A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT: LANDSCAPES OF LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE OF NON-TRADITIONAL WORKERS

by

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Abstract

In the 21st century contexts in which we live, precarious work has become more prevalent. This study explored how workplace learning takes place for those of us who do not belong fully to an organisation. The need for lifelong and life-wide learning in formal, non-formal and informal ways becomes critical for non-traditional workers, who are defined as those who are not in traditional full-time employment but work on short-term contracts, often for multiple companies. This study focused on this niche group of professionals who work in alternative ways.

I was drawn to conduct this study due to my own expectations and experiences about the world of work. Childhood mindsets about work being in one company and job for life were challenged and changed during my career, in which I found myself working in non-traditional ways, enjoying the flexibility that this way of working afforded me. Transformative learning theory, which is about a revision of frames of reference, was a helpful theoretical lens to explain some aspects of my career story.

My unique career journey piqued my curiosity about how other non-traditional workers navigate their way into and through the world of work and how they develop as professionals in contexts of precarity. Communities of practice theory (a social learning theory) surfaced as a helpful theoretical lens to explore the learning journeys of my own and another five non-traditional workers.

A narrative autoethnographic research approach and a participatory interview technique called river of life were used as the methodological roadmap to navigate my way through the study. The study explored the development of identities, the processes and sources of learning, and the implications of learning in such contexts.

The findings identified the importance of lifelong and life-wide learning for non-traditional workers, culminating in the notion of careers being like living landscapes that are moving and changing as we engage in them. The important role of experience and the development of transferable skills was identified. The participants were also found to be good at managing multiplicity in their careers, working across subject areas, projects and multiple identities. Finally, an emerging culture of this type of worker was explored.

Student Declaration

I, Amanda Jane Cox (871871599) declare that

(i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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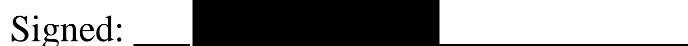

Date: ____21 June 2023________________

Supervisor's Declaration

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Supervisor: Prof V.M. John

Signed:___________________

15 June 2023

Dedication

My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

Psalm 121:2

I dedicate this study to two people who had the most significant influence

on getting this thesis finished,

Firstly, my mother,

Margaret Quicke

who unselfishly opened her home to me in the final stages of writing up this study,

which took much longer than we all anticipated.

Your patience and unconditional love are astounding.

Secondly, to my sister,

Janine Colborne

who talked me through some of my most anxious days,

when I thought I'd hit the end of the road and couldn't go on.

// Acknowledgements

A dissertation of this nature is an individual effort. There is only one person whose name appears on the final certificate. I do not believe it is possible to do a study like this, without the support of others, and this is the only place where they are acknowledged. I would like to thank those who have supported me on this journey, in different ways, not least of whom I have already mentioned under my dedication on the previous page.

My supervisor, Professor Vaughn John has always gone beyond the call of duty to respond timeously, honestly and encouragingly on revisions of chapters. His wealth of knowledge and experience as an academic and a mentor are enormous. I am privileged to have been able to work with him for my masters' research and this doctoral study.

My sister Debbie Jenkins, and my peer Dr Vivienne Spooner who did some critical reading of my story chapters, showing me where I could cut them down in length. My goddaughter, Danielle Napier, who enhanced and edited images and sorted and renamed my articles. My editor Gill Hannant, who waited patiently for my script through multiple revised timeframes and then used her expertise to enhance this script for me. My medical team who guided me through the ups and downs of various health challenges I faced while on this doctoral journey. The many friends who have believed in me, prayed for me, encouraged and supported me. There are too many to name here.

Last, but not least, I owe a debt of gratitude to the other five participants who joined me on this journey, Brendon, Leigh, Russel, Sagie and Ashira. I feel as though we are kindred spirits, even though we are so different in many ways. I enjoyed the time spent with each of you, listening to your stories about being non-traditional workers, then finding ways to tell those stories and to interpret them through qualitative analysis methods.

Thank you all, for the different ways you have supported me on this journey.

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List of Abbreviations

4IR – Fourth Industrial Revolution

ABET – Adult Basic Education and Training

AET – Adult Education and Training

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ALC – Adult Literacy Centre (fictitious company name)

ANC – African National Congress

AsgiSA – Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa

BBBEE – Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment

BEE – Black Economic Empowerment

BLM – Black Lives Matter

COP – Community of practice

COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions

CPD – Continuous professional development

CV – Curriculum Vitae

DOL – Department of Labour

DTP – Desktop Publishing

EE – Employment Equity

ETDP SETA - Education, training and development SETA

GEAR – Growth, Employment and Redistribution

GU – Granger University (fictitious company name)

GVA – Garland Venn and Associates (fictitious company)

IC – Independent Contractor

ILO – International Labour Organisation

IRL – Institute of research on learning

ISP – Internet Service Provider

IT – Information Technology

KE – Knowledge Economy

KZN – KwaZulu-Natal

LDS – Leadership Development Strategies (fictitious company name)

LGSETA – Local Government SETA

LLB – Bachelor of law degree

LLL – Lifelong learning

LMS – Learner Management System

LOP – Landscapes of Practice

LPP – Legitimate Peripheral Participation

LWL – Life-wide learning

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

MERSETA – Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA

MOOC – Massive Online Open Courses

NALEDI – National Labour and Economic Development Institute

NDP – National Development Plan

NPO – Non-Profit Organisations

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

NSE – Non-standard Employment

NTW – Non-traditional worker

OBE – Outcomes-based Education

PC – Personal computers

PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate in Education

PLT – Practical Legal Training

RCM – Reid College of Management (fictitious company name)

RDP – Reconstruction and Development Programme

SAQA – South African Qualifications Authority

SDF – Skills Development Facilitator

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SETA – Sector Education and Training Authority;,

SLSs – Social Learning Spaces

TLT – Transformative learning theory

UCE – Unit for Continuing Education

UCT – University of Cape Town

UDW – University of Durban Westville

UK – United Kingdom

UKZN – University of KwaZulu-Natal

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNISA – University of South Africa

UNITAR – United Nations Institute for Training and Research

USA – United States of America

VUCA – Volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous

WSP – Workplace Skills Plan

Prelude: What is this Study About?

This study is an exploration of the workplace learning of workers, in the early 21st century, who do not work in traditional, full-time, permanent employment. This type of work arrangement is also known as precarious or casualised work and takes a range of forms. On the one hand, there are poorly paid seasonal labourers who are just trying to put bread on the table; small businesses in the informal sector, such as street vendors, who sell food and other goods from the pavement of busy places, and then those holding multiple low-paid jobs. However, there is another group of workers that are considered precarious and casualised because our work lacks permanence, namely professionals who provide their expertise to companies on a freelance basis and are relatively well remunerated. The focus of this study was on this latter group of casualised workers. There are many names for this type of worker, such as independent contractor, consultant, portfolio worker and digital nomad, to name a few. I have defined this niche group as non-traditional workers (NTWs) in detail in Chapter 3.

My interest in this topic came about due to my personal experience of being an NTW. Furthermore, my interest in research methods that include the self was piqued when I learned about them during my master's degree.

Epistemological and ontological assumptions about what counts as research and that one could be a participant of your own study were challenged at that time. My epistemological and ontological positioning was at the centre of the study, where I was the researched. Yet, I was also the researcher. I could not position myself completely outside of the study due to my closeness to the topic. So, whilst my position as insider provided me with a particular lens, it made stepping outside of that position difficult. My insider positioning was foregrounded by starting the thesis with my story.

My role as researcher developed along with the narrative and in particular in bringing in the stories of the other participants. In so doing, the focus extends from my story to the stories and experiences of others and then, through the interpretation chapters, to consider the wider culture of NTWs.

As a study of the self (a narrative autoethnography), this thesis is presented as a story and hence does not follow the traditional structure and format of other theses. All elements of traditional research projects are present, but they do not appear in the same order, nor do they use traditional chapter headings. The chapter headings trace a very broad outline of the narrative of the study.

As it was my journey into the world of work that brought me to doing this study, it made sense to start the dissertation with that story. My decision to do that was guided by critical feedback I received from a self-study research methodology group I used to attend in the early stages of this the study.

In this thesis, I have used this prelude, the interludes between chapters, and an afterword, to weave together and connect the chapters, so that the whole thesis reads like a story, and to comment on methodological moves and decisions made in the study.

As a very brief overview, the thesis starts with my story (Chapter 1). In chapter 2, I introduce transformative learning theory as a useful theoretical framework to understand and explain parts of my story. I expected that transformative learning theory would be significant in other NTW's lives, however, it was not as significant as I had anticipated.

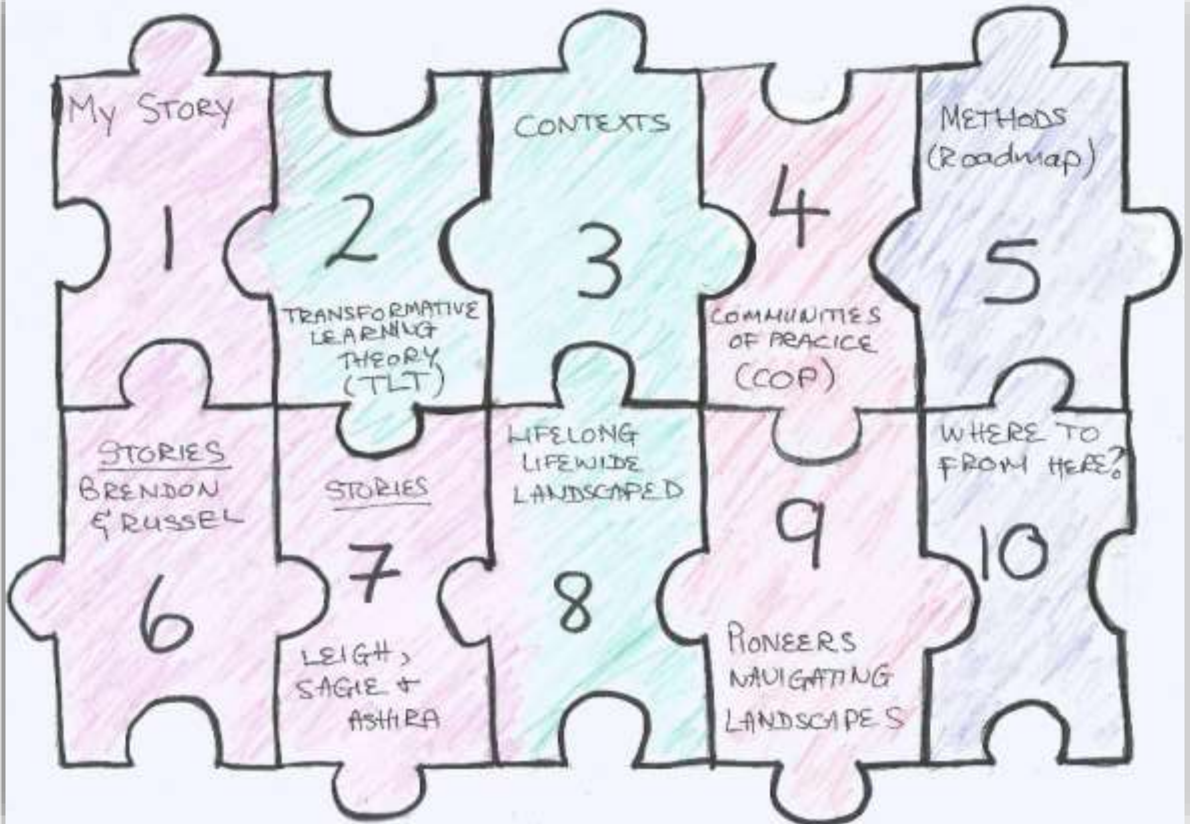
Chapter 3 outlines the contexts in which my story and the other participants' stories have been unfolding.

Chapter 4 introduces the other five participants and sets out the theoretical framework of communities of practice, as a helpful lens through which to explore the lives of others that I had socialised or worked with in my journey. This theory foregrounds social and relational ways of learning. However, it was limited in that there was not a single community of practice to which we all belonged and that could be explored. That gave rise to landscapes of practice being more relevant in this study, as each person inhabits their own unique landscapes, which overlaps with the landscapes of others.

Chapter 5 outlines the methodological choices of the study and are presented as a roadmap for the doctoral journey. The river has been used in the study as a metaphor for career journeys of participants. A data generation method called river of life (Moussa, 2009) was used as a participatory data generation tool for the interviews with the other participants. More on this method and the use of the river metaphor will unfold from Chapter 2 and the data generation method will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Chapters 6 to 10 present the findings and conclusions of the study and will be elaborated upon later.

The puzzle image below represents the ten chapters of the study. This image and slight variations of it have been used in the prelude, interludes and afterword as a broad organising framework and reference point of the unfolding story, to keep the reader oriented.



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Chapter 1: What do you Want to be When you Grow up?

I knew that when I grew up, I wanted to be a wife and a mother.

1968 to 1986: Early Life and Childhood

I was born in 1968 into a family with three older sisters. My father was a lawyer and my mother, a stay-at-home mom, was a preschool teacher by profession. My father died when I was eight months old, so my earliest childhood memories are of being in a family of girls. The month I turned seven years, my mother married a biochemistry professor who had five children of his own, making me the youngest of nine children, in an academic family where tertiary studies were the norm.

I enjoyed school and was academically strong in subjects like maths, accounting and science. Although I loved learning, I didn't[1] have any idea what profession I wanted to pursue. I ruled out teaching, because my worst activity at school was standing in front of a class to do speeches.

My mindset about the world of work was strongly influenced by my parents in that I expected to either be in one job for life, like my step-dad, or be a full-time, stay-at-home mom. I took it for granted that I would marry and have a family of my own and looked forward to playing those roles.

There was never any question for me about whether I should go to university; the problem was more about what I wanted to study. At least partly influenced by being the stepdaughter of a scientist, I chose a science degree. I recall family members saying to me: "You can get a good job with a science degree." I felt encouraged to hear that, and felt I had made a good decision, but I had no idea what that good job would look like or what that really meant practically.

1987 to 1991: Tertiary Studies & Travel

In 1987 I started a Bachelor of Science degree at what is now called the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Tertiary studies were a shock to my system. The academic leap

[1] I am aware that the APA 7th edition norm is to avoid contractions such as 'didn't'. However, I have been guided by the more casual conventions of a narrative style of writing, and have chosen to use contractions throughout the thesis.

from school to university was overwhelming and, for the first time in my life, I felt stupid. Surprisingly, I passed all my subjects in first year. However, I was not passionate about the subjects I was studying and wanted more options to take into second and third years. So, I took an additional year to complete my degree and ended 1988 with 1st year subjects in Chemistry; Physics; Calculus; Psychology; Computer programming, Cell Biology and Environmental Biology. I chose Chemistry and Cell Biology as my subjects for 2nd and 3rd year. I was still not passionate about the subjects I was studying or clear about what career I could pursue with this qualification. My friends seemed to know what they wanted to become, but I was just studying science because it seemed to be the best choice for me. I developed a mantra:

"At least I know what I don't want to do with my life."

Although often said as a light-hearted answer in conversations, it was a true reflection of how I felt. It was not an easy place to be in and it was my struggle for many years.

In 1991, having completed my science degree, I took a year off to travel and work in the north of the globe and was able to visit many countries. I flew to London with a friend of mine. My sister, Janine and her husband were living there at the time met us and we travelled with them for a few weeks. My friend and I then did a short tour into Europe, which included short visits to Germany, Switzerland, Austria and France, before flying to Ireland to a pre-arranged waitressing job in a hotel on the West Coast.

When we returned to the UK my friend decided to come back to South Africa, while I flew to the USA for a tour and then to visit my stepbrother there. After the USA trip, I returned for a short time to the UK and then flew to Israel, where I lived and worked on a Kibbutz for three months. On this trip, I certainly reaped the benefits of coming from a large family.

I loved the travel experience, but sooner or later I had to return and look for work.

1992: Back to Reality—The World of Work

I found work as a research assistant to one of the physical chemistry professors at UKZN in Durban. He was in the process of setting up his laboratory and so my role was quite undefined. The work involved various computer-related tasks linked to predicting how two molecules interact with each other. One task was to create a drawing of the predicted molecular structures, using a machine called a plotter (a printer-like device for drawing images). It was my job to get the plotter working and there were no manuals to help me. Through trial and error and working with the computer technician in the department, I

managed to get it working. Then, I initiated a project to write user manuals for future students in the laboratory. I really enjoyed this project, and the professor told me the following year that his new students had found the manuals extremely helpful. I was glad my work had made a difference.

In this laboratory position, my computer skills developed, but I could not see the relevance of studying how molecules interact, and continued my search to find that elusive professional title of what I wanted to be. For now, I had my mantra to fall back on:

“At least I know what I don’t want to do.”

1993–1995: Revisiting Student Life … and Laboratory Work

As I considered my next career move, it seemed like a good idea to pursue a career as a scientist. Academic careers in South African universities involve teaching and research. Although I had always steered away from teaching as a profession, I knew that if I did teach, it would be at university level and so a research and lecturing career was a possibility for me.

In 1993, I was accepted into an honours degree at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in Medical Biochemistry. I felt the medical aspect of this qualification would have more relevance and interest for me than pure chemistry. So, I moved to Cape Town, 16 hours’ drive away from my hometown, to become a full-time student again.

My research project involved attempting to develop anti-malarial compounds and setting up an experiment to test the compounds. I thought the malarial aspect of the project would be relevant and interesting because of its potential to make a difference in people’s lives. However, it still involved laboratory work, and I identified that this was not a path for me. I passed this qualification comfortably, but once again my mantra was useful:

“At least I know what I don’t want to do.”

Despite knowing that I was not cut out for a life in laboratory work, I didn’t know what else to pursue, so in 1994, I found myself back in a research assistant position in UCT’s biochemistry department. Like my work in the chemistry laboratory in 1992, this position involved operating computer-driven scientific equipment. This machine was to analyse the amino acid composition of proteins.

I really did not enjoy this job and was perplexed by the mystery of what I wanted to become. I was looking for a single professional title, such as an architect, engineer, lawyer

or pharmacist. I identified that I wanted to do work that involved helping people. Scientific research, although having the potential to help people, can take years of working in a laboratory before making a new discovery or breakthrough. I identified that I needed to be working more directly with people and being able to see the difference I was making in their lives.

1995–1997: Wondering, Wandering & Spiritual Identity

The next season of my life can be summarised into three activities as I tried to find direction for a career: wondering what I wanted to do professionally; wandering into work outside my scientific training, and establishing a strong spiritual identity.

Firstly, I wondered if I was the only person who didn't know what they wanted to become and so I started doing my own informal research project. Every social situation I was in, I would ask working adults how they came to be in their current positions. I discovered, much to my surprise, that although there were a small portion of people who knew early in their lives what they wanted to become, they seemed to be the minority. Most of the people I 'interviewed' didn't set out knowing exactly what they wanted to do but just took the opportunities that were in front of them and developed their skills and knowledge along the way. However, I still had a strong mindset that I should know what I wanted to be and looked for an elusive title that I could claim. In social contexts, I regularly fielded the inevitable question "What do you do?" Each time this question, brought new waves of anxiety about my lack of direction and purpose.

As part of my 'wondering', I started working through a book called *What colour is your parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles. This is a practical self-help book about job hunting and career change. Bolles (1994) takes the reader through a series of practical exercises to help one identify skills and knowledge domains that one has already developed, and those one wishes to develop. Skills developed in one context but used in another are called transferable skills, a concept that has influenced my thinking about work. It is this idea that whatever work I take on, I am learning skills that can be used in other contexts that has been helpful for me, especially as I experienced a wide range of work contexts.

Secondly, I wandered into work that was very different from my early laboratory work. I did some paid temporary office work, I was an extra in two different television adverts, and I volunteered at our church to assist with reception and administration functions once a week. The volunteer work at church was enjoyable in that I worked with people in a community where I had a strong sense of belonging and purpose. It was very different

from working in a laboratory and a much more suitable environment for me as there was a strong aspect of connection with people.

In 1996, a new paid work opportunity came about through a friend who was starting a new sports business with two partners. They needed an assistant, receptionist, secretary, administrator. I accepted the position and was launched into an interesting but stressful context. The business was still being established, so there was a lot that needed to be done and work roles were not clearly defined for anyone. I did a range of administrative and receptionist tasks. One task that landed on my desk that I really enjoyed was to work out rosters and arrange games for the corporate teams that would play each other in a round-robin-type competition and included building relationships with the team captains that I liaised with. This was the best part of the job for me.

The business had financial difficulties from the start and six months in, early in 1997, they were not able to pay me. It was time to move on. I had more experience, having obtained more transferable skills, in an undefined work environment, but no clear career plan.

Thirdly, during this time my spiritual identity developed when, through the church to which I belonged, I started to experience a time of an increased presence of God's Spirit. This has become known as 'The Toronto blessing'. God met me in very personal ways, and I experienced a new and refreshing spiritual life and identity.

In 1997 when the secretarial/assistant job ended, I had an opportunity to travel again, this time to the south of the globe to visit a friend in New Zealand. There was a small possibility of a job in my field of study, but there was nothing definite about it. I decided to go anyway and spent about eight months living in a small town at the top of the South Island, where I again became part of a church community and found a sense of purpose and belonging there. My flights to and from New Zealand included a one-night stop-over in Malaysia, so I had the opportunity to get a glimpse of another country.

I didn't find paid work in New Zealand, but I did a lot of thinking about the value of work. The apartheid context in which I had grown up created racialised views of work, with high-paying professional careers generally held by white people, and menial work, such as postal delivery, domestic work and gardening, being reserved for people of colour. Thus, identities about work were strongly embedded in South African society. It took this time away from South Africa to identify some of the norms and ways of thinking about work that were strongly held by South Africans. It was a time of evaluating and reframing my thinking

about work-related identities and understanding work as valuable, regardless of how menial the tasks.

1998 to 2000: Settling in and then Falling Apart

On my return from New Zealand, I went back to Cape Town and found work waitressing in a busy coffee shop. The work was physically tiring but I enjoyed it and itwas lucrative enough to provide for my financial needs at the time. I also learned important people skills, through dealing with the customers and with the other staff. I was in this job for about five months.

The foundational stones that had been laid in the previous year about work identities were important now, as I did work that was not considered ambitious or a long-term career prospect but had value in it, just because it was work. I was not as worried about my elusive professional title but started to explore my career options.

I was considering doing a computer programming course but in the process, was referred to a position in a newly-formed computer consulting company. This led to being offered my first and, to date, only full-time permanent employment. The position involved two quite different support roles, but the intention was for me to also develop and learn programming and other computer-related skills needed within the industry.

One of my roles was to do the bookkeeping for the company. I had done accounting at school and, with some basic training from the company accountant, quickly learned what I needed to. My other role was that of being a Knowledge Centre Coordinator. The concept of a knowledge centre and of knowledge management was in its infancy in the 1990s and hence the role of Knowledge Centre Coordinator was very undefined. At the simplest level, Knowledge Management can be defined as “doing what is needed to get the most out of knowledge resources” (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2015, p. 4). Knowledge management processes include the use of human as well as technology resources to make the right information available to the right people when they need it. The role of the Knowledge Centre Coordinator was to facilitate the storage and usage of knowledge in the business, almost like a library or repository of knowledge.

The bookkeeping role was meant to be the minor role but took up a large part of my time. I think I defaulted to doing this work because it was more defined than the other. I had taken the position in the hope that it would open opportunities to learn computer programming, but it was never clear how or when that would happen. I felt like I was getting good work

experience in the business world (transferable skills), certainly better than what I'd had up until then, and that it was more closely linked to a profession into which I might be able to develop. I felt like things were starting to settle down and that at last I was making some progress professionally. I had settled back into living in Cape Town and had also started to date someone. Things seemed to be coming together in my life. However, it was short-lived, and I was about to experience the most difficult time in my life.

A few things happened that unsettled me, including the relationship with my boyfriend not working out. I started to unravel emotionally, experienced high levels of anxiety and insomnia worse than I ever had before. I started to go into a downward spiral that lasted for several months, until I completely fell apart the weekend of Easter 2000. I was treated at a psychiatric clinic in Cape Town for three weeks for a breakdown. It was an emotional breakdown, a spiritual breakdown, a professional breakdown—every area of my life came apart. I felt that God had abandoned me. I felt disconnected from everyone around me. I felt dead inside. I felt hopeless and full of despair.

I was 32 years old. My friends were marrying, having children and building their careers. None of the expectations I'd had of marriage and my own family had happened and despite my searching for meaningful work, I had ended up an emotional mess. I could not make sense of what was happening to me or how I could ever pull myself out of this dark hole. My already tenuous work identity was now non-existent, and I even felt that my spiritual identity had been severed. This was certainly not what I had envisioned in my childhood dreams of adult life—I was grown up and I was a mess.

2001: One Day at a Time—Putting the Pieces Back Together

The medical treatment I received in hospital through a caring and wise doctor was the first important step towards some level of stability. Then it was a long journey to recovery and a sense of normality. The next two years were a slow, step-by-step and day-by-day process of going through the motions, while being numbed from emotion. I learnt many things through this difficult season, but three things stand out for me as helpful tools to apply when struggling with depression and anxiety, namely, to look outward, to not look too far ahead, and to stop comparing myself to others.

After an extended period of sick leave and then unpaid leave from my job at the computer company, I resigned. It was one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make as I still needed work but didn't feel that I could cope with going back into full-time work at that stage, which is what the company needed from me.

I wanted to be closer to my family, and so in 2001 I moved temporarily to Durban to a short-term contract as a research assistant in the chemistry department where I had done my initial degree (1987–1990) and worked in my first job as a research assistant (1992). It felt as if I had come full circle, but not in a good way. The laboratory experience, unlike the first in 1992, was desolate. The laboratories were empty, where before there had been numerous postgraduate students. The research position involved a lot of independent work, and I only saw or talked to my boss every few days, so there was literally no one else in the laboratories except for me. I was in a place of desolation and this job reflected that reality.

One of the chemistry professors suggested I try to find a science teaching position in a high school. Although I did not have a teaching qualification, she said that the high demand for science teachers meant that schools often took science graduates with no teaching qualification. I secured a nine-month contract as a science teacher in a high school in Durban that, for the purpose of this study, will be called Eastridge High School.

Apr 2001 – Dec 2001: "Trying out" Teaching

My first experience of teaching was not good. I had come a long way since the previous April, but was still not in a great place emotionally and I was not good at managing the learners. It was not long before the parents started calling the headmaster to complain about my teaching and to inquire if I was qualified. I had to be taken out of the teaching role I had been contracted into. However, the headmaster honoured the nine-month contract we had signed, and so I became a teacher assistant. It was not easy to be pulled out of a job I'd been hired for, but the job provided for me financially and gave me a place I needed to be each day as I was learning to deal with disappointment and change. This season turned out to have a stabilising influence in my life.

In an undefined role as a teacher assistant, I needed to find helpful and productive things to do with my time. The country was going through changes to the education system brought about through the transition from apartheid to democracy. Training was being provided in Chatsworth, a suburb of Durban, and schools needed to send representatives from their staff teams. I was sent on this training, mostly because of my availability. At the time, the training didn't seem particularly relevant but, in hindsight, I can see how it gave me a good grounding in the philosophies and principles of the newly formed South African education system, of which I would become a part.

One thing I found to do to keep myself productive was to become familiar with Microsoft Office software. Thanks to the skills I develop, I was able to help the Zulu teacher with typing up and formatting her exam papers. She really appreciated my help as there were no other staff members teaching Zulu.

As the year progressed, I involved myself in various school-based activities, including initiating an HIV/AIDS awareness group and drafting an HIV/AIDS policy for the school. My mental health improved during those nine months at the school and, by the end of 2001, I felt I had 'found' myself again. In my time there, different aspects of my life were being restored; most significantly, my spiritual identity was restored.

2002: Finding my Niche

I started the year 2002 on a positive note, actively looking for work. I found a temporary position at an outgoing call centre for an organisation that was contracted to provide free Microsoft software to all schools in the country. We had to phone schools to inform them of the initiative. This work was enjoyable even though it was very basic and routine. It involved working with people, and the project was going to benefit the schools. Thus, it was work with a purpose, and I loved that.

Then a new five-month temporary teaching job opened for me, which involved teaching maths and biology at a small under-resourced school in Durban. I was reticent about it at first because of my attempt at teaching at Eastridge High School the previous year. However, as I found out more about the position, including that the class sizes were no more than 10 students and that it was a morning's only position with no extra mural responsibilities, I decided to give it a try.

I loved teaching maths!!

Finally, my mantra changed—I had found something I loved doing. I started advertising private maths tuition at the local library and at schools in the area. I had three students that first term, but continued to build up my client base, much of it through word of mouth. Maths tuition became a significant aspect of my work over the next few years. I had finally found my niche in the working world and thus had a much clearer direction of the type of work to look for.

In November 2002, I found a position at a private training company, which for the purpose of this study will be called Adult Literacy Centre (ALC), a provider of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). ABET has four levels, with ABET 4 being the top level, equivalent to

the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1. NQF 1 is the first school leaving certificate (known as Grade 9 in schools) and the NQF goes up to level 10, (a doctorate).

ALC needed someone who could teach ABET level 4 maths and it was a job suited perfectly for me. They could not guarantee how much work they could give me, as this was an independent contractor position. However, before the end of the year, the first of the country's Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) signed a contract with ALC to provide ABET to companies within their sector. The SETAs are organisations that were established by the government to facilitate and promote training within their sector of the economy and will be discussed more in Chapter 3. The work that ALC obtained through the SETAs translated into work every day of the week for me over the next three years.

As it was freelance work, I was able to continue my extra maths lessons to schoolchildren, fitting the extra lessons around the more structured times allocated to my work at ALC. Thus, I had also started working across multiple contexts at one time, something that was to become a normal way of working for me.

Teaching maths came very naturally to me and was extremely rewarding. The inequalities of the apartheid era meant that I was teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills to men and women of a similar age to me. In a just, fair, and democratic society, these men and women would have been my colleagues, not my students. It was humbling working with and getting to know them as I became increasingly aware of the types of difficulties and challenges they experienced in their lives, even at that time which was nearly 10 years into the South African democracy.

I loved my work at ALC and learned quickly. Before long, I was contracted into a more senior role, that of quality assurance monitoring of projects. This work required travelling to various companies in different parts of the city of Durban, and later in the province of KZN, to assess the progress and the problems experienced in ABET projects. I really enjoyed meeting up with the facilitators and being able to provide guidance and mentoring to them.

After some years of working this way, I realised that I had started my own freelance business as an education and training professional. It was not an intentional start of a business involving a formal business plan as one might expect'; it was more of a process of growing and developing as new ideas and opportunities came into my world. It was not a deliberate choice of being a freelance worker over being a permanent employee—rather it was a work model that grew out of a place of difficulty, of the need to find work to support

myself, and through contact with people in my social circle. Thus, a professional identity emerged during this time. Ironically, I had found my niche after many years of struggle, in a profession that I had never thought would suit me—teaching!

2006: Expanding Teacher Identity

Teaching ABET was extremely rewarding because of the relationships developed with students and their hunger for learning, but I wanted to find work that stimulated me intellectually and would continue to develop my skills as an educator. So, in 2006, I started looking for new workplaces to develop my teacher identity and found two new training positions.

The first was an adult education provider that I have called Reid College of Management (RCM) who was a training provider for qualifications higher than NQF 1. There I taught some NQF 3 and 4 level maths modules. It was rewarding teaching these students and I continued contracting to RCM until 2009.

The second organisation was a tertiary institution, that I have called Granger University (GU), where I was contracted as a lecturer. The classes were bigger than I had previously experienced, a big stretch for me as I was used to smaller groups of students. However, I knew that if I was to develop experience in teaching, I needed to embrace opportunities outside my comfort zone. At ALC I had reached the ceiling of my potential growth and felt like a big fish in a small pond. In this new context of lecturing in a tertiary institution, I felt like a very, very small fish in a huge lake. I was excited by the opportunities for growth, but also a bit overwhelmed with the largeness of the organisation.

Over the next two years, I picked up more and more modules at GU, until I was able to give up the work at ALC. I had continued to provide the extra maths tuition that I had started doing in 2002 and was thus working across multiple companies at one time. I liked the variety of the work and not going to the same place to work every day. I also liked the flexibility this way of working afforded me. Not only had I found my niche in a profession, but I had found a niche in a way of working that was outside of traditional work models and that has ultimately brought me to this study.

The work at RCM did not involve much interaction with other lecturers because we worked mostly at client venues and spent minimal time at the campus building, so there was not much peer-to-peer interaction. It was different at GU, where independent contract lecturers had a communal room on campus where we could store books and notes, relax or work between lectures and interact with other lecturers. This room was like our sanctuary—it

was the place we could go to be away from the students and have some downtime between lectures. We had access to computers and a printer. It was a space where many interesting and helpful conversations took place. However, it should also be noted that this was not always a positive space. There were times when I found it too busy and too noisy when there were a lot of people in the room.

A helpful development activity we engaged in as independently contracted lecturers at GU was an annual peer-review process. The purpose of these reviews was for monitoring the quality of lecturing, but also for development of lecturers. I have been peer-reviewed by a wide range of different people over my years at GU and have learned some helpful things about my teaching that I would not have seen on my own, about my weaknesses or areas for development as well as about my strengths.

2008: Management Consulting & Other Projects

By 2008 I had six years' experience as an Independent Contractor (IC). My work had been financially viable and the contract model was working well for me. I had found my niche in teaching, but was also open to other work opportunities. A benefit of the contract model is the ability to take on multiple projects. Around this time three other projects caught my attention and interest. Two were short-lived, but the third became a significant and enduring income stream.

The first opportunity was to co-manage a walking club. This was an interest rather than a viable business opportunity. I really enjoyed the leadership role I played, especially communicating with club members through regular e-mails, which they loved, affirming my strengths at writing. I was in this role for about 18 months.

The second opportunity was in a small computer business that friends of mine had started, where I learned how to take apart and fix a computer (my broken computer was used as the learning tool). After systematically testing each component of a working computer, we were able to identify that the power supply needed replacing. I was only involved in this company for about two months, but found the learning about fixing computers really helpful, such that the following year I used that knowledge in a module I taught at GU, thus transferring my knowledge from one context to another.

The third opportunity was to work as a consultant with a friend of mine, whom I will call Preston for the purposes of this study. Preston's main area of consulting was assisting clients with Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) strategies and

implementation. BBBEE is South African legislation that has been implemented to uplift and empower previously disadvantaged race groups. There are seven elements that are used to measure the BBBEE level of organisations. The two that I was involved in were skills development and employment equity.

In 2009, I went on training to become a Skills Development Facilitator (SDF). The SDF's role is to assess training needs in an organisation, and to plan, implement and report on training. The SDF training included learning how to submit Workplace Skills Plans (WSPs), which are reports submitted to the SETAs to access training grants. The SDF training opened doors in management consulting for me and I gained experience in assessing, planning and overseeing the implementation of skills development projects. When BBBEE audits were done annually, I was involved in pulling together the skills development data from stakeholders in the organisation and presenting it to the verification agent. I reported directly to Preston as he mentored me into this role to the point where I now work independently on client projects.

As I gained experience in BBBEE consulting, I was drawn into helping companies with employment equity (EE) reporting. The first employment equity project I worked on felt a little like being 'thrown into the deep end' when a client needed to set up their systems to become compliant with the Department of Labour (DOL). I worked on this project, mostly on my own, but asking questions of more senior consultants (like Preston) as I went along. I worked closely with staff from the client company to implement the changes needed.

The work with Preston became an enduring part of my work and it was helpful to have different sources of income. The consulting work dovetailed well with the quiet periods in my lecturing work. Thus, in my work life, I had two strong professional identities, namely being a lecturer and a business consultant.

2008 – 2018: Life Begins at 40

In 2008, I turned 40. I had come through a really difficult time in my life and found my way into work that I was passionate about. Although single, I was content and at peace with that. I had learned that it was not helpful to compare myself to others to determine where I should be in life, but rather to compare myself to what I had been like eight years earlier, in a place of such despair and hopelessness and where I could not have imagined the kind of contentment and joy I felt in this season of my life.

I was considering studying further, to widen my work opportunities when, quite serendipitously, I found my way into the Adult Education Master's programme at UKZN in 2010. Thus, I made a significant shift, from my original qualifications in the natural sciences, to the human sciences. It was one of the best decisions of my professional life. Finally, I found myself studying something that I was passionate about—very different to my undergraduate studies. The qualification expanded my mind, opening new and interesting ideas that I had not been exposed to in the natural sciences. I enjoyed the collegial relationships developed with other students during the coursework and the intellectual stimulation of the course.

The master's qualification opened new doors professionally, which included writing for academic journals and conferences, in my own capacity and in collaboration with others. It also enabled me to start teaching higher levels of students, firstly 3rd year degree students and then honours (postgraduate) students.

Thus, my forties (2008–2018) were a time of growth academically and professionally that set me on a path towards new avenues and career directions that I am pursuing. I am moving into new roles in online teaching and learning, while continuing to develop my research and academic writing skills. This time frame includes starting on this doctoral journey. My career continues to evolve and develop in new and interesting directions that would have been difficult for me to predict or plan for 30 years ago.

For many years, as I struggled to find a professional identity, I feared people asking the question: "What do you do?" because I didn't have an answer. Now, for different reasons, it remains a difficult question to answer, because people are usually looking for a short answer—but my professional life is so diverse and multifaceted that I have to ask them: "How long have you got for me to tell you?"

Interlude 1: The Research Puzzle

Having just read Chapter 1, you might ask, “What was that?” “Is it a thesis or is it an autobiography?” “Is it research and if so, what is the research about?” “What is it that is under inquiry?” Some of the answers to those questions are more methodological in nature and will be answered in Chapter 5, but what needs to be asked first is: “What is the research puzzle?”

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) talk about a research puzzle within a narrative inquiry, rather than the term more traditionally used, namely, the research question. What are the interesting questions or puzzles that enable this story to be research? This interlude outlines these research puzzles.

Being a non-traditional worker (NTW) in this time in history is not uncommon. It is not an experience unique to me. It is counter-cultural to what I grew up believing about the world of work, but it is not counter-cultural now. Increasing numbers of people are finding themselves working in non-traditional ways. My unusual work trajectory is what brought me to the study in the first place. Over time, I began to realise that my journey and learning have been significant at more than just a personal level. Not only are there many others that work in similar ways to what I do, but this story (and theirs) has been unfolding within the broader South African story and an even broader global story within the 21st century. Those contexts influence the stories in this study and are explored in Chapter 3.

It is my intention that Chapter 1 is more than just a story but that it has begun to answer the first part of the research puzzle, namely:

- *What is my career journey (story) that has brought me to be a non-traditional worker?*

How did I come to be this type of worker? How did the journey unfold to bring me to where I am today? What mindsets did I establish or revise on my work journey?

Other parts of this puzzle have also, to a lesser extent, been answered in Chapter 1 and will continue to be answered in the rest of the dissertation. These parts of the puzzle probe two sub-questions about my career journey:

    - *What processes and sources of learning have contributed to becoming this type of worker?*
    - *How have identities been shaped or influenced on my career journey?*

Unlike an autobiography, this work needs to be more, needs to have purpose and needs to be analysed further if it is to become research. It also needs to go beyond myself. The experience of working in non-traditional ways is not unique to me. Many of my colleagues work like this. My interest in the nuances, lived experiences and in-depth understanding of my story, drew me towards a qualitative study about my experience. However, I wanted to expand my narrative to include others. I wanted to hear other people's stories of becoming and being non-traditional workers in order to explore this growing phenomenon and culture. I was interested to see how our journeys are similar and different from one another's. Such an inquiry extends the research puzzle further, exploring the same questions of others that I asked of myself:

- *What are the career journeys (stories) of other non-traditional workers?*
  - *What processes and sources of learning have contributed to them becoming this type of worker?*
  - *How have identities been shaped or influenced on these career journeys?*

As the narrative of this study unfolds, another five NTWs of diverse age, gender and race will be introduced and their stories in and through the world of non-traditional work explored. The NTWs are introduced with communities of practice as a theoretical framework to explore the social and informal ways in which learning takes place for this type of worker.

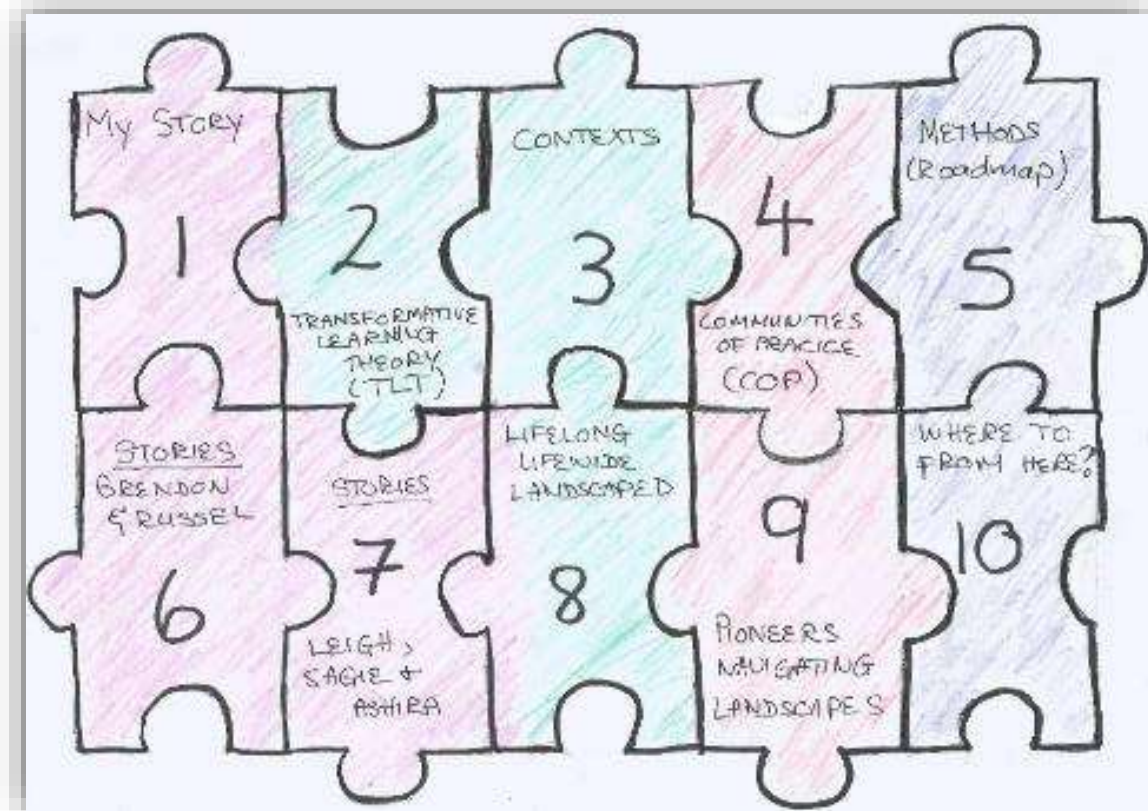
The research puzzle extends one step further—there is another part of the puzzle that I am inquisitive to explore—a piece of the puzzle that takes us beyond the six stories of NTWs in this study, to gain a better understanding of what this might mean for the many people worldwide who work in these non-traditional ways. What can we learn from the six stories in this study that will extend beyond their stories and provide deeper insight into non-traditional ways of working? What can we learn from looking back at these stories that will help others to look forward in planning a non-traditional working model? What about the organisations that we contract to? What can they learn about the workplace learning of NTWs? So, the last part of the research puzzle that this study explored is:

- *"What are the implications of learning in such changing and flexible contexts for individuals and for organisations in the 21st century South African context?"*

This interlude has contextualised my story from Chapter 1 and has set out the research puzzles (research questions) of the study.

