

# **Becoming a researcher: Stories of self**

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## **Abstract**

In this introduction we situate the call for papers for this Special Edition on *Becoming a researcher*. We begin with a discussion on writing, research and publication; and the idea of slow scholarship and meaningful collegiality which forms the substrate of our approach. Next, we foreground the self as data in current research genres. We begin with narrative methods which emphasize the argument that people lead individual and socially storied lives. Burgeoning out from narrative, we explore arts-based educational research which encompasses the visual, the aesthetic and often borrows literary elements. Next, we turn to the growing genre of autoethnography to see the interweaving of the self, the social and research. Finally, we introduce the unique papers in this Special Edition. These stories of becoming researchers constitute a rich contribution to this genre of writing and research.

## **Introduction**

In this Special Edition: *Becoming a Researcher*, we foreground the self as data and recognise multiple *stories of self* (Arnold, 2011). Moving aside abstract, distanced, non-emotional frameworks, the contributions in this volume embrace an embodied, interconnected approach to understanding selves as researchers (Essén & Varlander, 2012) and the process of reaching current settled and unsettled destinations. Contributions link the personal with the theoretical, the individual with the universal, factual with imaginary, and word with image to reclaim the inevitability of the personal in academic lives. Papers in this collection show how researchers *live* their research and how, even though, many researchers “have been trained to guard against subjectivity (self-driven perspectives) and to separate self from research activities, it is an impossible task” (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010, p. 2). Scholarship is intimately tied to personal experience. Stories of liberation, loss, love, survival, trust, emergence and becoming are presented here as researchers bear witness to themselves as writers and academics (Nash, 2004). Collectively this Special Edition enacts a methodological proposition that the personal, the academy, ways of knowing, pedagogy, theory and practice are intricately bound together (Arnold, 2010; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Knowles & Cole, 2008).

How do we write these stories of self? Since the 1980s, new research genres have interrogated writing and research practices with a sharpening eye on the “I” in academic inquiry. Pinnegar and Danes (2007) identify four recent trends that have opened up the space for personal scholarship to develop. These are: 1) The growing change in relationship between the researcher and the researched and a recognition that human interactions are never static but are always relational; 2) The change from the use of

numbers to the use of words as data and the growing primacy of human experience and meaning; 3) A change from a focus on the general and universal to the local and specific; 4) Increasing acceptance of alternative epistemologies and a growing recognition of blurred genres of knowing. In this volume, contributing authors have used some of these current forms of scholarship such as narrative, poetry and autoethnography. Although these are personal stories that focus on the self, they do so at intersections with time, context and place. As such, these stories of the self move beyond the personal to include the social.

We would like to use this introductory paper to explore some of the literature in these emerging research genres. A section will focus on narrative methods, the next on the contributions of arts-based genres followed by a discussion of autoethnography. The final section of the paper will present an overview of the contributions to this Special Edition. First, however, we would like to begin with a discussion that is at the heart of this Special Edition: Becoming a researcher.

### **Becoming a researcher**

Increasingly, faculty are under pressure to write and publish. The literature on publishing productivity levels world-wide indicates that about 15% of researchers account for most published articles (Stack, 2003) and that many academics, new and experienced, continue to struggle to publish their research (McGrail, Richard & Jones, 2006; Pannell, 2002). Calls for regular, ongoing, structured interventions to help faculty increase their writing output appear regularly in the literature (Campbell, Ellis, & Adebajo, 2012; Cumbie, Weinert, Luparell, Conley, & Smith, 2005; Galligan et al., 2003; Gillespie et al., 2005; Grant, 2006; Lee & Boud, 2003; McGrail et al., 2006; Moore, 2003; Morss & Murray, 2001; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Non-tenured faculty and women, particularly lag behind in the productivity stakes (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Damiano-Teixeira, 2006; Leahey, 2006). Akerlind (2008) argues that although non-tenured faculty and women require particular attention, development is needed at different stages of any academic career as research needs/agendas change. In addition, conditions are continually under transition as is seen in the increasing emphasis on attracting grant funding in Canada (Polster, 2007). Findlow (2012) also argues that in professional disciplines, such as education, practitioners can find their professional identity more meaningful than academic ones. Coming from professional practice, academia is often seen as isolating, and many feel a lack of confidence or authority in their identity as academics (Snyder, 2011)

Akerlind (2008) suggests that there are four phases in a researcher's possible development: 1) becoming a confident researcher (developing the research and writing skills to publish); 2) becoming a recognized researcher (developing expertise and becoming part of a research community); 3) becoming a productive researcher (developing the skills to access grants, conduct research and publish regularly); and 4) becoming a sophisticated researcher (becoming a leading thinker in a field). Researcher development can build confidence and skills in any of these areas.

