

**Building Whose Capacities and
Capital, Furthering Whose Fields and
Promoting Whose Interests?:
Interrogating Identity, Influence and
Innovation in and through Publishing a
Research Book about English Teachers
of Travellers**

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Part of Abstract

The publication of a research book about English teachers of Travellers (Danaher, Coombes & Kiddle, 2007) stimulates reflection about whose capacities are built and whose interests are promoted by such publication. In the fields of universities and publishing companies, the authors and publisher clearly benefit through the acquisition of economic and perhaps of cultural and/or symbolic capital. In the field of Traveller education, hopefully the distinctive issues of educational provision for mobile communities are brought to greater prominence. In the field of teachers' work, teachers' interests might be served by a book sympathetic to their multiple pressures and achievements.

Part of Abstract (Continued)

This paper deploys Bourdieu's concepts of capital and field to interrogate the intended impact of the book's writing and publication. Identity is examined through the dual foci of the research participants and the authors; influence is considered with reference to Traveller education scholarship; and innovation is interpreted through the teachers' work in the Traveller Education Support Services.

Overview of presentation

- **Writing research books, scholarship and the RQF**
- *Teaching Traveller Children*
- **Three forms of capital and four fields**
- **Building capacity: identity, influence and innovation**
- **Focused discussion**

Writing research books, scholarship and the RQF

- **Interested in demystifying but not in devaluing writing research books**
- **Can be seen as ‘the next level’ in a pinball game or a massively multiplayer online game**
- **Can be seen as part of a researcher’s/scholar’s professional learning**
- **Mixed signals – gold standard or devalued/debased currency**

Writing research books, scholarship and the RQF (Continued)

- **RAE and now RQF – Tier 1 refereed journal articles seemingly more highly valued than books**
- **PhD thesis the most intellectually demanding text I have written**
- **Research books entail a different audience and require a different writing genre**
- **Plenty of room for individual specialisation within a collaborative enterprise**

Teaching Traveller Children

- **Based on data collected in the first half of 1999 (never give up!)**
- **22 interviews with 26 interviewees yielding over 200,000 words of transcripts (part of broader project yielding over 500,000 words of transcripts)**
- **One co-author my mother (who had transcribed most of the 1999 interviews; I really value co-writing with family members and friends)**

Teaching Traveller Children (Continued)

- **The other co-author one of the 1999 interviewees and crucial to the publisher accepting the book proposal (credibility with the book's primary audience/market)**
- **Publisher well-known for publishing texts in this field**
- **10 chapters divided into five parts**
- **Maximum of 55,000 words (went from 54,263 to 48,487 words – lost 10.64% of total length)**

Teaching Traveller Children (Continued)

- **Part of a letter from an editor:**

What a pity you didn't mention in your proposal that the book was based on your PhD. I'd have given you guidance on how to make it into a readable book!

I'm having to return this as it still reads like a PhD: defensive. It's also hugely overwritten and riddled with postmodern jargon and quirks. If we're to dig out of it the book that educationists and even Travellers will read, it has to be redone. Sentences are too convoluted, & there's too much passive voice.

Teaching Traveller Children (Continued)

- **Part of a letter from an editor (continued):**

It might be that an Australian PhD requires you to interpret or explain what your interviewees say, but it's boring and patronising for readers to be told everything twice. Readers are quite capable of understanding what the people you quote are saying.

The typology gave a useful structure for you to write your PhD according to, but makes for a rather rigid and predictable read. I'd like you to ditch the headings (or vary them) except for 'Implications for practice', which is fine.

Your referencing is virtually flawless – thank you!

Teaching Traveller Children (Continued)

- **Before:**

The question “How do you see yourself as an educator?” is intended to distil participants’ constructions of self that derive from their responses to the two preceding questions. As we argued above, those constructions in turn go to the heart of the participants’ effectiveness in helping their Traveller students to learn. So self-perceptions function as the point of intersection between educators’ identities and their educational strategies; confidence and/or doubts in one area tend to spill over into the other. (79 words)

- **After:**

How teachers see themselves as educators goes to the heart of their effectiveness in helping their Traveller students to learn. So self-perceptions function as the point of intersection between educators’ identities and their educational strategies; confidence or doubts in one area tend to spill over into the other. (48 words)