I propose that this study is like a jigsaw puzzle with ten pieces (each chapter) which has been depicted in the image below. However, the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle only goes so far. The

research puzzle is more like an ever-growing jigsaw puzzle—one that does not have any straight edges. In other words, it does not have an end. The dissertation may be bounded and have a clear beginning and end, it should increase the understanding of the puzzles set out above. But like any research, it should also raise new questions and puzzles that extend beyond it and thus it needs edges that can connect with new research questions and studies.



Chapter 2 continues my story as I consider transformative learning theory as a theoretical framework that was helpful in explaining aspects of my story and aspects of the stories of some of the other participants. It was particularly helpful for my story, but less so for the other participants.

Chapter 2: Changing Mindsets

"Transformative learning suggests not only change in what we know or are able to do but also a dramatic shift in how we come to know and how we understand ourselves in relation to the broader world (Dirkx, 2012, p.116)".

Chapter 1 outlined the story of how I came to be a NTW and how I came to be a lecturer and a consultant. It tells a story of how, over time, some of my mindsets about the world of work have gone through significant and fundamental changes from the mindsets of my youth. Thus, at a personal level, transformative learning theory (TLT) has been helpful in understanding and exploring the types of mindset changes I experienced in becoming and being a NTW.

This chapter explores mindset changes in relation to TLT, the type of shifts that Dirkx (2012) refers to in the opening quote above. Jack Mezirow, a United States of America (USA) adult educator, is best known for developing transformative learning theory (1991). This chapter outlines Jack Mezirow's (1991) conception of TLT, which is considered a theory in progress. Hence, the chapter then briefly discusses seven alternative conceptions of the theory. There are, however, some concerns about the diversity of these views and there are calls for the development of a unified view of TLT (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Gunnlaugson, 2005, 2008; Hoggan, 2016a, 2016b). The ongoing debates in the literature are then presented (Cranton, 1994; Dirkx, 1998, 2006; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008; Ntseane, 2011, 2012; Taylor, 1997, 2008; Tisdell, 2008, 2012) before outlining the role of the theory as a lens for the stories in the study. A brief summary brings the chapter to a close.

Through this chapter, starting in the next paragraph, I have used examples from my story to explain key concepts, which serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it brings the theoretical concepts to life through practical examples and, secondly, it demonstrates the usefulness of the theory as a lens for my story.

The year 2010 began with a new adventure for me, although not everyone considers studying an adventure. It was 17 years since I had completed my last formal qualification, Honours in Medical Biochemistry. Now, as I registered for a master's degree in Adult Education, I was making a significant shift from studies in the natural sciences to studies in the human sciences (more on this in Chapter 5).

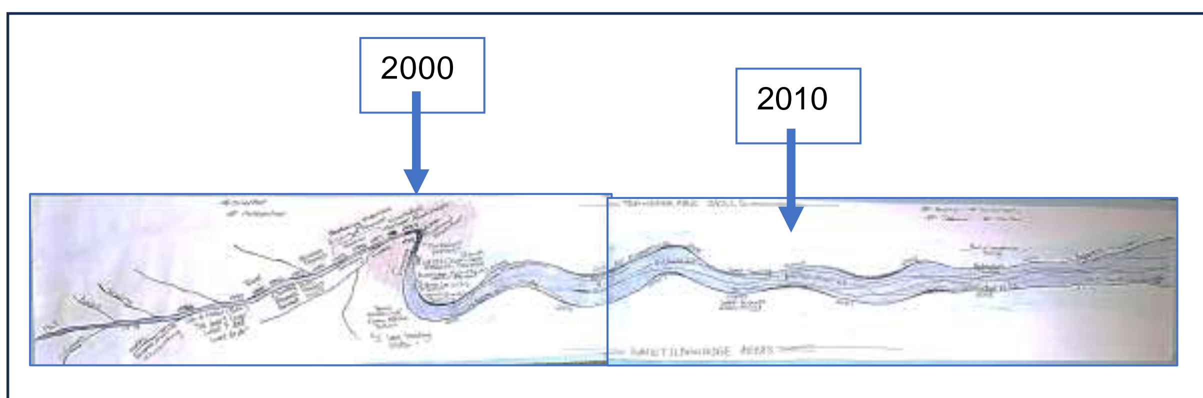
An adult education master's degree was a perfect fit for me at this stage of my life. It was like my experience of discovering my passion for teaching Maths in 2003—I simply loved it and I fell naturally into the rhythm of formal studies.

The beginning of these studies happened to coincide with the ten-year anniversary of my breakdown. I go back to the breakdown as a reference point because it became a significant turning point for me in my career. It was a time during which some of my fundamental ways of thinking seemed to have been transformed.

In this study, the river has been used as a metaphor to tell a story or a history of a life, a phenomenon or experience. Drawing 1 below depicts my career story (from Chapter 1). The big bend in the river—the first arrow—signifies the breakdown. The period before that, shown with many tributaries leading into the river, was very fragmented, depicting my diverse interests, work experience, studies and travel. It also signifies for me a lack of direction and a time during which I felt lost in the world of work.

In contrast, after the bend, the river becomes a coherent stream that is ever widening and meandering. Thus, the significance of the breakdown as such an integral part of the story of my work life, is that it seemed to be a turning point, moving from a period of a very fragmented and uninspiring career, into a world of work that energised and excited me and which I found extremely fulfilling.

Drawing 1: Amanda's River of Life: Significance of 2000 and 2010 in Light of TLT



The second arrow points to 2010 when I started my master's qualification. By then the river was full and free-flowing. During my master's study, my way of thinking was stretched, challenged and expanded again. It was interesting to learn how philosophies and theories were useful in describing the development of humankind over time, while related to my story. Theories of learning were of particular interest to me and I was drawn the most to TLT (Mezirow, 1991) because it resonated strongly with the process of breakdown and recovery I had been through, and which then led to me integrating back

into society through a non-traditional work model. TLT gave me a language and a lens to describe my experience and gave me a way to understand what I had been going through over that period. The master's study that started in 2010 signifies another significant change in mindset, as I learned about qualitative research methods. That shift in thinking is discussed in Chapter 5 of this study.

According to Taylor (2007), TLT is arguably the theory that has been discussed the most in the adult learning literature. As of this writing, in 2022, the literature on the theory spans more than five decades, starting in the mid-1970s. Although Jack Mezirow is the theorist most well-known for the development of TLT, a much greater body of literature has developed through a range of researchers (Brookfield, 2012; Cranton, 1994, 2006; Dirkx, 1998, 2006, 2012; Merriam, 2004; Taylor, 2001, 2007, 2008; Tisdell, 2008). Paulo Freire (1985) had a significant influence on Jack Mezirow's theorising, which will be explored later in this chapter. Mezirow is a good starting point for understanding the theory and so his conception of TLT will be explained first, followed by other conceptions of the theory.

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (TLT)

Mezirow and Associates (1990, p. 1) defined transformative learning as follows:

> Learning is the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action. What we perceive and fail to perceive and what we think and fail to think are powerfully influenced by habits of expectation that constitute our frame of reference, that is, a set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret experience.

We can say that TLT is about how, as we grow into adulthood, we develop ***frames of reference*** through which we make sense of the world (Mezirow, 1991). When something happens in our lives which causes a disruption that does not align with those frames of reference, we experience what Mezirow (1991) calls a ***disorienting dilemma****.* The frames of reference we have established are no longer useful in the context of this new experience. We then go through a ***process*** that might lead to revising or changing those frames of reference. That process involves questioning previous taken for granted assumptions we have held. Mezirow (1991) says that when a revision of a frame of reference happens, then transformative learning has taken place and he calls this a ***perspective transformation***.

Below, I explore the meaning of these key concepts from Mezirow's conception of TLT as I consider my own experiences.

Frames of Reference

Mezirow and Associates (1990) define frames of reference as the assumptions and beliefs we develop as we grow up in a particular family, country and time in history. Frames of reference can be seen as structures that influence how we make sense of our experiences (Mezirow, 1997a). My assumptions about the world of work were established by my socio-cultural context which included my family of origin, the social groups in which I interacted and, as a white person in South Africa growing up during the apartheid era, I expected to follow in my mother's footsteps of being a full-time mother. I also knew that if I did pursue a career, I needed to get into a stable company in a full-time, permanent role as an employee and work in that company for life. Thus, the early assumptions I had about the world of work were strongly influenced by the frames of reference I had established while growing up.

Disorienting Dilemma: A Catalyst for Change

A disorienting dilemma is an external event or experience that disrupts or disorients us (Mezirow, 1991). It could be the loss of someone really close to us, the loss of a job, or any life event or trauma that shakes us up and which does not fit into the frames of reference we have developed as we became adults; our existing frames of reference are inadequate for us to make meaning of the new experience. Thus, a disorienting dilemma is a catalyst for change.

The disorienting dilemma in my life was the breakdown. It was a trauma of which I could not make sense as it did not fit within the frameworks of reference about my life. This experience disrupted my work life as I needed to give up a full-time, permanent position to give me time to recover. It was also a catalyst that started a long process of questioning, reflecting, re-evaluating and acting that led me out of the disorientation and a reintegrating into society as a NTW with multiple job titles.

A Process of Change

A disorienting dilemma triggers a process that leads to change. Much has been written about the process, including various steps or phases. In 1978, Mezirow outlined ten steps or phases in the process of change (Kitchenham, 2008) and revised the steps several

times. Some of the key concepts in this process of change are critical reflection, discourse and taking action. Each of these concepts of the process will be explored briefly here.

Critical Reflection

An important concept that Mezirow (1991) includes in his process of TLT is **critical reflection**. Reflection involves remembering, but critical reflection goes beyond remembering—it asks questions about our underlying assumptions and premises. Mezirow (1991, p.12) says that: “While all reflection implies an element of critique, the term critical reflection will here be reserved to refer to challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning.”

Mezirow (1991) defines three types of reflection. The first he calls content reflection. This involves questions about ***what*** is happening. The second is process reflection—questions about ***how*** things happen. The third moves from reflection into critical reflection—questions about ***why*** we are engaging in a particular activity—what Mezirow calls a premise reflection. This is reflection that involves questioning the underlying assumptions of an experience or event. So, for example, as a maths lecturer, I can reflect on the content or curriculum of what I am going to teach (content reflection), such as fractions or estimation. When I start to think about how I am going to teach the content, I am moving towards process reflection. However, when I start to question why I am teaching maths in the first place, I am now using critical reflection to challenge the underlying assumptions of my actions.

Some premises of mine about work have been revised over time. An example is the premise about work being conducted in a geographic place or a building that you go to between certain times of the day. There is also the premise that you work for one company in a full-time permanent role for life. Those premises of mine changed as I integrated back into society as a NTW in the early 2000s, working for multiple companies for the majority of my career. I have found meaning and fulfilment in working in this way.

Discourse / Dialogue

Discourse is a dialogue or conversation between people in which each person gives their interpretation or viewpoint about something, providing reasons to support their point of view (Mezirow, 1997b). It involves an evaluation of these different points of view until together we come to a common understanding about the situation. Mezirow (2012, p. 78) says:

> Discourse, in the context of transformation theory, is that specialised use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. This involves assessing reasons advanced by weighing the supportive evidence and arguments and by examination of alternative perspectives.

We see here that discourse in this context is more than just a discussion amongst people, it involves critical assessment of viewpoints. It involves being prepared to listen to and consider other people's differing viewpoints. Discourse implies relationship as it involves more than one voice being heard. Hence, by its nature, discourse is embedded in social contexts. Discourse is considered an important part of the transformative learning process. By implication then, conversations and engagement with people with diverse viewpoints are an important part of this type of learning.

In my process of recovery, while I was trying to reintegrate into society and into the world of work, there was dialogue I had with my psychiatrist as he challenged some of my perceptions of what I was going through. There were also dialogues with other people I met who had been through similar experiences to what I had. Those conversations were helpful in my re-evaluating things in my life and ultimately helpful in me reintegrating into society and back into the world of work.

There was also an internal dialogue, a conversation between my emergent self and an older version of myself. This type of dialogue is harder to identify as it is not necessarily articulated into explicit words. I think of my assumptions about the world of work and the notion of having a single professional title, of getting into one company and staying in it for life. Those assumptions about success in the world of work did not necessarily involve an explicit conversation I had with anyone else but were perhaps more a subconscious discussion with myself about what was working and what was not working. My inner dialogue had changed. After finding my way into work as a NTW, I came to reflect on and realise that I was successfully managing multiple small jobs that involved different strengths of mine. For example, one day I might be teaching a maths module and the next day I would be consulting to a client about their skills development or employment equity initiatives. Through a process of transformation, initiated by a disorienting dilemma, I was able to think about my journey and my story in a different way to how I had before. I no longer considered having one career title or profession for life as so important. Rather I had learned to embrace diversity and multiplicity in my work-life. I had found a place of

belonging in which I could learn and grow professionally, outside of the traditional way of working in permanent employment.

My mindset had been changed from thinking about success in the world of work being in company and one profession for life, to thinking about how a career can be made up of small ‘building blocks’ of areas of interest and types of skills. I had come to reframe my thinking about the world of work and what it means to be successful. TLT enabled me to explain how I had been through a disorienting dilemma that had led to revised frameworks about success in the world of work.

Taking Action

One of the phases in the transformation process is that of action (Mezirow, 1997a). Once frames of reference have been changed or revised, the outcome is that the person acts on the revised assumptions. TLT must result in action, based on the changed assumptions. Much of the process of changing assumptions takes place in the mind, but it is when someone acts differently that one can see that change has taken place. Having an opportunity to act on changed assumptions is important in the transformative learning process Lange, 2004, as cited in Taylor, 2008, pp.10-11).

Taking action is what kept me going, helped me to move forward and stop getting stuck in my negative cyclical thoughts about the past. I had to just take one day at a time and do what was in front of me for that day. It was the sense of breaking time down into small increments and actively living in the present that helped me move forward into new ways of thinking.

Perspective Transformation

Perspective transformation is the outcome of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). It involves being able to look at a situation in a new way. Mezirow (1991, p.167) says:

> Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings.

Looking back on my story and my views of the world of work as a young adult, I can see that fundamental shifts took place in my understanding of what it means to be at work. I

still frequently experience other people’s perceptions about the more traditional way of working when I get asked questions like “Are you going to work?” when I’ve been working at home and am about to go out for a coffee break.

Concluding Thoughts about Mezirow’s TLT

The deconstruction of Mezirow’s TLT into concepts, above, illustrate how this conception of the theory was a useful lens to understand my experience. The socio-cultural contexts that developed my frames of reference in my early life were extremely influential in my conceptions of the world of work. They continued to create barriers and anxiety for me when I did not conform to them. They were strongly held beliefs and assumptions that were difficult for me to change. However, once I had been through a significant life experience that started with a disorienting dilemma and involved critical reflections and dialogue, it brought about perspective transformation. From then on, I seemed to be more open to other changes, not so fixed on one way of seeing or looking at situations. I was also able to take new actions and be comfortable with them.

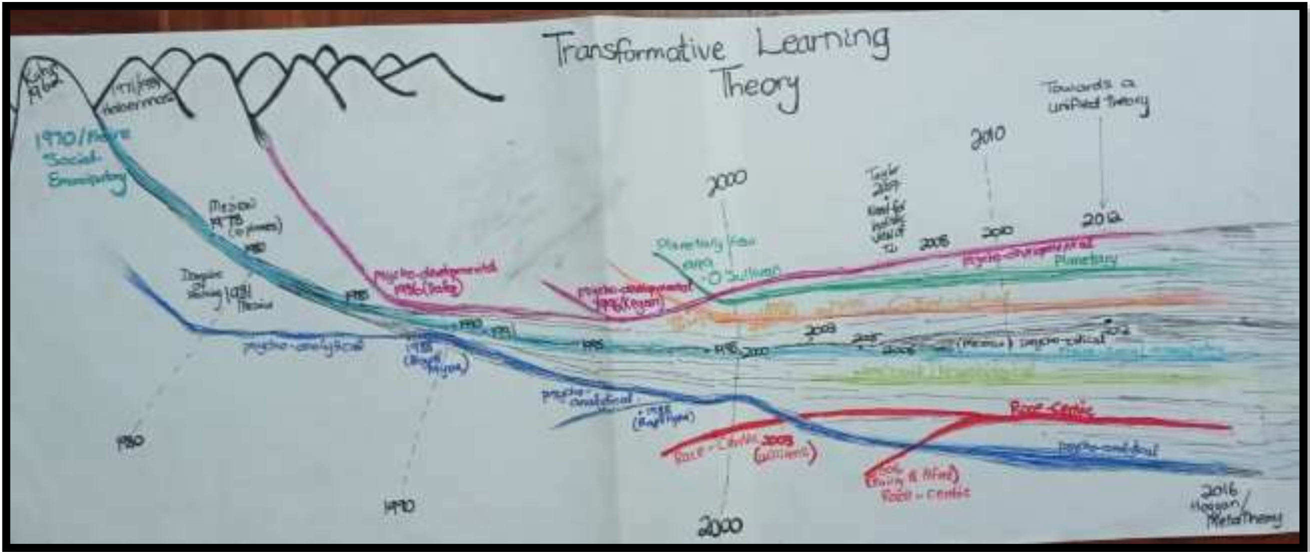
An important point here is that Mezirow’s (1991) conception of TLT as outlined above has been critiqued for its focus on rational and cognitive processes with little attention given to other ways of knowing (Merriam, 2004; Taylor, 2007). Dealing with strong and uncomfortable emotions was also a significant part of my transformative learning experience, which Mezirow’s conception of TLT does not address adequately. Other ways of knowing, such as emotions (Dirkx, 2006, 2008), spirituality (Tisdell, 2008) and relationships (Merriam & Ntseane, 2008) will be explored later in this chapter.

A Theory in Progress

When I was first introduced to the TLT as a master's student, the focus of our discussion was on Mezirow’s conceptions of TLT in the early 1990s, as has been outlined above. This was because Mezirow’s conception of the theory is the predominant one in the literature and a helpful starting point for discussion. However, as a theory-in-progress, there are alternative views of TLT that warrant further discussion.

Taylor (2008) proposes eight conceptions of TLT that include Mezirow’s conception, which this section of the chapter explores. The section ends with a proposed future direction for the theory. This exploration starts in Drawing 2 with my pictorial expression of how the theory developed over more than half a century, from the early 1970s to the most recent decade of the 2010s.

DRAWING 2: TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY DEVELOPMENT



Drawing 2 depicts the development of TLT, starting in the top left corner, in the mountains, that stands for the foundation of the history being depicted. The names of three researchers who influenced Mezirow’s development of TLT appear here, namely: Paulo Freire, Thomas Kuhn and Jurgen Habermas (Baumgartner, 2012; Kitchenham, 2008). Their contributions towards Mezirow's work will be identified later. The black ink used throughout the drawing stands for Mezirow’s conception of TLT, and is predominant, just as Mezirow’s conception of the theory has been predominant.

The light blue colour in the drawing represents the work of Paulo Freire. More than just influencing Mezirow’s work, Freire’s ideas stand as a theory in their own right and could thus be considered the first conception of TLT. Two additional conceptions of the theory—the psycho-developmental and psycho-analytical—are represented with tributaries in purple and dark blue and will be explored later in this chapter. These tributaries enter the river in the 1980s. They developed around similar time frames to Mezirow’s conception, but independently of it. Thus, four conceptions developed in the 1980s into the early 1990s.

After this, the river widens as other conceptions of the theory start to develop. Taylor (2008) has identified an additional four conceptions that developed from the mid-1990s and into the early 2000s, they are named below and explained in more detail later. They are represented by dark green (Planetary view), red (Cultural/Spiritual view), pink (Race-Centric view) and light green (Neurobiological view). Hence, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century there are eight concepts of TLT, including Mezirow’s (Taylor, 2008).

The diversity of the different conceptions provides a deeper understanding of a complex phenomenon of adult learning. However, as Hoggan (2016a) warns, transformative learning is in danger of coming to mean all things to all people, whereby it is being used to refer to almost any learning. Newman's (2012) critique is more radical as he suggests that transformative learning does not exist as an identifiable phenomenon, arguing that what many call transformative learning is really just good learning. Hoggan (2016b) proposed a way forward and developed a typology of learning outcomes that one can expect of someone who has gone through a perspective transformation.

Drawing 2 ends with a wide stream and all the colours blend together, as there are calls in the literature to work towards a unified theory (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Gunnlaugson, 2005, 2008; Hoggan, 2016a, 2016b).

Drawing 2 has given a broad overview of how the theory has developed over the last five decades. Next, I consider in more detail the developments of different views or conceptions of the theory, discussing the four early conceptions, and then an additional four conceptions that arose later, leading up to the call for a more unified theory (Cranton & Taylor, 2012).

Four Early Conceptions of TLT: 1970s–1990s Mezirow's conception of TLT has its roots in research he undertook in the mid-1970s in the USA, as outlined by Baumgartner (2012). The participants of his study were women who were returning to post-secondary education after an extended period out of education contexts. The women experienced disorienting dilemmas as they started to question their roles in society. Mezirow's study took place in a developed or Westernised context around the time of the feminist movement in the 1960's and 1970's (Raina, 2017). It was a time in history when the role of women was being critqued, revised and contested in the cultural context in which they lived.

In 1978, Mezirow proposed that there were ten phases in the process of transformation (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow's development of the theory continued in the 1980s. In 1990 and then in 1991, he formalised much of his theory in two books, *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood* (Mezirow, 1990) and *Transformative dimensions of adult learning* (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow continued to develop the theory in the following years,1995, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, as outlined by Kitchenham (2008) and illustrated on Drawing 2 by the dates in the black ink, down the middle of the river. The above publications by Mezirow included responses to critiques, clarifying meaning, supporting his claims and developing concepts further (Kitchenham, 2008). Hence, a rich dialogue on

TLT emerged in the literature. Mezirow's conception of TLT, as one conception out of eight, has become known as the psycho-critical view (Baumgartner, 2001; Dirkx, 1998) and was outlined at the start of this chapter and will be returned to briefly below to contextualise the other views.

Mezirow / Psycho-Critical View (Black)

Mezirow's (1991) conception of TLT has a focus on critical reflection as a key element of the transformative learning process. The theorists that most influenced Mezirow's conceptualisation of TLT were Paulo Freire on conscientisation (Calleja, 2014), Thomas Khun on paradigms and frames of reference (Khun,1972, as cited in Baumgartner, 2012) and Jurgen Habermas on the domains of learning (Baumgartner, 2012; Kitchenham, 2008). Hence these three names are on Drawing 2 in the mountains at the start of the river. The work of Freire in particular needs further exploration, because he not only influenced Mezirow's work, but his work is recognised as a theory in its own right and will be explored shortly. Some key concepts from the work of Khun and Habermas contributed to Mezirow's conception of TLT but did not develop into a theory in the way that Freire's work did and hence their ideas are not explored further here.

There are some fundamental differences between Mezirow's and Freire's conceptions. Perhaps the most obvious way in which Mezirow's conception differs from that of Freire, is that Freire's intention is to bring about social change, while Mezirow's view has a very individual focus, something for which he was critiqued by Mike Newman in 1994 in his book *Defining the enemy*, and Tom Inglis (1997). Although he has responded to these critiques (Mezirow, 1997a, 1998), the debate about a social or an individual focus persists.

Freire / Social-Emancipatory View (Light Blue)

Freire's view of TLT is known as the social-emancipatory view (Taylor, 2008) and emerged from his work as a teacher with poor illiterate people in Brazil, involving raising of consciousness in participants. He taught the people he worked with to question the underlying assumptions of the society and world within which they lived (Taylor, 2008) and thus he helped to give them a voice where previously they had no voice. Freire's work to empower marginalised people is better known as critical consciousness (Dirkx, 1998) or what Freire called reading the word and reading the world (Freire, 1985). By this he meant there was a reciprocal relationship between an understanding of the world around you (reading the world) and understanding the words you read and using your reading to better understand the world around you.

Daloz / Psycho-Developmental View (Purple)

The work of Daloz in 1986 and spanning to 1996 with the work of Kegan is known as the psycho-developmental view (Taylor, 2008). Daloz's view is that we make sense of our life experiences based on the developmental phases of our lives (Dirkx, 1998). As we move from one phase to another, what made sense to us in one phase of life no longer makes sense and we need to reconstruct meaning in our lives based on the new phase. So, for example, one of my frames of reference about the life and work as I was growing up, was that I would marry, have my own children and be a full-time, stay-at-home mom. When I moved from early adulthood into mid-life and that expected pattern for my life had not taken place, I went through a disruption that caused me to reframe and make sense of my life differently to how I had previously. My disruption could be in part due to some of the expected developmental events not taking place in my life. These are what Merriam (2005) calls sleeper transitions. By this Merriam (2005) means that when events that we expect to take place in our lives, do not happen, there is an adjustment period and a learning to navigate the stage of life in a way that is different from what we had expected.

Boyd / Psycho-Analytical View (Dark Blue)

The psycho-analytic approach was developed from the work of Robert Boyd in 1988 and Dirkx in 2000 (Taylor, 2008). Influenced by the work of Carl Jung, Robert Boyd's stance of TLT involves the recognition of not just the conscious, but of the unconscious parts of ourselves and trying to make the unconscious conscious (Dirkx, 1998). Images, symbolism and emotion are ways that are used for individuals and groups to engage with, and hopefully uncover, previously hidden parts of their unconsciousness. This approach makes use of what Dirkx (2006) calls emotion-laden images. Examples are when something in a learning process evokes significant emotions. During this doctoral journey there have been many moments in which strong emotions have arisen. At times I have experienced fulfilment and satisfaction at finding something new, while at other times, like when I needed to put down the study for a time due to health issues, I knew in a cognitive way that it was what I needed to do, but it evoked strong emotions of sadness and frustration.

Mezirow's conception as well as those of Freire, Daloz and Boyd represent four different perspectives of TLT that had emerged and were discussed in the literature before the turn of the century (Baumgartner, 2001; Dirkx, 1998).

Four Further Conceptions of TLT: 1990s to mid-2000s

During the next period (between 1998 and 2005), an additional four conceptions of TLT emerged, as seen in Drawing 2 in the dark green, red, pink and light green colours. These developments were largely in response to certain aspects of Mezirow's (1991) conception of the theory and are outlined next.

O'Sullivan / Planetary View (Dark Green)

In 1999, O' Sullivan proposed a planetary view of TLT which explores how humans relate to the physical world and addresses fundamental issues about changing of systems (Taylor, 2008). This view is about recognising individuals from an ecological and planetary perspective and is particularly relevant in our current contexts in which our natural resources are being depleted to a degree that is unsustainable.

Cultural/Spiritual View (Red)

A cultural/spiritual view developed from the work of Brooks in 2000 and Tisdell in 2003 (Taylor, 2008). The cultural/spiritual view recognises a spiritual dimension to TLT, acknowledging that the process of transformation is extrarational. This perspective also includes a cultural sensitivity. It is a view that would be favourable for contexts that explore cultures that are not mainstream, such as an African Culture rather than a Northern American culture. Merriam and Ntseane's (2008) article about transformative learning in Botswana is a particularly good example of this view of TLT. Furthermore, Ntseane (2011, 2012) takes this discussion further on how TLT can be used in a way that is culturally sensitive, especially in African contexts, or as is the case in this study, a South African context.

Race-Centric View (Pink)

Williams (2003, as cited in Taylor, 2008) and Johnson-Bailey and Alfred (2006) propose a view of TLT that is race-centric. This view places the African (and mostly African women) at the centre of the analysis and recognises the transformative nature of cultural traditions and rites of passage in African cultures (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006). Three key concepts in the process of transformation in this view are described by Taylor (2008, p. 9) as: *"promoting inclusion* [giving voice to the historically silenced]*, promoting empowerment* [not self-actualisation but belongingness and equity as a cultural member] and *learning to negotiate effectively between and across cultures [emphasis added]."* A race-centric view

is particularly pertinent to the South African context, with its deeply racialised history and at a global level in terms of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

Neurobiological view (Light Green)

The most recent of all the conceptions is the neurobiological view by Janik in 2005, which suggests that there is a change in brain structure during the transformative learning process (Taylor, 2008). This view suggests that a distinct physical pathway in the brain develops when going through a perspective transformation.

The last two sections of this chapter have considered eight different conceptions of TLT, as outlined by Taylor (2008), who argues that these diverse conceptions are exciting in terms of their potential to offer a broader perspective of TLT as they address factors often overlooked in Mezirow's predominant theory (Mezirow, 1991). However, there are also cautions about this diversity, which leads to the next section.

Towards a More Unified Theory: Mid-2000s to late 2010s

Although the multiple conceptions of the theory add diverse perspectives to our understanding of transformative learning, there are also dangers to having such diverse perspectives. Cranton and Taylor (2012) argue that one of the problems with these varied conceptions of the theory is the tendency to think in dualisms, whereby a researcher would argue for rational or extrarational processes, or about individual or social change. Cranton and Taylor (2012) suggest that some of these perspectives that seem to be contradictory in nature could co-exist. The transformative learning process could include rational and extrarational ways of knowing, rather than just one or the other.

The move toward a more holistic and unified theory of transformative learning that has been called for in recent literature (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Gunnlaugson, 2005, 2008; Hoggan, 2016a, 2016b) acknowledges the many other ways of knowing, such as the role of emotions and spirituality. It is a view that includes cognitive and conative aspects of learning.

Gunnlaugson (2005, 2008) and Hoggan (2016a, 2016b) propose that TLT is more of a meta-theory (a theory about theory) and that the eight conceptions of TLT (as outlined above) are theories within the broad meta-theory. Hoggan's (2016a, 2016b) literature review of TLT identified the various learning outcomes that had been reported from which he developed a typology of those transformative learning outcomes. Hoggan's (2016a, 2016b) focus is more about identifying outcomes of transformative learning, with less focus

on the process of how that learning takes place. The work of Gunlaugson (2005, 2008) and of Hoggan (2016a, 2016b) contribute towards finding a way to develop a more unified theory, as called for by Cranton and Taylor (2012).

Debates Towards a More Unified Theory

One of the strengths of TLT is that there has been much debate and dialogue in the literature, leading to ongoing development of the theory. Furthermore, with the call towards developing a more unified theory (Cranton & Taylor, 2012), it is important to consider the debates around the theory. The next section explores the key debates.

The Process of Change: Linear or Non-linear?

In Mezirow's early conceptions of TLT, he outlined 10 phases to the process, that were reported to have been experienced in a relatively linear fashion (Kroth & Cranton, 2014). The 10 phases of the process start with a disorienting dilemma and include undergoing self-examination; feeling alienated from traditional social expectations; relating to new ways of acting, and ultimately reintegrating into society (Mezirow, 1991).

Similar to the women in Mezirow's studies in the 1970s where he initially proposed the 10 phases (Kitchenham, 2008), I experienced a disorienting dilemma and a reframing and understanding of myself as a woman in the world of work. The contexts and dilemmas were quite different, but the process is recognisable. When my expectations of what was normal or should happen in my career were not materialising, disorientation was taking place. A personal health dilemma triggered a process of questioning my previously held assumptions about life and the world of work. However, the process that led to a revision of frames of reference, and eventually became a reintegration into society, did not happen in a linear, neatly packaged way. I can recognise many of the 10 phases as being part of the process, but the process was very messy and non-linear in nature. Some of the phases were taking place simultaneously. For example, two of Mezirow's (1991) 10 phases, *planning a course of action* and *acquiring new knowledge and skills*, were part of my recovery process, but took place simultaneously. My initial assumptions about planning a career had, in many ways, led to my disorientating dilemma and so my revised sense of planning was simpler and more of an emergent plan. It was when I stopped struggling to identify and plan a clear career trajectory and started to just take one day at a time and do what was in front of me, that my career came together. That very simple plan was more about a plan to help me get through each day, rather than plot out my future and it was

taking place at the same time as acquiring new skills and knowledge. It was a continual day-by-day plan and at the same time, in doing what was in front of me each day, I continued to develop new skills as I took on new work opportunities. My experience, which did not happen in a linear way concurs with Cranton (1994) who claimed that individuals work through transformative learning in different ways and that the process is not linear or hierarchical. As the theory developed during the 1990s, Mezirow refined and reordered the phases of transformation and, according to Taylor (1997), Mezirow agreed (in a 1995 publication) that the process is not always linear.

Cranton (1994) proposed four phases, namely: a trigger, appraisal, exploration, and the development of alternative perspectives. What Mezirow (1991) calls a disorienting dilemma, Cranton (1994) calls a trigger—an event or experience that causes disruption and confusion and does not fit within existing frames of reference. Next, appraisal is about a process of assessing or evaluating meaning. Exploration involves looking at a range of possibilities and ultimately the development of a new perspective would take place which would be what Mezirow (1991) calls a perspective transformation. Cranton's (1994) phases are more open to a complex, overlapping and non-linear understanding of how the process of perspective transformation takes place in different individuals in different contexts.

Rational or Extrarational Processes?

In the psycho-critical view of TLT, Mezirow sees critical reflection as essential to the process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1995 as cited in Kitchenham, 2008). This focus on the cognitive aspects of knowing and critical reflection, with little regard for other ways of knowing, has faced critique in the literature, as will be explored next.

The debate about whether the process of learning is rational or extrarational brings into focus some of the other conceptions that have been outlined earlier. For example, the psycho-analytical perspective of Boyd attends to the emotional elements of learning (Taylor, 2008). Taylor (2001) reports that the role of the emotions has been found to be indispensable to rational thought, which supports the notion that not only are emotions important to our learning, but that it is the interplay between our emotions and our thinking that is fundamental for learning (Dirkx, 2006, 2008). Studies of neurobiology also support the notion that emotion and rationality are interdependent rather than independent, and that emotions are needed for rationality to occur (Taylor, 2001). Further support for

complementary and interdependent relationships between the cognitive and the emotional in learning comes from more recent studies (Mälkki, 2012; Stevens-Long et al., 2012).

Dirkx (2006, 2008) has made significant contributions towards understanding the role of emotion in transformational learning based on the ideas of Jung and then Boyd and has been discussed briefly as the psycho-analytical perspective earlier in this chapter (Dirkx, 1998). Dirkx (2008) claims that in recent history, (the previous 15 to 20 years) in teaching and learning contexts, emotions were seen as an obstacle or hinderance to learning. With that view in mind, the attitude towards emotions was to try to deal with them and get them out of the way so that one could get down to the actual learning—a cognitive understanding. Dirkx (2008) proposes that this view is changing, whereby strong emotions that arise during learning are being seen as an integral and important part of learning. We are whole beings and the separate parts of us are complex and interlinked. A more unified theory of transformative learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2012) would include such affective as well as cognitive ways of knowing as complementary and working together.

Tisdell (2008), in the cultural-spiritual perspective of TLT, proposes that spirituality plays a significant role in adult learning. Tisdell (2008, p. 28) defines spirituality as “an individual’s personal experience with the sacred”. In defining spirituality, Tisdell (2008) makes a distinction between religion and spirituality, even though these terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Spirituality is an important aspect of my story.

Ntseane (2011, 2012) has contributed towards an understanding of the role of culture in adult learning and Merriam and Ntseane (2008) found that in an African context, in Botswana, the culture of the people was influential in their transformative learning, which included spiritual elements of hearing from ancestors through dreams.

Dirkx (2006, 2008), Tisdell (2008) and Ntseane (2011, 2012) have thus explored ways of knowing that go beyond cognitive, rational ways of knowing. We could call these the extrarational ways of knowing that include emotion, spirituality and culture. These contributions towards other ways of knowing provide a more holistic view of transformative learning theory. My process of change was more in line with this more holistic perspective and these other ways of knowing, as I explore next.

While I was going through the breakdown, I wanted desperately to understand what was happening to me, but I couldn’t make sense of it in a cognitive way. A critical aspect of my recovery and learning was when I stopped trying to work out what was happening cognitively and just moved forward day by day, hour by hour, and got on with the business

of living and working. There were spiritual elements to my journey, which involved me asking God for guidance in my career. There was a sense of abandonment by God that I felt during the most difficult stages of my journey and then a restoration of the spiritual side of my life as I recovered. There were emotional (Dirkx J. M., Nurturing soul work: A Jungian approach to transformative learning, 2012) and spiritual (Tisdell, 2008) ways of knowing that contributed to my recovery and to the revision of my frames of reference about life and about work. It was not just a cognitive and logic-based understanding of my dilemma that brought me to the point of having revised frames of reference as proposed by Taylor (2001).

TLT has been helpful for me at a personal level to explore the type of mindset changes I experienced in becoming and being a non-traditional worker. There were rational and cognitive aspects of learning, but there were also extrarational ways of learning, being and becoming an NTW. A unified theory that holds two seemingly opposite concepts in tension rather than as separate categories, acknowledges that learning processes can be both rational and extrarational (Cranton & Taylor, 2012).

Autonomous or Relational Learning?

Mezirow (1997b) argues that one of the outcomes of transformative learning is learning to think and act autonomously. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) critique Mezirow's assumptions as they explore the role of culture to influence transformative learning. They argue that autonomy is a Western cultural value and that in an African culture, autonomy is not a cultural value. The participants in their study in Botswana showed an increased sense of responsibility to community and relationships (Merriam & Ntseane, 2008) as an outcome of transformative learning. Thus, they argue that in an African context, transformative learning led to a greater realisation of the need for interdependence, which involves recognising the needs of their community, while also taking ownership of one's own life. The important role of relationships has been shown in numerous other studies to influence TLT, as outlined next.

Taylor's (2007) review identifies that relationships are an essential element of the transformative learning process. Kappel and Daley (2004) showed how significant relationships are in the transformative learning of participants in complex urban contexts. According to John and Cox (2018), community engagement and authentic, supportive relationships were important aspects of transformational learning in young adults in a life skills and leadership programme in South Africa. Stevens-Long et al. (2012) have

identified the important role of peer as well as mentor-mentee type of relationships to support their transformative learning in their doctoral studies. For Baumgartner (2002) social interaction was integral to the learning process for participants making meaning of chronic illness. Cranton (2006) has discussed the importance of authentic relationships in a classroom context that aims to foster transformative learning. A study by Spooner and John (2020) found that transformative learning was fostered in a leadership programme in a higher education institution through the development of relationships of trust.

The studies outlined above identify the important role that relationships play in TLT. None of us live in isolation, but in relationship with others at home, work and play, and so independence (autonomy) is not necessarily something to be aspired to. On the other hand, too much dependence on others can also be negative. If we displayed these two concepts on a continuum, with dependence at one end and independence at the other, interdependence would be somewhere in the middle and speaks of the need for relationships but also for individual agency.

Individual or Social Change?

The eight perspectives of TLT (as discussed earlier) can be separated into two broad categories, those that have a primary focus on individual change and those with a primary focus on social change, as shown below and as outlined in my master's dissertation (Cox, 2013)

Social Focus	**Individual Focus**
Socio-Emancipatory	Psycho-critical
Race-Centric	Psycho-developmental
Cultural/Spiritual	Psycho-analytical
Planetary	Neurobiological

Mezirow's psycho-critical perspective has been critiqued for its focus on individual change with little consideration or explicit process for social change (Collard & Law, 1989, as cited in Baumgartner, 2012). Mezirow (1997c) outlined and then responded to a critique by Michael Newman in Newman's 1994 book *Defining the Enemy*. Newman has critiqued Mezirow's focus on individual change and Mezirow (1997c) argued that although TLT is about individual change, it takes place within a social context. As is the case in the other debates in this section of the chapter, should we be arguing about transformative learning being individual or social, can they not include both? In the move towards a unified view of

TLT that Cranton and Taylor (2012) call for, we should consider both the social and individual aspects of learning in each conception of the theory. For example, Mezirow (1997b) states that frames of reference are culturally assimilated, and changing of those frames of reference requires discourse to validate the new point of view. Discourse implies relationship. Baumgartner (2002) found that social interaction through dialogue was an integral part of the transformative learning process amongst adults learning to live with HIV/AIDS, suggesting it is not an isolated individual experience that brings about change, but an experience that takes place within a wider social context. Despite Mezirow's (1997c) response, there continues to be critique about the individual nature of Mezirow's conception of the theory.

Importance of Context

One of the critiques of Mezirow's (1991) conception of TLT is the Western assumptions inherent in the theory. As early as 1997 there was recognition in the literature of the need for studies to explore the contextual factors of transformative learning (Taylor, 1997) and Taylor's (2007) review also identifies this need. Merriam (2004) also notes that Mezirow's conception of TLT does not have enough emphasis on context.