Faculty frequently experience extreme pressures particularly with the increasing corporatization of universities and the emphasis on continual efficiency, productivity and excellence (Hartman & Darab, 2012). A casualty of these pressures is often meaningful collegiality. As Tierney and Bensimon (1996) argue:

we must work toward the creation of a community that does not demand the suppression of one's identity in order to become socialized into abstract norms. We support the development of organizations in which interrelatedness and concern for others is central. (p.16)

In the face of constant urgent deadlines, few faculty have time to engage in the deep thinking and "slow scholarship" (Hartman & Darab, 2012) that leads to one becoming a sophisticated researcher.

#### *Writing and researcher identity*

Writing is a central way academics come to know their profession (Lea & Stierer, 2009). Indeed, it is an act of identity (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). Writing within an academic context is the way we constitute and express that identity. When one writes, one uses materials, resources, practices, and genres of other people in the discourse. We identify with that discourse, discipline or set of research/writing practices. By developing researcher identities, we align ourselves with the work we do. Through acts of research and disciplinary writing over time, that identity becomes consolidated (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). It is this identity/ies that motivates us to persevere through difficulties, to think deeply and to engage in "slow scholarship" (Hartman & Darab, 2012). One way to construct/deconstruct our writing or researcher identity/ies is through an examination of the self. Stories of the self (narrative, arts-based or autoethnographic) allow us to notice the elements in our researcher lives that shape our identity. Our purpose in this Special Edition was to provide the space for individual stories but also collectively to foster meaningful collegiality through the publication of these stories.

#### **Narrative research**

Narrative as an account of any occurrence is fundamental to communication, social interaction and understanding. We use narrative to make sense of the world and to tell others what we have discovered. When we note that something is a part of a whole and that it is a cause of something else we create narrative meaning (Polkinghorne, 1988). Coherence, connections, links, meaning and sense are provided by narrative.

The narrative or autobiographical turn in the social sciences is associated with post-modernism and more specifically post-structuralism and a lack of faith in grand or meta-narratives. Deleuze (1993; 2004) and Deleuze and Guattari (1988; 1994), particularly, focused on multiplicity and connection and argued that we inhabit a changing world of becoming. Since nothing is fixed there are as many worlds as there are ways of discussing and thinking about them. The importance of narratives is in the way we use them to invent the world; new concepts are made and "lines of flight" created, while the interconnections and contradictions of human interaction take rhizomatic forms. Thinkers, researchers and writers are involved in nomadic inquiry and as foundational

forms are interrogated we witness the dissolution of sedimented structures. Narrative research is a broad area and there have been many debates and disagreements about definitions, meanings and practices. This is a contested and developing field. Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008) provide a comprehensive review of the theoretical underpinnings of narrative research and focus on the process of doing it. For our purposes here, we focus on narrative inquiry, narrative research and aesthetic qualities and arts-based research since these are relevant to the contributions in the Special Edition.

### *Narrative inquiry*

Narrative inquiry is one form of narrative research in which researchers pay close attention to their ontological and ethical commitments. Narrative inquirers draw on Dewey's theory of experience (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Connelly and Clandinin (2006) offer the following definition:

Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way narrative is the phenomena studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomena. To use narrative inquiry as a methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

All phases of narrative inquiry are complex (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009) and it is shaped by narrative as a way of knowing and narrative as a genre (Kramp, 2004). Burnier (1996) distinguishes between logicoscientific and narrative reasoning. The former is based on positivist assumptions and driven by reasoned hypotheses. It answers Rorty's question of how do we come to know the truth (as cited in Kramp, 2004). The criterion for evaluating this research is verification and denotative language is used. In contrast, narrative reasoning relies on contextualism and a concern for the human condition, which results in flexible stories while attending to the particular, personal, and specific. This approach answers Rorty's question of how do we come to endow experience with meaning (as cited in Kramp, 2004). The researcher interprets the experience and events told by the storyteller, which is not simple because we are aware of alternate meanings and that each story has a point of view depending on who is telling the story and who is being told, when and where. Thus the appropriate criterion is verisimilitude or the likelihood that something could be true. Connotative language is used.