Teaching Traveller Children (Continued)

- **Before:**

We noted in the introduction our intention to return to reconsider the issues identified from the analysis presented in the ten chapters of the book. We proposed that it is productive to conceptualise the shifts in the Traveller education literature over the past 40 years as moving from *deficit* to *disadvantage* to *difference* to *diversity* in its representations of Travellers. At the same time, we noted with concern a fundamental ambivalence towards Travellers and the resilience of sedentarism (McVeigh, 1997), and we linked the contemporary focus on diversity in understanding Traveller education with an approach that is both anti-sedentarist (Danaher, Moriarty and Danaher, 2004) and anti-essentialist (Danaher, 2001b). (108 words)

- **After:**

Traveller education literature has shifted in its representations of Travellers over the past 40 years from *deficit* to *disadvantage* to *difference* to *diversity*. But the fundamental ambivalence towards Travellers and the resilience of sedentarism (McVeigh, 1997) persist. The contemporary focus on diversity is both anti-sedentarist (Danaher et al., 2004) and anti-essentialist (Danaher, 2001b).. (53 words)

Three Forms of Capital and Four Fields (Continued)

- **“cultural capital – A form of value associated with culturally authorised tastes, consumption patterns, attributes, skills and awards. Within the field of education, for example, an academic degree constitutes cultural capital” (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. x)**
- **“...economic [capital can be understood] in terms of financial assets...” (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. 109)**

Three Forms of Capital and Four Fields (Continued)

- **“symbolic capital – A form of capital or value that is not recognised as such. Prestige and a glowing reputation, for example, operate as symbolic capital because they mean nothing in themselves, but depend on people believing that someone possesses these qualities” (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, pp. xv-xvi)**
- **“The point about the various forms of capital is that they are recognised as having value and they can be traded or exchanged for desired outcomes within their own field or within others” (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, pp. 109-110)**

Three Forms of Capital and Four Fields (Continued)

- **“A cultural field can be defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities. But it is also constituted by, or out of, the conflict which is involved when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field, and how that capital is to be distributed. Bourdieu understands the concept of cultural field to refer to fluid and dynamic, rather than static entities. Cultural fields, that is, are made up not simply of institutions and rules, but [also] of the interactions between institutions, rules and practices” (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, pp. 21-22)**

Three Forms of Capital and Four Fields (Continued)

- **The field of universities**
 - **No economic capital (only 80 copies sold to date!)**
 - **Symbolic capital only if the book becomes cited by others and that scholarly rarity “a seminal text”**
 - **Cultural capital but only if recognised as such by others**
 - **Question of relative values within cultural capital (e.g., time taken to write the book versus time allowed by workload model for future writing based on book’s publication)**

Three Forms of Capital and Four Fields (Continued)

- **The field of publishing companies**
 - **Hopefully some economic capital for the publisher**
 - **No symbolic capital unless it becomes “a seminal text”**
 - **Cultural capital if the book is seen as adding value to the company’s growing specialisation in Traveller education research**

Three Forms of Capital and Four Fields (Continued)

- **The field of Traveller education**

- **Cultural capital of this field of scholarship potentially enhanced if the book is taken up within and outside the field as adding to the store of current knowledge**
- **Book conceived partly as a counternarrative to the dominant discourse of Travellers as ‘deficit’, ‘deviant’ and ‘disadvantaged’ (that is, the authors wanted to contribute to the cultural and perhaps the symbolic capital of mobile communities)**

Three Forms of Capital and Four Fields (Continued)

- **The field of teachers' work**
 - **Book also conceived as helping to disrupt the growing discourse of teachers as 'part of the problem', 'obstacles to reform', etc.**
 - **Authors genuinely admiring of the research participants' commitment, ingenuity and innovation (while aware that that admiration could shade into a celebratory discourse)**
 - **Teachers' cultural capital potentially enhanced if the book is seen to contribute to a more enabling view of their work and identities**

Building Capacity: Identity, Influence and Innovation

- **Building capacity**

Whose capacities are built depends on whose interests are promoted

- **Identity**

The promotion of interests (and hence the building of capacity) can help to explore and value different forms of identity (e.g., researcher/author, Traveller, teacher).