From an African context, Merriam and Ntseane (2008) report on the role of culture in shaping transformative learning in Botswana. One aspect of this debate has been discussed earlier in this chapter, under autonomous versus relational learning. Ntseane (2011, 2012) takes this discussion further, identifying how transformative learning can be used in a culturally sensitive way. Important to this discussion is that transformative learning does not take place in a vacuum, and contexts must be considered. Ntseane (2011, 2012) demonstrates this about the role of African culture in the process of transformative learning.

Although there is a growing body of knowledge about this in South Africa (Cox & John, 2016; Spooner & John, 2020), there is still a gap in the literature in terms of TLT in African and South African contexts. This study hopes to make a contribution towards this gap.

TLT has been significant in my individual experience of becoming and being a NTW, but what about the context I grew up in? What does the contextual landscape of the last 50 years look like? How might that landscape have influenced my story? Furthermore, how has context contributed to transformative learning in other non-traditional workers? Chapter 3 will explore the contexts of the last fifty years, in which my story and the stories

of other participants have been unfolding. Chapter 8 will explore TLT in the stories of the other participants.

Transformative Learning Theory in this Study

Baumgartner (2001) says that transformational learning is about a fundamental shift in how we come to know. Combined with the opening quote of this chapter by Dirkx (2012), we can say that transformative learning involves fundamental shifts in our ways of being in, seeing and interpreting the world in which we live (Baumgartner, 2001; Dirkx, 2012).

This chapter has outlined the history of TLT, showing how eight conceptions of TLT developed alongside each other (Taylor, 2008). While there are benefits in multiple perspectives, there are also cautions about transformational learning coming to mean all things to all people, and so more recent literature calls for developing a more unified perspective (Cranton & Taylor, 2012).

Throughout this chapter, I have used examples from my life to explain concepts, demonstrating the usefulness of the theory as a theoretical framework for my story. There have been fundamental shifts in the way I see myself as an adult woman in the world of work compared to the assumptions I had in my early life, as was explored in Chapter 1 and through this chapter. Thus, I have demonstrated the usefulness of TLT as a lens for my story, as summed up below.

TLT resonated with the prolonged struggle in my early adult life as I tried to make meaning of my own professional identity and find how and where I fitted in the world of work. Many of my early assumptions about what it means to be successful in the world of work were revised through my journey. The non-traditional way of working as a NTW were not part of my early understanding of work, whereas now this seems a natural and preferable way for me to work. But this work model remains counter-cultural for many people.

I pick up the threads of TLT again in Chapter 5 of this study, as there have also been fundamental shifts in my understanding of what counts as research. In Chapter 8, I explore whether TLT is a useful lens to understand the experiences of the other five participants, asking the following questions: What are the experiences of the other participants in this study? Have they also been through a disorienting dilemma, or a number of them? Have their frames of reference needed significant revision, or did they grow up with mindsets that were more aligned to alternative ways of working? Have they perhaps always had a mindset about this way of working and hence not needed to go through that change? Thus, TLT, as a theoretical framework, weaves its way through Chapters 2, 5, 8 and 10.

Interlude 2 which follows, provides an overview of the first five chapters of the dissertation, to help keep the reader orientated to the story that runs throughout.

Interlude 2: A Picture of the Puzzle (Chapters 1–5)

Doing a jigsaw puzzle requires various steps and processes. It involves sorting of straight edges so that one can develop the outline or the structure of the picture you are creating. It also involves sorting puzzle pieces into similar colours or parts of pictures. An important and extremely helpful part of the process of doing a jigsaw puzzle is having a copy of the picture you are making. That picture forms a reference point, a way to orient oneself and get a better understanding of the picture you are trying to create. It gives one the big picture of what you are making, and then you go back to the detail of putting pieces together, one at a time.

If this study is a research puzzle (as outlined in Interlude 1) then this interlude is a picture of that puzzle. It provides a view of the first half of the thesis, Chapters 1 to 5. The aim of this interlude is to present enough of a picture for the reader to keep oriented and follow the storyline, without giving away too much of the story.

Chapter 1: My story—What do you Want to be When you Grow up?

The introductory chapter told my story of becoming and being a NTW. I grew up with mindsets about the world of work being in one job and career for life, or of being a stay-at-home mother, as my mom had been. My life did not unfold like either of the scenarios and despite much searching to find my place in the world of work, instead I found myself in my early thirties experiencing an emotional breakdown. As I came through that difficult time, I found my way into teaching maths, eventually finding something that I loved doing. I developed my educator identity through various contexts of teaching maths and other subjects. The breakdown seemed to be a turning point towards finding my niche in the working world and also of finding a work model that suited me, that of an NTW, doing freelance work for multiple companies at once.

Chapter 2: Changing Mindsets

The process that I went through to find a place of enjoyment, learning and satisfaction in my career resembled what Mezirow (1991) defines as transformative learning. Chapter 2 outlined TLT, tracing its development through the last 50 years to the more recent writing that calls for a more unified view of TLT (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). Throughout that outline, examples were used from my story. Thus, my story was theorised through a TLT lens. The chapter concluded by posing some questions about the potential usefulness of TLT as a lens for the other participants' stories (Chapter 8), and for methodological aspects of the study (Chapter 5).

Chapter 3: A Changing Landscape

This chapter describes the contexts of the last 50 years globally and locally, situating South Africa in a global neoliberal context in the early 21st century. Contexts and concepts discussed in this chapter include lifelong learning (LLL), different types of learning (formal, non-formal and informal), globalisation, South Africa, information technologies, the knowledge economy and knowledge societies, labour and education issues in South Africa, casualisation of work (precarious work) and workplace learning (professional development). This chapter also outlines the type of worker that is the focus of this study, what I have defined as a non-traditional worker (NTW).

Chapter 4: Who Else is in the Landscape?

My experiences of being an NTW in the early 21st century are not unique to me. There are many others who work in non-traditional ways. Thus, Chapter 4 makes an important shift in the storyline to briefly introduce another five participants to the study. It is also fitting that in bringing others into the study, there is an acknowledgement that much of our learning is social rather than individual. Hence, the chapter traces the development of another adult learning theory that has come to be known as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Communities of practice theory is a social learning theory which explores the ways that people interact and learn from others.

Chapter 5: Developing a Roadmap for a Doctoral Adventure

Chapter 5 outlines the methodology and data generation and analysis methods of the study. The chapter has been likened to a roadmap, which is a tool used to help one find one's way to a destination. Thus, the aim of the chapter is to guide the reader about the methodological choices that were made and to discuss practically how the data were collected and analysed.

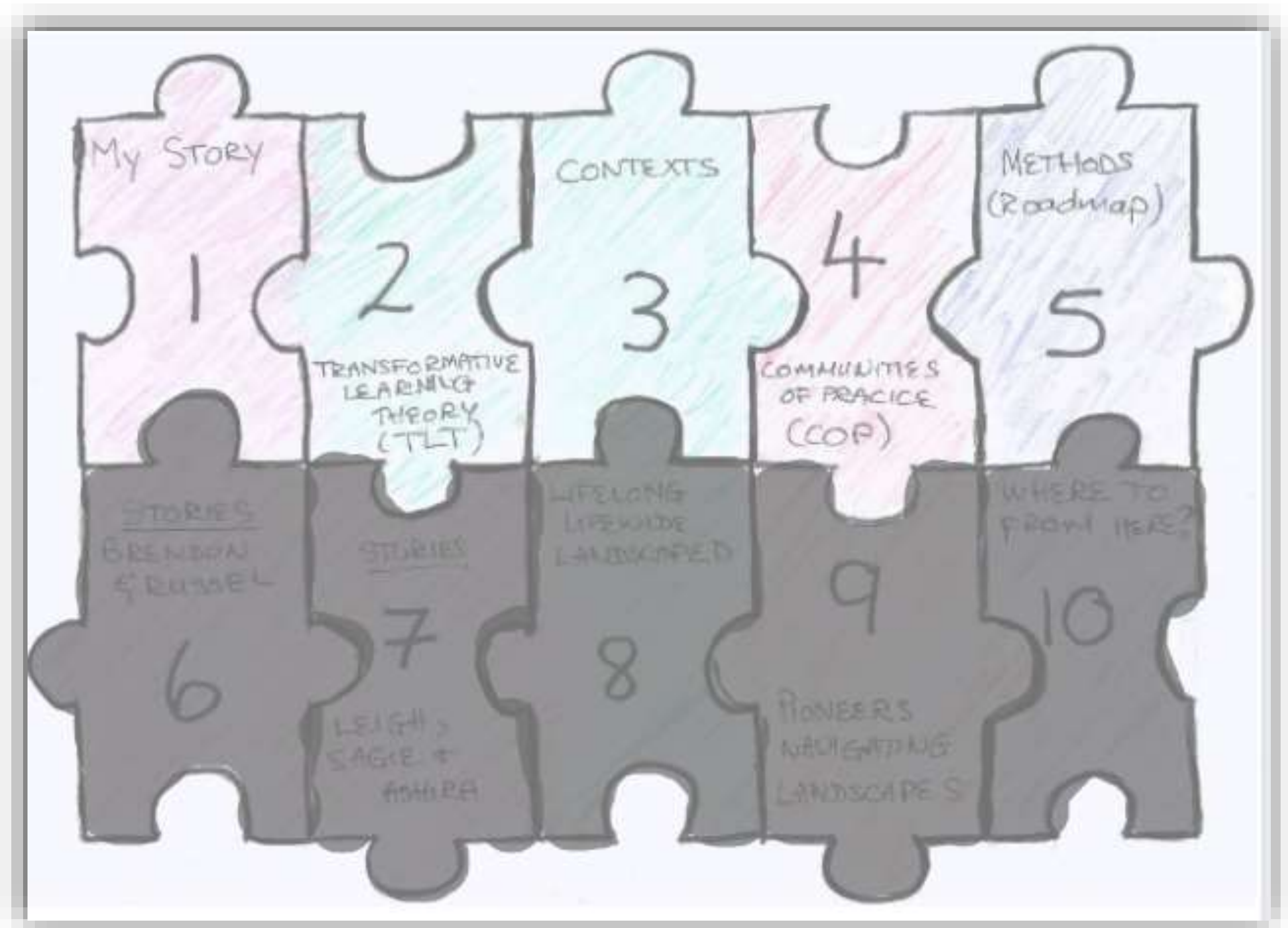
The study started from an idea I had while doing my master's research and that initial idea evolved and changed to become what it is today. The early part of Chapter 5 outlines significant epistemological and ontological shifts that I needed to make to conduct this study. The chapter outlines the research design and plan for the collection, analysis and presentation of data.

Summary

In summary, the first five chapters are foundational to this study and involve introducing the topic through my story of experience, identifying and outlining the research puzzle, understanding the contexts of the study, setting out two theoretical frameworks and developing a methodological roadmap for the study.

The last five chapters include two chapters of other participants' stories, two chapters of themes and theorising and then a concluding chapter. Other interludes through the study will outline the plot in these chapters.

For now, the story shifts to Chapter 3, to gain an understanding of the contexts in which this study took place.



Chapter 3: Changing Contextual Landscapes

Where are you going today?

I grab my handbag and sling it over my one shoulder, then do the same with my laptop bag onto the other shoulder. Then I pick up my two bags of books for lecturing today. There are too many books and they are too heavy to put into one bag and I feel like a packhorse, as I am about to rush out the door to go lecturing… my cell phone rings. I put down all the bags and find the phone—and see it is my mom. She is calling from her flat on the 6th floor of the same building where I live on the first floor. After a brief hello she asks me, "Where are you going today?" Trying to hide my frustration and impatience, I say "Why?" She wants to know when I will be out so she can come and do her washing down in my flat.

I've been reflecting recently on why I get so frustrated with her asking me that question. I've realised the answer is multi-faceted. I am a 45-year-old single independent woman. I have not lived in my parents' home since I was 18. I have lived on my own for more than 15 years, hence I am not used to having to tell anyone where I am going. For the first time in years my mom and I are living in the same building, albeit in different flats and so we are in daily contact. Contrary to me, mom has spent her whole adult life living with and looking after a large family, so she is used to knowing people's whereabouts and what time they are coming and going each day. For her to ask, "Where are you going to today?" is a natural part of conversation, just as my not having to communicate my whereabouts is natural to me. However, there is more to it than this. If I worked in a traditional full-time job at a single geographical location, there would be no need for mom to ask this question as I would simply be 'going to work' on any regular day of the week. Since 2002, I have worked as an independent contractor and hence my work takes place in different places on different days. Sometimes I am lecturing at GU, based in two different locations in the city of Durban. At other times, I am seeing clients in a wide range of locations around the city. When I do not need to physically be at any of these work locations, I work from home or from my favourite local coffee shop.

One of the ways I manage my own mindset about work times and spaces is by implementing a piece of advice given by a friend in my early days as a non-traditional worker. Her advice was that no matter when you are working from home or working at a

client, get into a habit of being up and dressed for work at 8am when other people are also starting their workday. That means properly dressed, no slippers or casual clothes. I have not always stuck strictly to the 8–5 pm rule, but I have in general followed this helpful advice. If I am working from home for all or even part of the day, I will still get dressed for work in the morning, as if I were going to any of my workplaces. I think that by doing this, it helps set my frame of mind into a 'working' mode, even though I might not physically be leaving the building. This routine seems to work as a psychological tool that helps me to get focused on work. I think it helps with my frame of mind, in that I set my work according to time frames rather than to physical locations.

I realise that my mindset about 'work' and when I consider myself 'at work' or 'not at work' is very different to those who are only used to the traditional full-time permanent employment model. Although this has become so normal for me, I am starting to notice just how different it is for those who do not work in this way. Many of my mindsets about work have changed because of working in this way. My way of working has become so natural to me but was not immediately obvious to my mom and I needed to take some time to help her understand the situation better. Doing so helped us both to navigate new territory in our relationship.

The anecdote above illustrates different mindsets about work, workplaces, workspaces and work time frames, and touches on how a small but significant piece of advice became a very useful tool that helps me frame my mindsets about what it means to be at work, even though not necessarily moving to a different geographical location. The anecdote also signals a different type of worker that has emerged over the last 50 years. In chapter 1 (my story) I briefly defined this type of worker as a non-traditional worker (NTW) and will continue to use that term throughout this study for the sake of simplicity. Here I define it more fully.

Non-Traditional Workers (NTWs)

There are many names for the types of worker that I refer to as NTWs, who fall outside of the traditional permanent, full-time work model. New terms for NTWs are also arising due to the increasing digitalisation of our world. Below, I explore the meaning of some of those terms. An exhaustive set of definitions of every term is not possible here, but some of the key terms will be defined to help the reader get a sense of the type of worker that is the focus of this study.

In 1976, Douglas Hall introduced the term the *protean career*, with the word *protean* coming from the name of the Greek god Proteus, who was able to change his form or shape. Hence, the *protean career* is an attempt to describe a career that involves varied and changing experiences, training and competencies (Hall, 1976, as cited in Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 241). Someone whose work is varied and changes often could be called a *protean worker*.

Charles Handy (1989) coined the term *portfolio worker*. Cohenand Mallon (1999, p. 329) describe portfolio work as “packages of work arrangements for the plying and selling of individual’s skills in a variety of contexts.” A portfolio of work has for a long time been used to refer to the collection of artworks or photographs, to showcase the skills of the person who produced them. More recently, the term has been used more broadly. For example, as lecturers, we are required to develop a teaching portfolio, showcasing our teaching philosophy and practice as well as artefacts that demonstrate our skills and abilities. It is in this much broader sense that the term portfolio worker is used, to refer to workers who work on a range of different projects at the same time, such as the way I do consulting and lecturing work.

Van den Born and van Witteloostuijn (2013) propose that professional *freelancers* represent a hybrid between an employee and an entrepreneur. They are employees in that they are usually hired for set periods of time by large firms, yet they are like entrepreneurs in that they work without organisational guarantee of continued work.

Independent contractors could be described as non-standard skilled workers (David, 2010). Independent contracting (self-employed without personnel) has grown dramatically in the UK in recent years (Ruiner et al., 2020). The term is also used in South Africa. I am known as an independent contractor for most of the work that I do.

Gardner (2017) outlined the development of the concept of the *T-shaped professional* from as early as 1991. The term come from the idea of an individual who has depth of knowledge in one discipline and system, depicted by the vertical part of the T-shape, and knowledge across multiple domains or systems for the horizontal part of the T-shape.

In a similar way to the idea of a portfolio worker doing packages of work, a more recent term that has gained some popularity is that of a *gig worker*. In a musical context, a gig refers to when someone performs a set of songs in a pub or social setting. This use of the term gig has now been applied to work contexts and someone who works across multiple jobs could be called a gig worker, working in a *gig economy*. The gig economy is a system

which connects workers with requesters through mobile applications (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Torpey & Hogan, 2016). An example of gig work is Uber, who match rides with those needing transport. An Uber driver could be called a gig worker. Just Food Magazine (2020) reports on how Uber was easily able to adapt in changing circumstances, pivoting to online delivery services during the hard lockdown of COVID-19, since the demand for rides was minimal.

A digital nomad is a relatively new concept that could be described as knowledge workers who are able to work from anywhere in the world, as their work can be done through digital media (Orel, 2021). *Digital nomadism* has arisen as a new alternative work model, one that enables people to work as they travel across international borders (Orel, 2021; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2020). This way of working is particularly popular amongst millennials (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2020).

The type of work I have been describing using a wide variety of terms is what the International labour organisation (ILO) calls non-standard employment (NSE). In other words, this refers to the range of types of employment contract that are not permanent and full-time (ILO, 2016). I have used the term non-traditional worker (NTW) to define the type of worker who would be in NSE contracts.

Related to the type of worker, there are also a range of terms used to describe the types of careers of this type of worker. Firstly, the more traditional career in one company for life is known as an organisational career (Arthur, 2014). Terms that describe the career of an NTW include *protean career, portfolio career* or a *boundaryless career*. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) emphasise that the boundaryless career is the antithesis of the organisational career. The traditional (organisational) career generally took place in one firm and over the entire working life. It was the work model of the 20th century and was my frame of reference growing up, with my step-dad being a role model of that type of career.

A boundaryless career is described by Drabick-Podgórna (2014) as one that does not have a designed or defined vertical progression but is more likely to have horizontal shifts to different projects, multiple organisations, flexible work models (non-traditional models) and to learning and developing in multiple ways and spaces. Drabick-Podgórna (2014) proposes that to guide people who pursue boundaryless careers, we should be teaching individuals how to develop competencies that enable them to deal with unpredictability and how to construct identities in a self-reflective way.

This section of the chapter outlined a number of different names for what I have called NTWs. The type of work that NTWs do is broadly known as casualised work. However, casualised work includes a broad range of workers, including poorly paid farm labourers hired for seasonal work, yet also includes what I have defined as NTWs, whose work is relatively well remunerated, even though it is contingent and lacks permanence. As a NTW, although I experience some levels of vulnerability, it is not comparable to the vulnerability of the broader group of casualised labourers who earn very low wages.

The focus of this study is on NTWs, which is a sub-set of the wider group of casualised workers. NTWs could be described as professionals who are working in sustainable and viable alternative work models. They could also be described as knowledge workers in a knowledge economy. NTWs do not have company benefits such as paid leave, medical aid and compulsory retirement savings. As workers who are considered as outside the organisation, there is less regulation of formal learning and development, and NTWs are unlikely to be sent on training by the company. Thus, the burden of responsibility for workplace learning falls on each NTW to chart their own course through the constantly changing world of work. I propose that NTWs need to engage in lifelong and life-wide learning to remain employable, which I define next.

Lifelong and Life-Wide Learning

“The days of staying in one job, or with one company for decades is waning. In the gig economy, workers will likely have many gigs over the course of their careers, which means that they will have to be lifelong learners” (World Bank Group , 2019, p. vii). This is also true for other NTWs.

The concept of lifelong learning is integral to the discipline of adult education. Reder (2020, p. 49) defines lifelong learning as “learning that takes place at any age and stage of life” and “learning and changes that occur over substantial time periods across the lifespan”.

The term lifelong learning (LLL) became popularised in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Faure report of 1972 and was further developed in UNESCO’s Delors report of 1996 (Reischmann, 2014). Jacques Delors led a UNESCO commission to explore the role of education for the 21st century and the report recording the findings of the commission, has come to be known as the Delors report (Delors, 1996). The report proposed a vision of education for the 21st century that included learning throughout life (lifelong learning).

Numerous studies have found a positive relationship between having a lifelong learning mindset and employability (Corrales-Herrero & Rodriguez-Prado, 2018; Eppler-Hattab, 2022; Nimmi et al., 2021). Thus, NTWs who are free agents and not permanently associated with one organisation need to develop and drive their own lifelong learning.

The concept of life-wide learning (LWL) developed as an extension of lifelong learning. LWL is another dimension of lifelong learning rather than something completely different (Clark, 2005). Soylu et al. (2016, p. 134) say that "life-wide learning represents the fact that learning can take place in all fields of life such as work, family, travelling, volunteering, etc." In addition, they say that "Life-wide learning is directly related to the personal development of individuals, which is a desirable feature for today's graduates. Furthermore, it enables people to improve themselves cognitively, socially and personally" (Soylu et al., 2016, p. 134).

For the purpose of this study, lifelong learning was defined as learning that takes place across the length of one's life (dimension of time) and life-wide learning takes place across the breadth of life (all areas of one's life) and thus includes personal and professional life (Clark, 2005; Mutlu, 2012). It is the professional life of the participants that was under exploration in this study, but sometimes professional and personal lives overlap and intersect, as experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown where many adults worked from home and children were also at home.

The need to engage in lifelong and life-wide learning in the changing contexts we live in, is particularly pertinent for NTWs, whose work is less secure than full-time permanent workers. NTWs need to keep looking for new work and keep upskilling themselves. Such learning includes formal, non-formal and informal learning, terms which will be defined next.

Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning

Adult Education is a field of study about how adults learn. The Commission of the European Communities (2000) identifies and defines three categories of purposeful learning activities, namely, formal, non-formal and informal learning. Formal learning leads towards a qualification and is associated with educational institutions. For example, formal learning took place for me through my master's qualification. Non-formal learning does not usually lead to a qualification, but often takes place alongside training institutions (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). It may be provided through organisations or groups in civil society or in the workplace. It can include planned learning

activities that complement formal systems, such as private tutoring of students. Peer reviews that take place for me annually at GU are an example of non-formal learning as they are intentional, planned activities with the goal of professional development, but there is not a qualification attached to it.

Informal learning takes place in everyday life (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). It is not necessarily intentional (though it can be) and might not even be recognised by the individuals that are learning. “Informal learning is typically unplanned, or highly embedded within other activities such as work” (Milligan et al., 2014, p. 1). In other words, informal learning refers to learning that takes place in daily life. Milligan et al. (2014) say that informal learning continues once formal learning is complete and that workplace learning is a particularly significant context for informal learning.

Informal learning takes place when I am chatting to colleagues in the staff room or to students in the classroom. It could involve thinking about how I taught a particular concept or section of work and how I might improve that the next time I teach.

As illustrated through examples from my story, all types of education and learning are significant and relevant for the workplace learning of NTWs. However, informal learning has a potentially more significant role to play in contexts of precarity and contingency. Finding ways to harness our informal learning as NTWs could guide future directions of careers.

It should also be noted that the definitions of formal and informal learning (or education) are fairly clear in the literature, while non-formal learning is not as clear. For example, Johnson and Majewska (2022) outline the key differences between formal and informal learning, indicating that non-formal learning lies between them and is not as clearly defined. Most specifically, they say that some non-formal learning leads to qualifications. This definition contrasts with the Commission of the European Communities (2000) definition.

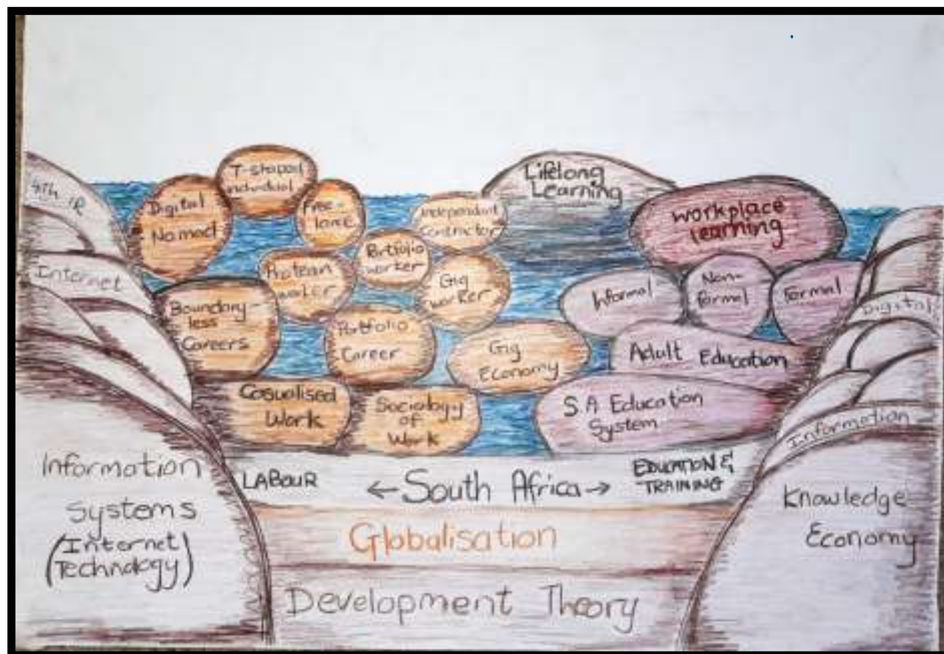
For the purpose of this study, I will use the term non-formal learning to refer to any structured learning or workshops that do not lead to accredited training as defined by the Commission of the European Communities (2000).

Organising Structure for the Chapter

I introduced this chapter with an anecdote of what it is like to be an NTW and then I defined key terms that are pertinent to the study. Those key terms can be seen as rocks

near the surface in Drawing 3, which is a cross-sectional view of a river. The rocks in Drawing 3 represent the contexts in which the participants' lives have unfolded and should be seen as foundations and stepping-stones rather than as obstacles. Drawing 3 acts as an organising framework for the contextual topics discussed in this chapter and expanded on below.

DRAWING 3: CROSS-SECTIONAL VIEW OF A RIVER OF LIFE (CONTEXTS)



Drawing 3 has three foundational topics, seen as layers of the bed of the river, namely development theories, globalisation, and South Africa. Next, the banks of the river represent the influence of Information Technology (IT) on the left and the knowledge economy (KE) on the right as two contexts that drive and enable remote and alternative ways of working. The chapter then moves to the topics depicted by the rocks in the middle of the river. Those just left of centre (orange-brown in colour) are labour-related issues and the rocks to the right of centre (reddish brown colour) discuss issues of learning and education in South Africa. That brings me to where I started the chapter, considering the wide range of work models that I have defined collectively as NTWs, the important role of lifelong learning in today's workplaces and the different types of learning. Thus, this chapter defines, explores and discusses underlying contexts that influence our early 21st century workplaces. To bring the chapter to a close, some empirical studies of workplace learning and development of NTWs are reviewed.

Development, Globalisation and South Africa

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. Statistics South Africa (2019) ranks South Africa as one of the top five countries in the world for inequality. The Gini-coefficient, a measure of inequality, in 2013 placed South Africa as the most unequal country in the world (The World Bank, 2018). The ILO (2021) claims that income inequality has grown in South Africa in recent decades and that trend was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yeganeh (2020) also argues that COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities. Furthermore, the ILO (2021) claims that 40% of South Africa's inequality can be explained by race, indications that apartheid has left a lasting mark on the country. Citizens live in deep poverty, geographically very close to others with great wealth. Three influential theories of development over the last 60–70 years might shed some light on possible reasons for such inequality, namely modernisation theory, dependency theory and neoliberal theory.

Modernisation theory was dominant from the 1950s through to the 1980s, the decades of relative stability worldwide following World War II. These were the years when my parents were young adults, the era into which I was born and in which my own frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991) about the world of work were established, as outlined in Chapter 2. Modernisation theory proposes that the development that was seen in the USA and the European countries was the way that development would happen in all countries and that economic growth would eventually trickle down to other countries and within a country would trickle down to the poorest citizens (Youngman, 2000). When the trickle-down effect did not happen, the theory was critiqued and lost support. There was a critique from the left (dependency theory) and one from the right (neoliberal theory) (Youngman, 2000).

Dependency theory was most prominent from the 1960s into the 1970s and was a socialist perspective that says that more developed countries have become rich and prosperous through the exploitation of peripheral countries (Youngman, 2000). This theory argues that developed countries have created a relationship of dependency rather than one of empowerment. The main proposition about dependency theory is that less developed countries should disengage from the capitalist world to be based on a socialist worldview.

Neoliberal theory, a critique from the right, proposes privatisation with reduced government intervention and was typical of developed nations such as the USA the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany from the early 1980s (Youngman, 2000). Neoliberal theory is also known as *laissez-faire* capitalism, favouring free markets with minimal government

intervention. The view thus differs from modernisation theory, with a focus being on privatisation of businesses. From around the 1970s, neoliberal theory began to gain traction and has been the predominant influence globally since the 1980s.

None of these theories have accurately predicted the realities of development worldwide. Ipppf we are to become a more equal society, theories need to translate into action. Hence, I now consider what has been done (or is being done) practically to reduce inequality globally. The millennium development goals (MDGs) and sustainable development goals (SDGs) are relevant here as they reflect global development intentions.

The MDGs were established by countries across the globe, facilitated through the United Nations (UN), in September 2000 (UN, 2011). The MDGs were a set of eight development goals that each country committed to, with the deadline to meet those goals being the year 2015. The focus of the goals was on reducing poverty, improving education, better health, gender equality and other development issues. Some progress was made towards these goals, while others (health goals) were not met, and it was noted that many countries in Africa lagged behind other countries (Bates-Eamer et al., 2012). Thus, progress was not equal across countries.

As the 2015 deadline neared, countries met again to review the successes and failures of the MDGs and to establish a new set of goals, the SDGs, to be achieved by 2030 (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The SDGs are a set of 17 goals that include ending poverty, fighting inequality and tackling climate change issues (UN, 2016) particularly pertinent to this study is SDG 4, which addresses the need for all to have quality education and is stated on the United Nations website as: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN, n.d.). Adult education is included in this development goal, especially in its intent to promote lifelong learning.

At the time of this writing, we are halfway through the period for which the SDG goals have been set and, despite the best intentions, we continue to see the stark distinction of the rich and the poor living side by side in South Africa. The UN’s sustainable development report indicates that progress on the education goal (SDG 4) is stagnant or increasing at a rate of less than 50% of what it needs to (Sachs et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the challenges we have faced at a global level most recently, such as COVID-19, climate change and other conflicts, have put the development goals in danger, in some instances reversing years of progress in eradicating poverty and hunger, improvements in healthcare and education (UN, 2022).

Makau (2021) reports that during the first period of the pandemic (April to June 2020), the world's top five billionaires had a 26% increase in their wealth, while in the USA 44 million people lost their jobs. Furthermore, Makau (2021, p. 4) states that: "Pandemics, while indiscriminate in infections and direct consequence, have historically shown to discriminate against the most vulnerable in the short and long term." In other words, the gap between developed and developing countries has been overtly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic in major ways (Makau, 2021).

The challenges faced locally, such as riots and looting in KZN in July 2021 (Mundhree & Beharry-Ramraj, 2022) and devastating floods in KZN in April 2022, have also been significant in exacerbating issues of poverty and inequality.

Globalisation

There is no standard definition of globalisation and it is a complex topic that includes social, political, cultural and educational elements. Globalisation refers to the ways in which countries worldwide have become interconnected. Wittmann (2014, p. 194) defines globalisation: "In a broad sense, globalisation can be defined as a common term for the social, political, economic and cultural coalescence of the world." In other words, globalisation refers to how countries across the world have become more integrated.

Scholte (2005) argues that over the past 50 years, neoliberal perspectives have had a powerful influence in accelerating globalisation. Economic globalisation has been argued to increase income inequality (Bergh & Nilsson, 2010; Wallace et al., 2011). Such an argument is contrary to the premise of neoliberal theory as defined by Scholte (2005), that globalisation should bring maximum prosperity, liberty, democracy and peace. Kitenge (2020) notes that globalisation has been both detrimental and beneficial to the welfare of people. Merriam and Kim (2008) argue that globalisation has created interconnectedness, bringing together diverse cultures and worldviews and different ways of knowing. Furthermore, they propose that non-western or indigenous ways of knowing may be more helpful for people working across cultures and contexts successfully. Cheng (2004) argues that where global or local knowledge is concerned, there is a danger of losing local knowledge through globalisation of education, or of not getting the best of global knowledge in efforts to protect local knowledge.

Thus there are positive and negative views and outcomes about globalisation and I argue that there is the need for countries to embrace both globalisation and nationalism. It would be difficult for a country to separate itself completely from the influences of globalisation,

but there is also the need to protect, preserve and make use of local knowledge and indigenous ways of knowing.

From an adult education perspective, Lehner and Wurzenberger (2013) promote and explore the concept of global education to cope with the challenges of globalisation. In particular they promote “bottom-up” approaches or grassroots movements to facilitate learning that develops and empowers individuals to be global citizens (Lehner & Wurzenberger, 2013) . Furthermore, Merriam and Kim (2008) say that while globalisation has stimulated greater focus on formal learning worldwide, it is important to continue to recognise informal ways of learning, which should be valued as much as formal learning. These types of learning have been defined earlier in this chapter. The stories of workplace learning of participants (Chapters 1, 6 & 7) include formal, non-formal and informal learning. Informal learning is particularly pertinent for the NTWs, whose work is contingent and precarious, as they are not likely to benefit from formal or non-formal learning in organisations as they are not full members of such organisations. Chapter 8 discusses these types of learning in more detail in the context of the participants’ lives.

South Africa: Part of a Global Village in the 21st Century

Globalisation and the neoliberal agenda impacted South Africa in the transition from apartheid to a post-apartheid democratic state. Global pressure in the 1980s in the form of restricting trade through sanctions put pressure on the Nationalist Government to bring apartheid to an end. Leading up to and since 1994 when the first democratic elections were held, South Africa rejoined the world economy. The Constitution, the Bill of Rights and legislation that changed with the transition, uses language that is inclusive of humanistic goals, of social justice and equity, as well as language of economic growth for the development and reconstruction of the nation within a global village.

In 1994 the African National Congress (ANC) government established the *Reconstruction and Development programme* (RDP), a socio-economic policy framework intended to bring about a more equitable society, by addressing the injustices that many years of apartheid rule had created (John, 2009). The RDP had a strong focus on democracy, peace and alleviating poverty (ibid). Roughly two years into the RDP, in 1996, the ANC introduced a new strategy called *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* (GEAR). This framework had a focus on economic growth issues with very little about social issues. GEAR was not meant to replace RDP, but in effect it did (ibid). Hence, the government shifted to a focus on the economy, growth and employment (ibid).

The ANC has been criticised by those on the left for their shift from the RDP towards the GEAR which has a global neoliberal agenda (Mathonsi & Sithole, 2020). Furthermore, later macro-economic policies such as *Accelerated* and *Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa* (AsgiSA) *and the National Development Plan* (NDP) continue a neoliberal agenda (ibid). Maphaka & Rapanyane (2021) agree with Mathonsi & Sithole (2020*)* that the ANC, has followed a neoliberal agenda, which has a focus on economic issues, moving away from the more humanistic issues that need to be addressed in South Africa, such as poverty, inequality and unemployment. In summary, the ANC have continued the neo-liberal capitalist hegemony, rather than addressing the needs of the poorest of the poor.

Globalisation and neoliberal ideology have arguably influenced the growth of casualised work worldwide. In a Canadian study, neoliberal policies were reported to increase the likelihood of workers finding temporary or casualised employment (MacPhail & Bowles, 2008). In South Africa, Webster et al. (2017) agree that informalisation of work has been a result of neoliberal globalisation.

The National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI) is a section 21 non-profit organisation, an initiative of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). NALEDIs task is to conduct research related to labour movement policies in South Africa. Bodibe (2006), on behalf of NALEDI attributes neoliberal market restructuring globally and in the Southern African region to be one of the key driving forces behind the increase in casualisation of work. NALEDI (2011) asserts that in South Africa casual labour is on the increase; that this has increased insecurity in the workplace and shifts the power to employers, with less protection for employees.

Next, I consider how Information Systems and the Knowledge Economy (the two banks of the river in Drawing 3), have significantly influenced the development and emergence of alternate work models.

Computer-Based Information Systems and Technologies

Information systems have been around for a long time; it is the form of these systems that has changed. Fifty years ago, a business would have had a physical filing cabinet and files to organise their business documents. Today, the same business would have a computer-based way of doing the same thing, saving information in files and folders.

Over the last 50 years my lifetime), access to computer-based technologies has gone from being non-existent (growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, we had no access to computers)

to being such an integral part of our lives that we cannot imagine an existence without them. To illustrate this increasing use of computer-based information systems, I summarise memories I have of increasing use of IT in each decade of my life.

Lovich (2023) identified the introduction to PCs in the 1980s, which aligns with my first exposure to computers during my undergraduate studies in 1988 when I took computer science as a 1st year subject. I used the university's computers to do all the required work for the subject.

In 1990, the last year of my undergraduate studies, I had two projects to type up and access to a personal computer (PC) through a friend. Typing up those projects, I used the correct placing of my fingers to touch-type, and by the end of the projects could type fairly fast and accuracy. I have used that skill extensively throughout my career.

During the 1990s, more people obtained their own desktop computers and the Internet became increasingly available to the public in South Africa. In 1993, when I did my honours qualification, I was operating computer-driven machinery in the laboratories, but we were not yet using the internet. By 1998, when I worked in a computer consulting company, the Internet was used widely in business, which is where I learned to use it. Crenshaw and Robison (2006, p. 190) say: "The 1990s witnessed the emergence of new information technologies that have had a substantial impact on both commerce and society in general."

In the 2000s, social media tools such as Facebook and WhatsApp became popular, being adopted extensively, both locally and globally. This adoption took place across all age groups, races and classes, changing many aspects of our lives and giving voice to the person in the street as social media has facilitated a culture of participation. In this decade, I bought my first desktop computer and then later my first laptop computer. I also had my first internet connection at home. It was a dial-up connection accessed through a fixed landline telephone. Blackberry phones in this decade brought about a change in communication, such as accessing e-mails through mobile phones (Lovich, 2023).

In the 2010s the influence of the Internet became integral to ways of working. This was true not only for non-traditional workers, as many full-time employees in organisations made use of these online reporting systems. However, it has made possible alternative ways of working. In this decade, I first upgraded from a dial-up connection to an ADSL landline and then later to a 3G Wi-Fi connection. Each of these upgrades have enabled an increase in data usage as well as the speed of working and contributed towards greater

levels of mobility in my work to the point where now some of my work can be done from anywhere that has an Internet connection.

The technological changes discussed above did not take place in a linear way, but increased the most over the most recent decades. Hillyer (2020), from the World Economic Forum, reports on the technological developments over the last 20 years, saying that in 2000 less than 7% of the world was online, but today (2020) more than 50% of the world population has some sort of access to the internet. Furthermore, the use of cell phones has expanded from around 740 million subscriptions to over 8 billion, so that there are more cell phones in use than there are people on the planet. These statistics indicate how the use of IT has dramatically increased in the new millennium.

Internet Technologies (IT) as Drivers of Globalisation

Internet-based technologies have been drivers of globalisation and of alternate and precarious work models because of their ability to break down geographical barriers (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). Education (and many other industries) are being influenced by developments in IT systems. Internet-based technologies have become the tools we need to do business in all parts of the globe, making flexible and remote work possible and often preferable. This was happening before 2020 and the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has been a catalyst for the shift of many businesses to more flexible ways of working.

At a private tertiary institution where I contract lecture, we were able to move our entire face-to-face teaching into an online experience during the hard lockdown of COVID-19. While this might have had some drawbacks, it did ensure that we did not lose an academic year, which would have had significant implications for the business and for individuals. While many businesses have had to close because of the pandemic, others were able to adapt or pivot to offering their services and products through internet-based technology and working from home models (Shepherd, 2020). The pandemic highlighted the versatility and flexibility that Internet-based technologies can facilitate for many businesses. Changes to ways of doing business are likely to influence all types of worker contracts, but NTWs might be better prepared for such changes and be at the forefront of such change.

Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

The 2010s saw significant developments in what is becoming known as the fourth industrial revolution, which Schwab (2016) argues has been building since around the

middle of the 20th century. An industrial revolution happens when the development of new, innovative technologies disrupts businesses in some way.

According to Schwab (2016), there have been several industrial revolutions in modern history, saying that the first industrial revolution used water and steam to mechanise production from 1760–1900 and the second used electric power for mass production from 1900 to 1960. Furthermore, the third industrial revolution made use of electronics to automate production from 1960–2000 and the fourth is a digital revolution, building on the third, and is about the mixing or blurring of the lines between physical, digital and biological aspects of life from 2000 to the present (Schwab, 2016).

The 4IR is characterised by artificial intelligence, robotics, the internet of things, autonomous vehicles, 3D Printing and nanotechnology (Schwab, 2016). The speed at which breakthroughs are happening in these different areas of technology is unprecedented. Technological developments are disrupting virtually every industry.

A recent potential artificial intelligence (AI) disruptor comes in the form of ChatGPT, which is an online software tool (chatbot) that can generate human-like answers to questions posed to it (Oyelude, 2023). The software has the potential to be used, or misused and it is the latter which is drawing much attention and concern. In education and academic contexts, such as my workplaces, there are concerns about intellectual integrity and that it will become difficult to detect plagiarism (Qasem, 2023). However, there are also possible benefits, for example the ability of the tool to identify the gist of a complex topic and simplifying the writing and building of a literature review.

There are concerns that ChatGPT will bring about loss of employment and job change. In particular, Jose (2023) suggests that ChatGPT might affect contingent workers, as companies usually bring in freelance workers to do repetitive tasks. ChatGPT can now do those tasks. Jose (2023) predicts that existing roles and titles for work will change and that business operations are likely to change in many industries Lovich (2023) argues that it is impossible to predict how ChatGPT and other technologies will change the world of work, because our brains work linearly but the changes happening in the workplace due to technology are exponential. Rather, to prepare for the future workplace, we need to be attentive to the changes taking place around us, identify and predict possible ways in which work may be disrupted, and keep going through that process (Lovich, 2023). In other words, we need to be continuously learning and changing as new technologies emerge. The need for lifelong learning becomes apparent in such contexts.