Narrative inquirers also understand narrative as a literary genre that has a recognizable structure and formal characteristics (Kramp, 2004). Human events are organized in time. The form is perspectival; it reflects a point of view. Kramp argues,

It is in the telling that meaning is given to experience. It is in telling that we come to understand ...there is no already existing story for the narrator to tell; rather the story comes to be in the act of telling.... (p. 110)

The subject of the research is the storyteller and understanding is the research goal. The researcher gives authority to the narrator. Such stories become the embodiment of an intimate relationship between the knower and the known, storyteller and listener, between researcher and subject. They have impacts and consequences for scholars, and the research is not replicable. "Tell me about a time..." is an open ended prompt which allows the participant to tell the researcher what they want to say. Typically, detailed stories, texts rich in "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) are produced. The researcher studies the narratives, subjects them to analysis and interprets them.

#### *Narrative research and aesthetic qualities*

Other narrative researchers stress the aesthetic qualities of representation. For example Coulter and Smith (2009) argue that literary elements such as point of view; "heteroglossia" or portraying multiple voices; authorial distance; and tone, which are used in the construction of narratives in educational research, support collaborative meaning making processes between the writer/researcher and reader. By attending to aesthetic qualities the literary elements draw readers into narrative accounts. The authors discuss how such literary elements relate to the qualitative research practices of generating and analyzing evidence for the purpose of discerning themes. These relations are linked to broader issues about the knowledge we can possibly gain from research and how we might learn it. Further, Coulter (2009) argues that the aesthetic, the ethical and the relational are not mutually exclusive.

Barone (2009) explores the place of the political in narratives possessing both literary and scientific dimensions. Issues related to researching and composing narratives with a "progressivist" orientation include (a) the purposes of the research (b) how authors encourage or discourage readers to take multiple perspectives (c) ethical concerns related to the researcher's assumed privileges of authorship, and (d) the political responsibilities and rights of readers. Additionally, Yeoman's (2012) conception of narrative is rooted in both literature and cultural studies. She argues that from the study of the literature we learn how to tell effective stories in the most engaging ways possible, while from cultural studies we learn how narratives work in society and how they shape our understandings of the world and our roles in it. However, the two ways in which narratives operate are sometimes in tension with each other. That is, while binary oppositions can produce dramatic stories they might also produce division along lines of class, race and gender. Smith (2009) draws on literary theory and an analysis of the cultural expectations of narratives to argue that despite the capacity of narratives to represent multiple perspectives and thereby foster multiple interpretations, many do not actually do so. He suggests that therefore narrative researchers should reveal how their research stories are constructed which may encourage readers to question and to develop their own perspectives.

### *Arts-based educational research*

Arts-based educational research encourages researchers to experiment with materials and techniques to produce creative works (Barone & Eisner, 2006; 2011; Eisner, 1997; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Siegesmund & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). Relevant to the papers included in this Special Edition, such works include narratives (Barone & Eisner, 2006) and poetry (Galvin & Prendergast, 2012; Prendergast, Leggo & Shameshima, 2009). Barone and Eisner argue that narrative construction and storytelling as a kind of arts-based educational research can enhance perspectives, “Arts-based educational research at its best is capable of persuading the percipient to see educational phenomena in new ways, and to entertain questions about them that might have otherwise been left unasked” (2006, p. 96). Because form and function are interdependent arts-based educational research also attends to aesthetic design elements including format, language, empathic understanding and virtual realities.

### *Evaluation*

What are accurate criteria for assessing creative, non-traditional and transgressive forms of narrative research? Further, can what we use for one text be valid for another? Such questions occur within discussions about the validity and reliability of these research documents. Richardson (2000a) offers the criteria of substantive contribution; aesthetic quality; reflexivity; impact and expression of a reality. In regards to arts-based educational research, McDermott (2010) asks for whom and for what purpose does a work serve, and whether it contributes to change. She concludes that artistic scholarship is successful if it effects change in either the maker or the audience. Additionally, Barone and Eisner (2006) discuss the following criteria for evaluating arts-based educational research work: illuminating effect; generativity; incisiveness and generalizability.

### **Autoethnography**

One form of a creative, non-traditional and transgressive research approach is autoethnography. Autoethnography has increasingly gained ground as a research genre since the crisis of representation in the 1980s. In recent decades, there has been a rapid increase in the publication of autoethnographic articles that range from the purpose of academic lives (Alexander, 2012; Burnier, 2006; Hernández, Sancho, Creus, & Montané, 2010; Pelias, 2003; 2004), lessons of teaching (Granger, 2011; Rivas, 2009; Wilson, 2011), illness (Richardson, 2010; Uotinen, 2011), immigration (Alsop, 2002) and many other topics. The term “autoethnography” covers a wide range of approaches to writing and research but generally refers to the research genre that associates the personal to the social/cultural. These approaches vary in the weighting placed on culture (*ethnos*), self (*auto*), or research (*graphy*) (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Some focus more on self, others on the socio-cultural context and yet others pay more attention to analytical research methods but there is always an interweaving of the three at some level.