Building Capacity: Identity, Influence and Innovation (Continued)

- **Influence**

Influence is a hoped for but not automatic consequence of capacity building (here with reference to Traveller education scholarship)

- **Innovation**

Here innovation is part of the authors' construction of the teachers' work in the Traveller Education Support Services (remains to be seen whether that construction receives wider acceptance and contributes to the teachers' capacity)

Conclusion

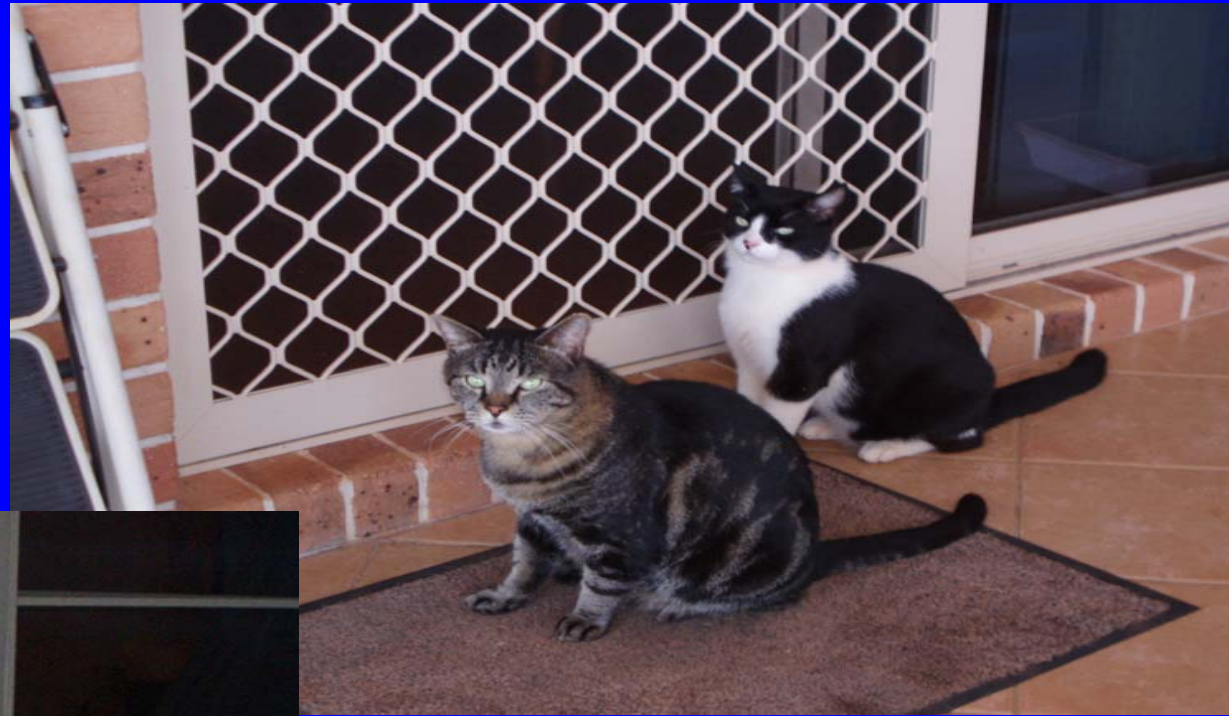
The paper presents the argument that capital and field highlight the fluid and mobile character of identity, influence and innovation in educational research. In particular, researchers who aspire to use their research to contribute to building the capacities and promoting the interests of research participants and their communities must recognise the multiple and competing currencies and exchange rates operating within and across forms of capital and fields of power.

References

- **Danaher, P. A., Coombes, P. N., & Kiddle, C. (2007). *Teaching Traveller children: Maximising learning outcomes*. Stoke on Trent, UK and Sterling, VA: Trentham Books.**
- **Webb, J., Schirato, T., & Danaher, G. R. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.**

Thank you for participating!

- Meow!



Focused Discussion

- **Is book writing one of the navigational points on your horizon? If so, what will it be about, who will publish it and who will buy it?**
- **To what extent is writing style part of one's identity? Is changing that style part of capacity building?**
- **Which fields of power do you want to influence (perhaps through engaging in innovation)?**
- **How is (building) capacity linked with the forms of capital operating in those fields of power?**