Foresight Africa (2020) argues that 4IR technologies have the potential to address social and economic changes in Africa. For example, the spread of digital technologies could empower the poor with access to information about jobs. However, in previous revolutions Africa has been left behind, something that could happen again if African countries do not capitalise on opportunities presented by the 4IR or tackle the numerous challenges they face. Development of infrastructure is one of the biggest challenges African countries need to address if they want to benefit from the 4IR (Foresight Africa, 2020).

What is pertinent to this study about the 4IR, is to recognise that the pace of change in technologies is increasing and the workplaces of the next generations will be very different from what they are at present. How will we prepare future generations for workplaces, when we don't know what it will be like? That is the challenge we face and is one of the things I think about as an adult educator as I reflect on the implications that these developments might have for individuals and organisations. The fourth industrial revolution is already disrupting workplaces and introducing new types of work and ways of working, as illustrated by the wide range of names for non-traditional workers that were explored at the start of the chapter. Terms such as digital nomad (Orel, 2021; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2020) and gig worker (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Torpey & Hogan, 2016) have developed due to improvements and expansion of IT systems worldwide.

In many places in my career story, I indicated that my work was undefined. In most of my early work contexts, I had to find out how things worked, set up systems and initiate and execute projects. Is undefined work a characteristic of the NTW model? When the other participants' stories are told in Chapters 6 and 7, I will explore whether it is common for NTWs to work in fairly undefined contexts such as I did.

Currently, the 4IR is disrupting work, especially with regard to machine learning and artificial intelligence. As change and disruption happens, more workers will be faced with changing roles and will need to adapt, something that could potentially be learned from NTWs who have had to manage changing roles due to the precarity of their work. A response towards empowering new generations of workers to adapt to workplaces, will not be about teaching them how existing systems work, but about teaching them how to learn, adjust and be flexible in their own work contexts.

The knowledge economy is another driver of globalisation and of alternate work models and will be discussed further as I move from the left to the right bank of the river in Drawing 3.

A Knowledge Society and a Knowledge Economy

Peter Drucker (1968) predicted with incredible accuracy many characteristics of our current environment. Pertinent to this study was his prediction of new industries that were beginning to emerge and cause change and discontinuity. He foresaw the early stages of what we now call the Knowledge Economy (KE) and an information era. Drucker (1968) says that “knowledge industries” have become the primary industries within the economy, where previous industries such as agriculture, farming and mining were seen as primary industries. If this was the case more than 50 years ago, how much more is this relevant for us today? In a knowledge economy, intellectual assets and products are the focus. Measuring these assets is a greater challenge than measuring the more tangible assets of an industrial economy.

Powell and Snellman (2004) define the Knowledge Economy as one where there is a greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical labour and machines. The NTWs in this study could be considered knowledge workers in a knowledge economy in that their work involves working with people and ideas rather than with the manufacture of physical products.

The society in which we live today could be called a knowledge society, a society whose goal should be to make information and knowledge available to all its members (Wiseman, 2014). “The knowledge society is based on digitisation and represents the interrelation between individuals and the pervasive and all-round application of computer technologies” (Milenkova & Manov, 2019, p. 96). Thus, a knowledge society works hand-in-hand with computerised systems and drives the types of work and the ways of working that were the focus of this study. A knowledge society is one in which its members can access the knowledge that they need, at the time that they need it (Wiseman, 2014).

I work in the knowledge economy and produce knowledge products, such as the reports that I produce and submit to government on behalf of my clients. The report, with its detailed requirements, is the product that secures the funding. Knowledge products are easily transferable across geographic borders, using Internet technologies. Thus, the opportunities for work to be done across multinational teams has also increased, driving the development of flexible and alternate ways of working.

The last few sections of the chapter have outlined the foundational contexts of the study, illustrated by the base and two banks of the river in Drawing 3, showing how IT and a knowledge society work together and drive globalisation in that knowledge products can

be delivered to clients through internet technologies, taking away the need to be in the same geographic region as clients. Work can be done from anywhere.

The discussion now turns to the issues of labour and then to education, two areas of South African life that underwent significant change in the transition from apartheid to democracy, which included the need to establish new legislation. With reference to Drawing 3, labour issues are represented by the rocks to the middle and left of the river and education and training to the right.

Labour: Unemployment, Racialised Work and Casualised Work

South Africa faces numerous labour challenges that warrant discussion here, namely, high unemployment rates, a workforce that continues to be highly racialised due to apartheid, and the casualisation of work.

South Africa has high levels of unemployment, especially amongst the youth. Statistics South Africa (2022) reported that the official unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2022 was 32,9%. Youth unemployment was 59,6% for 15–24-year-olds and 40,5% for 25–34- year-olds, illustrating that it is the youth that bear the brunt of high levels of unemployment.

The South African workforce is stratified by race nearly three decades into democracy. In apartheid, the goal of the white rulers was to force non-whites to do menial and seasonal work for low wages, while ensuring political as well as economic power remained in white control (Gradín, 2019). Thus, well paid and highly skilled professions such as lawyers, doctors and engineers, were reserved for whites, and menial work such as domestic work, postal deliveries and refuse collection were the type of work given to non-whites. When the ANC came into power in 1994, they formally dismantled discriminatory legislation (Gradín, 2019), and put new legislation in place. Although these laws have brought about much change, decades of white domination cannot be erased quickly, and the South African workforce continues to be highly racialised.

Furthermore, the 21st century business environment has been described as being volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) (Mack & Khare, 2016). In such environments, employers need flexibility. Casual workers enable that type of flexibility. Furthermore, as has been discussed earlier in the chapter, neoliberal theory gained strength globally in the 1990s (Youngman, 2000), bringing about corporate downsizing, restructuring of workplaces globally and increased casualisation of work as a way to maintain a flexible

workforce (ILO, 2016; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018; MacPhail & Bowles, 2008; Rasak & Babatunde, 2017; Webster et al., 2017). The neoliberal influence in the 1990s coincided with the significant changes that were taking place in South Africa at the time.

In the 1990s, when South Africa was reintegrating into the global economy and changing legislation, labour law went through significant changes and introduced high levels of protection to permanent workers. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1997) highly favours the employee rather than the employer. High levels of protection were in response to high levels of exploitation that had been present during apartheid, and hence necessary. However, the higher levels of protection had unintended consequences, making companies more cautious about taking on permanent employees, and thus favouring casualised work models.

Studies show how casual work has a way of blurring the boundaries between work and personal life, which is particularly pertinent for NTWs. However, this is also true of traditional workers since the COVID-19 pandemic. Rao (2017), studying contract work for international, early-career professionals, has reported that the short-term nature of contract work makes it difficult for NTWs to plan their personal lives. Kalleberg and Vallas (2018) also note that casualised work impacts personal decisions, such as delaying of marriage and family. These examples highlight that besides this type of worker being more vulnerable, contract work also has implications beyond work and into personal lives. Casualised work is a challenge for countries like South Africa where there is a need to find the balance between flexibility for employers and protection of workers (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018).

The work I do is one example of casualised work. Although I enjoy this way of working, it has its disadvantages and risks. There is a level of uncertainty and vulnerability that exists for me (and other NTWs) that permanent employees do not face. The vulnerability of the casual worker is of great concern to local and international organisations, as will be discussed next.

Sociology of Work

The sociology of work is the study of how work is organised in our cultures and societies with a concern about the vulnerability of workers (Vallas, 2011). Labour organisations globally and locally are concerned with the vulnerability that casual workers experience. The ILO is one such organisation. The ILO (2016, p. 3) states that its goal "is not to make all work standard, but rather to make all work decent."

At a national level, the DOL is concerned about the protection of employees. The protection that the government intended to bring to workers in a democratic South Africa was in response to the previous exploitation experienced by people of colour during apartheid. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (RSA, 1997) was set in place as a baseline for how employees need to be treated in a fair and equitable way. Other legislation that influences work contexts are the Employment Equity Act (RSA, 1998a), the Skills Development Act (RSA, 1998b) and BBBEE (RSA, 2003) legislation. Although many South Africans have benefitted from these laws, progress is slow (Horwitz & Jain, 2011) and many citizens fall outside of the formal permanent employment model, in vulnerable and casualised work arrangements.

As identified earlier, Bodibe (2006) on behalf of NALEDI, reports that one of the key drivers behind the increased casualisation of work in the Southern African region is neoliberal market restructuring globally. Bodibe (2006, p. 4) defines casualised work as: "Non-standard and non-permanent employment relations such as temporary worker; fixed term contracts; seasonal work and outsourcing/subcontracting."

The definition above includes a wide range of work models, from very poorly paid seasonal labourers on farms, to outsourced work through labour brokers, to fairly well-paid knowledge professionals such as myself, who have been defined as NTWs. The NTWs in this study are a niche group of casualised workers. They are more like entrepreneurs than the vulnerable seasonal workers that we often think of when using the term casualised work, thus they experience vulnerability, but not to the same extent as other casual workers in South Africa.

My experience of casual employment has for the most part been very positive. I have enjoyed the flexibility it has afforded me, which includes variable hours of work but also that I can take on work for multiple companies at one time. Furthermore, within one company, I can choose which work I accept or do not accept, as I take on small pieces of work with defined boundaries. There are positive and negative arguments in the literature in favour of this type of work, with many people actively choosing this type of model over the more traditional permanent employment. Vaiman et al. (2011) say that perspectives of casualisation of work have historically been negative but are changing to more positive perspectives. A more helpful stance would be to acknowledge that there are both positive and negative aspects to casualised work for NTWs such as myself. A polarised view that says it is all good or all bad is not accurate or helpful.

My story, in Chapter 1, ended on a positive note, as I explained how I settled into a rewarding career as a freelance worker. However, after writing that chapter, I experienced significant health challenges and very quickly learned about the vulnerable nature of this type of work. I had to make decisions on what work I could manage and what I needed to give up and I also had to put this research on hold. If I had been a traditional worker, I would have had organisational support in the form of sick leave and company health insurance, thus not having to bear the financial burdens that I did.

The stories of five other participants in this study, in Chapters 6 and 7, also signify challenges and rewards of being NTWs and how those challenges and rewards have influenced their decisions to continue as a NTW, or to seek more secure employment options. It is important to note that this way of working is far from idyllic—it has benefits, but it also has risks.

Education is another important area of South African life that needed dismantling and then rebuilding at the end of apartheid, which will be discussed in the next section and relates to the right side of the river in Drawing 3.

Education and Training in South Africa

As in all areas of life during apartheid, schooling was segregated by race. Schools for white children were well resourced and those for black children the least resourced. Schools for Indian and Coloured children were somewhere between the two extremes. The education departments that administered the schooling systems were also segregated.

I completed my schooling in 1986, before the end of apartheid, and hence there were only white children and teachers in my school career, and I benefitted by obtaining an excellent education. The following year, 1987, I went to university in what had previously been a university for white students only. Although the official end of apartheid was 1994, in the latter years of the 1980s there were already shifts towards integrating all race groups into one education system. Hence, university was the first time I attended classes with other race groups. I do not remember any animosity between race groups, but do remember going to the dining halls for meals and noticing that the black students sat together in one area of the dining room and white students at the other end of the room. By the time I was in honours studies in 1993 in Cape Town, we had a good mix of race groups and nationalities in our class and we interacted and socialised together comfortably.

Eight years later, in 2001 when I started teaching, my shift from being the learner towards being the educator began. It was the early days of the new South African education system being implemented and the education department in KZN put training interventions in place to equip teachers. In my story in Chapter 1, called "Trying out Teaching", this was the training that Eastridge High School sent me on, and it gave me a grounding in the new education system.

The new education system was called outcomes-based education (OBE). The goal of OBE is that learners demonstrate that they have mastered a predefined skill or outcome rather than the covering of a certain amount of content or curriculum (Japee & Oza, 2021). Outcomes included the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Part of the re-establishment of the education system involved setting up the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a statutory body to oversee and evaluate the development of qualifications in the country. Qualifications are graded or assigned to levels within the NQF, a standardised national system for placing and identifying all qualifications. These range from the first school leaving certificates which would be an NQF 1 qualification to the highest possible level, NQF 10, the achievement of a doctoral degree. The ABET teaching I did in the early 2000s involved four levels, with ABET level 4 being the equivalent of NQF1. The post-graduate students I teach now are pursuing an NQF8 qualification, so I have taught across nearly all of the NQF levels during my career.

Adult Education in South Africa

Adult Education is a field informed by multiple disciplines (psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, organisational studies to name a few). How adults learn is one area among many in adult education and includes foci such as curriculum, facilitation, assessment, governance. Adult education includes learning being lifelong and life-wide (Clark, 2005; Mutlu, 2012) and also involves different types of learning— formal, non-formal

and informal learning (Commission of the European Communities, 2000)—as was defined early in this chapter. This study focused on the learning of adults who work in temporary or precarious contexts and much of their learning is informal.

During apartheid, adult education was largely funded by international organisations and the primary agenda was for emancipation (Aitchison, 2003). Once South Africa had transitioned into a democracy in 1994, much of the international funding stopped as adult education became the responsibility of the new ANC-led government (Aitchison, 2003).

Due to the discriminatory laws of apartheid, the majority of adults in South Africa were under-educated and so reform in education was not only about improving schooling, but also about teaching and training of adults (Aitchison, 2003).

One of the primary vehicles created by the ANC to address education and training of adults was through the establishment of SETAs (National Skills Authority, 2015). The main objective of the SETAs was to promote and facilitate training and skills development within their sector of the economy (National Skills Authority, 2015). SETAs are funded through a skills development levy (1% of payroll) paid by businesses within each sector. So, for example, a manufacturing company would belong to the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (MERSETA).

It was from contracts between the different SETAs and the ABET provider ALU, that I obtained enough work to keep me busy every day of the working week in the early 2000s (from Chapter 1). That work became my primary source of income for over three years.

Workplace Learning of NTWs

Earlier in the chapter, different types of learning were defined, namely formal, non-formal and informal, and it was noted that these types of learning are important for the workplace. Formal education and learning play a role in determining access to certain professions but are just the beginning of learning. Once in the workplace, non-formal and informal learning play more significant roles, complementing and adding to formal learning.

Studies of workplace learning indicate the important role of learning through active engagement in practice-based activities (Fenwick, 2008). In other words, we learn on the job through work-related activities. This learning might be planned and intentional, or it might be incidental.

Milligan et al. (2014) highlight the important role of informal learning for knowledge workers, and participation in informal learning activities in the workplace was seen to influence career development (Bednall et al., 2014). Bolt (2008) found that formal and informal learning play significant roles in workplace learning, but that these roles were isolated rather than integrated and thus argues that workplace learning could be enhanced by finding ways to integrate formal and informal learning.

All types of learning are influenced by internal motivational factors and the external environment, which will be explored next.

Internal Motivation

Workplace learning requires internal motivation, especially considering the rapid changes to workplaces that have been brought about by advancing information technologies. Individuals need to embrace lifelong learning (Zuhairi et al., 2020) as the development of a lifelong learning mindset may play a significant role in lifelong employability (Eppler-Hattab, 2022). Internal characteristics that are seen to be important for workplace learning are confidence, taking the initiative (Clarke, 2008), and being self-driven and flexible (Albion et al., 2015; Eppler-Hattab, 2022). Zhao (2012) has noted the value of all types of reflection for workplace learning, but especially that critical reflection facilitated the most significant learning (Zhao, 2012). Bednall et al. (2014) identified daily reflection on workplace activities as being significant for learning.

The onus is on individuals to drive their workplace learning. This is especially so for NTWs, who are not permanently inside organisations and need to be self-driven, motivated and intentional about their own professional (workplace) learning to ensure they remain employable.

External Contexts

External contexts also contribute to workplace learning. We learn in and through the external environments in which we live and work.

Nurturing and supportive relationships have been identified as important for workplace learning (Leach, 2009). Collaborative activities in a study group have been found to be helpful for the learning of high school teachers (Carusetta & Cranton, 2005; Thibodeau, 2008). Naim and Lenka (2017) report that knowledge sharing in the workplace develops competency among Gen Y employees and knowledge sharing has also been indicated by Bednall et al. (2014) as significant for learning. According to Milligan et al. (2014), there is a need for knowledge workers to develop personal learning networks. In other words, the relevance and importance of networking with other professionals is highlighted here.

The studies above have highlighted the importance of other people in workplace learning, through strong, supportive, collaborative relationships that require knowledge sharing. The important role of the social environment of learning will be explored in depth in Chapter 4 through the theory of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

However, an important point to make is that wherever people are working together, there are issues of power and politics (Fenwick, 2006). NTWs are outside of the mainstream

employee pool, not receiving benefits or guarantees of continued work and hence not in positions of power in organisations. It is often a chosen way of working, but with it comes a level of vulnerability and lack of power.

The brief review of literature on workplace learning above has identified the important role of relationships, knowledge sharing, collaboration and development of personal learning networks to facilitate and foster workplace learning.

Transitions and Identity Development

Times of transition or change, although not always welcome or comfortable, have the potential to foster significant learning and development (Merriam, 2005). NTWs are likely to experience more transitions than traditional workers and thus I argue that they might have greater opportunities for growth. As NTWs get used to negotiating new and changing spaces at the boundaries of organisations, it is possible that they become skilled at managing change and uncertainty, developing a skill that is particularly relevant to the volatile and changing contexts we find ourselves in today. However, Fenwick (2006), Smeaton (2003) and Yaacoub (2012) argue that NTWs lack career and growth opportunities due to them being peripheral to organisations. Perhaps it is more important to note that those inside organisations have different development opportunities to NTWs.

Crafter and Maunder (2012, p. 10) say that “Transitions are complex and multi-faceted and invariably involve changes to the self-identity born out of uncertainty in the social and cultural worlds of the individual.” In other words, transitions involve learning about oneself, making meaning and coming to understand oneself in different ways and through different identities. Fenwick (2008) agrees that workplace learning involves the development of identities and that identity work is needed in workplaces due to changing roles and functions within organisations.

Identity development is a concept that links to community of practice COP theory, which is discussed in Chapter 4, whereby Wenger (1998) sees identity and learning as two sides of a coin.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I defined the construct of a NTW after outlining a range of different terms in the literature that could be used to describe the type of worker that was the focus of this study. Finding one term that could encompass the range of different work models was important for the sake of simplicity and clarity.

Key terms linked to adult education and pertinent to this study were defined within the chapter. Contexts that influence the study were discussed, using the cross-section of a river as an organising framework of how these contexts relate to one another and undergird the stories of the participants of the study. This final section of the chapter outlines the main arguments that were made in relation to the contexts of the study.

Lifelong and life-wide learning are essential in today's working world. Continuing to learn, in formal, non-formal and informal ways, throughout our working lives is crucial for remaining competent, marketable or employable. Taking ownership of our own workplace learning has become vital, especially for NTWs. Fifty to sixty years ago, it was common to train toward one profession and remain in that profession and even in the same company for one's entire working life. Now, it is more common to have multiple career changes, to change companies a number of times and/or work outside of the traditional nine to five permanent employment positions.

Advances in technology, particularly digital technologies, have enabled significant changes to workplaces and spaces. For example, it is now possible for people in different geographic locations to work on one project, without even meeting physically. Workers can be more mobile as well as more flexible with their working hours. However, it should be noted that COVID-19 has disrupted and influenced alternate work models for all workers, not just for NTWs. NTWs may have been equipped to adapt to COVID-19 contexts due to already being familiar with alternative ways of working.

Globally, the very nature of work has also shifted since the era of industrialisation towards what is being called a *knowledge economy and knowledge society*. Drucker (1968) accurately predicted that knowledge industries would become the primary industries within the economy, where previously industries such as agriculture, farming and mining were primary industries. This shift in the world of work is towards a focus on work requiring intellectual capabilities more than manual or physical capabilities (Powell & Snellman, 2004).

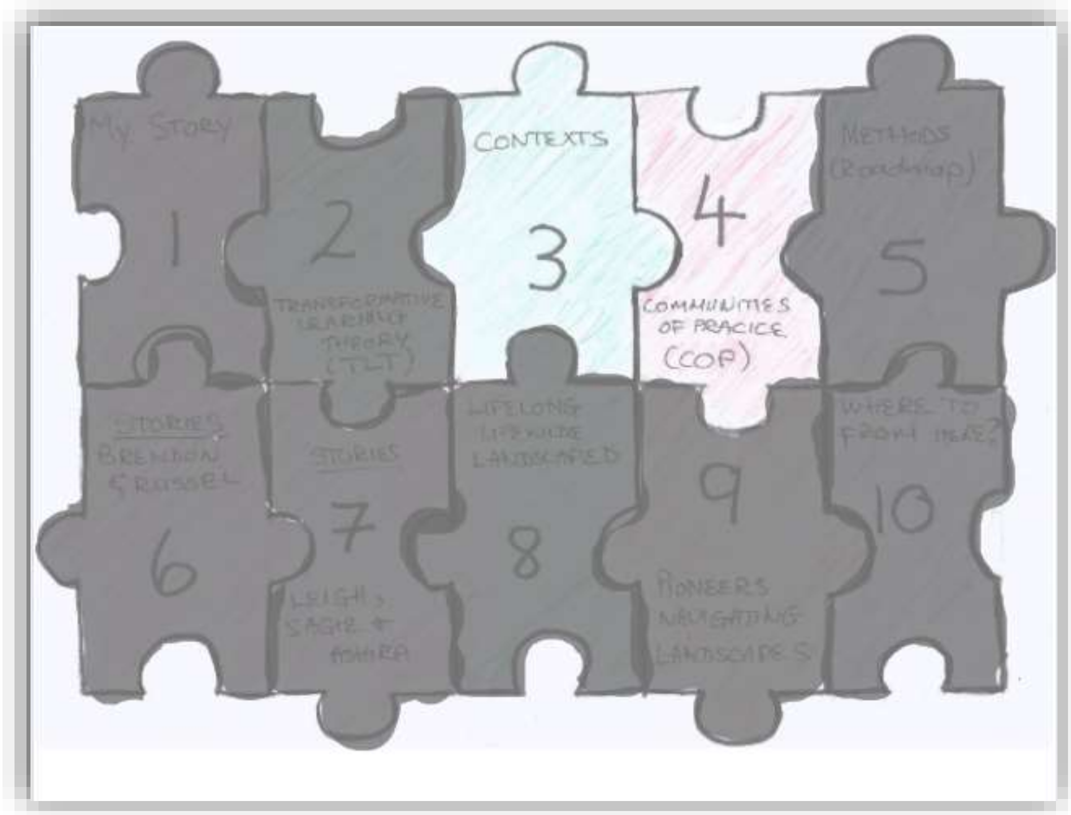
Information technologies and the knowledge economy have driven and enabled the development of alternative types of work models. There is a growing culture of different ways of working that fall outside of a traditional understanding of permanent full-time employment. People whose work is based on these types of models often work for multiple organisations or projects at one time and in more than one building or office and they the focus of this study and were defined earlier as NTWs.

Issues facing the world of work include the increased casualisation of work, economic uncertainty, global competitiveness and increasingly rapid changes in technology. One implication of these factors is that it is common for the worker in today's context to need to learn new things often and possibly not be formally qualified for some of the roles or functions taken on in the working world. In my parents' era, one could rely on the company one worked for to support you in old age, but that has changed. The importance of driving one's own professional development in these contexts cannot be overemphasised. The need for versatility, mobility, flexibility and lifelong learning is only likely to grow. Professionals need to continually gain new skills and knowledge in the changing social and economic contexts. While this is likely true for all or most workers today, it is particularly true for NTWs.

In the earlier discussion on workplace learning, the important role of our social environment to drive learning was noted, including the importance of collaboration, knowledge sharing and supportive relationships. That discussion signals the shift towards Chapter 4, which sets out COP theory as a lens or framework of the study.

Interlude 3: Defining Landscapes

The puzzle image signals that this interlude serves as a link between Chapters 3 and 4.



A major theme running through this study is that of landscapes and some clarity is needed to understand the meaning and development of the landscape concept. This interlude describes how the term landscape has been used thus far and how it will be used in Chapter 4 In the latter chapters of the study, the landscape metaphor continues to emerge as a useful way to discuss and think about learning of NTWs in the early 21st century. Further comment will be made when those parts of the study are reached.

The word landscapes first appears in the title of the study, namely *"A River Runs Through it: Landscapes of Learning Development and Change of Non-Traditional Workers"* where the learning and development of non-traditional workers is likened to a landscape. The landscape theme emerged during the study rather than being predetermined and the original title of the study did not use the word landscape. Thus, the title was changed relatively late in the study to better reflect how notions of time and space were important and helpful for understanding the learning of the participants.

Chapter 3 is titled “Changing Contextual Landscapes”. In that chapter, the word landscape was used to describe the contexts (or background topics) that influence the learning of the NTWs in the study. The topics discussed here included how NTWs are positioned in the early 21st century in global, neoliberal contexts at a time of major disruption due to changes in technology and a knowledge society. Furthermore, the chapter placed the NTWs within the South African context, nearly 30 years into democracy. The unique contexts set out and discussed in Chapter 3 influence the stories, learning and identity of the participants. It is those contexts that I referred to when I used the word landscapes in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 described what is usually included in the literature review chapter of more traditionally-structured theses.

As I move to Chapter 4, another usage of the word landscapes emerges through an exploration of the theory known as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and an extension of this theory, called landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). The theory will be explored in Chapter 4 as a theoretical framework for the study and the concept of a landscape of practice will be defined therein.

In Chapter 4, another five NTWs who have participated in this study are introduced. Thus, an important shift takes place in the dissertation at this point, a move from a focus on the singular (my experience) towards a focus on a wider group of people, other NTWs that I have met through the course of my work, who have also been NTWs at some stage in their careers. They are introduced in Chapter 4, but their career stories are told in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 4: Who Else is in the Landscape?

Social Learning: Developing Supervision Skills (2017)

It is 7:00 - much earlier than when I usually start lecturing. I have made a cup of tea that I clutch closely, enjoying its warmth and hoping it will help wake me up fully. Leigh, our team leader, has brought us some biscuits to help us to manage the early start to the day. It is the first year that most of us in the team have taught and supervised postgraduate students. Leigh's prior experience of supervising postgraduate research equips her to guide the rest of us who have never done so.

We all know each other quite well as we have all belonged to a community of independent contractors at this institution for quite some time. However, it is the first time we have had to work this closely as a team. I am the lecturer for the module. In addition, I am supervising five students' research projects, as are the other lecturers. The research module is year-long and over the first semester, the students develop a research proposal. In the second semester the students collect the data, do the analysis and interpretation and submit a research report.

During class time, I work with all the students on the module, to understand research theory. As a supervisor, I am focused on guiding my five students on their research projects.

As this is the first year of the institution running this programme, it is inevitable that there are teething problems and our confidence levels in our abilities to support the students in this new endeavour are not as high as we would like them to be. These early morning meetings that Leigh sets up to discuss and implement new stages of the programme are invaluable. Besides these more formal meetings, we interact informally in our staff room and bounce ideas off each other regularly. My expertise is in research methods, and so I am often asked more technical, research methods-based questions, while I have often relied on the subject-specific business knowledge of the other supervisors to keep my students' research projects on track.

The opening anecdote above describes how a group of academic freelance lecturers at a tertiary institution worked very closely to develop lecturing and supervision skills when a postgraduate programme was introduced at the institution. The social learning that we experienced in that year was one of the most significant professional learning experiences

of my career and the strongest example of social learning that I have experienced. We needed each other and interacted regularly in that year through organised meetings and through informal chats.

This anecdote was used to introduce this chapter because it is at this point that the study shifts from an exploration of an individual career journey (mine) to introduce other NTWs, while asking questions such as: "Who else is in this landscape?" "What are the stories of the other participants in the study that have brought them to being NTWs?" and "How does social learning theory help us to understand the professional learning of NTWs?"

Social learning is foregrounded in this study because it is an aspect of learning that is often forgotten. Undoubtedly, we learn as individuals, but many aspects of our learning are social rather than individual. We live and work with other people. We are not alone, and we do not operate alone. Our learning takes place in and through people around us. Individual learning is important, but it is not the only way we learn.

From this point in the chapter, I first define and then trace the evolution of the social learning theory known as COP theory (Wenger, 1998) and then consider some of the critiques of the theory. Some COPs to which I belong are described and another five participants from those COPs are introduced. Some empirical studies that apply COP theory are considered next, identifying the broad scope of applications and industries that have found the theory useful. I conclude the chapter by establishing COP theory as a lens for the study.

Social Learning Theory with Etienne Wenger

Etienne Wenger (now known as Etienne Wenger-Trayner) is an independent consultant and a social learning theorist who works across multiple disciplines including government, education and healthcare (Omidvar & Kislov, 2014). He is not a traditional academic in full-time employment with any university and works in non-traditional ways, outside formal employment and across a range of subject areas (disciplines). Being both a consultant and an independent academic and theorist, he is a good example of the type of worker that is under exploration in this study.

This chapter explores the evolution of Wenger-Trayner's social learning theory around five seminal texts that he has published or co-published since 1991. Notably, of the five books that Wenger-Trayner has authored, for only one was he the sole author. The other four he has co-authored with different people over the course of thirty years. I find this interesting

because it illustrates the collaborative and collegial nature of the work that Wenger-Trayner has engaged in over the years. So, although he is the person that is most well-known for the development of the theory, he has not worked and theorised in isolation, but rather through multiple collaborative efforts. In this sense he has been true to the subject he has been theorising—his learning, reflection and development of social learning theory has not taken place in isolation, but in collaboration with peers—it has involved social learning and often within different communities of practice.

Defining Communities of Practice Theory

Let me start by defining what I mean when I talk about a COP. Wenger et al. (2002, p. 4) say:

> Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.

Furthermore, COPs have three fundamental elements: a domain, a community and a practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015a). A domain is an area of subject knowledge; for example, one of the participants in this study is a lawyer, so her domain is Law. Community refers to groups of people who interact on a regular basis. So, the lawyer who meets regularly with colleagues to discuss legal issues, is part of a community. Lastly, a practice involves the sets of activities that lawyers do as part of their job, such as drawing up of legal documents and advising clients.

COP theory was identified as a suitable theoretical framework for this study due to its strength in explaining informal learning that takes place within social contexts. Workplace learning does not take place in a vacuum and the ways in which social contexts have influenced NTWs learning was of interest. The evolution of COP theory is explored next.

Evolution of COP Theory

The evolution of social learning theory that is associated with Etienne Wenger-Trayner, can be traced through a review of five books that he has authored or co-authored over the last 30 years and as summarised in Table 1 below. The idea to review this evolution within specific time periods began from two reviews, that of Kimble (2006) and of Li et al. (2009). Both sets of authors reviewed the first three books and time periods. Taking my cue from those reviews, I added the latter two books published in 2015 and 2020 respectively.

Thus, Table 1, below, is a summary of key concepts of the five seminal texts of Wenger-Trayner. The concepts that are highlighted in light blue are those that are used in this study.

TABLE 1: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE THEORY OVER FIVE TIME PERIODS

Primary publication	*Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*	*Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*	*Cultivating Communities of Practice: A guide to managing knowledge*	*Learning in Landscapes of Practice: Boundaries, Identity and Knowledgeability in Practice-based learning*	*Learning to Make a Difference: Value Creation in Social Learning Spaces*
Authors & Year Published	(Lave & Wenger,1991)	(Wenger, 1998)	(Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002)	(Wenger-Trayner, Fenton-O'Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak, & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b)	(Etienne Wenger-Trayner & Beverly Wenger-Trayner, 2020)
Main Purpose	Theory building (study of apprentices)	Theory building (study of insurance claim workers)	Application/Practical interest and examples from various businesses	Theory building and then stories from experience used to expand theoretical concepts	Refinement and extension of theory with stories from experience included
Key Concepts	Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Identity Participation	Practice; Identity; Community and Meaning; Dualities (e.g. Participation-reification); Brokering and Constellation of Communities; Competence	Cultivating Communities of Practice	Knowledgeability (compared to competence), Landscapes of practice and Value Creation.	Social Learning Spaces Value Creation Social Learning Modes
Focus	Communities of practice understood to exist outside the formal organisation	Communities of practice still seen as emergent, but suggestions that they can be 'guided' or 'nurtured' (Kimble, 2006).	Can be nurtured or cultivated given the right conditions. Communities of practice can be used as a managerial tool to steward knowledge.	Negotiating complex terrain, across multiple communities and learning at the boundaries of communities of practice.	Social Learning Spaces introduced as a new concept. Not all social learning contexts can be called a community of practice.

First Period (1991–1995)

The communities of practice concept become known primarily through the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) in *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* The book is based on studies of the learning of apprentices in a range of contexts such a tailors, midwives, and meat cutters. The concept Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) was introduced as a way of understanding how newcomers start to participate in various practices of the community, at first doing tasks at the periphery of the community but gaining mastery and eventually moving to the core or centre of the practice as they interact with others who have been participating in the community a little longer (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The focus is on the interactions between participants in the community and how as they interact, learning from others that are a little more experienced, and becoming more and more competent as they move towards the centre. As they do, they establish a new identity and develop increasing competence (Li et al., 2009). Although the concept LPP didn't follow through to the next phase of theory development, the more general concept of **participation** is an integral part of COP theory and seen in the second period of theory development.

The concept of communities of practice arose from the work that Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger were doing at the Institute of Research on Learning (IRL), a non-profit research organisation who had the mandate to reconceptualise learning. Interestingly, each of them accredits the origins of the concept communities of practice to the other (Wenger, 1998), which is perhaps a good indicator of just how collaborative the work of Lave and Wenger was in this early theory building period.

Kimble (2006, p. 224), in reviewing the literature of the early 1990s, states that there was agreement amongst researchers on the following: "Communities of practice exist outside the formal organization and for the benefit of the members driven by internal needs." Furthermore, it was agreed that learning is not easily passed from one person (or book) to another through written text but involves interaction with others in a social context (Kimble, 2006).

The focus of this first period was about learning in a single community of practice and how people move from the periphery to the core as they gain mastery or competence in the specific skills associated with that practice, as one might expect from an apprentice learning to master a trade. However, the NTWs in this study work in more complex contexts, each engaging in multiple COPs. The concepts of **participation** and **identity**

from this period were used in the theoretical lens of the study and are expanded in the second period which follows.

Second Period (1996–1999)

The second book considered here is *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (Wenger, 1998). Wenger was the sole author of this book, which is based on an ethnography of clerks in a medical insurance claims processing office. The purpose of this publication was for theory development. Wenger developed the concepts of **identity** and **participation** from the first period and introduced new concepts and identified four assumptions that undergird social learning theory and are outlined next.

Firstly, "we are **social beings"** (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). We are born into families and we engage with other people in all aspects of our lives. Even when we pursue individual goals (like doing a doctorate study), there are other people involved that make the achievement possible, such as supervisors, fellow students, family and friends.

Secondly, "knowledge is a matter of **competence"** in a particular enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Through active practice in teaching maths over many years, I have developed a competence or a skill. The community in which I practice has determined what counts as competence and, as I gain experience, I develop skills to match those competencies.

Thirdly, Knowing is about **participation** in and **engagement** with a particular enterprise (Wenger, 1998). This refers to the active part of learning, of being present with colleagues and being actively involved in something. The skills I developed as a management consultant came about through actively participating in projects with a more senior consultant. I was not just a passive observer; I was actively involved in the development of strategies and reports.

Fourthly, **Meaning** is about our ability to engage with and make sense of the world. (Wenger, 1998). Learning is a product or result of us making sense of the world. Returning to the management consulting context above, I can say that through my involvement in projects and my increasing competence, I was able to make sense of conversations about skills development and employment equity issues.

Based on the above assumptions about learning, Wenger (1998) defines four key concepts that are integral to the theory of communities of practice, as outlined next:

Four Key Concepts:

- **Practice (Learning as doing)** – This involves action, an active doing of a job or task. We learn in the action, we learn from experience. We become more competent with increased experience at an activity.
- **Identity (Learning as becoming)** – Learning involves the development of an identity. As an example, when I started as a lecturer I had the title of lecturer but did not fully feel the part being a lecturer. With time, more experience and affirmation by others and by continuing to be in the practice of lecturing, I came to recognise myself as a lecturer—it became an identity that I embrace, which was in part due to others recognising it in me. I became known as a good lecturer within that context.
- **Community (Learning as belonging)** – Through spending time in a community of lecturers, I have developed a history of relationships with people. With time spent engaging in a community, a sense of belonging develops and strengthens. That has developed despite being a NTW because I have been recontracted over an extended time period. However, other NTWs might not gain a sense of belonging due to the short-term precarious nature of their work.
- **Meaning (Learning as experience)** – Meaning is derived from our experience in the world. Learning is the product of making meaning from our experiences. The more we are involved in an activity in a workplace, the more sense we can make of that context.

With the above four concepts in mind, Wenger developed other concepts which will be explored next.

Dualities: Participation and Reification

One of the new concepts Wenger (1998) defined in this period was that of dualities. He identified four dualities, namely participation-reification; designed-emergent; identification-negotiability and local-global. The duality of participation-reification was used in this study. Wenger (1998) explains that dualities contain two concepts that are distinct and yet complementary. Wenger's description below, using the river and the mountain as an analogy, beautifully explains the complementary relationship between the concepts in a duality (Wenger, 1998, p. 71).

> In this interplay, our experience and our world shape each other through a reciprocal relation that goes to the very essence of who we are. The world as we shape it, and our experience as the world shapes it, are like the mountain and the river. They shape each other, but they have their own shape. They are reflections of each other, but they have their own existence, in their own realms. They fit around each other, but they remain distinct from each other. They cannot be transformed into each other, yet they transform each other. The river only carves and the mountain only guides, yet in their interactions, the carving becomes the guiding and the guiding becomes the carving.

Participation is about the active aspect of living and working in a particular context, while reification is about the making or developing of artefacts that represent something (Wenger, 1998). When I prepare a lesson that I am going to teach, the lesson plan I produce to guide me through the lesson is a reification of the lesson. The lesson plan is a tool that I use when I go to the classroom. It is a representation of the lesson, but it is not the lesson. When I go and teach that lesson, I am participating, I am involved in an activity. I use the lesson plan as a tool while I participate. When I go home, I might make some notes of what I want to add or take out the next time I teach that lesson, then I will file it away. When I come to teach the same module in the following year, I will start with the reification (the lesson plan). I might adjust and revise it based on my previous participation or things that have changed in the module. However, when I go back to the classroom and participate again, the lesson will be different to the one from the previous year—it will play out differently. The cycle can then start again with adjustments being made to the lesson plan.

We can see in this context that there is this interaction between the lesson plan and the delivery of the lesson that demonstrates the dual nature of participation and reification that takes place. Each one influences the other, without ever becoming the other. The concepts of participation and reification are complementary, they work together the same way that the river and the mountain work together—each shaping the other. It is through this complementary relationship that learning takes place and I have developed a competence to teach a particular subject.

Boundaries, Brokering and a Constellation of Communities

In this second theory building period, Wenger introduced the concepts of *boundaries, brokering* and a *constellation of communities* (Wenger, 1998). These concepts arise

from considering that most of our 21st century work contexts are not made up of a single COP, but of numerous overlapping and intersecting of COPs.

Wenger (1998) says that as we define a community of practice, so we establish **boundaries** to that practice and by defining what fits inside the community, we are also defining what does not fit in and hence we have boundaries. Wenger (1998) says that the contexts we live in are generally more complex and so we are operating in **multiple communities of practice** at one time. In such contexts we do a lot of boundary crossing and/or working at the boundaries of a practice. This working across boundaries, Wenger (1998) says, is about having a multi-membership perspective and that it involves **brokering** between communities of practice. Brokering takes place using **boundary objects** or what Wenger calls artefacts.

By way of example, in Chapter 1, I explained how in 2008 I did some work in a friend's computer company, learning how to take apart a computer, assess what component was broken, replace that component and then reassemble the computer. The following year, in a computer hardware section of a module I used to teach, I took my computer to the lecture and let the students take it apart as we discussed all the different computer components. My computer was the artefact that I used in one community and then in a different community. I was able to engage with students, enhancing their learning experience. I was brokering across two communities working at the boundary spaces of the organisations. To some extent, I was inside both organisations, but on the other hand, as an NTW, I was considered as outside of both organisations.

NTWs working for multiple organisations are likely to *transition* across organisational boundaries more regularly than traditional workers. In so doing, they need to negotiate identities and find ways to bring continuity to their experiences across multiple identities, as explored in the example above.

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I identified that some literature argues that this position at the boundaries has the potential to limit one's professional development (Fenwick, 2006; Smeaton, 2003). Fenwick (2006) and Smeaton (2003) argue that being outside of the formal organisational structure limits workplace learning because one is excluded from formal and promotional opportunities.

However, the counter-argument is that the type of learning one experiences at the boundaries (i.e. more informal and social) has the potential to increase skills and competencies. I know that I have developed professionally in my work as an NTW over

two decades, even though I have not been a full insider in the organisations I have contracted to. I argue, along with Merriam (2005), that transitions are a source of learning. Since NTWs inhabit multiple communities, they are more likely than traditional workers to transition regularly across the boundaries of communities. Hence, it might be advantageous for their workplace learning to work at the boundaries of communities. Workers today need to be agile and able to pivot to new conditions and roles easily, something that became very clear through the global COVID-19 pandemic. There is the need to constantly move, adapt, change and be flexible in workplaces in which external environmental conditions disrupt workplaces.

The focus of Wenger's text in this second period is that of theory development. As in the first period, communities of practice were still seen as emergent, but there are also suggestions that they can be 'guided' or 'nurtured' (Kimble, 2006). Most of the concepts theorised in this study come from this theory building period, as highlighted in light blue in Table 1.

Third Period (2000–2003)

The primary text in this period was written by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), called *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A guide to managing knowledge* and is a practical rather than theoretical book as the first two books of Wenger's had been. It was written in response to the interest that arose from the business community about integrating COP theory into practice.