Autoethnography first developed with an emphasis on *evocative* representations of writing about the self (e.g., Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 1999; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Richardson, 1995; 2000b; 2010). These evocative representations were highly personal revealing texts in which authors told stories about their own lived experiences (Richardson, 2000c). Recently, some researchers have moved away from

evocative to *analytical* self-narratives (e.g., Anderson, 2006; Pace, 2012). Analytical autoethnography recognizes the self as empirical data available for systematic analysis (Chang, 2008).

These two approaches – evocative and analytical – form the end points of a continuum along which a range of autoethnographic perspectives are positioned. Towards the evocative end, writing is more literary with much blurring of the boundaries between social science and literature. Authors tell their stories of self without interpretation or explanation and meaning is for the reader to decipher (Ellis, 2004). Rather than drawing conclusions, the authenticity of the text is in its resonance with the reader (Pace, 2012). “I was scared,” Laurel Richardson begins her autoethnography on the death of her sister and training as a hospice volunteer as a means of coping (Richardson, 2011, p. 158), “I hadn’t applied for a job in over forty years, and I’d never applied for a volunteer position. I feared being rejected.” Ellis (2013) begins her piece on coping with the vulnerability loss brings with “Drive slowly down the potholed gravel lane that runs atop the mountain ridge. When you maneuver the narrow tunnel...” (p.18). Pelias (2003) in his article *The academic tourist*, a statement on pedagogy and academic life, writes: “Students just keep coming and you think you will remember them, but most of them fade, like the class lectures you keep using, even though you always plan on writing new ones...” (p. 369).

Evocative ethnography uses language as a constitutive force where language acts. As Pelias (2004) suggests:

Evocative scholarship has language doing its hardest work, finding its most telling voice, and revealing its deepest secrets. It is literature that makes its writer and readers take notice not just of its points but also of its aesthetic presentation. Often it relies on the figurative and rests on form. It avoids cliché, the familiar. It depends on the creative and finds force in the imaginative. (p. 12)

Authors use literary devices to create scenes, characters and plots. The text often reveals hidden private lives and highlights emotional experiences. The language and style of writing imply the relational and connective nature of individual “selves”. All of these techniques position the reader as a participant in a dialogue rather than as a passive reader (Pace, 2012).

On the other side of the continuum, the *analytical* approach to autoethnography relies on traditional analytical methods, such as content analysis or grounded theory (see, for example, Pace, 2012) and often practices within a realist tradition. Personal experiences are empirical data for insight on broader sets of social phenomena (Atkinson, 2006). Anderson (2006) outlines five key features of analytical autoethnography. First, the researcher is an “insider”—a member—of the social phenomena being researched. When prominent adult educator, Stephen Brookfield, writes about clinical depression, his authenticity arises from his long-time experience of severe depression (Brookfield, 2011). The researcher is participant and observer, living the day-to-day experience as well as recording data for analysis. Second, this ethnography engages in analytic reflexivity—a

self-conscious introspection about the position of oneself, the context and others. While traditionally ethnographers have focused outwards on “others”, autoethnographers recognize the importance of looking inwards as part of the research endeavour. A third characteristic of analytical autoethnography is that the researcher is visible in the text as a social actor. The researcher’s feelings and experiences are captured in the research process. A fourth feature of this autoethnographical perspective is that dialogue is sought beyond the self. Data from ‘others’ is collected as a way of avoiding autobiography and “self-indulgence”. The final characteristic is that these autoethnographers commit to an analytic agenda. By this they mean that autoethnography should include empirical data and some mechanism for analyzing that data (Anderson, 2006; Pace, 2012).

*What does autoethnography offer researchers?*

First, autoethnographers choose themselves as data. For Ellis and Bochner (2000), the purpose of autoethnography is to “come to understand yourself in deeper ways and with understanding yourself comes understanding others” (p.738). The researcher is both the “subject” and the “object” of research. As the subject, the autoethnographer is the one who performs the investigation as well as the object, the one who is investigated. While the “self” is often perceived of as individual, autoethnography locates the individual among others-others of similarity, difference, opposition and connection (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010). It links the self with others, the self with the social, and the self with the context and reveals a socio-cultural understanding of selves (Starr, 2010). Autoethnographic data provides the researcher with an internal window through which the external world is understood and allows researchers to access “sensitive issues and inner-most thoughts” (Ngunjiri, Hernandez & Chang, 2010, p.3) in ways that other methodologies do not.

Second, since autoethnography shifts the subject of research from “the Other” to the self (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Starr, 2010), this genre inherently carries an element of resistance. Autoethnography does this by questioning: “how and why are the borders of Otherness created? How and why might research and researching reconstitute the borders of Otherness” (herising, 2005, p. 132). Stable, certain notions of researcher subjectivity and identity are brought under scrutiny and autoethnographers are forced into:

the movement away from established places of knowing, and [to] embarking on/engaging in research as a process whereby we are confounded and dislocated, where there are no easy answers or even ‘successful’ research outcomes, or where we fail to map the start and endpoints of our linear research processes, [and] where we are unable to find language” (herising, 2005, p. 148).

In autoethnography, researchers challenge the notion that they are situated outside of personal life processes. By doing this, these researchers re-position themselves to speak on their own behalf, to change their own conditions and where they can take action to transform their own research/teaching/life practices. Autoethnography is also resistance because it decentres the anonymous essay based on abstract categorical knowledge in favour of direct testimony and personal knowledge (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Writing is



deliberate in its use of the senses to invoke experiences, emotion and sentiment, which challenges the predominant model of the researcher/reader as rational impartial actor. In doing so, the relationship between the researcher and the researched inevitably becomes closer. The accessibility and readability of the text “repositions the reader as co-participant in the dialogue and thus rejects the orthodox view of the reader as passive receiver of knowledge” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.744). Finally, autoethnography acts as resistance by providing a space for those who are or feel silenced by dominant discourses and cultures (Tsalach, 2013). Silenced groups can claim a position, according to their own agenda and their own lived experiences (Franklin Klinker & Todd, 2007). In this way, autoethnography draws on Friere’s conscientization which involves the individual becoming aware of his/her own position and creating a space to transform as the self is reiteratively constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed (Maydell, 2010; Starr, 2010). Identifying with autoethnography, as a research genre, is itself an act of resistance “given the privileges of being in the academy, [and] choosing the margins as one’s identification is [itself] a political act” (herising, 2005, p. 145).

Third, since writing from marginalised and silenced spaces invokes exposure, these texts are inevitably fused with vulnerability:

The stories we write put us into conversation with ourselves as well as our readers. In conversation with ourselves, we expose our vulnerabilities, conflicts, choices and values. We take measure of our uncertainties, our mixed emotions, and the multiple layers of our experience. (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 748)

Through reflection inward and then reflection outward again, the presence of the researcher’s life experience is acknowledged with all his/her vulnerabilities (Mizzi, 2010). Autoethnographies often do not show the struggles that take place in the writing itself and the decisions one makes about what to reveal and what to hide. Writing about oneself, challenging marginalization and divulging sensitive issues, results in self-disclosure and exposure (Chatham-Carpenter, 2010; Ngunjiri, Heranadez, & Chang, 2010). Yet, it is this epistemology of vulnerability that is this research genre’s potency because it resonates with readers who feel that same vulnerability.

### **Overview of papers in the Special Edition**

In this edition of the *Morning Watch* we would like to honour the narratives, poetry and autoethnographies of those who have shared a piece of their journey on their way to becoming a researcher. We received submissions from staff, students and faculty at Memorial University as well as submissions from out of province. The authors draw upon various types of literary techniques in their narratives, autoethnographies and arts-based methodologies to share their research interests and journeys. While each submission is unique, the complexity of this journey is woven throughout the submissions. The authors discuss their research passions, the “moments” of significance, the stories of importance, the images of consequence and how the process of becoming a researcher is inevitably intertwined with their personal lives.

**John Hoben** relates to his own experiences as teacher-educator and beginning researcher and makes an argument for the need to place as much value on narrative research as is placed on empirical research. He discusses the importance of narrative practice and its ability to connect people within a university in an age of increasing corporate and authoritarian influence.

**Maura Hanrahan's** journey to becoming a researcher is intricately linked to her past. Maura reflects on her childhood experiences and the stigmatism she felt as a result of her Indigenous ancestry and how that influenced her journey to becoming a researcher.

**Gisela Ruebsaat** uses poetry to reflect on the relationship between everyday experiences and the words we use to describe what happens. She questions what happens to our sense of meaning or truth when language is cut off from the physical experience which first led to “the story”?