Wenger et al. (2002) argue that although communities of practice usually form naturally, organisations can cultivate such communities, much like one would cultivate plants or crops. In other words, there are things that companies can do to encourage, nurture, and grow COPs. However, they also stipulate that if one tries to over-manage these communities, they can easily die (Wenger et al, 2002).

The shift from a concept that has been described as emergent (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to one that can be cultivated (Wenger et al., 2002) is significant and has brought about some critique (Kimble, 2006; Li et al., 2009), which I will return to later in this chapter.

In this study, COP theory was a framework to understand the learning of NTWs rather than a practical tool, and hence the book published in this period did not provide any useful concepts for theorising.

Fourth Period (2004–2015)

Etienne Wenger forged a new partnership, that straddles his personal and professional life, when he married Beverly Trayner. They have both taken the double-barrelled surname Wenger-Trayner. They work together as social learning theorists and as consultants. The books in this and the following period include both Wenger-Trayners.

In 2015 Etienne Wenger-Trayner co-published a new book: *Learning in landscapes of practice: Boundaries, identity and knowledgeabiltiy in practice-based learning* (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015b). This book is a combination of theory and stories, bringing together theory and practice.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b) propose that in our work environments in the early 21st century, it is no longer common to be competent and skilled in just one COP. They say that most people work in multiple COPs and have levels of competence to varying degrees in each community. Thus, they suggest that most of us inhabit landscapes made up of multiple communities, extending the notion of communities of practice into that of **landscapes of practice** (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015b).

As a contrast to the concept of competence, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b) introduced the concept, **knowledgeability**. Within landscapes of practice, we cannot be competent in every community of practice, but we can be knowledgeable enough to participate and work within those communities. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b) say that we inhabit a landscape and move between practices, inhabiting some communities to greater extents than others. We might be competent in one or two of those communities, but knowledgeable enough in others to be able to connect and work professionally across those communities. NTWs are more likely than traditional workers to engage in multiple communities of practice, making the concept of knowledgeability particularly useful in the context of this study. I am knowledgeable about BBBEE from the consulting work I do. I know enough about it to be able to converse with experts about their approach towards BBBEE, but the majority of my work is lecturing either maths or research and in those contexts, I am more of an expert and can say that I am competent rather than knowledgeable.

The concepts used during this period for theorising in this study are **knowledgeability** and **landscapes of practice**.

Fifth Period (2016–2020)

In this fifth period, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) have developed the theory further as well as having been working as practitioners. The book published in this period is called *Learning to make a difference: Value creation in social learning spaces* (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner work across disciplines, fields, sectors and organisations. Their practice informs their theory and their theory informs their practice as they explain in the prologue of this new publication:

> Our book is not an empirical study, our theory is not a claim to truth based on systematic data collection. It is the crafting of a language, a way of talking about learning that is meant to be useful. But it is not mere theoretical musing. It is anchored in our own experience of practice and that of people we work with. The resulting conceptual framework is both a theoretical perspective and a source of practical guidance. (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 2)

The above quote demonstrates that Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) address a diverse group of people across disciplines and practices as practitioners and as theorists. The books in these fourth and fifth periods have some development of theoretical concepts, as well as applications to practice, often using stories to illustrate concepts and clarify meaning.

Social learning spaces (SLSs) is a new theoretical concept introduced during this fifth period (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). SLSs refer to places and spaces (physical and virtual) that involve learning with and through other people (social), but they fall short of the definition of communities of practice as defined earlier. It is a useful concept for this study, as there are many contexts in which learning takes place informally through communities that cannot be defined as COPs, but that do fit the broader term of SLSs.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) note that social learning spaces can range from a single meeting to a well-planned set of workshops. They are spaces that could be designed or arise spontaneously and can comprise a group that is homogenous or one that is diverse. They can take place in a range of settings and can involve a variety of types of relationships. Further to this, a social learning space is about participation (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

Three characteristics of participation are present in a SLS, as outlined below (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Firstly, people participate because they want to **make a difference—**they want what they do to matter. Secondly, participation takes place **at the edge of uncertainty**. When we start to engage with others at the boundaries of our knowing, it opens the way for learning. Thirdly, our participation involves **paying attention** to what is taking place (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) we are noticing what we need to pay attention to.

From this fifth period of revision of social learning theory, the concept of SLSs will be used, as some of the communities in which NTWs work do not meet the criteria of COPs but could be defined as SLSs.

Summing up the Five Periods

This section of the chapter has outlined the evolution of COP theory over five periods, based on seminal texts of Etienne Wenger-Trayner (and various associates) in each period, defining key concepts and focus areas for each period. At the end of each period, the concepts that are used in the theoretical framework for this study were identified. The way the terms were defined in each period are the way they were used in this study. More concepts were used from the second period than any other period as it was the strongest theory building period and no concepts were used from period three, which was a practical book.

Etienne Wenger-Trayner works at the nexus of theory and practice, not unlike the analogy that he gave at the start of the chapter of how a river and a mountain interact and guide each other. COP theory is used as a theoretical framework in this study.

Critique of COP Theory

The most significant critique of COP theory comes from the shift in focus in the first three periods that have been outlined above, where there seems to be radical shifts in thinking about the concept of COPs over this time. Kimble (2006) says that the theory has changed much over time, in fundamental ways that do not signify a maturation of theory. Li et al. (2009) agree with Kimble (2006), using the word evolution rather than development to describe how COP theory has changed over time. The word evolution implies a much more significant change taking place than that of development. Li et al. (2009) and Kimble (2006) warn that because COP theory has changed so much and is used in different ways and in different contexts, it is important to define what is meant by

a COP in a particular context, so that readers are not left wondering about the meaning. This advice has been followed in the above section where concepts were defined as they were used in the study as a theoretical framework.

Kimble (2006) argues that there is a dislocation between theory development in early work (in the first period) where communities of practice were seen as wild and outside of being systematised, to the second period of theory development where the theory was described as emergent or guided, to the third period of application, where it was possible to be tamed. Kimble (2006) argues that this change is a departure from the early conceptions of the theory. Hence he warns of the need to be careful of the difference between these stages and the meanings ascribed to the concept of communities of practice for a particular study or context. He advocates for making definitions and meaning explicit when using concepts related to COP theory. I have responded to this advice above during my summary of the developments of theory and in Chapter 9 where COP theory is discussed in relation to the participants.

Li et al. (2009) offer a similar critique, adding that in the third period, communities of practice shifted from individual identity and learning to application as a managerial tool for organisational competitiveness with a focus on engineering or cultivating communities of practice. Li et al. (2009) argue that the lack of uniform definitions of communities of practice make it difficult to use as an evaluative tool.

While that critique is noted, in the context of this study, these concepts were not used for evaluation purposes, but as theoretical concepts through which to understand the learning of NTWs. They provided language to help understand learning, especially informal learning, such as is often the case in COPs.

Taking heed of the cautions identified by Li et al. (2009) and Kimble (2006), this study has taken care to define how communities of practice theory and the related concepts were used as a theoretical lens to understand the social learning of NTWs. The definitions of concepts and which concepts have been used in the theoretical framework were outlined in the early part of the chapter that revised five seminal texts of Wenger's.

Kimble (2006) also argues that the book *Cultivating communities of practice* from this third period was written at a time when *knowledge management* was a relatively new term but was already fading at the time that Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, all business management consultants, came together to write this book. At the same time, the

interest in communities of practice was exploding in business. Kimble (2006) is rather cynical about the collaboration between Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), and argues that the three management consultants used this book to repackage knowledge management by talking about communities of practice as being a business tool that facilitates the stewarding of knowledge. Kimble's (2006) view was that knowledge management was another management fad, much like *Total Quality Management* or *Business process reengineering* which emerged quickly in the academic literature, become popular, but didn't last long. Kimble's view on this is debatable. Time has demonstrated that the concept of knowledge management is still around, more than 15 years after Kimble's (2006) statement, and is being taught as a subject in most business qualifications. It is a module that I teach in the third year of an undergraduate business qualification. My view is that knowledge management is becoming recognised as an emerging multi-disciplinary subject that includes not just technology, but strategy, organisational learning and communities of practice (Jashpara, 2011). The need to manage and retain knowledge within an organisation has also been increased through high employee turnover rates, increasingly volatile markets and changing workplaces (Becerra-Fernandez & Sabherwal, 2015).

Contrary to Kimble's (2006) critique about the collaboration efforts of Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), the authors viewed their collaboration as an alignment of their respective business contexts that was able to give practical insights to the theoretical concepts of communities of practice and of knowledge management.

Wenger (2010) acknowledges the shift from an analytical concept in the early stages of theory building towards how it is now used as a management tool or technique. However, Wenger (2010) points out that alongside the critique from academics, he has also received critique from practitioners, who say that the concept is good in theory but not easy to apply in practice. Thus, rather than try to defend the critiques from either perspective, Wenger's stance is that he personally has found the combination of an analytical/ theoretical perspective and the instrumental/practical perspective to work well together, creating a productive tension that can inform in both directions. Wenger (2010, p. 11) says: "Emerging from this tension, I see the beginnings of a new discipline focused on the learning capability of social systems." Wenger thus seems to view the differences between the theory and practice as a constructive tension and as a work in progress whereby each can inform and influence the other.

COP theory has also been criticised for its lack of attention to issues of power and trust (Contu & Willmott, 2003; Marshall & Rollinson, 2004; Roberts, 2006). Wenger (1998) indicates that his use of the terms like community and participation do not mean that all interactions in COPs will be harmonious, saying they could be competitive or conflictual.

Power relations are embedded within some of Wenger's (1998) concepts rather than being a key concept of the theory. However, in the fourth theory period, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015b, p. 15) define a landscape of practice and one of the key concepts in this definition and address issues of power when they say: "The landscape is political: The power dynamics of practice." They say that due to the various stakeholders that belong to some landscapes of practice, there are power dynamics at play and the community is political. In other words, not all stakeholders in a COP or SLS have the same level of influence and so when meaning is negotiated, the views of those with greater power will influence the meaning to a greater extent. I argue that issues of power have increasingly been addressed by Etienne Wenger-Trayner and his associates over the five seminal texts reviewed at the start of this chapter.

My COPs and SLSs and Introducing Five Other Non-Traditional Workers

As an NTW, I work across multiple communities of practice (COPs) and social learning spaces (SLSs). This section of the chapter outlines those COPs and SLSs and introduces another five participants that I have come to know through those spaces and whom I invited to participate in this research.

The largest part of my work has been contract lecturing at GU. In this work I am part of a large community of lecturers, mostly independent contractors and hence NTWs. It was my formal education that was needed for me to lecture the modules that I do. However, other ways of learning have made up most of my learning to be a lecturer. One of the ways I learn about my lecturing practice is through a peer review process all lecturers go through each year. This involves an academic staff member observing one of my lectures and then giving me constructive feedback. The process includes me having to reflect on and planning areas for development in the coming year. This structured and intentional process could be defined as a non-formal education intervention, as defined in Chapter 3, because it is planned and intentional, has the goal of development of practice, but it does not lead to a formal qualification.

At GU, much informal learning takes place in an unstructured and organic way as we discuss problems, and share ideas and challenges as we interact in our communal workspace. We have never formally been named a community of practice, but the three elements that make up a community of practice can be identified: a domain of knowledge, a community, and a practice. It is through this COP that I got to know Brendon, Leigh and Ashira who are introduced below.

Brendon is a married, white male in his late forties. He has two young daughters. I got to know Brendon as a contract worker at GU. We taught the same students on different modules within the IT faculty. Contract lecturers have a communal room on campus where we gather between our lectures to talk, work, and relax. Here Brendon and I interacted regularly, shared our teaching experiences and discussed our common interests of technology and education. I nicknamed Brendon my "tech guru" because of his wealth of knowledge about IT that I would tap into at times. When I met Brendon, he was running his own Web-Design business and lecturing as an independent contractor at GU, thus managing two different but interrelated professional identities.

Leigh, from the opening reflection of this chapter, is a single, white female in her late thirties. She is a qualified counselling psychologist but she is also a lecturer and she does a small amount of corporate training. Before this study, I had known Leigh more as a collegial acquaintance for many years. Through this study and through working together in postgraduate research, I have built a strong friendship with her. In particular, I learned a lot about research supervision through Leigh who was our mentor in our first year of a post-graduate qualification. Leigh is an ambitious woman who from an early age had a strong conviction that she wanted to become a psychologist. She loves people and relationships are an important part of her professional life.

Ashira is a lawyer, but also a law lecturer. She comes from a mixed-race family. Her father is Indian and her mother is Spanish. She was in her thirties and was engaged to be married at the time of the interview.

I first got to know Ashira when I was asking the other lecturers at GU who was knowledgeable about labour law. One of the other law lecturers advised me to speak to Ashira. I was a trustee in a large block of flats in which I resided, and I was concerned about the number of hours our security guard seemed to be doing. One of the advantages of teaching in a tertiary institution is that there are many experts in various

fields, making it simpler to find answers to our questions about life and work. This was one such occasion for me.

It is interesting to note here that I know Brendon and Ashira through the same COP, yet they do not know each other. Brendon had left the community before Ashira arrived. This illustrates the changing nature of communities and concurs with Roberts (2006, p. 625) who says “Communities of practice are not stable or static. They evolve over time as new members join, and others leave.”

There is another community of practice that I belonged to because of this doctoral study. It was a group of academics and postgraduate students who meet monthly to present and discuss research projects that involve the self. At each meeting two people would present an aspect of their research, and then the group would discuss and give feedback to the presenters, offering some healthy critique and support. When I first joined the group, it was helpful just to hear other people present an aspect of their study, as it gave me a feel for this type of research. However, the real value came when I shared an aspect of my own study when I was at the stage of submitting my proposal for ethical approval. The constructive feedback from the group that day challenged some of my ideas about the methodology, which helped me clarify the most suitable methodology for my study. It was through the presentation of my proposal that day that I found another participant for the study, Sagie. After hearing of my proposed research, he came up to introduce himself to me and to volunteer as a participant.

Sagie is in his early sixties, nearly ten years my senior and the oldest participant in the study. He is a married, Indian male who worked in the field of education management, in various traditional employment positions for much of his career. In his twenties, Sagie was in a bad car accident that left him as a paraplegic. Despite being told he would never walk or work again, Sagie had a very productive traditional career. Sagie’s move to become an NTW was for medical reasons when he could no longer cope with full-time permanent work. Thus, the latter part of his career was as an NTW.

I am also a consultant and although my consulting work in recent years has been done independently, in the early days of consulting, I often worked very closely and learned from my colleague Preston (mentioned in Chapter 1). Our working relationship was that of a mentor-mentee and so could be called a social learning space, but not a community of practice. My learning from him was significant and social. It was through working in collaboration (and long hours) on detailed skills development reporting, as well as

working at client sites when BBBEE verifications were taking place, that I gleaned knowledge and skills from Preston, as I grew in competence and confidence.

There is one more community that I need to highlight. It is a diverse community, most of whom do not know each other, but they represent the wider culture of being an NTW. There are a significant number of such people in our society and culture who could be defined as NTWs, each belonging to their own communities of practice. NTWs are everywhere, but there is a common space where we meet up in public places in the middle of the work week and that is in local restaurants or coffee shops. I have a practice of taking some work and my laptop with me down to my favourite coffee shop, especially on days when I've been working from home and I need a change of scenery. I can sit for hours at a table on my own, with the hubbub of noise around me, concentrating on the work I came to do. In those physical spaces, I see many people working on their laptops. Although not every one of them is an NTW, many of them are. Fairly often I strike up a conversation with someone at a table near me and through that I meet NTWs. That was how I met Russel, relatively early in my study.

Russel is an African male in his early 30s who first had a successful career in the shipping industry. Since 2013, from the age of about 26, he left the security of traditional employment to become a NTW as an Arts administrator. His passion for the Arts and particularly his engagement with Hip-Hop were the driving forces behind his decision to make this significant change in career.

The descriptions above introduce five NTWs who I invited into the study through different COPs and SLSs to which I belong. They were introduced here to illustrate how their work lives have overlapped and intersected with mine. Some of those intersections lasted a significant amount of time (Brendon and Leigh) and others were more transitory (Sagie, Russel and Ashira).

In Chapter 5, I outline and define the process of selection of participants in more detail and their stories will be told in Chapters 6 and 7. It is my story and the stories of these five NTWs that were the focus of this study.

Empirical Studies Using Communities of Practice

In this section I review some empirical studies that have made use of COP theory.

As was noted about the third period of theory development earlier in this chapter, the biggest initial interest in the new concept of COPs in the 1990s came from the business world. COP theory continues to have relevance for business and has become a key dimension of the new business subject I teach called knowledge management (Jashapara, 2011).

The business world continues to find applicability for COP theory, illustrated by the broad range of industries into which it has been applied. That includes a study of events management as a COP (Brown & Stokes, 2021), the use of COPs to enhance entrepreneurial learning (Haneberg & Aaboen, 2021) and for improvements in work practices in the construction industry (Love, 2009).

In the health industry, COPs were seen to provide some support for people diagnosed with the dual diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse (Anderson et al., 2013). Furthermore, a study of an online knowledge sharing community of health care professionals explored the type of activities nurses undertake and the types of knowledge they share (Hara & Hew, 2007). In that study an online COP supported professional learning of health care practitioners who struggle to keep up with rapid changes to the knowledge needed in their industry. The interest in COP theory from the field of education has taken longer to develop than the interest from the business world. However, there is now a burgeoning body of knowledge using COP theory in education contexts, as summarised below.

COPs have been seen to be particularly helpful in teacher (educator) development studies globally and locally (Akinyemi et al, 2019; Eddy et al., 2022; Romero & Vasilopoulos, 2020). A brief overview of a global and a local example, below, are illustrative of such studies. In a Saudi Arabian university, peer observation of teaching was helpful in developing a COP which fostered professional development of the members (Deraney, 2022). In a South African context, COPs were found to be helpful in the motivation, development and learning of natural science teachers in rural areas (Philander & Botha, 2021).

Unsurprisingly, one of the results of the COVID-19 pandemic and the move of education to virtual contexts, is that there are now many educational studies around distance and

remote learning. Thus, in addition to the educational COPs above, the following online education contexts have also used COPs.

Scott and Schofield (2021) highlight the important role that virtual COPs played for medical students and alumni in sharing best practice where discussion boards were used and found to be helpful online tools that facilitated learning. Verhoef et al. (2022) report on the use of COPs to enhance academic integrity in online learning spaces which arose as response to more assessments being done online since COVID-19. Lastly, Han (2022) explains how online COPs were established and facilitated learning of educators using a blended approach to learning.

Touching on the issue of power in COP theory, which was identified as a critique of Wenger's theory, Aragão da Silva and Pereira de Oliveira (2022) report that in a COP developing maths material, power relations between members of the community were seen to influence the material that was developed.

There is a growing body of knowledge around COPs across many industries, as the brief review above has illustrated. The above studies are by no means exhaustive, but rather illustrate the diversity of interest in the theory and application of communities of practice.

In most, if not all the studies identified above, the unit of analysis has been various COPs. The data were collected from individuals within those COPs, but it was their joint participation in selected COPs that was under scrutiny.

The focus of this study was different in that it was the working lives of six individuals that were under scrutiny. The NTWs did not all belong to the same COPs. Each participant came from at least one of the COPs or SLSs that I participate in, but there was no single COP that we all belonged to. Thus, social learning of NTWs was being explored from the individual perspective of each participant within their respective COPs and SLSs, and hence contributes towards filling a gap in the literature.

Summing up and Looking Forward: COP Theory in this Study

This chapter started with a reflection on a particularly significant COP in which I participated and started to develop the skill of supervising postgraduate research projects. The anecdote was a good example of social learning, which is an important part of learning for all workers, but especially for NTWs who regularly negotiate changing contexts.

Next, five periods of theory development of COPs were outlined based on five seminal texts authored by Etienne Wenger-Trayner and different associates. Some critiques of the theory were offered. Several COPs and SLSs in which I participate were outlined briefly, and from those spaces, another five NTWs were introduced. It is my story and theirs that was the focus of this study. A review of some empirical studies using COP theory was offered and illustrated the wide range of contexts in which COP theory has been applied in business and education.

I close this chapter by posing some questions about the NTWs that the study aimed to answer.

- How have professional identities been influenced, negotiated, developed and changed for NTWs over their careers?
- How does the duality of participation and reification contribute to an understanding of NTWs' learning?
- How do experience and competence develop skills in COPs?
- How have ICT developments influenced NTWs' trajectories?
- What learning takes place at the borders/boundaries of various practices?
- How does knowledgeability contribute towards individuals' being cross-disciplinary specialists?
- What is the relationship between competence and knowledgeability?
- How does the concept of landscapes of practice reflect work in the early 21st century context of this study?
- What is the nexus of identification as a place of learning for NTWs?

Interlude 4: The Landscape and its Inhabitants

In this dissertation, two theoretical frameworks have been considered in the learning of NTWs, namely TLT (Chapter 2) and COP theory (Chapter 4).

TLT was a helpful lens to understand my journey into the world of work. TLT is also useful to explain my journey from being a biochemist to being a social scientist (coming up in Chapter 5). The usefulness of TLT as a lens for the stories of the other participants will be explored in Chapter 8 after their stories have been told in Chapters 6 and 7.

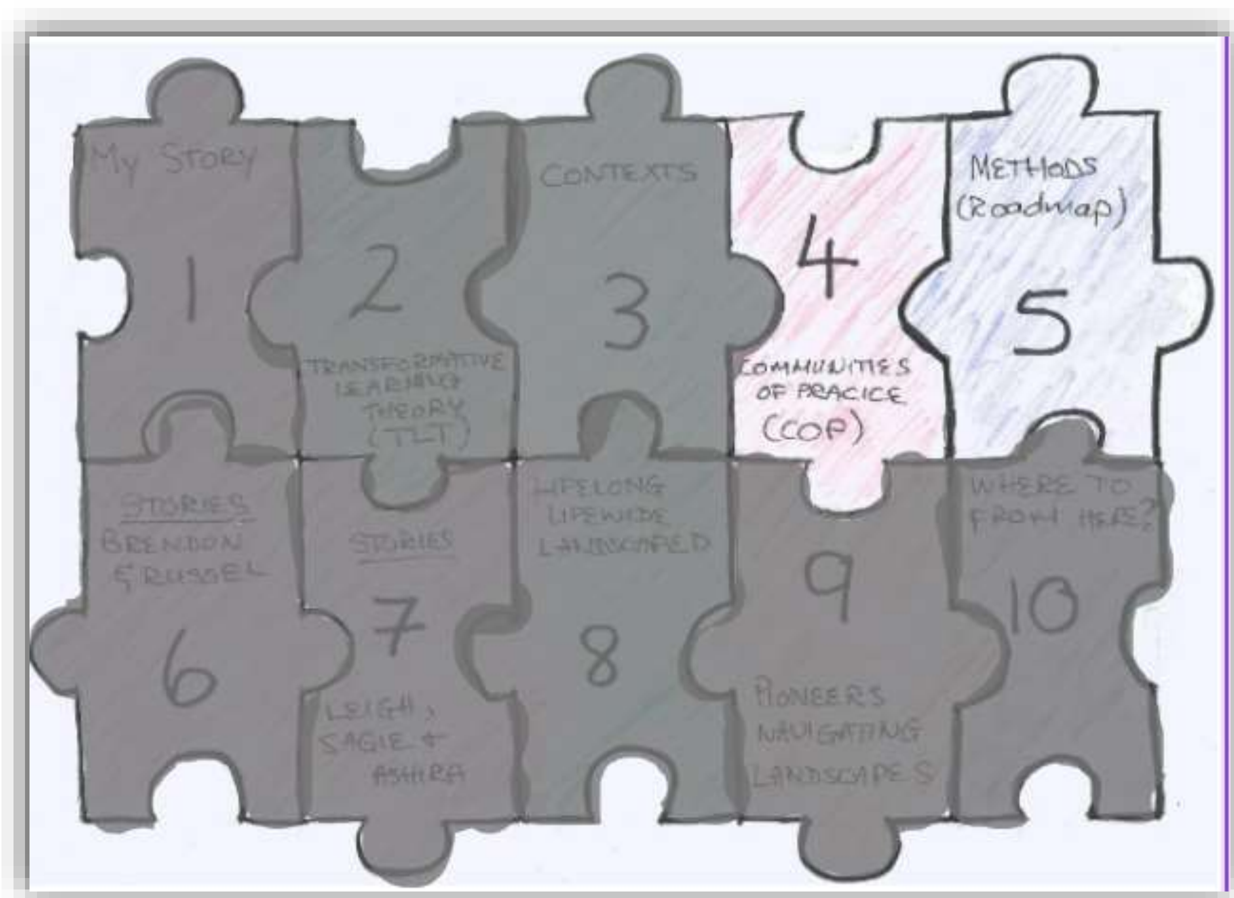
As the introductory reflection of Chapter 4 illustrated, becoming a supervisor for research in higher education was learned through my interactions with others in community. It was the development of new skills for each of us individually, but it was also the collective development of a practice and identities that would continue with subsequent years of supervising and teaching of postgraduate students in that institution.

Chapter 4 established communities of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) as a theoretical lens for the study, including the more recent developments of *landscapes of practice* (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). Towards the end of Chapter 4, I explained the different COPs and SLSs that I inhabit, and introduced the other five participants who I came to know through my work as an NTW in my COPs and SLSs. Hence, Chapter 4 was a shift away from the story of self, to consider the experiences of others and signals that the phenomenon under study (NTWs in 21st century, South Africa) is not unique to me, but is shared with others that I know, but also to a much wider population of people locally and globally. Hence the relevance of this study is underscored.

Before hearing the stories of these five NTWs (which are in Chapters 6 & 7), Chapter 5 outlines the methodological choices in the study, likening it to a roadmap. A roadmap is used to find one's direction to places within the landscape. Thus, Chapter 5 considers how I came to this study and outlines how the study was conducted.

Furthermore, a participatory data generation method that was used to obtain rich data in the form of stories, called the river of life method, extends the landscape theme. Three river drawings have already been seen in the previous chapters, but in Chapter 5, the intent and purpose of the river of life drawings will become clearer.

Interlude 4 identified the two theoretical frameworks of the study and made methodological links between Chapters 4 and 5, as illustrated by the puzzle image below.



My Story
1
2
Transformative Learning Theory (TLT)
Contexts
3
4
Communities of Pracice (COP)
Methods (Roadmap)
5
Stories Brendon & Russel
6
Stories
7
Leigh, Sagie & Ashira
Lifelong Lifewide Landscaped
8
9
Pioneers Navigating Landscapes
Where to from here?
10

Chapter 5: A Roadmap for a Doctoral Journey

Pick Me! Pick Me!

"Pick me, pick me" my body language screamed as I eagerly shot my hand up in Research Methods class. The lecturer for the module in the degree had just asked: "If you were writing a research paper, would you include your worldview, your context or background in relation to the study?" I was 100% certain I knew the answer—I was after all the daughter of a biochemist and had trained as a scientist—of course you would not include these details in a scientific paper. It should not matter who was doing the research, the outcome should be the same and the results should be reproducible if they were to have any value at all. Why would you need to say who you were?

The lecturer must have read my eagerness, as she did pick me to answer the question. I was delighted! However, my confidence was soon to be shaken and my mindset challenged when she explained that in qualitative research it is important for you to state your worldview and context and to position yourself within the study. Her response was a shock to me but a significant memory of one of the important shifts in my mindset that was needed to understand the nature of research in the Humanities. My scientific background had entrenched positivist assumptions into my thinking about research. This was a time to start finding my way into interpretivist studies.

Quantitative to Qualitative / Positivist to Interpretivist

The shift in mindset that took place in the story above was a necessary and significant part of a journey that I took from thinking about research as a biochemist (a positivist paradigm) towards embracing and understanding research that is qualitative in nature (from an interpretivist paradigm).

Changing mindsets was discussed in Chapter 2 as TLT was set out as a theoretical lens for the study, using examples from my story and my changed mindsets about work and being a worker. TLT is relevant again in this chapter, as I explore the ontological and epistemological shifts I had to make to embrace qualitative, interpretivist research and methodologies that included the self in research.

As explored in Chapter 2, Cranton (1994) proposed four stages in a transformative learning process, namely, a trigger, appraisal, exploration and the development of

alternative perspectives. I see the anecdote above as a trigger that initiated a journey of discovery into considering other ways of doing research. The next stages of appraisal and exploration (Cranton, 1994) involved assessing and considering alternatives, which I went through as I made my way through the rest of the master's qualification in which I undertook my first qualitative research project. By the time that study was finished, I had developed an altered perspective (Cranton, 1994) about what can count as research and had been through what Mezirow (1991) calls a perspective transformation. Thus, TLT is also a useful lens to explore this part of my story, in relation to doing research and being a researcher.

The most significant and memorable shifts in my thinking were illustrated through the story "Pick Me! Pick Me!" above. It was a shift that challenged the very notion of what I had grown up to believe about what counts and what doesn't count as research. It was a journey that took me from thinking about research in only positivist terms, in which there is only one truth and truth is objective, towards considering other ways of knowing. It was part of the journey that took me from being a natural scientist to being a social scientist doing this study. Epistemological and ontological shifts were needed for me to learn how to do a qualitative study. TLT is a helpful theoretical lens to understand that paradigm shift.

Another significant shift in my way of thinking about doing research about people was when I learned, to my delight, that it was possible to be a participant in one's own study. I had my first opportunity to put that into practice when one of our assignments in master's involved writing short stories from our lives and then engaging with those stories through the lens of different adult learning theories. I loved that assignment and did very well. The assignment was the seed of an idea that led me towards doing this doctoral research on the self.

Approach: Qualitative (A Collage)

The approach to this study was qualitative. Henning (2004) says that qualitative studies focus on depth of understanding, such as this study aimed to achieve. Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 5) describe the qualitative researcher as a bricoleur or quiltmaker. "The researcher, in turn, may be seen as a bricoleur, as a maker of quilts, or as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages."

A bricoleur produces a bricolage. A bricolage is like a collage (in art) or montage (in filmmaking), in other words, something made into a whole, using a range of materials or images that are available. The metaphor of a qualitative study being a bricolage or as myself as a bricoleur resonates with my personal and professional life. From a young age, one of the ways I expressed my creativity was through making collages.

A project on population geography at school gave me an opportunity to create a collage as the cover page to my project. I created a single A4 sized collage by cutting out many faces from magazines and sticking them close together, something similar to what I have done below in Picture 1 below.

PICTURE 1: FACES COLLAGE

PICTURE 2: GROWING UP AND LOOKING FORWARD

The idea of making a collage out of people's faces carried through into my early adult life. In 1992, I made a large poster to hang on my wall by cutting out photos of myself, family and friends. The poster had photos from my early childhood around the outer edges, with pictures of me growing older as I moved in towards the middle of the poster. Right at the centre is a picture of a landscape, symbolising my future, as can be seen in Picture 2—Growing up and looking forward.

Collage making is an activity I continue to do as a creative outlet to reflect on my life, finding words and pictures to make 'vision boards' about where I am in life and the direction that I want to take. Making a collage requires a range of activities that include searching for, collecting and cutting out pictures and words in magazines, and then putting them together in a way that is visually appealing and is a new coherent object. But what is the relevance of collage making in a research project such as this?

Firstly, I see my career as a collage. In the early days, I did a lot of very different jobs, my work experiences were very disjointed, and I didn't see how those could come together into something useful. However, when my career did come together in my thirties and I found my niche in the working world, many of the smaller parts of what I had worked on earlier came together into a coherent career.

Furthermore, as an NTW, I continue to do piecemeal, contractual work to a management consulting firm and to a tertiary education provider and the pieces of work I accept are like the pictures that make up the collage. I often find myself trying to make connections between subjects or work environments to see how skills in one context can be used in

another. I look for connections that bring continuity and coherence into my conception of my career.

Secondly, I see this study like a collage, as described so well here by Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 7):

> The qualitative researcher who uses montage is like a quilt maker or a jazz improviser. The quilter stitches, edits and put slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional unity—a pattern—to an interpretive experience.

This describes well the process of data generation and analysis in qualitative methods, the piecing together of information into an understandable whole and finding the links and connections between different stories and findings. The way I have structured this thesis, using interludes between chapters to connect the different parts of the study, is also reflective of putting together a collage, with ten main chapters forming the larger parts of the collage and the interludes, prelude and afterword the smaller parts that link the chapters together.

Pithouse-Morgan and Pillay (2013) use arts-based pedagogy in teacher development studies as a way for students to engage in memory work, enabling students to face and confront past painful memories. Furthermore, Pillay et al. (2018) have used collage and mosaic to explore teacher identities, facilitating an understanding of multiple layers of identity. Collage is one example of arts-based pedagogy and, as indicated above, has been found to be a creative way to explore the complexity of identity. Thus, the use of collage and drawings in this study were deemed appropriate and useful to understand workplace identities of the participants in this study.

Paradigm: Interpretivist

The study used an interpretivist paradigm. Cohen et al. (2007) say that in interpretative studies the researcher attempts to understand meanings and actions from the perspective of participants in the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe the interpretivist paradigm as being based in relativist assumptions of constructed and co-constructed reality in which the inquiry aims to understand experience. This study resonated well with those assumptions as it sought to understand the journeys of participants in becoming NTWs and the learning that took place on such journeys.

Knowledge about NTWs and their work and learning journeys was co-constructed, based on the experiences of the participants and myself.

This chapter started by considering a major mindset change that I needed to go through to get to this point of doing a qualitative doctoral study such as this. From here, the chapter moves to describe the methodology, explain how the participants were selected and how the data were collected and analysed. The last part of the chapter considers issues of ethics, quality and limitations. Thus, the chapter has served as a roadmap for me as the researcher, while providing readers with an understanding of how the study was conducted.

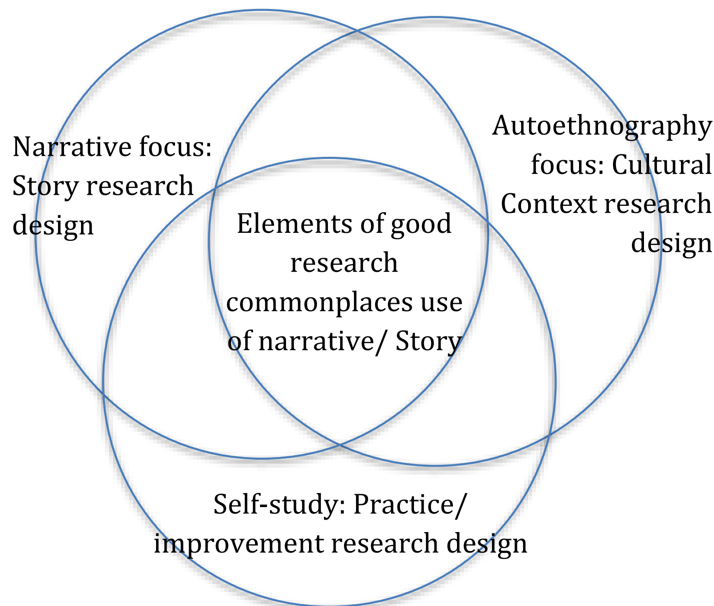
Methodology: Narrative with an Autoethnographic Stance

Finding my way towards a methodological position was not easy. Although I had made the shift from positivist research to the qualitative, as has been described earlier in this chapter, further shifts were needed to learn how to include the self in the study in a way that is trustworthy, authentic and contributes towards the development of scholarship. The research methods group that I joined, and that I described in Chapter 4, had a significant influence in this process. I like to say that they 'messed with my head' in a positive way. Every time I did a presentation to the group, they made suggestions that I didn't expect and which disoriented me for a while. Each time I had to go away to read or think about their suggestions to reorient myself and find my way back into the study. Once I'd gone through this process, I could see how valuable their input was in terms of keeping me true to the methodologies that involve study of the self.

Three research designs that privilege the self are narrative, autoethnography and self-study (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008). Each of these methodologies has a slightly different focus. The focus of narrative is on the story, the focus of self-study is on the improvement of practice, and the focus of autoethnography is on a cultural phenomenon within a context. Hamilton et al. (2008, p. 24) illustrate the relationship between these three methodologies with a Venn Diagram, like Figure 1 below, of three intersecting circles, each with their own specific focus. The intersections between the circles illustrate the layered and overlapping nature of these methodologies which make it difficult to define distinct boundaries between them.

Thus, I have positioned this study at the nexus of two of the methodologies, autoethnography and narrative. The rationale for this positioning is explained next by first discussing each methodology and then how they fit together.

FIGURE 1: RESEARCH METHODS OF THE SELF



Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method that has become increasingly recognised as legitimate research in the last few decades (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The change in ways of thinking about research, from the positivist, quantitative paradigm towards acceptance of qualitative methods, is described as a turn, a change or an acceptance of other ways of knowing. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) outline a process of four turns that have made space for the acceptance of narrative inquiry in academic contexts, saying that these turns did not come about through the pressure of narrative practitioners but rather through the creation of an environment in which narrative inquiry could flourish. Hence, these turns opened the way not only for narrative inquiry, but also other qualitative research methods.

The first turn was a shift towards giving attention to the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This is a turn from understanding the objectiveness of a researcher in a positivist paradigm, such as the way I was trained in the natural sciences. The second turn was a move to words as data, where previously data were seen mostly as numbers that were reported as

statistics (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). This turn involves a process of questioning whether numbers can really capture a deep understanding of human experience and through that the researcher turning to words. The third turn was towards a focus on the particular (on the local and the specific) In contrast, in quantitative studies the focus is on the general and being able to generalise findings to the wider population. The fourth was a turn towards different ways of knowing, blurred ways of knowing (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) or what Clandinin (2007, p. 1) refers to as "a widening in acceptance of alternative epistemologies or ways of knowing."

My anecdote at the start of the chapter describes the lived experience of what it is like to make the kinds of turns that are described above, from being a natural scientist to being a social scientist. For me, the anecdote described a particularly strong memory, what Cranton (1994) calls a trigger, that set-in motion a process of appraisal that brought about a revision of frames of references about what research is or what it can be.

These narrative turns and opening of spaces in the academy that would acknowledge these different ways of conducting research happen at a broad level of academia, but also individually (such as what happened with me).

Narrative inquiry is a study of stories or descriptions of a series of events. An assumption of narrative inquiry is that the story is the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience (Clandinin, 2006). The three commonplaces that make narrative inquiry distinctive are temporality, sociality and place.

Temporality is about time: past, present and the future (Hamilton et al., 2008). The element of temporality in this study has already been addressed in my story (Chapter 1), in the stories in Chapters 2 and 4 of the development of each learning theory and in Chapter 3 as the development and change of contexts over the last 50–60 years. Thus, all the previous chapters consider the influence of time to mould and shape the stories from the past to the present. As the narrative unfolds in the later chapters, futures will be considered and addressed.

Sociality is about the person or the participants in the research (Hamilton et al., 2008). Other than myself, there were five participants in the study, all of them have some connection to my story and so there has been interaction between the researcher and the researched. Furthermore, within each person's story, they have people who have influenced and shaped their narratives, as will be seen in Chapters 6 and 7 and so we

see the element of sociality as an important part of their experience in the world of work. Sociality also connects with the theory of communities of practice, a social learning theory, in Chapter 4.

Place is about where the study is situated (Hamilton et al., 2008). As has been seen in Chapter 3, the various places and contexts in which the study was conducted have been outlined. The study was positioned in the context of the 21st century workplace of South Africa, more specifically in Durban, KZN. Although the phenomenon of the non-traditional worker is a global phenomenon, the study focused on Durban as the place where I have lived and worked as a NTW for more than two decades, and where I met the other participants. Thus, narrative methodology enabled me to engage with stories of experience, both my own and those of others.

Polkinghorne (1995) explains that there are two ways to do a narrative inquiry. The first, the analysis of narratives, involves analysis of stories to identify themes, or an analysis of narratives. The second is narrative analysis, which involves collecting descriptions of events and making them into a story.

In this study, I first used narrative analysis to write the participants' experiences into their career stories in Chapters 6 and 7. Second, I used analysis of narratives to identify categories or themes across the narratives presented in Chapters 8 and 9. Third, across the whole study, I have stitched together and developed a story which resembles narrative analysis.

Autoethnography

Reflexive or narrative autoethnography is described as a process of the researcher using experience to focus on and examine the relationships between the self and others in a group or culture (Ellis, 2004).

> Autoethnography refers to research, writing, stories and methods that connect autobiographical and personal accounts to the cultural, social and political. This approach considers personal experience as an important source of knowledge in and of itself, as well as a source of insight into cultural experience. (Ellis & Adams, 2014, p. 254)

There is a debate among scholars who have written autoethnographies about what autoethnography is and what it is not. These two positions can be seen as the two ends of a continuum within the genre.

On the one hand, Carolyn Ellis, Arthur Bochner, Norman Denzin and Laurel Richardson advocate for what they call ‘evocative autoethnography’. This type of autoethnography evokes emotions and help the reader to get a sense of ‘being there’. Ellis’s *Autoethnographic I* (Ellis, 2004) is a good example of this type of autoethnography. In this book Ellis has artfully crafted a novel that is also a research methods textbook about how to do autoethnography. On the other hand, Leon Anderson (2006) argues for what he calls ‘analytic autoethnography’. Chang (2008) also supports the type of autoethnography that Anderson proposes. Anderson (2006, p. 373) suggests that this sub-genre of autoethnography refers to research in which “the researcher is (1) a full member of the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in published texts, and (3) committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena”.

This study leans more towards the side of Anderson’s analytic autoethnography. I was a full member of the study, and my membership was made explicit throughout the study (I was visible as a member) and the intent of the study was to continue developing an understanding of the phenomenon and theorising of NTWs’ workplace learning.

Taking an autoethnographic stance within this study enriched my reflexive exploration of the culture of non-traditional workers (Hamilton et al., 2008). Autoethnographic methodology enabled me to take the dual role of being the observed and the observer, the researched and the researcher (Ellis, 2004) and through stories to understand the culture of learning of non-traditional workers.