The concept of “serendipity” is highlighted when **Margot Maddison-MacFadyen** draws us into her narrative relating her journey to a series of unexpected events which eventually led to her doctoral research. She uses *ekphrasis*, a description in poetry of a work of art, to tell her story.

**Dennis Mulcahy** states his journey was not predetermined. He seeks to answer the question “how did I become who I am?” by reflecting on the series of events in his life that have led him to his research passion-rural education and schooling.

**Judith Martin's** journey to becoming a researcher was not planned either. She discusses how life changed for her when she received a “pink slip”. Her settled life as a teacher in an elementary school became unsettled and eventually led her to embark on her journey as a researcher.

**Elizabeth Yeoman** speaks to the importance of the stories we tell and the impact they can have on our lives and the lives of others. She shares with us vivid stories from her childhood that have impacted her life and have shaped her research.

The journey of self is weaved throughout **Sarah Pickett's** story of becoming a researcher. She connects her own experiences in “coming out” with her work as a psychotherapist and her conceptualization of a researcher. Throughout her autoethnographic reflections she relates these connections to theory.

**Cecile Badenhorst** reflects on the theme of “becoming” as it relates to her journey. She shares four moments in her life that significantly impacted the development of her identity as a teacher/writer/ researcher. She comments that while there is coherence in the “enduring contours of influence” that are weaved throughout these moments, the identities created are only partial and still evolving.

**Cecilia Moloney** offers perspectives on discovery using poetic and narrative forms. She intertwines self discovery and research into the natural and engineered worlds.

The query of self has been focal in **Xuemei Li's** journey. She reflects on the relevancy of her life experiences in shaping and directing her in her journey. She comments on how the process has helped her establish a professional identity and has allowed her to use her position to advocate for the marginalized.

**Gabrielle Young** uses a qualitative narrative approach and through an interview process explores a female academic's journey of becoming a researcher. Her content analysis of the data revealed themes relating to the journey from practitioner to researcher and how family influences this path. The struggle with the conflicting roles of parent and researcher are interwoven throughout the script. She concluded that while the interviewee found that the process has been difficult friendships with fellow academics has helped to ease the transition.

**Heather McLeod's** story of developing as a researcher is an attempt to engage in narrative construction, a form of arts-based educational research (ABER) (Barone and Eisner, 2006). She focuses on her interests in visual art, history and social justice and compares developing as a researcher to the journey of "self".

**Dorothy Vaandering** uses poetry to describe her experience as a researcher. Research to her is about the process of always questioning, always searching and is linked to her childhood.

**Anne Burke** reflects on how her research on the literacy practices of young children is shaped by the knowledge she gains from the children who are involved with her work. How children's play acts as a form of "meaning-making" is discussed.

**Heather White** views her journey as a "hero's journey". She writes about "transition", of "becoming" and how the past and future are connected in the present. Heather speaks of uncertainty on her journey but has hope that the future will unfold as it should.

**Rhonda Joy** compares the journey of "becoming a researcher" to the interconnected and ever-changing colors of a kaleidoscope. She reflects on how this journey is intertwined and has been influenced by every aspect of her life and then uses several colors of the kaleidoscope to highlight themes in her journey.

**Sharon Penney** also uses a narrative approach to tell the story of a young scholar as she transitions from graduate school to a tenure track position. The case study highlights the complexity of this "unfinished" journey and the influences of family and teachers/mentors. It amplifies the interconnectedness of the self with such identities as the child, student, partner, teacher, professor and researcher.

**Shawn Pendergast** challenges the traditional view of a researcher in terms of the path that is most often taken. He argues that while some may choose a linear path to becoming a researcher, it is possible to follow a non-linear path and become what he coins a "non-traditional" researcher.

**Nathalie Pender** reflects on her life as a graduate student and “researcher in training”. She comments on the busyness of her life and the challenges of finding the time and the words to write.

### **Conclusion**

Narrative, arts-based and autoethnography research genres allow rich understandings of academic research practice, taking into account tensions and multiple layers (Jones, 2011). “A professional life story expresses a particular sense of self and a perspective on membership of a group” (Jones, 2011, p. 116). These stories of becoming researchers constitute a rich contribution to this genre of writing and research. These reflections perhaps do not show the process followed in producing these texts but reveal decisions and tensions of the self in understanding how we do research and what kinds of researchers we are and intend to be within the historical contexts and power relationships that shape our professional identities and personal selves.

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