The Nexus of Narrative Inquiry and Autoethnography

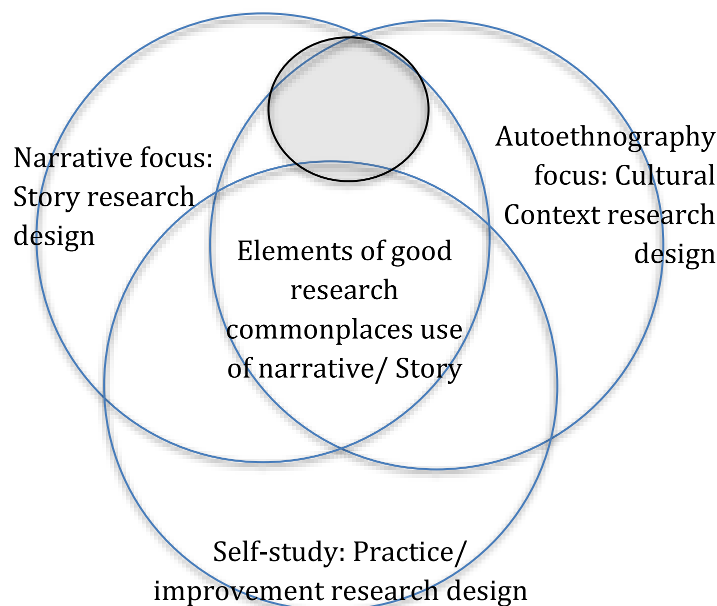
This study was positioned at the nexus between narrative inquiry and autoethnography. Having explored the two methodologies in their own right, here I brought them together as the most suitable stance to take towards this study. Berger (2001) advocates for narrative autoethnography in the development of rapport between participant and researcher. Long (2008) also recommends narrative autoethnography to promote spiritual learning in teaching contexts.

My methodological choices were informed through scholarly debate with peers in a self-study research group at the UKZN and reading literature around this family of methodologies. I have noticed that there often seems to be a pattern for those exploring the use of this genre of methodologies, which is to spend a significant period wandering from one methodology to another. Perhaps this illustrates the difficulty of clearly defining a position within these three overlapping, but distinct, methodologies.

Rosenberg (2016) describes how during her doctoral studies she ‘wandered’ methodologically between self-study and autoethnography, in the end concluding that there are strengths from both methodologies which were useful for her study. Thus Rosenberg (2016) did not merely settle on one of the methodologies but found the value of positioning her study in such a way that she could draw on two related methodologies.

Like Rosenberg, Harrison’s (2009) study involved some methodological wanderings, starting with self-study, but ultimately locating it at an intersection between narrative and autoethnography. Harrison’s study included her own narrative and the narratives of nine other participants, but with an autoethnographic gaze at the culture of being a doctoral candidate and the journey towards a doctoral identity (Harrison, 2009). Harrison (2009) takes Anderson’s (2006) approach of analytic autoethnography in her study, as did I.

FIGURE 2: THE NEXUS OF NARRATIVE AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY



Although it is not easy to make clear boundaries or definitions between these related methodologies, Hamilton et al. (2008) argue for the need to be transparent about and to clarify our research designs, saying that to do this will help to strengthen the study. An adaption of Hamilton et al.'s (2008) Venn diagram is a helpful way to illustrate my methodological position. My methodological wandering to find the most appropriate design for the study brought me to a place, illustrated on the Venn diagram above, labelled Figure 2 and in the grey shaded area, as a nexus between narrative and autoethnography.

The topic of Harrison's (2009) research study was different from mine, but there are many parallels. My study included my career story/journey of becoming a non-traditional worker as well as the stories of colleagues who work in non-traditional ways. The intention of my study was to gain an understanding of the learning culture of non-traditional workers through their stories of becoming and being such workers. Thus, I took my cue from Harrison (2009) in terms of my research design, at an intersection between narrative and autoethnography. In other words, using narrative methodology, but with an autoethnographic stance. Thus, the methodological framework embraced notions of time, place and sociality (narrative) and culture (autoethnography).

In closing this discussion on methodology, the autoethnographic stance or gaze enabled me to have an insider view of the culture of NTW's. My lived experience of the workplace was foregrounded in Chapter 1, through my story, demonstrating what it was like to be a member of this culture and giving me an insider view of the culture of NTW's. I was positioned right at the centre of my inquiry. Smith (2005) calls this epistemological intimacy. The narrative aspect of the study enabled me (to some degree) to step outside of the study to stand alongside the other participants to explore the experiences of others who, like me work in alternative ways. That helped me take the gaze off my own experience to consider the diverse, unique stories of the other participants, how they were both similar and different to my own experiences and so to position myself as an outsider (or certainly outside of the central position of the study). Two ways I intentionally moved towards an outside view was firstly, that I asked participants to provide clarity and correction to the way I wrote their stories. Secondly, through a focus group, I presented preliminary themes to the participants to gain a sense of what resonated with them. Thus, I invited their participation into the interpretation of the research. There was at least one theme that they did not resonate with and I excluded from the final interpretations. By stepping back from my interpretation of the findings and

letting the participants voices be heard, I foregrounded their understandings of NTW learning experiences.

Rationale for the Thesis Structure

As briefly identified in the prelude, and as would have been noted by this stage of the thesis, the more traditional structure for a doctoral study has not been followed in this dissertation, in alignment with research methods and styles of presentation that include the self. A few examples of other doctoral studies that have unconventional structures are those of Campbell (2017); De Beer (2018) and van der Walt (2018).

As already noted, a narrative inquiry is a study of experience in which the unit of analysis is a story (Clandinin, 2006). Chapters 1, 6 and 7 explicitly tell the stories of the participants. However, a narrative inquiry aims to write a story into the whole document, such as an article, book or research dissertation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and not only those chapters that tell people's stories.

By way of example, in their seminal text on narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use their own stories as well as other people's stories to unravel the research puzzle of what a narrative inquiry is. However, they go further than that to write a narrative into the whole book. In their epilogue, they say they "re-tell the narrative of the book" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 187). This means more than just a summary of each section of the book but is rather about helping the reader to identify the narrative that runs through the entire book.

I first became aware of this need to find the narrative of the whole study at a research methods group I attended where I presented the planned structure of my thesis. A senior, experienced researcher recommended that I start the dissertation with my story, because that is what brought me to doing this study. She went on to say that from there, look for the story (or narrative) in the rest of the chapters to see how to structure it. I went home excited and eager to go and find the story within the study and in time came up with the structure presented here. Thus, not only have participants' stories been told in Chapters 1, 6 and 7, but other chapters have been "storied". Chapters 2 and 4 are theory chapters, which have been written in a narrative. Chapter 3, the literature on the contexts of the study, has also been told as an unfolding story. This chapter is a story of how I came to the methodology as well as how I planned to conduct the study. The story

in the remaining five chapters (6–10) will be outlined after this chapter, in Interlude 5. The use of interludes will be explained next.

I have used interludes between my chapters in a similar way to De Beer (2018). His doctoral study was different from mine in that he published five academic papers and used interludes to link the articles together into one coherent document. In my study, the interludes link the chapters in the way De Beer's (2018) interludes connect his articles. However, the interludes play a similar role in both studies. De Beer (2018) refers to them being like a "connective tissue" that holds the thesis together. I have used interludes to make connections between chapters. Some interludes include summaries of chapters, but they also go beyond summary; they create another layer of interpretation to the study, explaining methodologically what had taken place in a previous or upcoming chapter. In other words, some aspects of the interludes are narratives about narratives. The interludes aim to keep the reader oriented to the unfolding narrative of the whole study, being like the 'connective tissue' referred to by De Beer (2018).

The next section of this chapter outlines how and from whom the data were collected.

Data Generation: Being in the Field

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to data generation for narrative inquiries as "being in the field". In a study of the self, one is immersed in the story and one's life is inevitably like "being in the field". It can be difficult to differentiate between what is and what is not part of your study. Thus, there is the need to keep coming back to the focal point of the study, the research puzzle (research questions). The research puzzle was set out in Interlude 1 and guided the study.

This section of the chapter explains the parameters and selection criteria for the participants, then describes the five methods used to generate data (field notes, river of life interview, self-interview, document analysis and focus group), followed by three phases or stages of data generation. There is a short description of how the narratives were constructed, also summarised in Tables 2 and 3. The section ends with Table 4, which outlines the different methods of data generation that contributed to solving the research puzzles (questions).

The Participants (Population and Sampling)

It was my career journey (Chapter 1) that brought me to the point of doing this study in which I was a participant, and my story was woven through the entire study. In Chapter 4, I introduced five other NTWs that I have come to know through my various workplaces and whom I invited to participate in this study. Here I describe the criteria I used when deciding to invite Brendon, Leigh, Ashira, Sagie and Russel as participants.

Firstly, the participants needed to be NTWs (as defined in Chapter 3) and thus outside of permanent full-time work contracts. However, I wanted them to be particularly good examples of an NTW in that they were working across multiple contexts (possibly running a business while doing other consulting work or lecturing and consulting) at the same time. In more traditional research projects, one might call this way of sampling purposive. Purposive sampling involves handpicking participants based on their possession of particular characteristics suited to the study (Cohen et al. 2007) or with a specific purpose in mind (Maree & Pietersen, 2017).

Secondly, due to my closeness to the study, I wanted to invite NTWs whose stories intersected with mine in some way; in other words, people I had come to know through the various communities of practice and social learning spaces in which I interact.

Thirdly, I wanted the participants to reflect diversity in terms of age, race and gender. In the South African context of this study, diversity is particularly pertinent, due to past inequalities from apartheid and how that might privilege some people and disadvantage others.

With those parameters in mind, as I went about my daily work and studies and, over an extended period, I looked for other participants and identified the five people named above. This sample is not representative of the wider population and is known as non-probability sampling (Cohen et al., 2007). Qualitative research methodologies usually make use of non-probability sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2017). Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative studies do not intend to make predictions about the wider population and so a representative sample, achieved by probability sampling, is not needed (Maree & Pietersen, 2017). Thus, the sample was diverse but not representative. The participants, including myself, ranged in age from early thirties through to late fifties at the time of the interviewing. There were three men and three women. Of the males, there was an Indian male (Sagie), an African male (Russel) and a White male

(Brendon). Of the females, other than myself, there was another white female (Leigh) and a female of mixed race (Indian and Spanish) (Ashira). The sample was diverse in terms of gender, age and race, but not of class.

Five Data Generation Methods

In a qualitative research project, it is likely that the researcher will use multiple methods to collect data to solve the research puzzle. In this study, I used field notes, two types of interviews, document analysis and a focus group to collect data. Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) say that the most common data generation methods for qualitative studies are fieldnotes, interviews, personal documents, artefacts and journal records. They indicate that personal documents range from journals to certificates to photos and that interviews can be conducted in a range of ways. Furthermore, field notes can range from making notes during or soon after an experience, to making notes a long time after.

Field Notes: Personal Reflections

In studies of the self, the field is very broad and reflections and memories about experiences are potential sources of data generation. Chang (2013) argues that autoethnographic fieldwork takes place in the offices, homes and workplaces of the autoethnographer—wherever they can recall experiences with people or objects that are relevant to the phenomenon being studied. This can be helpful in that it is possible to collect rich data. However, it also creates a challenge, in that there is potentially an endless amount of data that could be collected. How do I decide what should and what should not be included? How do I capture thoughts and reflections and make them manageable and useful? In the early stage of this study, I had thoughts, ideas and reflections that needed to be captured and stored somewhere so that later they could be assembled. I discovered a technology tool that would assist me in the form of a blogging platform called Blogger, which is an application available to anyone who has a Google account. A blog is a relatively recent term or concept that is an electronic form of a journal that is published on the Internet.

Blogger is very user friendly and it is possible to set the privacy options so that no-one else can see your notes/reflections. Blogger also has tools that enable filtering and sharing of key words, so that similar types of reflections can be grouped together when needed. Google's Blogger application was used to record field notes such as reflections on my own and other participants' learning. These entries included new insights or reflections of my current learning, as well as reflexive meta-narratives of what I wrote,

recorded or remembered from past experiences. These field notes were used in constructing my story and for initiating new insights about the study, especially in the early stages of the study when the form and structure of the dissertation was not established.

River of Life Interviews

River of life is a creative, participatory data generation method to map out a journey or history. Participants are asked to draw their lives using the metaphor of a river to depict developments, changes, turns, blockages and tributaries. Three river drawings have already been seen in Chapters 2 and 3 to depict my story (Drawing 1, in Chapter 2), the development of TLT (Drawing 2, in Chapter 2) and the unfolding and changing contexts (Drawing 3, in Chapter 3).

River of life could be classified as a participatory method of qualitative data generation. Participatory methods use innovative or creative ways for data generation with the intention of involving the participants more actively in the data generation process (Rule & John, 2011) that include transect walks, drawings and photo-voice. Furthermore, rich and interesting data were obtained through the use of visual collages to represent and tell life histories of teachers in rural South African schools (Pillay & Saloojee, 2012).

Participants of this study were given some time to reflect on and draw their careers using the metaphor of a river, identifying key points, influences and challenges they experienced on their journey to becoming and being non-traditional workers. Each person's drawing then became the primary tool I used to interview them about their story. The participants seemed to really enjoy the creative process of drawing their rivers and then discussing their career journeys with me. The creative element of using the river of life method aligns with the arts-based methods used by Pithouse-Morgan and Pillay (2013) in teacher development studies. Rich and detailed narratives emerged from the conversations with each participant about their river drawings. Their presentations were audio-recorded and then transcribed into text and the data used in the construction of their stories and for the content analysis following the stories in Chapters 8 and 9.

The literature on river of life as a method is mostly practical, about how to conduct workshops that use river of life (Kendelevu Project, 2006; Moussa, 2009). The method is often used in group workshops in community development contexts, such as the United

Nations Institute for training and research (UNITAR) as described by Moussa (2009) and has been found to be helpful as a way for participants to bond quickly.

More recently, John (2020) used the method in a peace education workshop on xenophobia and found that the exercise triggered memories or traumatic events for the participants. A plan had been put in place to provide psychosocial support to participants if such an event occurred. However, John (2020) didn't anticipate the scale of the potential trauma and had to make adjustments to the workshops. John's (2020) reflections about the method are important to note from an ethical point of view as it demonstrates the potential for this method to be evocative and trigger past traumas. One of the participants of my study became quite emotional while telling me about a time of trauma in their life and I wondered if I had pushed them too far. I was considering if I should stop, as required by my plans for ethical research, but then they composed themselves and continued before I could intervene. Anyone considering using this method should be cognisant of its potential to evoke strong emotions and plan around how to support the participants should the need arise. Furthermore, it is important for researchers using this method to be sensitive to participants' emotions and to have a strategy of counselling and care in place.

The river metaphor fits well within the broader theme of landscapes in this study. The landscape theme emerged during the study and is reflected already in the title of the study and in Chapters 3 and 4. The image of a river running through a landscape is a helpful metaphor for imagining the life stories of participants as moving through a particular contextual and theoretical landscape. However, rivers might not be the best metaphor for the telling of a story, as will be seen in some of the NTWs stories (Chapters 6 & 7), where participants used other metaphors to describe some parts of their experiences.

Self-Interview

Interviewing is a common method of data generation in qualitative studies, but how does one interview oneself? Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) describe a self-interview in autoethnography as follows: "An autoethnographic self-interview involves dialogue between one's past and present selves, at times actively with others" (p. 69). In other words, various tools are used to dialogue with one's past experiences. Including others in those conversations can be a helpful way of remembering.

One way in which I dialogued with myself was through the personal reflections in the blog. Another approach was to get another researcher to interview me. The benefits of having someone else in the discussion is that they enable you to see your story from an outside perspective and so add valuable insights that you would not otherwise have noticed. Hence, I drew my river of life and then asked my supervisor to interview me using the drawing. The conversation was audio-taped so that the discussion could be analysed later. Although the intent of the interview was to tell and write my story, active participation in the interview also became a type of pilot interview for me, giving me a sense of what it would be like to interview participants using this method.

Document Analysis

To supplement the river of life drawings, the participants were asked to provide me with a copy of their curriculum vitae (CV) and a document analysis of this was conducted. Bowen (2009, p. 27) defines document analysis as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material."

The CVs provided me with the more traditional way of analysing a career in that I was able to plot out the timelines for their professional journeys. They also provided some of the biographical detail that was possibly not identified during the telling of their stories.

Focus Group

A focus group is a method for collecting qualitative data from a group of people in which discussions are held amongst the participants and it is assumed that the group interaction itself will generate rich data that might not emerge from individual interviews with participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2017).

Barbour (2018) warns that the limitations of using focus group sessions to develop narratives of participants is that there is a lot of 'noise' from different participants that can make it difficult to establish a storyline. However, the purpose of the focus group in this study was not to elicit the participants' stories (which was done through other data generation methods) but rather to go beyond their stories and gain insight from them about the broader topic of the learning of NTWs in a South African context. I also hoped the focus group discussion would help answer the last part of the research puzzle about possible implications for organisations and for individuals.

One focus group session of about 90 minutes took place and is described in more detail under Phase 3 below.

Three Phases of Data Generation

The methods used to generate data have been described above. This next section outlines the way the data generation progressed in three phases, while demonstrating which of the methods above were used in each phase.

It should be noted that although the word phases have been used here, that does not mean that the phases were linear. Rather, the data generation and construction of the narratives took place in a messy and iterative way. So, for example, in this study, the data generation described in these first two phases was not purely linear in time but rather interwoven. I started with my story as a natural way to start the process. However, I did not complete my story before starting to collect data from the other participants. Likewise, although most of the stories were constructed prior to Phase 3 taking place, the reflexive nature of focus groups and of sharing of stories and ideas also contributed to the narratives of the participants.

Phase 1: Development of My Story

The first phase of data collected was about my career and workplace learning. The process is outlined in Table 2 below, but with reference to the methods that have just been described above.

TABLE 2: GENERATION OF MY STORY

CV analysis	**River of life drawing**	**Self-Interview**	**Story construction**
I developed a timeline graphic / chronology of critical events changes and developments in my professional life using my CV.	I used the timeline as a starting point to create (draw) a river of life drawing.	I discussed my river of life drawing with my supervisor. The dialogue assisted me with the construction of my story and acted as a pilot interview, helping me envision what interviewing the other participants would be like.	I constructed the story using my CV, the river of life drawing and my reflections from my blog
Field Notes / Personal Reflections: Reflexive field notes were taken using Blogger as a tool to record these reflections, as described above.			

Phase 2: Construction of Other Participants' Stories

The second phase of data generation involved the other five participants of the study. The process for collecting data from them was similar to how I collected data and constructed my story and has been summarised in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3: GENERATION OF OTHER PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

Informed Consent	**Document analysis/CVs**	**River of life interviews**	**Construction of the stories**
Initial discussions were held with potential participants about the study and their willingness to be participants. The project was explained and they agreed to participate. They all chose that their names to be used in the study rather than using pseudonyms.	CVs were useful in the construction of the participants' stories as they provided chronological and biographic detail.	River of life drawings and the interviews were mostly conducted during one interview session of about 90 minutes. It took some time for the construction of the drawings, and then the interview portion took about an hour.	The CVs, river of life drawings and the reflexive notes were used to construct the participants' stories.
Field Notes / Personal Reflections: Reflexive field notes were taken using Blogger as a tool to record these reflections, as described above.			

I used the CVs, the river of life drawings and the transcripts from the interview to write the narratives. CVs provided a more formal depiction of their stories including timelines, education and employment details. The river of life drawings provided a more creative tool to initiate conversations about important events and experiences that had occurred along the way and to draw out the nuances and complexities of learning. Sections of the transcripts were also used to depict their stories.

The participants' stories were co-created in that I often used their own words in the stories. Once I had written their stories, I asked them to read them for accuracy and make adjustments, corrections or add in detail.

Phase 3: Focus Group

For the third phase of the data generation, I wanted to bring all the participants together for a focus group session. I planned to conduct this session once most of the story

constructions were complete. Unfortunately, due to health challenges I experienced during the study, there was a significant delay before this session could be conducted. Furthermore, in the time that had elapsed since the river of life interviews took place, Brendon had emigrated to the UK, Sagie had fully retired for health reasons and so was not able to participate and Ashira was very pregnant with her second child. Hence, I planned to do the session using the Zoom micro-conferencing application.

The next challenge was finding a suitable time for all participants to meet. Even that posed considerable challenges, where one participant could only meet during the week and another could only meet on a Saturday. Thus, I had to do my best in the given situation and I conducted a focus group session with three of the five participants (Brendon, Leigh and Russel) and then met separately with Ashira for a discussion of the same issues later. Hence, the focus group session was not without its challenges.

The focus group session was the third phase of data generation because I wanted the participants to have first told me their career and workplace learning stories, and to have read my accounts of their stories. From their stories, I did a preliminary content analysis, identifying possible themes about the learning of NTWs. Those preliminary themes formed the basis of our discussion, as I asked them to identify what resonated, or didn't resonate with them. In doing this, I wanted to bring in some insight and wisdom that other NTWs had gained through their experiences of being this type of worker. In this sense, I involved the participants in my analysis, ensuring that the themes developed made sense to them, in keeping with interpretivist studies (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) .

To prepare them for the focus group session, I asked them to read through the themes and to reflect on the four questions I wanted to discuss. These two documents can be seen in Annexure B.

Following the input from the focus group session, I refined the themes, some were discarded, while others I was able to elaborate on. The final themes are presented in Chapters 8 and 9.

How Data were Generated for each Research Question

Table **4** is an overview of how the various data generation methods were used to answer the research puzzles (questions).

TABLE 4: DATA GENERATION FOR THE RESEARCH PUZZLE / QUESTIONS

Research Puzzle Questions	Data Generation Method used
1. What is my career journey (story) that has brought me to be a non-traditional worker? a. What processes and sources of learning have contributed to becoming this type of worker? b. How have identities been shaped or influenced on my career journey?	• Document analysis of CV • River of life drawing and self-interview • Field notes/Personal reflections
2. What are the career journeys (stories) of other non-traditional workers? a. What processes and sources of learning have contributed to them becoming this type of worker? b. How have identities been shaped or influenced on these career journeys?	• Document analysis of CV • River of life drawings and interviews • Field notes/Personal reflections focus group
3. What implications does learning in such changing and flexible contexts have for individuals and organisations in a 21st century South African context?	• Focus group • Themes from the findings

Analysis of the Data

My experience of qualitative data analysis in my master's study and now this doctoral study is that it defies a simplistic step-by-step approach, due in part to the very iterative nature of the process. However, there is the need to be transparent and to document the methods used to analyse and interpret data. Henning's (2004) outline of content analysis has been used to report the analysis process, summarised into the table below and then explained in more detail following the table. Henning's (2004) data analysis involves increasing levels of abstraction from the original data. However, in this study they are not always presented as different steps. For example, within one chapter, and even within one theme, there are elements of content analysis, discourse analysis, interpretation and theorising.

Below is Table 5 which has been adapted from Henning (2004) with some additions from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Bauer and Gaskell (2000)

TABLE 5: DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

	Stage/Level of Analysis	Description
1	Organising and preparing data for analysis	A filing system was developed to organise the data. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The focus group was audio-recorded and discussion points were documented on a virtual white board that was used during the online discussion. Familiarising self with data (includes transcription) (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
2	Thick descriptions/ Participant stories (Chapters 6 & 7)	Thick descriptions in the form of narratives were constructed as explained earlier under "Construction of the stories" using CV analysis, river of life drawings and in-depth interviews. These narratives included the use of verbatim citations from transcripts (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000).
3	Content/Thematic analysis (Inductive analysis) (Chapters 8 & 9)	Transcripts were coded to generate categories and then themes (Henning, 2004) linked to the content of the interview (literal meaning).
4	Discourse analysis (Inductive analysis) (Chapters 8 & 9)	Transcripts were analysed and coded for symbolic use of language, metaphors or imagery to explore meaning at another level (Henning, 2004).
5	Theorising/ Discussion of data using theoretical frameworks (Deductive analysis) (Chapters 8 & 9)	The two theoretical frameworks were used as lenses to interpret and understand the NTWs' stories and to consider what theory says about the data and what the data says about theory.
6	Discussion of key research questions (Chapter 10)	The answers to the key research questions were discussed and developed more explicitly using the earlier stages of analysis (stages 2 to 6 above).

Organising Data

The first stage of organising and preparing data for analysis is crucial, particularly when a large amount of data is collected, as was the case in this study. This stage facilitates both the quality and the management of the data generation and analysis processes. Organising and preparing the data for analysis includes transcribing of the interviews into text form. I conducted the interviews and transcribed the interviews, which helped me to get to know the data well, which is an essential early step in qualitative analysis.

Writing Stories / Thick Descriptions

In stage two the transcripts, river of life drawings and CVs were used to write each participant's story. The stories are presented in Chapters 6 and 7. In many instances the participants' actual words were used in the telling of their stories. This happened more with some participants than others. Initially the stories were written in full detail, but later another layer of analysis took place as the stories were edited down to be more concise. For some of the stories this refining and revising process took place more than once, especially for the stories that were particularly long and detailed.

The use of the CVs as well as the river of life drawings to write the stories was helpful. The CVs helped to map out the factual details and dates of various events and experiences and when they took place, but the river of life method helped identify the detail, nuance and emotions of their stories in a way that a CV cannot do.

Content Analysis

Following this, a content analysis was done, which involved breaking the transcript into units of meaning (open coding) and then using those codes to generate categories and eventually themes (Henning, 2004). To identify themes, I selected one of the participant's transcripts and did a detailed level of content analysis to identify preliminary codes and categories. The transcript chosen for this part of the analysis was one that had particularly strong and detailed insights into learning of NTWs, which enabled me to undertake an intensive initial analysis to identify codes and categories. From those initial codes and categories, the other transcripts were analysed in a more global way. However, the analysis process is iterative and involved going back and forth between the original transcripts and the codes to ensure a thorough analysis of data.

Reading through the transcripts and the stories enabled me to identify key words and ideas which I wrote onto post-it notes and assembled on large sheets of paper (A3 or A2) to get a sense of what was taking place across all the stories. I used those 'posters' to identify preliminary themes. Quotes from participant interviews or aspects of their stories were identified to support the categories and were used in the telling of their stories in Chapters 6 and 7.

I wanted to glean as much insight as possible from the other participants about being this type of worker. Hence, as has been reported about the focus group session, I used the preliminary themes I had identified as the discussion points, asking my co-participants which themes they related to and which ones they didn't. This was not about gaining consensus but rather to hear various perspectives about what I had identified and to see what resonated most for them. It was a way of me being able to check my analysis and my potential biases with my peers. Most of the themes were identified by various participants as useful, but some did not stand out and were set aside.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis involved a similar process to content analysis—identifying units of meaning (discourse markers) and then drawing meaning from those markers. The difference is that text was analysed for units of symbolic meaning through metaphors or language structures or deeper meanings than just the content of the text (Henning, 2004). For example, Russel used the phrase 'crafting a career', likening his career to being like a craft. As researcher, I found that analogy helpful and so brought it through, into the heading of Chapter 6, the chapter in which Russel's story is told.

Symbolic meaning was used through the river metaphor that the participants were asked to draw and to tell their stories. The river was an established metaphor at the start of the study, because of the use of the river of life method. Hence, it was used in a deductive sense. Other metaphors of land and space, such as waves and roads, were metaphors that arose inductively from the stories of the participants rather than from myself as researcher. The last section in Chapter 8 explores in more detail the use of metaphors of land and space, linked to landscapes.

Content analysis involved the literal meaning of the data, while discourse analysis considered symbolic meaning that arose from the participants stories.

Deductive Analysis / Theorising

A deductive analysis approach followed in Chapter 8 (TLT) and Chapter 9 (COP theory) as data were discussed in relation to the theoretical frameworks of the study.

Research Questions Answered

Finally, there was a discussion on how the research questions had been answered (Chapter 10). Although the previous stages of analysis (Chapters 6–9) contributed towards answering the key research questions, this discussion highlighted in a more direct and explicit way how the questions were answered.

It is important to reiterate here, as I did at the start of this section, that although the data analysis has been described in a step-by-step manner, the process was messy, non-linear and overlapping. Some of the analysis took place within the writing of the chapters where it was important just to get my ideas and thoughts down on paper. The writing became a layered process of changing and refining, writing and rewriting of each draft. For example, my first draft of Chapters 8 and 9 was not very different in style and content to Chapters 6 and 7. A second draft of those chapters yielded quite a different text, more in line with the final drafts in this dissertation but without the theorising that came with the next revision. Thus, an additional layer of 'revision' took place in bringing the theoretical and contextual discussions into these chapters. A significant part of the analysis of the data in this study took place through layers of writing. In keeping with the idea of quilting, new levels of understanding were stitched into the chapter with each revision of writing.

Ethics, Quality and Limitations

In bringing this methodological roadmap to an end, it is important to consider issues of ethics, quality and limitations in the study.

Ethical Issues

The independence of the participants of the study and the personal nature of their development journeys meant that it was necessary to get informed consent from each participant. However, consent from gatekeepers of organisations that participants work for was not necessary as the organisations were not participants nor the unit of analysis for the study. Pseudonyms were used for organisations that were mentioned by participants as part of their stories. The participants were given the choice whether to

remain anonymous or have their actual names used in the report. It is likely that even if pseudonyms were used, those who knew my workplaces may be able to identify the participants. These issues were discussed with participants prior to obtaining informed consent and all participants opted to have their actual names used instead of a pseudonym. Interviews with participants took place at suitable locations at times suited to their schedules but outside of any formally contracted working hours and places.

Before collecting data, informed consent was discussed with the participants. Their rights as well as the data generation plan and process were explained with an opportunity for them to consider whether they were willing to participate. They were able to ask questions of concern. Signed acknowledgement of their consent was given prior to any data being collected.

Ethical issues for autoethnography are different from other studies and some of these considerations, as pertained to this study, are discussed below. Autoethnographers have connections to the communities in which they study, and therefore need to take ethical consideration of this. Ellis and Adams (2014) and Ellis (2007, as cited in Ellis & Adams, 2014) refer to the ethics of autoethnography as *relational ethics*. By this they mean considering the people who will be implicated in your study, like family, friends or colleagues of participants, who might be recognisable in the way you construct your story. Ethical consideration therefore needed to be an ongoing process throughout the study as stories were constructed about others, or others were implicated in stories of the self. This might involve telling the story in a different way to conceal the identity of a person, or of getting consent from them to represent them in a particular way.

Throughout the study, and in particular when writing the stories (Chapters 1, 6 & 7), I was cognisant of issues of relational ethics. For example, in one of my anecdotes I reflect on my relationship with my mom, who forms part of my story but was not consulted as a participant. Likewise, in the other stories which follow in Chapters 6 and 7, familial relationships are identified, such as parents, children and spouses. However, the topic being studied and the telling of the stories of becoming and being this type of worker were not highly sensitive or likely to be problematic for participants' families.

In terms of my relationships with the participants, most of the time they discussed their stories with ease and enjoyment. However, there was a moment during my interview with one participant that I thought I might have pushed them too far in recalling difficult

childhood circumstances. I could tell they were quite emotional, and I was thinking about how to stop the interview, when they picked up the story again.

As Ellis and Adams (2014) point out, one also must consider the ethics of leaving the field of study. Having formed relationships with people for the purpose of my research, do I now have the right to end that relationship when I am finished with my research? My closeness to the study can result in the cultivation of close relationships and make it difficult to ever leave the field so to speak. In this study, I already had collegial relationships with some of the participants (Brendon and Leigh), others I met during the early parts of my study (Russel and Sagie) through various forums, and then much later I got to know Ashira. The involvement in a study like this does bring the researched close to the researcher as we discuss details of our career stories. Thus, I feel a closeness and connection to each of the participants, even though I don't see any of them often. When I do have an opportunity to connect with any of them again, we are able to pick up where we left off. Thus, I don't think there is any reason to be concerned about the relationships formed and forged through this study and that, if anything, it brought me into a closer relationship with each person.

Following on from the discussion on relational ethics, another measure that ensured an ethical approach was that each person had an opportunity to read my representations of their stories and were thus able to ask me to omit anything that made them uncomfortable. The step of getting participants to read their stories was helpful from an ethical as well as a quality perspective for the study. Once the study was concluded, a summary report was made available to all participants in which the findings of the study were presented to them.

Quality of the study

The traditional measures of quality for quantitative studies, validity and reliability are not suitable for a qualitative study because the aims or goals of what the study hopes to do and to claim are different. Various qualitative researchers have suggested suitable alternative measures to ensure the quality and rigour of a study. My study was guided by that of Rule and John (2011) who have drawn on the principle of trustworthiness

proposed by Guba in 1981. The four measures of trustworthiness proposed are credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability.

Credibility: Credibility is about how believable the findings are and how congruent they are with reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2017). One way to ensure credibility is having a research design that fits the research questions. A qualitative research design has been set out in this chapter and lends itself to creative ways of talking and thinking about workplace learning that are coherent with the purposes of the study.

Dependability: The focus of dependability is on ensuring methodological rigour and coherence across the study. The goal is to produce findings that can be accepted with confidence by the research community (Rule & John, 2011). Being able to provide a detailed account of methods contributed towards dependability (Nieuwenhuis, 2017).

Transferability: Transferability is about whether a reader of the research can make connections between the study and their own context. Thus, transferability is reader dependent (Nieuwenhuis, 2017). The researcher's responsibility is to provide a full and detailed description of the contexts of the study and how typical the participants of the study are to the contexts being studied.

Confirmability: Confirmability addresses concerns about the influence or biases that the researcher might have on the study (Rule & John, 2011). Confirmability can be enhanced by fully disclosing the research process, limitations and positionality of the study, which I believe I have done through this chapter.

Rule and John (2011) propose four practical ways that the above measures of trustworthiness can be ensured in a qualitative study, as outlined below.

Thick Descriptions:

First introduced by Clifford Geertz in 1973, a thick description means an account of an experience, action or event expressed in detail, which tries to capture a sense of being in the experience (Rule & John, 2011). My story (Chapter 1) and the stories of the other participants (Chapters 6 & 7) to follow are thick descriptions in this study. There are also other short stories or anecdotes at various places in the dissertation that are thick descriptions that enhance the value and understanding of the phenomenon.

Verifying Accounts with Participants:

Verifying accounts with participants is also called member checking and refers to asking participants to read their stories once they have been written (Rule & John, 2011), which I did. Thus, participants were able to check the accuracy of my account of their story and ask for various information to be edited, added or left out. This is an important step from an ethical as well as a quality perspective.

Audit Trail to Trace Findings:

An audit trail, recommended by Bassey in 1999, involves a researcher demonstrating (showing explicitly) how the findings (themes) can be traced back to the original data in the transcripts (Rule & John, 2011). Being able to trace the way back to the data means that the data need to be well organised, labelled and stored. The audit trail was enhanced in their stories (Chapters 6 & 7), as rich quotes from their interviews were used in the construction of their stories. In Chapters 8 and 9 it was possible to identify anecdotes from participants' stories to support the themes identified.

Crystallisation

To conclude this section on quality, a brief mention should be made of crystallisation. Rule and John (2011) state that crystallisation is about understanding the multifaceted nature of reality which is revealed by using additional sources and methods for data generation. By bringing multiple data sources together, a more complex multifaceted representation of the phenomenon is gained, the way a crystal has many sides to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

In this study, multiple methods were used to construct and analyse the stories and experiences of participants and gain insights from NTWs of different age, race and gender, bringing a richness and complexity to the phenomenon being studied.

Limitations

Every study has a scope and boundaries on what it can do, as well as what it cannot do. Hence, it is important to delineate the study and be clear about what it claims or does not claim to do (Rule & John, 2011). This section on limitations helps to accomplish that for this study.

As a small-scale qualitative study, with a small scope and sample size, this study does not claim to project the findings onto a wider population. I cannot be sure that a different set of participants would yield the same results. It is likely and possible that similar

findings would emerge from a similar study done elsewhere, or with a bigger sample, but this study does not claim that it will.

The strength and intent of this study is that it has been a way to explore the depth, complexities, nuances, richness and learning of participants. However, the study is very context bound (contexts of time, place, sociality and culture) and although it could have applicability to other contexts, it does not make claims outside these contexts.

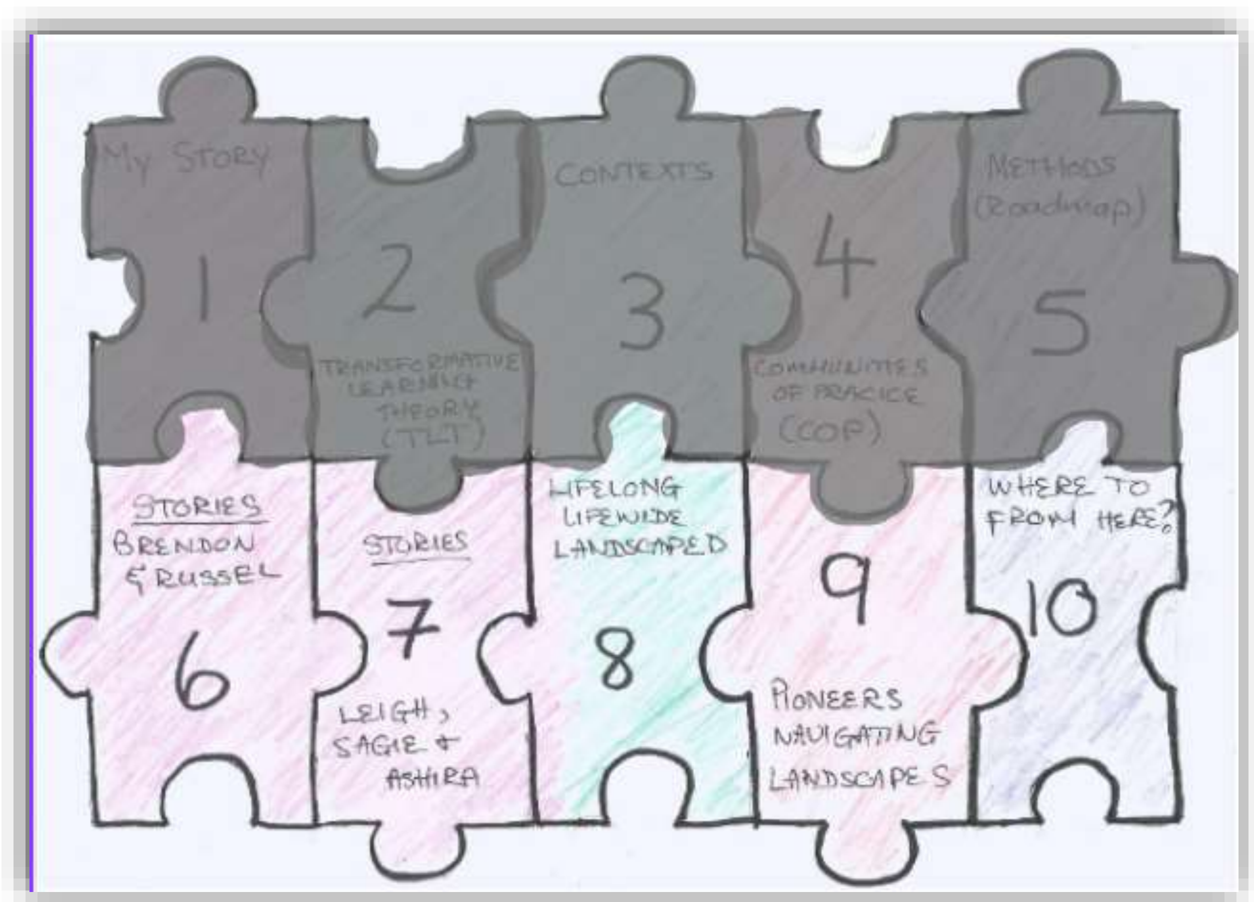
The narrative autoethnography methodology described earlier placed me at the centre of the study. While that positioning afforded me a unique and personal perspective of the phenomenon, it limited my ability to step aside from the study and look at it objectively.

Summing up the Chapter

This chapter started with an anecdote about when my mindset about what counts as research was challenged, and set the stage for me to set out the epistemology and ontology of the study in a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm. I noted how TLT was a useful lens to explain the mindshifts that needed to take place for me to transition from being a biochemist, to being an adult education specialist and to doing a study of the self. My methodological position of doing a narrative autoethnography was described. The chapter then moved to the more practical aspects of how the study was conducted as the data generation and analysis methods were described. The last part of the chapter outlined issues of ethics and quality and considered the limitations of the study.

Interlude 5: A Picture of the Puzzle (Chapters 6–10)

In Interlude 2, I presented the first five chapters of this study as a picture of the puzzle. This interlude does the same for the last five chapters. When doing a jigsaw puzzle, there are many times that one looks at the puzzle picture on the front of the box, and then goes back to the detail of putting puzzle pieces together. Thus, to solve the puzzle we move between looking at the big picture and then looking at the detail of each puzzle piece. In a similar way, Interlude 2 and this interlude provide the big picture of the study. Chapters 1–5 were the foundational chapters, setting the stage for the answers to the research puzzles in Chapters 6–10, which are briefly described below.



Chapter 6 - What Career are you Crafting?

Chapter 6 tells the career stories of how Brendon and Russel are crafting their careers as they work in non-traditional ways. It was Russel who first used the term ‘crafting a career’ to describe how his career as an arts administrator is evolving and changing over time, likening the process to doing a craft. This is not unlike the metaphor of a collage that was used in Chapter 5. There is

an element of planning, but the plan is more emergent than predefined. In a similar vein to these two stories, my story, in Chapter 1 was also likened to doing a craft.

Chapter 7 - What Career are you Constructing?

The idea of constructing a career is that there seems to be a lot more planning needed for a construction than for a craft. Constructions need plans, there needs to be a reasonable level of certainty prior to the construction beginning. Not every detail has been mapped out, so there is some room for change, but the initial construction needs to take place in order to practice in the chosen profession. In this study, Leigh, Sagie and Ashira studied towards a particular profession and remained in that discipline. Their formal studies had to be pursued for them to register as a psychologist (Leigh), a teacher and education leader (Sagie) and a lawyer (Ashira). They might have had multiple identities and different roles, but they continued to work within the main discipline in which they studied. Hence, I see their career developments as more like a construction process than a crafting process.

Chapter 8 – Lifelong, Life-Wide and Landscaped / Living Landscapes

Chapter 8 moves from the telling of the stories towards the interpretation of those stories. The first part of this chapter explores the notions of lifelong and life-wide learning of the NTWs. The important role of lifelong and life-wide learning was highlighted in Chapter 3 and now extends into Chapter 8, identifying how the participants learned in different ways along the trajectories of their careers (lifelong) and in all areas of their lives and work (life-wide learning). Lifelong and life-wide learning are crucial for adult learning, especially for NTWs who are not formally positioned within organisations.

The second part of the chapter considers how a range of metaphors linked to land and space work together to understand the complex learning environments of NTWs. The metaphors depict a living landscape, one that is moving, changing and evolving over time and has been named "A montage of metaphors". The living landscape also represents the three-dimensional space characteristic of a narrative inquiry.

Chapter 9 – Pioneers Navigating Landscapes

The stories of the NTWs demonstrated that their work often involves undefined roles, or uncharted territory, much like pioneers. Hence the chapter starts with a discussion on how the NTWs in this study are charting their way as pioneers in their respective landscapes. Three aspects of their learning journeys are discussed as themes in this chapter. Firstly, these pioneers

learn through experience and develop transferable skills as they work. Secondly, they learn to manage multiplicity as they work across multiple projects, companies and identities at once. Multiple identities are established rather than a single career identity. Thirdly, NTWs work in a culture of risk and reward.

Chapter 10 – What have we Learned?

This chapter brings the thesis to a close, reflecting on what has been learned through the methodology, the theoretical frameworks and on how the research puzzles (questions) have been answered. Contributions towards scholarship are summarised here and an afterword considers possible directions for future research about the workplace learning of NTWs.

Chapter 6: What Career are you Crafting?

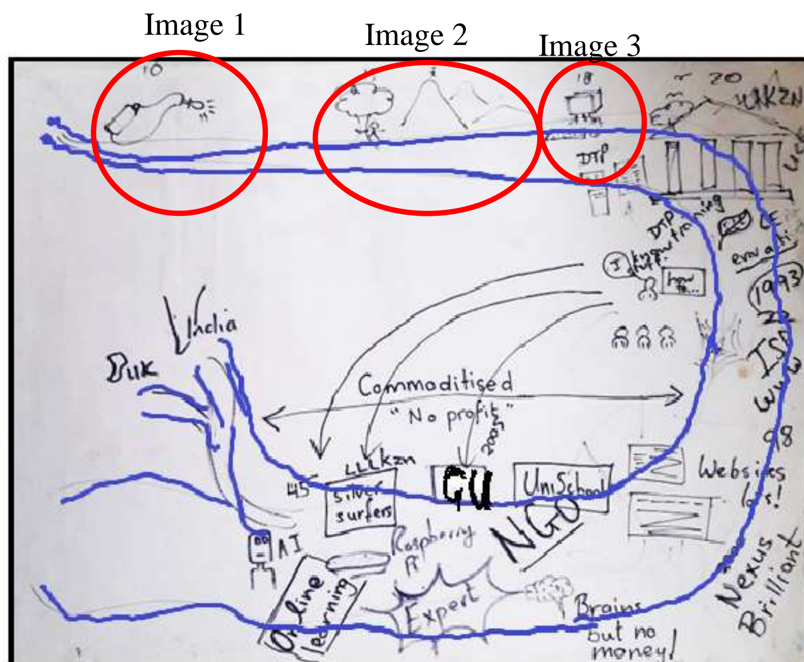
PART 1: Surfing the Technology Waves (Brendon's Story)

Brendon is a particularly good example of a NTW. He described himself at ten-years old as a tinkerer—incredibly inquisitive about how things worked. Throughout his schooling and university studies he was involved in multiple activities at one time, starting his first small business while studying.

Brendon's parents modelled two quite different ways of working. His mother was in full-time permanent employment for her whole working life. His dad started off formally employed, but in a wide range of jobs, including a veterinary pharmaceutical manufacturer and a newspaper typesetter. Due to some personal health challenges, he was no longer able to work in structured environments and, since then, his work has included selling garden furniture, running a small transport company and being a water diviner.

Brendon's river of life can be seen in Drawing 4. The drawing illustrates the diversity of his interests and activities. The river can hardly be seen under all the other images and hence has been highlighted in blue, starting in the top left corner and ending at the bottom left corner. Two big bends signify significant changes of direction.

Drawing 4: Brendon's River of Life



The metaphor of a river has been integral to this study and been useful to understand the progression of stories over time. However, Brendon uses the metaphor of waves and surfing to explain for some aspects of his story, hence the story title “Surfing the Technology Waves”.

1981–1989: Childhood & Teens—Tinkerer

As a child, Brendon spent a large amount of his time tinkering (Drawing 4, Image 1) and says:

> *Around the age of ten, I was a tinkerer. I used to spend* ***hours*** *[his emphasis] taking things apart and putting them back together again… Connecting bulbs to batteries, … that is what I did—it took huge amounts of my time.*

Drawing 4 – Image 2, at age 15, is of trees and mountains as Brendon loved the outdoors and he spent significant time at scout camps and hiking. He continued his involvement in scouts as an adult and through it learned about leadership, the outdoors, first aid and cooking.

Brendon’s first access to computers was through his school in the late 1980s where he could use a computer for about 40 minutes a week. He enjoyed working with computers from the outset and he saved up to buy his first machine, which he did when he was 18 (See Drawing 4, Image 3). Thus, he was an early adopter of computers.

1990–1998: Formal Tertiary Studies and Other Interests

In 1990 Brendon started his tertiary studies at UKZN, studying Biology, Geography and Environmental Sciences. These choices reflected his interests in the outdoors. He completed his first degree in 1992, an Honours degree in 1993 in Geographical and Environmental Sciences, followed by a Master’s in Geographical and Environmental Sciences from 1994 to 1998. During this nine-year period, besides his full-time formal studies, Brendon was active in several other projects, including being an environmental activist in a non-profit organisation, where he took a leadership role as the Chairperson for two years.

During this time, Brendon started his first business, in desktop publishing (DTP) making brochures, business cards and wedding invitations for clients. He attributes the success of this business to it being an era when most people had little access to computers as well as skills to use them. He explained:

This work was really as a result of the fact that computers were still rare. Most of what I did back then would nowadays just be a tiny bit of creative layout in Microsoft Word! Back then, as rare as hen's teeth!

This is the first example of Brendon being just ahead of a technology wave and thus able to offer business services and skills that were not readily available at the time. Brendon attributes his initial interest in DTP and design to his father's work at Natal Newspapers and the exposure it gave him to design, layout and fonts. Even though the newspapers did not use computers at the time, the concepts of print media and design had interested Brendon. He said he 'imbibed' knowledge from his father. His use of the word imbibed paints a vivid impression of how thirsty he was to learn.

This is how he described that time:

So, my dad brought home pieces of the lead (metal) type that was used to produce newspapers. He made me a stamp of my own name. We also discussed fonts, page layout etc.

Brendon was also able to develop skills in design through a student movement on campus, learning about press training, media training and photography.

Around 1993, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) started to become more accessible and many people who had previously not had access to the Internet now needed to learn to use it. This need created another opportunity for Brendon—he was just ahead of the technology wave, having taught himself to use the Internet. He recounted that time here:

I was a real hippie, long hair, bare foot, tie-died clothing—spent all my time in trees and at the same time I was getting more and more involved in technology …I was doing magazines, brochures, and stuff and then in 1993 we got the Internet, ISPs and we got the Web and so I started teaching my own lecturers how to use search engines. I made my own flyers, stuck them up. The flyers said: "Do you want to know how to use the world-wide-web?" Because only postgraduate students and academics had access to the web, I invariably ended up teaching my own lecturers.

Everyone wanted to train—they needed to use the web and therefore they needed know how to use computers—that was the dynamic—it was boom time and I really enjoyed it.

The adult education department at UKZN saw the flyers Brendon had put up and approached him about running courses for them and people started to come in for

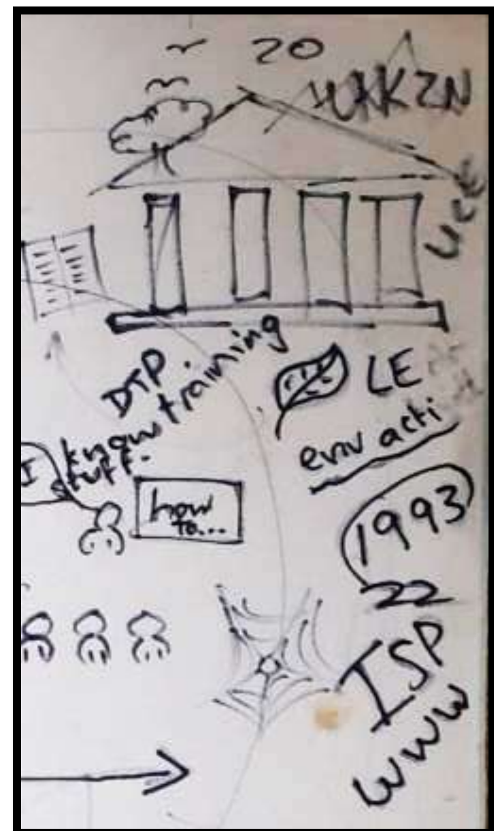
training. Through this channel, Brendon gained much training experience because of his early adoption of computer-based technologies. He knew so much because he sat at his computer all day, every day, playing. Brendon calls this playing a digital form of tinkering and explained what this involves:

> *Tinkering for me involves undirected, purposeless exploration that leads to an emerging result that I didn't anticipate or seek. Eventually I ended up with a toolbox of computer skills that could be purposefully directed towards meeting the needs of my clients, but that is largely by accident rather than design.*

Here, Brendon described a learning process that was exploratory and emergent in nature. He went on to explain how this training developed:

> *I started by wanting to teach people how to use the web and email. However, many of them had never had a need to use a computer before, so I had to start by teaching them how to use a computer interface. Then realised that they didn't know about file systems and how to type. So, my curriculum developed backwards from higher level skills to the fundamentals!*

DRAWING 4A: ENVIRONMENTALIST TO COMPUTER EXPERT



Using the surfing metaphor, there was a wave of interest in learning how to use computers and to surf the web. Because Brendon had such extensive knowledge about computers and the Internet, he was able to catch the wave and gain extensive experience as an educator.

The narrative above illustrates how, even during his formal studies, Brendon was tinkering with other things, gaining experience in business and in training and involved in multiple projects at one time, typical of a NTW, and discussed further in Chapters 9.

Drawing 4A above is how Brendon illustrated his story during this period, showing the university building at the top, his formal studies, but including pictures of his environmental interests, his DTP training as well as the introduction of ISPs and the world wide web.

At this point, Brendon's river drawing has a big bend which he described as follows:

> *The unanticipated bend in the river took me away from being an environmental activist or game ranger towards the world of technology. The Unit for Continuing Education (UCE) at UKZN effectively incubated my business, without me knowing what business incubation was, or even thinking that I was building a business.*
>
> *It became a conscious thing in 1998, when I decided to leave the university … and set up my own business.*

Brendon had become very comfortable in the geography department, where he was working on his master's qualification, but also doing small business activities, like the training and web design described earlier. His skills were in high demand at the time, and he was riding the technology wave. His small training business had started quite organically, but had grown, with more and more clients coming to his office from outside of the university, and so he left the university and started working from a home office.

The skills Brendon had developed in DTP, computers and as a trainer were the building blocks for his career in website design and for his subsequent lecturing work.

1998–2000: Specialising in Building Websites

The Internet started in 1992 but there were not enough users in South Africa to justify building websites but, from 1998, the demand increased. However, the demand was still primarily for organisations that had an overseas market, as the Internet was more accessible in developed countries. Once again, as an early adopter of technology, Brendon had invaluable skills that were in demand and he was positioned well to catch the wave of website design. Brendon explained:

> *In the early stages of my business, while still working out of UKZN offices, I did very general work—if it had anything to do with computers, I did it, but from 1998, I really started to specialize in websites. At the moment [2016] I administer … I would guess about 100 websites, but I'd guess I've probably built about 1000 websites in total. So that has been a lot of my work.*

Despite this success, Brendon had significant challenges with business partners. In his first business he was in partnership with what he calls a bunch of *skelms* (crooks). He was working extremely hard but not being well remunerated, and so he ended up with nothing to show for it. In addition to his business failing, Brendon had married some time before that, and this business failure (around 2000) coincided with a divorce. Although the divorce was not linked to the business, it was a challenging time for him in all areas of his life. He says that the company shrank, and he also literally shrank (lost weight) and became gaunt. After this business collapsed, Brendon started another web design business, Brilliant Web, still owned and managed by him at the time of the interview.

2000–2015: Brains but no Money/ Lecturing and Business

Over this period, Brendon lived out two strong professional identities, namely business owner and educator. In addition to his work with Brilliant Web, Brendon took on some computer-related training with a small training provider. Brendon developed his educator's identity further when in 2005 he started lecturing at GU. He had married again, and his first daughter was born about eight months after he started lecturing at GU.

Brendon accredits his career in training due to knowing things about technology and being a little ahead of his audience; he observed:

> *My training career comes because I know stuff and I am five minutes ahead of my audience, or five years ahead of my audience.*

He was ahead of his audience because of his insatiable curiosity to understand how things worked and from spending hours playing around on his computer learning first-hand how they worked. Brendon taught himself through play and experimentation how information technologies worked. When I got to know him during this period, I used to call him my ''Tech Guru" because of his wealth of knowledge about technology. I would ask him for advice on what printer to purchase, or what cell phone make and model he would recommend.

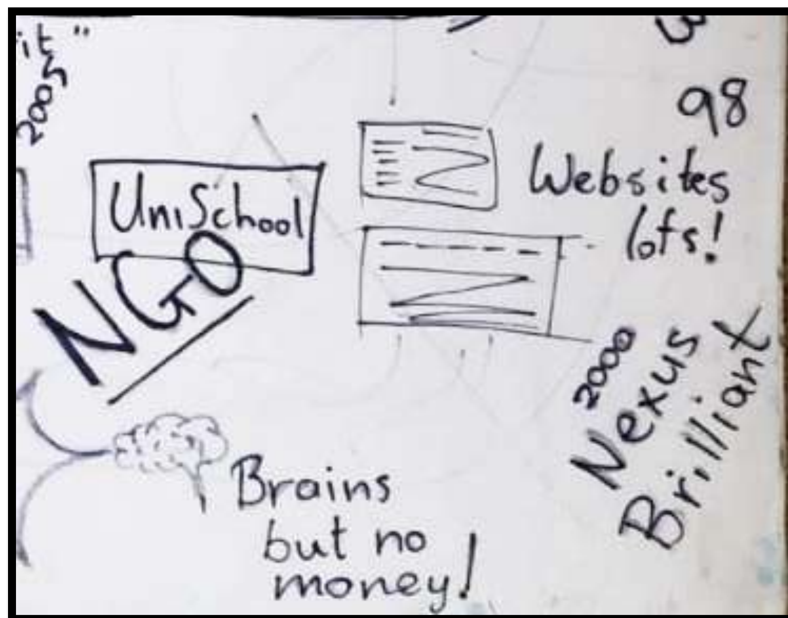
In addition to his development of technology expertise, his identity as an educator was developing as he was learning through experience how to teach. Brendon was limited in the level he could teach at tertiary level because of his qualifications at the time, teaching the module End-user-computing in the IT diploma. Based on his exposure to computers and as an early adopter of technology, he was skilled and experienced enough to teach the module. Later, the organisation aligned themselves to national and

international standards and, to continue teaching the module, Brendon obtained formal qualifications to be a Microsoft Application Specialist and Microsoft Office Specialist. Those certificates were a formality rather than a demonstration of competence.

Brendon fully embraced his lecturer identity, while he continued with his web design business. Unfortunately, he had another bad experience with a business partner who was not trustworthy and absconded, leaving Brendon with large debt that he was still paying off at the time of the interview.

Brendon says of this stage of his career that he was working hard in his business as well as in lecturing, but his hard work was not having good financial return. He described this time in Drawing 4B below with the phrase “Brains but no money”, meaning his work was intellectually stimulating, but not matched with financial reward.

Drawing 4B: Brains But No Money



His dual identities as lecturer and entrepreneur were strong, but the time demands that both ventures required meant he was not able to focus on either one fully. He was being pulled in two directions and had to make the difficult decision about where to focus his time and energy. So, despite being passionate about teaching, Brendon left lecturing to focus on his business, which had greater potential to meet his financial needs.

2015–2016: Focus on the Business

By the time I interviewed Brendon for this study, he had been working solely on his business for about a year. When I arrived to interview him, I thought he was looking well.

When I asked him if things were going well in terms of his decision to focus only on the business, he responded saying that he had not been hungry for a year. His response confirmed my initial impression that he looked as though he had put on some weight and was looking healthier and I took that to mean that things were better financially.

Despite being singularly focused on the business now and not having to divide his time between business and lecturing, he was still doing a wide range of different projects within the business, which fitted well with Brendon's early history of being a tinkerer and being curious about how things worked.

Like me, Brendon had studied in one discipline, but had made his career in another, so I was interested to know if there was any way that his formal qualification had been used in his new career. He told me that a fundamental part of the pedagogy of his master's qualification had influenced his work. His qualification in the geography department in the 1990s was intentionally designed to be cross-disciplinary in nature, and designed to build both specialist knowledge but also to build cross-discipline boundaries so that students could see how different parts fit together.

Brendon explained that the academic staff in the department were very overt about this design of their qualification, describing how they took all the postgraduate students on a week-long excursion. For the first three days they split them into groups according to their areas of specialty. Then, for two days they worked in cross-disciplinary teams. On the final day they all worked together to review what they had learned. In this way they managed to bring people together across a range of subject areas and who would not normallytalk to each other. An exercise like this helped the students see the value of being a cross-disciplinary specialist. Brendon said that the way this formal qualification was designed undergirds the way he works now: he is good at working across multiple contexts or disciplines and able to see the connections between them.

The End of the Web-Design Wave

Brendon started his business in an organic and incidental manner while he was still studying formally. Because he was ahead of the wave in web design, he was able to ride it for close to two decades. By the time I interviewed him (2016), he said that the web design wave was over for him. Younger, less experienced people were undercutting him significantly so he could no longer compete. He explained that this was in part due to newer technologies and availability of free basic web design software and that new entrants could quickly learn the necessary skills.

Thus, Brendon was trying to establish a new identity for himself as a business software consultant rather than a website developer. He was trying to separate out the software conceptualisation from the actual building of the software. He wanted to focus on the things that he was good at (such as a holistic vision for a company's IT needs) and outsource the heavy building aspects of web-design to a team he worked with in India.

Diverse Business Projects and Interests

Brendon's curiosity about life, learning, education and IT shows in the wide range of projects that he is doing now in his business, which can be clustered into four areas, as will be briefly described below.

Work with Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs)

Brendon described how he supported about five different NPOs in a holistic way with their IT needs. That support included internet marketing, website development, system development, database development and computer training for their staff. He found this work really rewarding and explained:

> *I really like working with NPOs, because it's got heart—it is about decent people, working for decent people doing decent things and they are completely upfront about their budgets. Their goal is to spend their money, not keep it; whereas, my small business clients never tell me how much they want to spend, they are always trying to squeeze me down to a lower cost and once I've done the work they are reluctant to pay.*

Brendon explained that NPOs need to spend their budgets due to funder requirements and funding cycles. It was a pleasure for him to work with these organisations as it was work that involved head as well as heart.

Raspberry Pi Innovations

A Raspberry Pi is a small, stripped-down, low-cost core of a computer which has no moving parts that can be used to build cost-effective computers. Brendon uses Raspberry Pi computers in a few ways to solve clients' problems. The most heart-warming example he described brought together his two core interests (education and IT) and skills, whereby he worked with the client, an under-resourced school in a rural area, to convert a 12-metre container into a classroom and set up several Raspberry Pi computers. He uploaded a large database of offline educational content from the Internet and trained the teachers to use the devices and resources so that they, in turn, could teach the children these skills. Thus, he had set up a system that simulates the

Internet. The pupils benefitted from many resources on the system, while learning skills needed to use the Internet.

Silver Surfers

It became clear through my conversation with Brendon that, despite leaving lecturing, his teacher identity had not left him. He was still involved in teaching computer skills to an audience that is primarily what he calls *The Silver Surfers*, to refer to older generations who are learning to surf the Internet. This is how he described it:

> *The metaphor I often use is that of surfers when they are trying to catch a wave. If they are there when the swell comes, they can pick it up and catch it… but the poor bugger who is closer into shore, turns around to a wall of water and gets knocked flat. So, I help those who are about to be knocked flat—especially the 'silver surfers' (older people). They love me and they love my courses, and it empowers them, and they can now do stuff and everyone wins. They are highly motivated. The problem is that I do not do it very often, about two courses a month at most.*

It is easy to see from Brendon's words that this type of training is something he would love to do more of as it is really rewarding.

Developing Online Learning Courses

Brendon's interest in developing online training courses also draws on his expertise in education (teaching) and technology. His interest is in developing (building) courses, such as onboarding (induction) courses. Induction courses are a good example of learning material businesses find helpful, as new employees are able to work their way through the content independently and in their own time.

Brendon explained that developing an online course requires set steps, some of which he outsources, but noted that this aspect of his work is a highly creative space whereby the client may not see the connections between the content and the tools available, but from a pedagogical perspective he is able to make the connections.

Drawing 4C: Range of Projects and Interests

Drawing 4C is from the bottom edge of the page of Brendon’s river of life drawing, showing the range of projects that have been outlined above. He also has a keen interest in AI and how it is disrupting businesses.

Brendon noted that, in his lifetime, AI has gone from a science fiction novel he read as a youngster to now when he is using AI systems every day. Explaining that Google uses machine learning (a type of AI) to help users to find the content that is as close as possible to what they were looking for, he then described how AI has developed so significantly that it is starting to disrupt businesses. One example is the use of AI to build investment robots that could provide excellent investment advice. The strength of the analysis that AI is now able to do, surpasses that of what a human is capable of.

Brendon’s inquisitive mind drew him into the possibilities of how some of the applications he has described might play out in the future when he said:

> *So, I’m interested in all these weird spaces and how they fit into future careers, future job opportunities, future business opportunities.*

Brendon’s story has illustrated the range of interests and disciplines in which Brendon works. He identified himself as a cross-disciplinary specialist, which will be picked up in more detail in Chapter 9.

By the end of the study…

… Brendon had moved to the UK with his family and was for the first time in a traditional work role, as an IT trainer in a construction company. Finding full-time, permanent work was the only viable way that he could move his family over to the UK. Despite having a

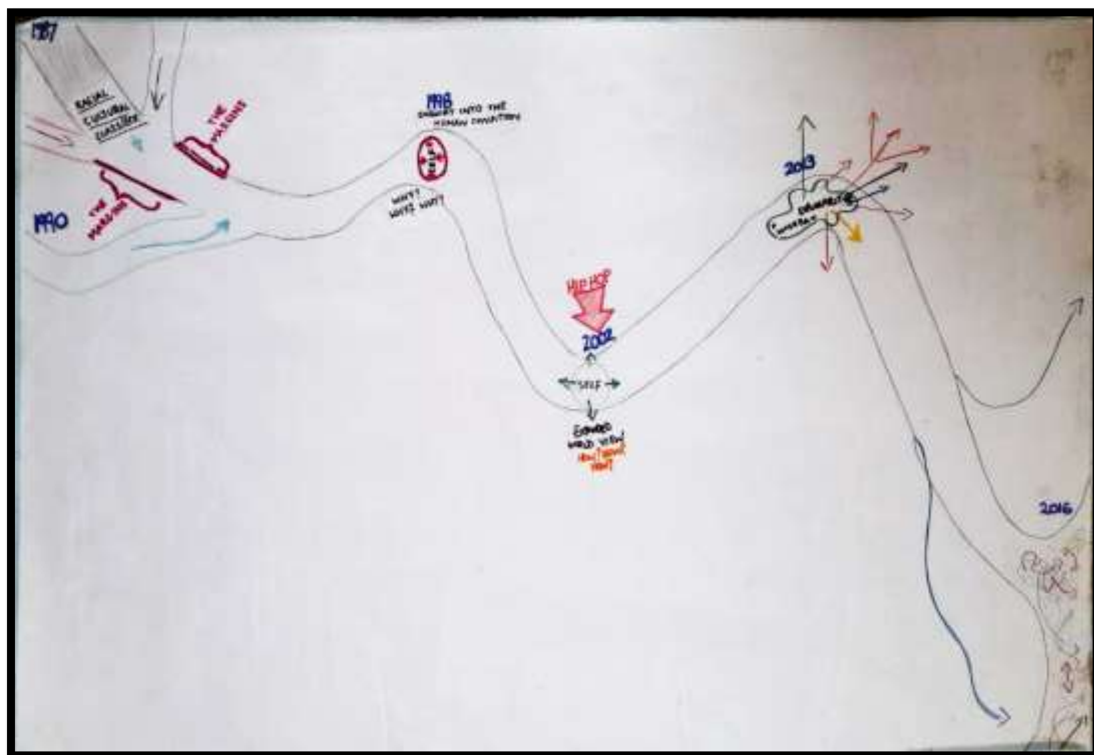
very strong leaning towards the NTW model, he was enjoying the financial stability that came with the traditional work role as well as having time and opportunity to still follow some of his other interests on a voluntary basis.
Brendon reflected on how different his South African experience of being an NTW was from his permanent employment in the UK. In the South African business, he was always working and never finished his work. In his permanent position in the UK, he was able to focus on the deliverables of his job, give them enough time and attention to do them well and his remuneration is ample to meet his needs.

PART 2: Hip-Hop Scholar Working at the Margins (Russel’s Story)

Russel is an African male in his early 30’s who identifies himself as a Hip-Hop scholar and an Arts Administrator. Before interviewing Russel, all I knew about Hip-Hop was that it was another genre of music. I had no idea about the rich cultural heritage of Hip-Hop and that it could be as influential in someone’s life as it was for Russel.

Russel’s river of life, Drawing 5, starts with the year of his birth, 1987, in the top left corner. There are three tributaries that come together and then a fourth, with the date 1990 that joins the river just slightly later. The river then continues for a while before making a big bend in 1998. That bend is followed by another two bends, 2002 and 2013. These bends in the river represent nodal points in Russel’s life. The river ends with an opening out/ expansion towards the bottom right of the page.

DRAWING 5: RUSSEL'S RIVER OF LIFE



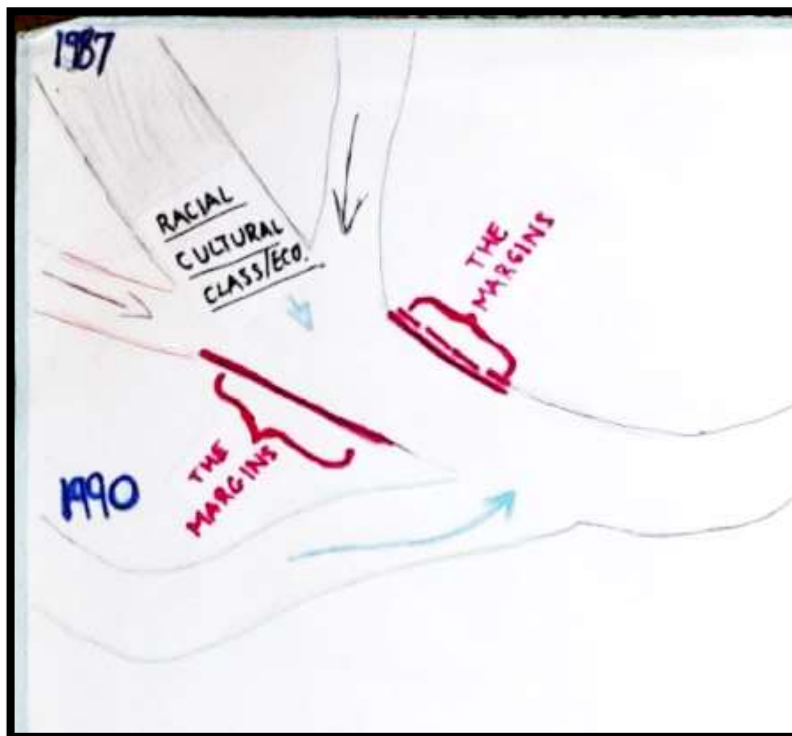
Russel’s mom was a domestic worker who lived on the property where she worked. Domestic work in South Africa needs some contextual background to fully understand Russel’s story. Domestic work stemmed from apartheid but has continued into post-apartheid South Africa. Domestic work is one of the main sources of employment for African women in South Africa (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019). It is also known to be one of oppression and exploitation, or what Maqubela (2016) calls the quintessentially

oppressed. The work usually involves an African woman cleaning and ironing for a white household. It often includes looking after other people's children while the worker's own children do not have sufficient attention or care. Domestic work is a livelihood rather than a career (Maqubela, 2016). It is work that contributes towards keeping food on the table, but does not help one to get out of a cycle of poverty. Some full-time domestic work positions include the worker staying in a room on the property of the employer, such as the position that Russel's mom held. Russel's mother was in full-time employment as a domestic worker her whole working life.

1987 to 1998: Early Life - The Margins

A closer look at the first part of Russel's drawing, where the tributaries come together, can be seen in Drawing 5A. In the centre of the river are the words "Racial"; "Cultural" and "Class/Economic". On either side of the river are the words "The margins". The fourth tributary with the year 1990 written on it joins the river just after the words "The margins".

DRAWING 5A: EARLY LIFE – THE MARGINS



The meaning of this part of Russel's drawing is that from as early as he can remember, he felt that he was on the margins of society in terms of race, culture and class. In 1990, aged about three, he moved with his mother to an area of Durban called Overport.

Under apartheid, when areas were racially segregated by law, Overport was primarily an Indian area, where many professionals lived.

Hence, although this was where he spent most of his time, he was not like the other children in the area from the point of view of race, culture and class. He was an outsider. This is how he described this early part of his life:

> *I was a black kid in an Indian community and in Overport at that time, it was a community that comprised of doctors, attorneys, businessmen and the like… I didn't even have black friends, so I was even at the margins of black society.*

It is interesting to note here that he even felt he was living at the margins of his own race group. The notion of living at the margins of society is a significant theme in Russel's story that has followed him into adulthood and enables him to do the work he does now, as explained later in the story.

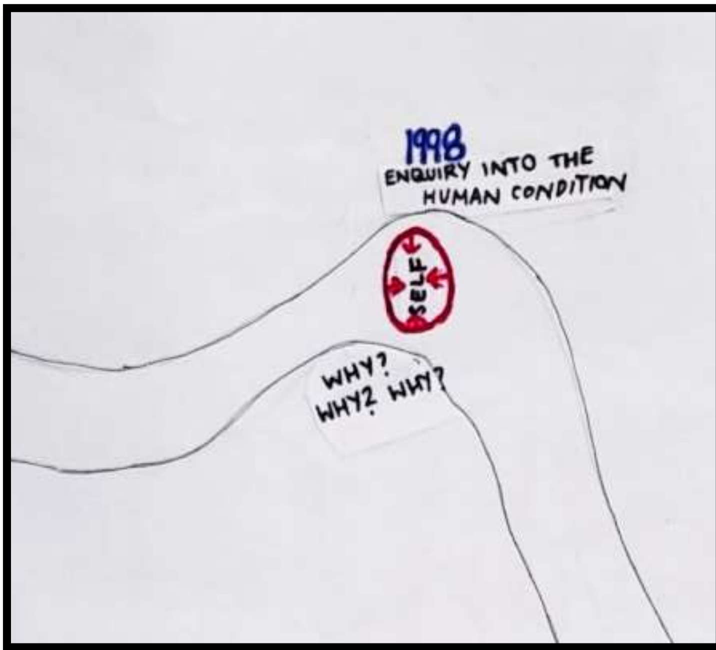
At first, Russel was the only child living with his mother on the property where she worked. An older brother did not live with them, and in 1994 Russel's mom had another son and, in 1998, a daughter. With the arrival of his sister, Russel's life was turned upside down, as signalled by the first big bend in his river drawing. Russel's family become too big to allow them to continue living with Russel's mother's employer. His mom continued with her job as a domestic worker, but they all moved to an area which was right next to an informal settlement.

1998–2002: Why? Why? Why? Enquiry into the Human Condition

Russel described this period of his life as the scariest and most introverted. Drawing 5B is a closer look at this part of Russel's river of life. It shows a circle with the word "self" and four arrows pointing inward. The words "Why? Why? Why?" are written above the river, the date, 1998, at the top, with the phrase "Enquiry into the human condition".

Russel said that he has images and memories of that time that continue to stay with him. As I wanted to understand this stage of Russel's life better, I probed for more information during our interview. Russel paused and I realised that he was emotional. I wondered if I had pushed him too far. I thought of the importance of ethical issues in my study and the need to ensure that no harm is done and was contemplating how I should proceed, when he continued, providing some examples of what he meant.

DRAWING 5B: INTROSPECTION / WHY? WHY? WHY?



Russel told me about a time when his friends had "harassed" one of the other children from the area. The child who was harassed went back home and told his father about it and the father gave the child a knife and told him to use it to defend himself if he needed to. Another example was how there was a man who walked around in the area for about three months carrying a coffin and trying to sell it. Russel didn't know the story behind this, but it stands out as a memory of something that was very disconcerting for him as a 12-year-old. So, there were all these events going on around him and he was trying to make sense of them. Until they moved to this area opposite the informal settlement, he had been rather sheltered, but here he was exposed to experiences that were disruptive. He could not make any sense of them and said he did not have anyone he could ask.

2002: How? How? How? Expanding Worldview

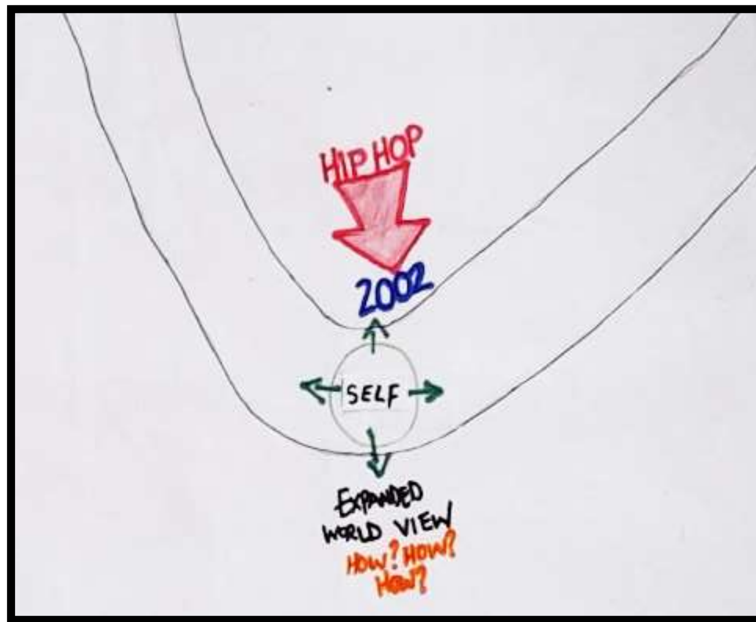
In 2002 Russel moved back into Overport, with his family, to a different property from where they had lived before while his mom continued to work for the same employer. In this area Russel made new friends and through those friends he was introduced to Hip-Hop. He showed this stage (see Drawing 5C) with the same idea of a circle to represent the self, but now the arrows are pointing outward instead of inward and the questioning has changed from "Why?" to "How?"

Below the river he has written the words "Expanded Worldview" and above the river there is a big arrow and the words "Hip-Hop". This second of three big bends in Russel's river of life illustrate the significant role that Hip-Hop would play in the trajectory of Russel's life and later his work.

When I asked Russel to tell me more about Hip-Hop. He explained that it started in New York in the South Bronx in the late 1970s / early 1980s as a social movement to stop

gang violence. He explained that Hip-Hop has primarily four elements which are MCing (Orality); DJing (or Turntablism); Movement or dance (B-Boying) and Graffiti / Art or visual. A fifth element was introduced later, which is the knowledge of the self.

DRAWING 5C: HIP-HOP / HOW? HOW? HOW?



The element that Russel practiced the most as a youngster was MCing (also known as emcee or master of ceremonies), which is about the use of words and narratives that usually take place in a celebration like a wedding. However, he pointed out that as a scholar of Hip-Hop it is important to embrace all the elements. So, for example, he engages with B-Boying by thinking about the way people "engage with the pavement" (how people carry themselves when they walk on the streets).

Russel was interested in the lyrics of various Hip-Hop pieces that he came across and would download them from the Internet and then do his own reading and research to understand the meaning of the lyrics. Thus, he became what he calls "A Hip-Hop Scholar". It fascinated Russel that this movement had started in New York, USA in the 1970s, yet here he was in 2002, in Overport, South Africa and it was so relevant for him.

Russel's discovery of Hip-Hop helped him really express himself and explore how he related to the world. The four elements of Hip-Hop opened Russel up to literature (through MCing); advertising and copywriting (through Graffiti), dance and movement (through breakdancing) and an appreciation of Jazz and classical music (through DJing). Through his exploration and reading, he began to understand the world better, such as how people operate, individually, as a family unit, as a community and as sub-

communities. Russel also said that the fathers of Hip-Hop have fathered him as he has studied their lyrics. His own father was largely absent from his life, especially so from around 1998 when he started to have all these “Why?” questions.

From this turning point in 2002 to the next turning point in 2013, the questioning from the earlier stage of his life, asking “Why? Why? Why?” changed to the question “How? How? How”? Some of the examples of the kinds of ‘How’ questions he was asking were:

- How do you accumulate wealth?
- How do you establish a family? (A nuclear family unit)
- How do you chart your way in the world?

For example, it was only when Russel started to see nuclear families, with both parents and a unified family structure, that he started to understand the fractured home that he had come from. It was only when he saw people living with great wealth that he understood the poverty from which he had come. Thus, he started to see how he could be more intentional about building up his own nuclear family if he wanted to. He had seen many fractured homes, coming from one himself, but began to see that there were other choices he could make that would help him to craft the life he wanted and that the world actually was malleable.

Russel’s study of Hip-hop lyrics helped him to understand and find answers to the many questions about life that he was asking, helping him expand his worldview and make sense of events in his life.

2004–2013: Post-School into First Career

Russel did not have aspirations of a profession, like being a doctor, a lawyer, scientist or teacher and said that he didn’t think a lot about what would happen after high school, but he added:

> *I remember about Grade 11 thinking very clearly … if I could get a job as an assistant at a furniture store, I'd be quite happy.*

A furniture store assistant represented a stable, full-time job that would enable Russel to make a reasonable living. His frame of reference about work up until that point was the work he’d seen his mother doing as a domestic worker. He knew that financially he could not afford tertiary studies, and a stable job with a regular income would therefore be considered a good job.

Russel's first work experience came when he was about 14 years, doing newspaper deliveries in his neighbourhood. While doing that work, he met a woman who used to walk her dog. They got to know each other over a period of about two years. She worked in the shipping industry, and he thought it sounded like an interesting field. She was able to find a temporary job for him through her workplace, as a stand-in for the delivery man who was on leave. While there, another woman in the company helped him apply for a learnership, and he was accepted onto a shipping learnership with all costs covered.

A qualification called a learnership is an agreement between an employer, a training provider and a learner. The learner attends classes with the training provider, doing the more theoretical aspects of the qualification and also works in a company, logging their work-integrated learning activities as part of the requirements of the qualification. Thus, a three-party relationship is formed to develop skills within the sector. Russel did well on the shipping learnership and developed professionally within the industry until he was earning a decent salary package. Russel said that there were several people in his life who were really kind to him and helped him to get to where he is now, such as the two women referred to above. He remained in the shipping industry for about eight years, gaining valuable experience in many areas of the business. However, it is significant to note that on his river of life drawing, there was no reference to Russel's career in shipping.

Whilst working in shipping, as a side interest, Russel started to administer arts-related projects and to see their income earning potential. He also noticed that many individuals in his network in the arts world, were NTWs and the freelance work model was working for them. Thus, he started to see that the NTW work model might be a viable way for him to pursue a career in the arts. However, he considered shipping a backup plan when he first ventured into the unknown territory of independent contracting to craft a career for himself in the arts.

During this period Russel's worldview started to change. He explained it as follows:

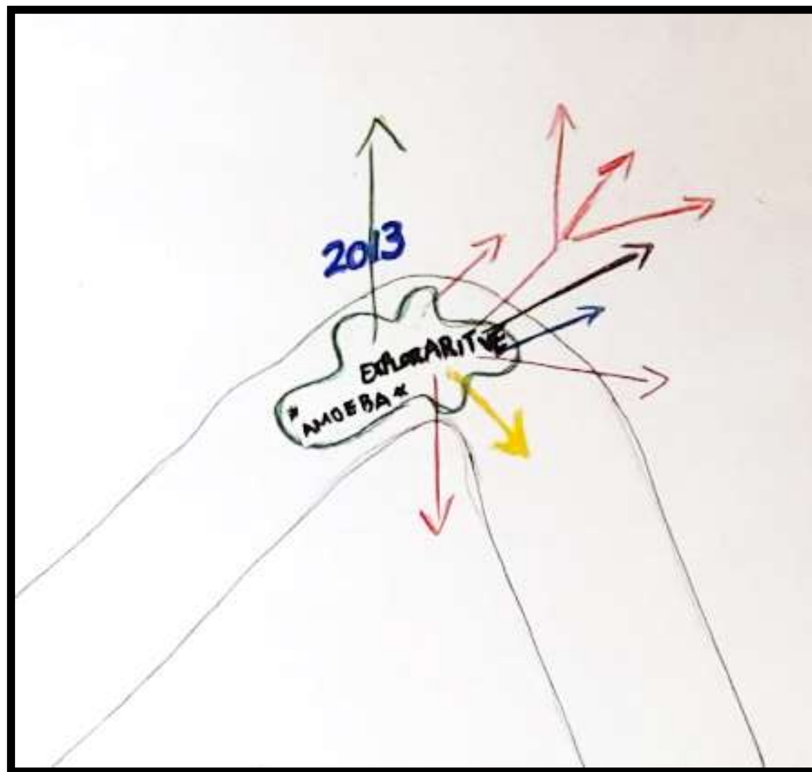
> *When I was young, I was told you can only become this or you can only do that. I was 'boxed in'. So, I grew up with the idea that the world is a rigid thing. But then I started to grow and explore the world and I learned that life is actually quite malleable, that you can play around and you can push and prod and craft a life for yourself.*

The idea of life being malleable is expressed through Russel's next drawing and theme of his life, that of an amoeba, something that is moving and changing shape.

2013–2016: Amoeba (Morphing) - Arts Administrator

The third turn in Russel's drawing is labelled 2013 (See Drawing 5D). Here, the circle representing the self has morphed into an amoeba with the word "Explorative" written inside and many multicoloured and different sized arrows pointing outwards. He started to explore his world in ways that were different to what he'd been told in his youth. Russel's reference to an amoeba aligns to the notion of a protean worker or a protean career, as was defined in Chapter 3 (Hall, 1976, as cited in Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) of something that is changing or morphing.

Drawing 5D: Amoeba



By 2013 Russel had developed the confidence and enough projects to explore his interest in making a career for himself in the arts. Thus, he resigned from his job in shipping to work on a freelance basis, intentionally changing from traditional permanent employment to that of an NTW. Russel's work on various arts projects followed. Due to most of his early work in these projects being strongly administrative, he gave himself the title of "Arts Administrator".

One area of Russel’s work was in a business he had started in 2010 while he was still in full-time employment in shipping. He had co-founded a business called Onexus, a music business that teaches young talented musicians to monetise their talents into viable businesses. Russel called this a passion project as it is the type of work that feeds his soul. This programme was funded by the National Department of Arts and Culture, and remained a stable component of his work at the time of my interview with him.

Some of Russel’s work projects came about through contacts he had in Johannesburg and Cape Town who ran National arts-related projects. They needed someone in Durban who could administer these projects, and Russel was that person. In these projects, Russel was primarily an administrator, but was also a visionary and provided leadership of projects for NPOs. Russel was often involved in the fundraising aspects of these organisations, having learned with time and through experience what funders are looking for. He became particularly good at applying for funding that would facilitate provocative artwork that contributed to conversations and engagements with marginalised youth in Durban.

One of NPOs in which Russel had a leadership role was an art gallery. Russel explained to me that the arts world is divided into two parts, the commercial arts world, which is purely profit driven, and the public institution, in which the art is not sellable. The gallery falls into the latter and is more cutting edge, provocative and critical in its content, aiming to stimulate uncomfortable discussions about our culture and society. However, since the art is not for sale, the projects require funding. Russel assists with applying for funding that enables the gallery to have three-week-long art exhibitions throughout the year. The gallery invites critical artwork that is going to push a cultural identity and spark critical conversations about our society and culture. Russel’s involvement in this gallery is in a volunteer capacity and, importantly, provides him with opportunities to contribute to the conversations around culture within the city of Durban.

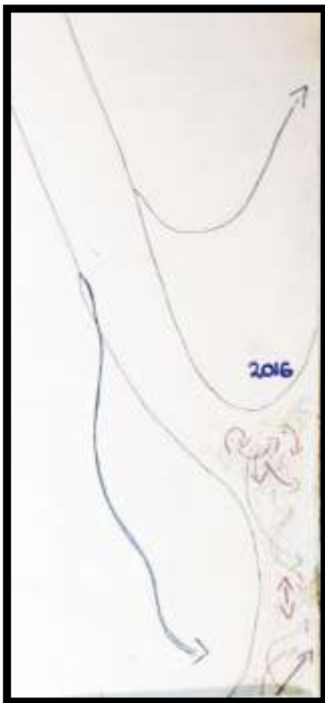
Russel is involved in many projects, both paid and voluntary. He has financial responsibilities and so he needs to do paid work, but he also sees voluntary work as part of his work. As I explored the idea more with him, he explained how volunteer work often becomes paid work. So, if he has a project for a paid client, he will deliver what is required, but he will also go beyond that and provide more value than was needed. Those ‘extras’ that he does for the client sometimes translate into paid work.

Russel's work now is very different from work in shipping, yet he learned invaluable lessons there that he uses now as a NTW. For example, when he worked in sales in shipping, he learnt about the ratio of number of leads to number of actual sales, so when pursuing projects now, he understands that not all projects will materialise. He also understands that after that first call is made, it can be a significant amount of time before the actual sale takes place. Russel's years of experience in the shipping Industry seem to have given him a good understanding of business principles and sales cycles. He developed transferable skills in one context which he applies in a different context.

2016 and Beyond: Looking Forward

The end of Russel's river of life (See Drawing 5E) the opening out of the river, signifies the wide range of projects in which he was engaged, with different projects being illustrated with different colours.

DRAWING 5E: LOOKING AHEAD



Russel reflected on his journey and especially how the difficulties he had as a child have become a key part of his life and work now and remarked:

> *My cultural curiosity always comes from that—you're always at the margins of everything—so you've got a particular vantage point so that you're able to see the cracks in people within the culture (that possibly they wouldn't be able to see).*

Russel’s quote brings us back full circle to the idea of living on the margins of society. Here he was describing how his life has been about living in marginal spaces and being able to make connections across contexts. He does not see his life at the margins as a negative thing, but rather sees it as a unique positioning of the self that enables him to do the work he does. Living and working in these marginal spaces will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

Russel’s early life of being at the margins of society has shaped and guided his work life. He still feels that he operates at the margins of society but that this gives him unique insights into other people’s lives. Much of his work is with young people who have come from challenging backgrounds not unlike his own, and so he is able to relate to them and mentor them. He said that his work involves helping young people with the kinds of difficulties which he faced, thus mentoring them.

Russel has also noticed that young people are defining luxury differently when he says that:

> *Young people are defining luxury not through money, but through time—choosing to not spend 8 hours behind the desk but to spend five hours and then spend three hours with your kids, that's real luxury because you can afford something—which is time—that a CEO can't afford.*

He also talked about how he uses Hip-Hop to engage with and understand new challenges he faces. He explained:

> *Whatever challenges I’m faced with today, I always go back to my roots and understanding of hip-hop and I’m able to engage with it.*

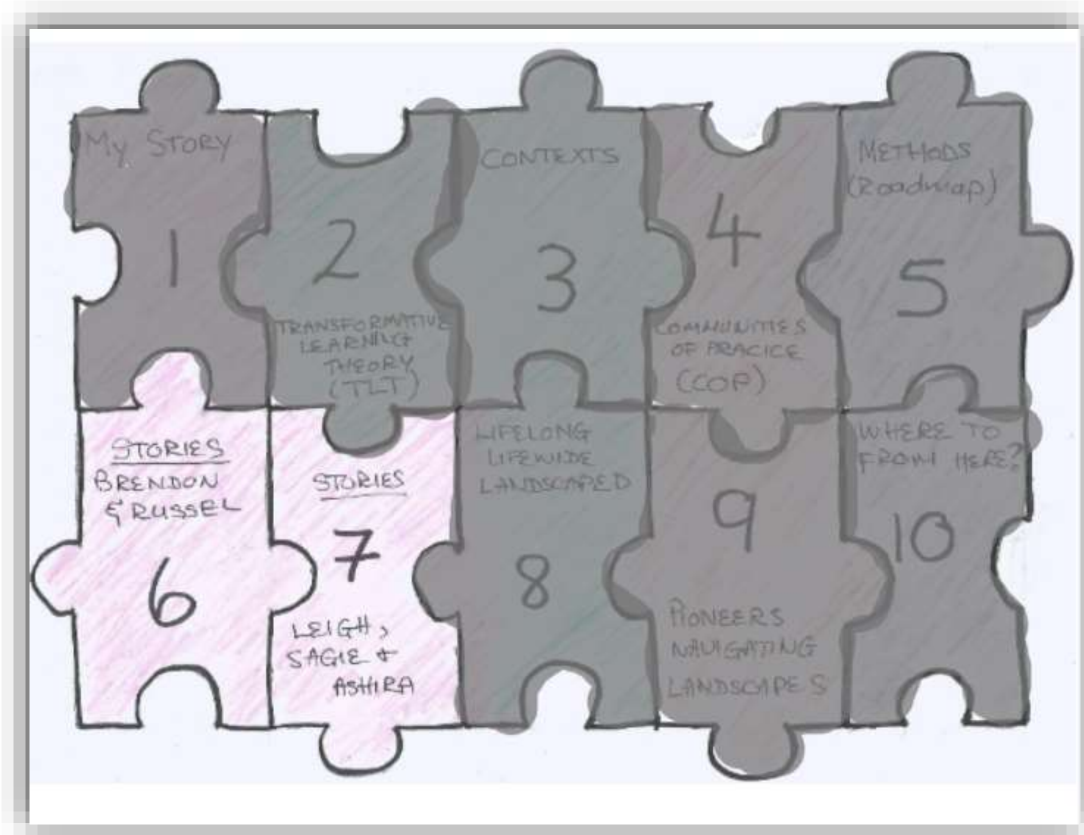
Russel is crafting a career for himself in the world of arts, working from his passion of Hip-hop. He uses arts and creativity to initiate and facilitate critical conversations around those who are marginalised in society and to empower marginalised youth with business principles. Thus, Russel has traded a potentially lucrative career in the shipping industry to work to be able to do work which he is passionate about. He is doing work with heart and with purpose, reaching out to people who come from difficult circumstances, leading them through examples from his own life.

By the end of the study…

…Russel had moved to an area closer to where his mother and grandmother lived, to be in a better position to assist them with day-to-day activities. He had been able to do this as much of his work took place through the Internet. His work had also changed from being primarily administrative towards production work. Thus, he had changed his work title from “Arts Administrator” to “Cultural Producer / Creative Industries Consultant”.

Interlude 6: Crafting and Constructing

This interlude links Chapters 6 and 7, the two chapters about the participants as indicated by the puzzle image below.



Chapter 6 told the stories of how Brendon and Russel have navigated their professional landscapes. The metaphor of "crafting a career" illustrates an emergent design that was typical of my career and those of Brendon and Russel. Like me, Brendon and Russel did some formal tertiary studying, but found their way into professions that did not make direct use of those formal studies. Our careers have included diverse experiences but have come together into a coherent whole, not unlike a collage or a quilt, as proposed in Chapter 5. We have multiple professional titles and there is an emergent design as professional identities continue to evolve with time. We have found we are often working in spaces between disciplines where we have enough knowledge about two disciplines to talk about them comfortably, but we are not experts in either domain. We are good at sitting between disciplines and making connections between them.

Brendon's and Russel's stories ended with a brief update of what had happened to them between the time of interviews and the end of the study. These updates of participants' stories demonstrate

that lives and stories continue to evolve. The narrative accounts are written at a certain point in time, but the lives of those participants do not stand still but continue to unfold. Following is brief update on my story following on from Chapter 1.

By the end of the study, I had changed from being primarily a maths lecturer to being primarily a research lecturer. I had obtained a significant amount of experience in online/distance tutoring and continued to do some face-to-face lecturing. I had also gained first-hand experience of the vulnerable nature of being this type of worker, due to numerous health challenges I experienced. I had a hysterectomy, an appendectomy, a neuropathy and renewed problems with my anxiety levels. These health issues brought home to me the vulnerable nature of work as a NTW as there were times when I had to give up paid work due to my health. Although I have enjoyed the NTW model of work, such vulnerabilities are a challenge that NTWs need to navigate.

In Chapter 7, I have contrasted the design of crafting a career to that of constructing a career. The other three participants, Leigh (psychologist), Sagie (Education Expert) and Ashira (Law) studied towards a profession and then remained in that field of discipline. Their careers can be seen more as a construction, much like a builder constructs a home from a plan that was drawn up by an architect. The plan is quite specific and needs to be followed initially, but there are some things that can change along the way. Leigh, Sagie and Ashira have experienced multiple identities and changes they might not have expected, but have remained in the discipline in which they studied.

Chapter 7: What Career are you Constructing?

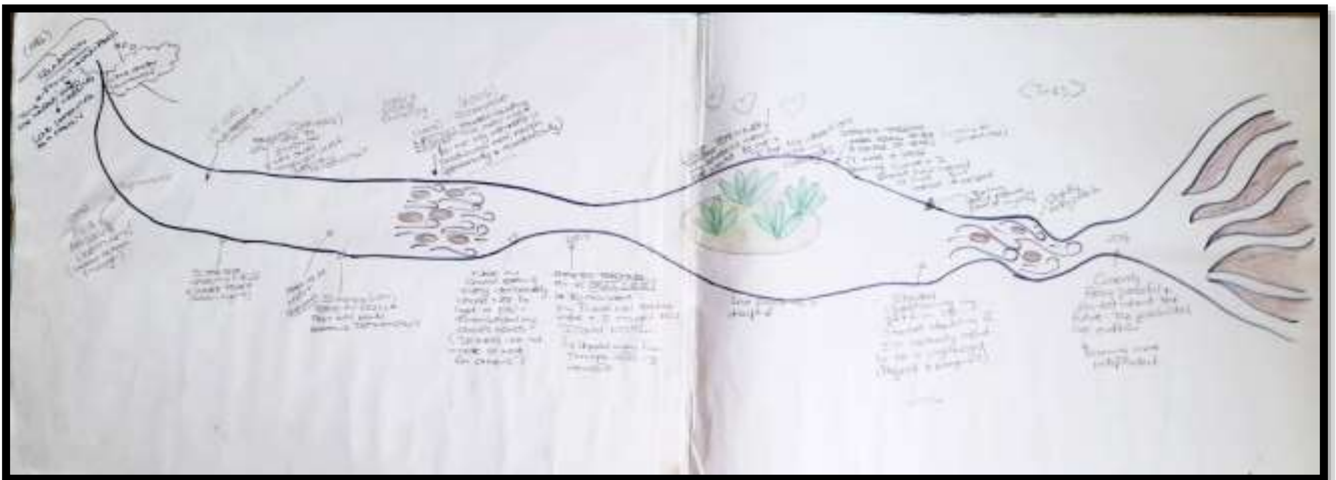
PART 1: ‘De Wets are not made to work for others’ (Leigh’s Story)

Leigh is a single white female in her thirties, who is a psychologist, a lecturer, and a corporate trainer. Leigh dances for enjoyment and exercise and at the time of interviewing her, she had been doing Salsa for a few years.

I first met Leigh in about 2008 as we both lectured at the same tertiary institution in Durban. However, over the years our acquaintance turned into a friendship. The anecdote at the start of Chapter 4 described our work together on the Honours module in 2017.

Leigh drew a relatively simple river to represent her career journey as seen in Drawing 6 below and enlarged and explained in more detail in this part of the chapter.

DRAWING 6: LEIGH'S RIVER OF LIFE



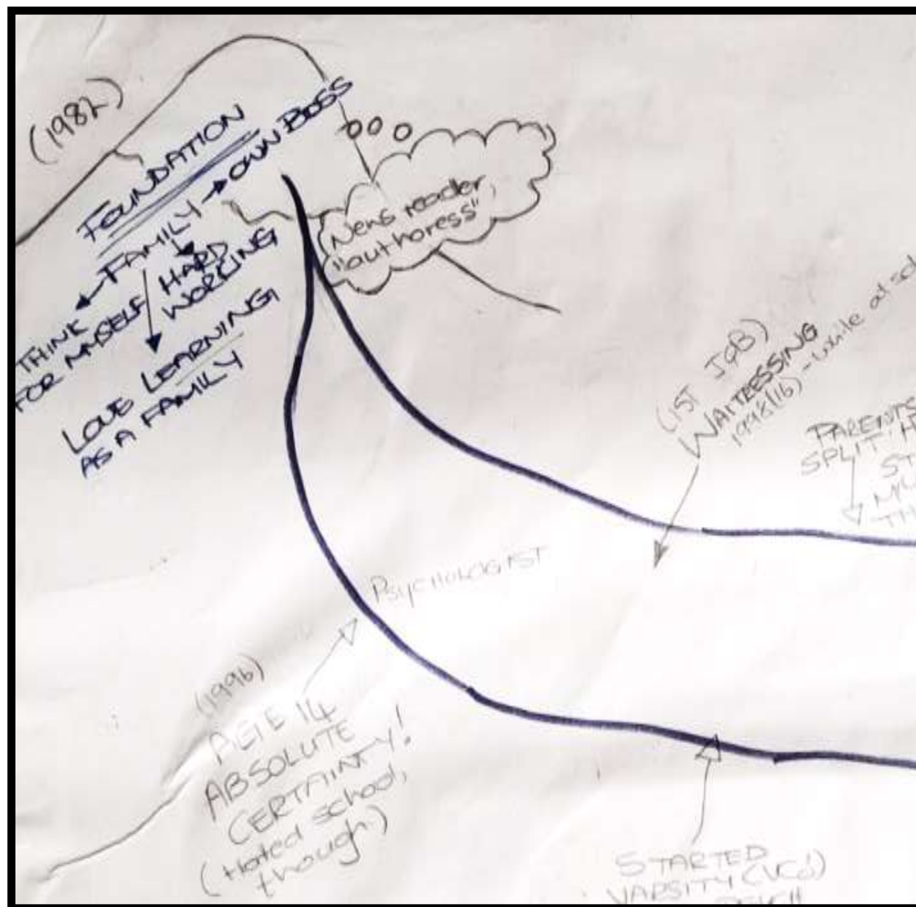
Foundations

The mountains, at the source of the river (See Drawing 6A below) show four foundational family values encapsulating Leigh’s view about life and work, namely:

- Think for yourself
- Love of learning
- Be your own boss
- Work hard

Leigh laughed as she explained that the first of these values ‘think for yourself’ did not make her school life easy as it went counter to the conformity of the school system and the expectation to fit into boxes. The value to ‘love learning’ undergirds her inquiring mind, fostered by her parents. The value of ‘Be your own boss’ links to a mantra Leigh has often heard her dad say: *“De Wets are not made to work for others”*. The final value was ‘Work hard’ and Leigh said she grew up knowing that she would work in a profession that involved service to others and would require hard work.

DRAWING 6A: FOUNDATIONS



Leigh’s parents worked professionally all their lives and so professional identity was a strong influencing factor in Leigh’s early life. Leigh’s dad has always practiced as an attorney and, having specialised in a few niche areas, became highly skilled. Hence, he has remained primarily in one profession his entire working life. On the other hand, Leigh’s mom has been through multiple career changes that include being a nursing sister, a paramedic and a trainer of paramedics (all working within the health care sector). However, she has also had a micro-lending business, a sewing business and

has been a real estate agent. Her mom's choices were deliberate and dependent on various stages or seasons of her life. For example, her work in real estate was when Leigh and her younger brother were quite small, and she needed flexibility in her work.

Thus, each parent role-modelled different but successful career trajectories for Leigh, but neither were they in traditional employment.

1996: Aspirations to be Psychologist (14 years old)

Leigh's dad would have liked her to become a lawyer and practice with him but, from about the age of about 14, Leigh knew with absolute certainty that she wanted to be a psychologist. Leigh explained how she came to this decision:

> *My mother had trained as a psychiatric nurse, and I had always been fascinated by her stories about the patients at Town Hill and Fort Napier hospitals, as well as her experiences in the casualty department at Addington Hospital in the 1970s. I had had an encounter with a psychologist as a child, and I remember thinking how pleasant it must be to chat to people all day as a career. I was (I still am!) achingly empathic towards others, which is something that I inherited from both parents. They have always encouraged me to serve others in my life. I started gravitating towards psychological theory in my reading. I think all of these things came together and crystallised when I was 14, and I realised that I wanted to be a psychologist, to understand why people do what they do.*

1998–2006: Early Work Experience and Formal Studies

Leigh's first job, at the age of sixteen, was waitressing, while still at school. She became very good at her work and made good friends with the staff. She also really enjoyed the interactions with the customers, but said that she learned more in this job about dealing with unreasonable, difficult people than she did in all her psychology studies.

Immediately after finishing school (2000), Leigh started her formal studies towards becoming a psychologist, completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2003. Leigh loved the study of psychology from the outset. Going into her second year (2001) Leigh needed to find some part-time work to ease family financial pressures when her parents separated and later divorced. Leigh found a part-time job at an aftercare for children at a primary school in Westville. This job worked well for her as she could study in the morning and then work in the afternoons. She loved this job, going as far as to say: "It was the best

job I've had." She said it taught her a lot of patience and she forged good friendships with colleagues and is still friends with the woman who owned the aftercare. In 2004, having worked while studying, that changed when she did her Honours in Psychology (2004) and then Masters in Counselling (2005) in psychology and she became a full-time student. She was not able to do any part-time work due to the intensity of the study requirements and so Leigh's parents supported her financially during this time.

Leigh says that the honours qualification was a big jump from her undergraduate degree and was a time of significant academic growth and hard work. The master's qualification included a theoretical and practical component as well as a research project. The practical aspects of study included doing assessments and therapy on child and adult clients and being involved in a community-based project. Over and above that, it was expected the research project was completed (or near completion) by the end of the year.

2006–2007: Internship and Board Exam

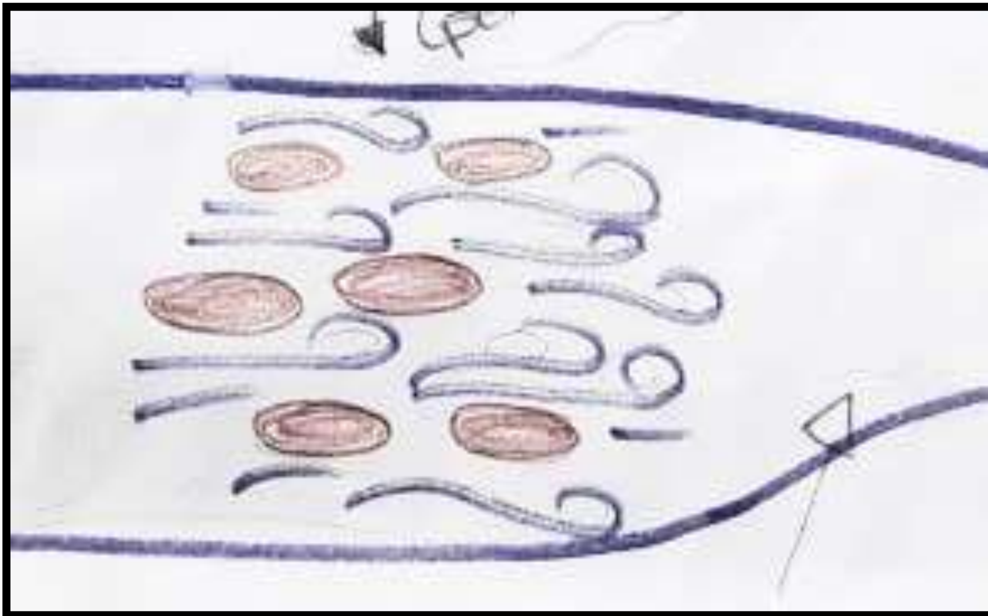
The final stages of becoming a psychologist were an internship year and a board exam. The internship year was rigorous and challenging and included but was not limited to doing various child and adult assessments, undertaking therapy of children and adults and doing group therapy with disabled students. It was a year of putting into practice what was learned through formal qualifications and so it was a steep learning curve.

Leigh's internship year (2006) was an especially difficult year for her, emotionally and academically. In the April of that year, in the space of one week, she experienced several tragic losses which included the death of her grandfather, death of a close friend and her long-term boyfriend ended their relationship with plans to move to Cape Town. This was a time of great emotional distress which is represented by a very rocky patch of rapids in Leigh's river of life drawing (See Drawing 6B).

> *My internship year was my "annus horribilis"* [a Latin phrase meaning 'horrible year']. *Not only is it the most stressful year of your life in terms of your training, but it was an incredibly stressful year personally, particularly during that very stressful week in April when everything came crashing down. As much as there was a surface sympathy from my colleagues for my personal stress, there also seemed to be an unspoken expectation that I pick up the slack again at work very quickly. I needed to process my personal stuff, and I needed to work really, really hard to complete my training, and I didn't have the*

energy and resources to do both. So, I buried my head in the sand and pretended like everything was fine, but my formal learning basically came to a halt for a couple of months. When they called me in and said that they may have to extend my internship in the August of 2006, I realised how much was at stake for me. That was when I really started working to complete the requirements of my training.

DRAWING 6B: ANNUS HORRIBILIS / HORRIBLE YEAR



Leigh explained that the possible extension of her internship year gave her a wake-up-call, as it did not reflect well on your ability to cope as a psychologist if the intern year needed to be extended. From that point she worked hard to meet all the requirements of the internship year, but it was a particularly difficult time. The final requirement to be able to register as a counselling psychologist was for Leigh to pass her onerous and exacting board exams, which she did in 2007.

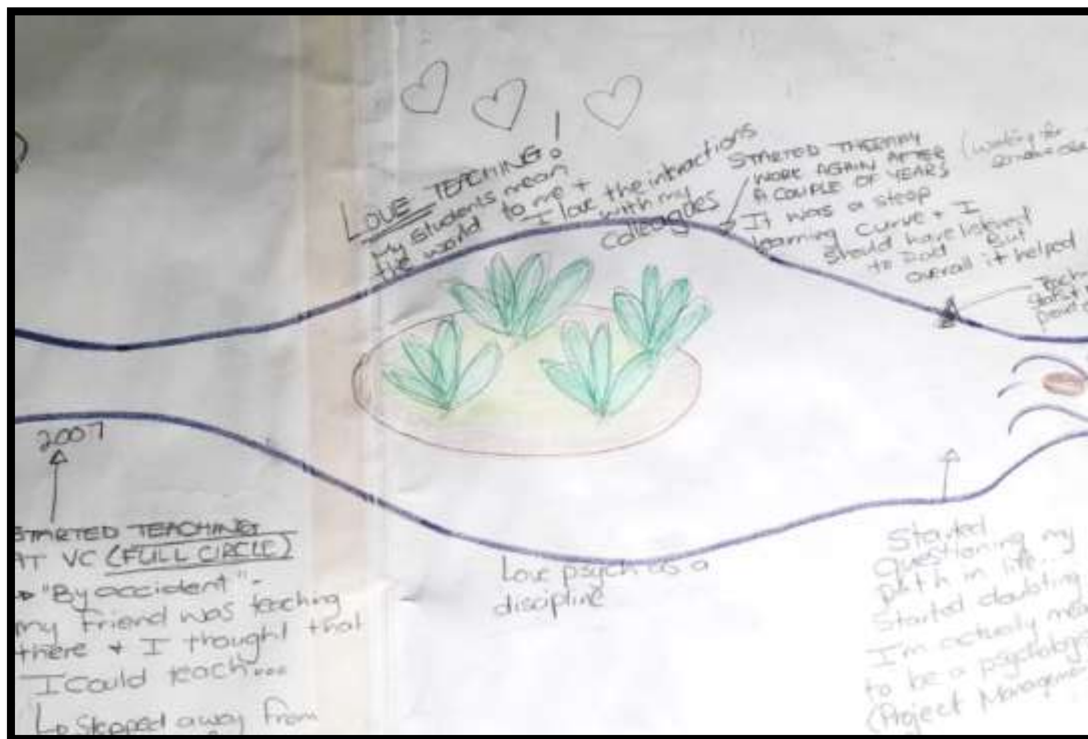
Leigh registered as a counselling psychologist, but the especially rigorous internship year, her first experiences of being a therapist, left her wondering if she really was cut out to be a psychologist. This was difficult for her, because she had been so sure about her choice of profession for so long and had met the rigorous requirements to achieve that goal.

2007 - Current: "De Wets are not made to work for others"

With the formal requirements of becoming a psychologist behind her, Leigh needed to find work and she said that she very deliberately chose not to 'get a job' in the traditional sense, recalling her dad's mantra, *'De Wets are not made to work for others'.* She also deliberately took a step away from therapy. In 2007 Leigh found two new work opportunities. The first was for a provider of job-related assessments and training. Her work here included training on various accredited programmes, development of various training manuals and conducting and overseeing career guidance assessments.

The second opportunity was to do part-time contracted lecturing for GU. Leigh quickly discovered that she loved lecturing! She drew this period on her river of life as a large, spacious island with plants, with the words "Love Teaching" written at the top and the words "love psych as a discipline" at the bottom (See Drawing 6C).

DRAWING 6C: LEIGH'S ISLAND—FULLY EMBRACED LECTURER IDENTITY



She described what it was she loved about lecturing:

> *My favourite part of lecturing is connecting with my students and getting to know them, because I feel that when I know them, I can teach them in the way that suits them best. I LOVE that moment when a student has been struggling with a concept, and you've seen the frustration and confusion on their face, and then you see the eyes widen and the*

frown lines disappear from their foreheads, and they say, "Oh!" That moment, the ping when the lightbulb goes on above their heads, is what makes it worthwhile! And an extension of that is when you see a student who, at the beginning of the semester, was doubting himself or herself and by the time you get to the exam, he or she is feeling confident. I love reminding them of how far they've come in one semester, to see the pride in their faces when they realise that.

Leigh fully internalised her lecturer identity but says she became very teacher-like in her relationships with her family, something they pointed out to her, requiring her to adjust those relationships.

In 2007 Leigh also started volunteer work for the Open Door crisis centre, training lay-people to do counselling, developing their training programmes and serving on their board. Although she was not being paid for this work, Leigh was using her skills and qualifications as a therapist in the work she did there. She was building up strong relational networks that would later be beneficial for her. She was also working on multiple projects at one time, typical of a NTW.

2010–2016: Therapy and Other Projects

In 2010 Leigh continued with her lecturing at GU but found some new work opportunities, lecturing various psychology and business communications modules at another tertiary institution. She also started therapy work again through another psychologist's practice. Leigh worked hard in the practice, but she was exploited in that she was not remunerated at acceptable rates. Leigh shows this period of her life with a second 'rocky patch' which was not as severe as her internship year, but still was a difficult time (See Drawing 6D).

After about 18 months of the therapy work, Leigh was on the road to burnout, and she gave up the therapy work. This second attempt at therapy work had not gone well and it raised some questions about her professional identity and she wondered whether she had made a mistake in her career choice.

This is how Leigh described her questioning:

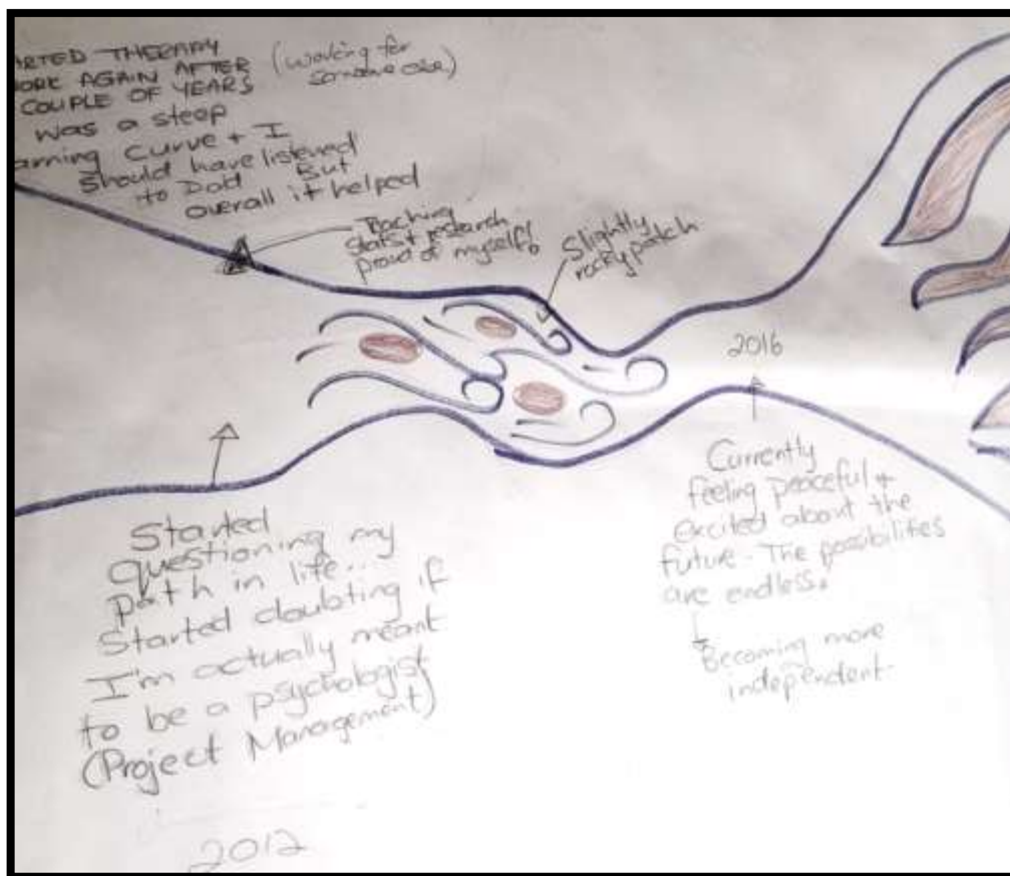
It was hard for me, being such a proud person who was so certain that being a psychologist was what I was meant to be, to admit that maybe I was wrong! It was a hard knock for my self-esteem to feel that maybe I'd spent all this time training, and it

meant nothing. I felt that I'd disappointed my parents, that I'd wasted their money. It made me question my identity, because "being a psychologist" was such a big part of how I saw myself, and now I had to rethink that part of me.

After some time of processing, talking to family members and thinking about her career, Leigh came to a better place and understanding of her professional identity explained:

I've realised that "being a psychologist" doesn't have to be such a major part of my identity, and that there is no such thing as a wasted education, and that I may not have been a therapist until now, but I still love psychology as a discipline.

DRAWING 6D: ANOTHER ROCKY PATCH



Although this time had been difficult for Leigh, through a few varied activities she had participated in, she had realised how she had developed a broad range of skills and had seen that she did not have to be fixed into a single identity as a psychologist. She was coming to understand herself as someone with multiple professional identities. The three activities outlined below illustrate this point.

Firstly, Leigh started teaching a statistics module at GU. She was approved to teach this module as she had completed statistics modules during her formal training to be a psychologist. This equipped her to understand studies that are quantitative in nature.

Secondly, Leigh studied and completed a short project management course at GU. Through her engagement in this course, she learned that she had developed good business acumen, something that would help her as an independent worker, not in traditional employment (an NTW).

Thirdly, on a voluntary basis, Leigh helped a cousin of hers to assess and resolve what was going on with regard to the relationships in his business. He had asked Leigh to observe the dynamics of the relationships of his employees and to give him some insight into the difficult context he was facing. Leigh spent some time watching employees as they interacted with each other and then predicted how they would each react. Her cousin followed her advice and reported back that things had played out exactly how she had predicted. This activity boosted her confidence about her ability to assess and predict different personalities and gave her an insight into the type of psychology-related projects she could potentially undertake in her career.

2016 and Beyond: Clicking into Place and Moving Forward

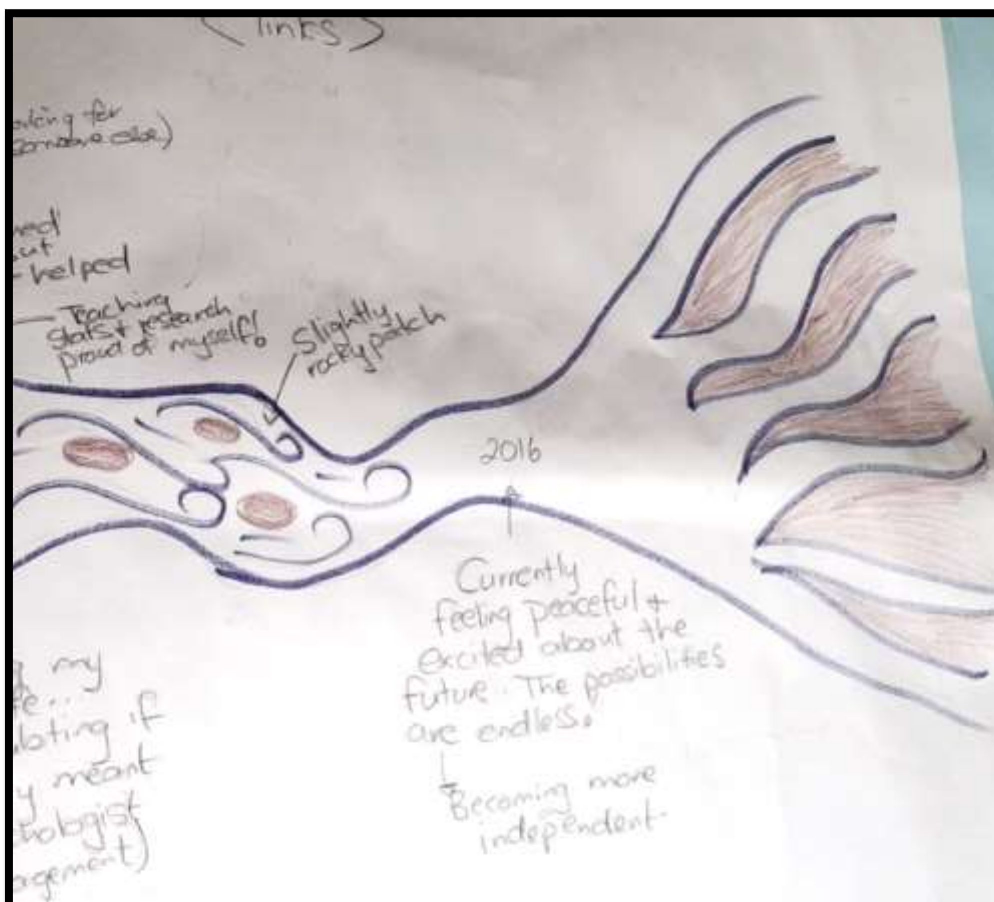
On Leigh's river of life, she describes 2016 (the time of the interview) as a peaceful place where she felt she was becoming more independent. She also said that the resolution of her questioning in the previous stage of her life seemed to "click into place", much like the way her chiropractor works on her physical body, "clicking it into place" (See Drawing 6E).

The final part of the river widening out is illustrative of an anticipated place of spaciousness and of expansion of identities as Leigh felt that there were now new and different things that she wanted to try in her professional life.

At the time of the interview, Leigh had plans to open a psychology practice but also hoped to do some corporate coaching like she had done for her cousin. She planned to continue to do some lecturing but to be selective about which modules she taught. Her focus was shifting towards the therapy that she was formally trained for. She was shifting into increasingly independent roles (her own practice) rather than contracting to other companies such as training providers.

An important note to pick up on from chapter four is needed here. Chapter four started with an anecdote that described a meeting that Leigh had set up for the supervisors on a new post-graduate qualification. She was our lead supervisor as she had prior experience supervising. Together we learned a lot as we work closely to develop supervision skills. Leigh would often ask me more technical questions about research methodology and I would often ask her (and others) about more business related questions, as the students were doing a business qualification.Leigh's way of working as a NTW seems to be an interesting mixture of her parents' different work lives. Leigh has a strong identity as a psychologist, much like her dad in his law practice, but much like her mom, Leigh already had multiple identities in her professional life. She was juggling multiple projects at the same time, typical of a NTW and her way of working still rings true to her dad's mantra that "De Wets are not made to work for others".

DRAWING 6E: PRESENT AND FUTURE



By the end of the study…

… Leigh had stopped lecturing and was supporting herself through her own psychology practice. She had continued to do some lecturing as she established her practice, until the practice was able to support her. Leigh knows first-hand that the NTW model comes with its own risks and that things do not come easily, but she still prefers this work model as she believes she is not cut out to be an employee. She would rather take the risks and be independent. She has retained and even reinforced some of the family values that she drew as foundational to her life, especially the one from her father that says: "De Wets are not made to work for others".

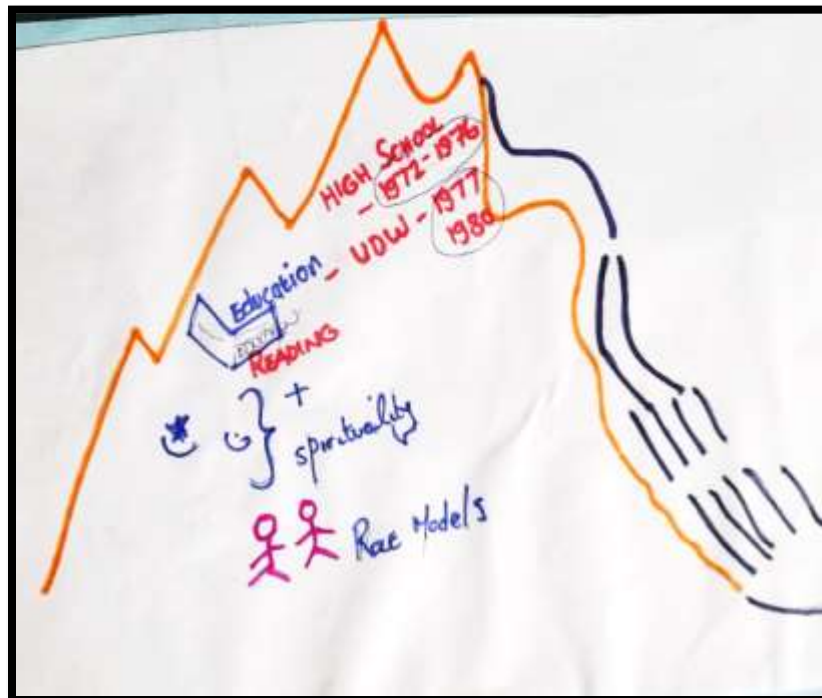
PART 2: Educational Leadership Road Trip (Sagie's Story)

Sagie is a 62-year-old, married Indian male whose trajectory into becoming a non-traditional worker took place quite late in his career, having been in full-time permanent employment for about twenty years. Hence, much of his professional development took place while he was in traditional employment. Drawing 7 is Sagie's river of life drawing. As the oldest of the participants, he has a notably long trajectory as he was nearing the end of his career when I interviewed him.

DRAWING 7: SAGIE'S RIVER OF LIFE

Although Sagie used the river metaphor to draw his work trajectory, he also used road-signs to signify key points where his career journey was impacted by his health. Perhaps a road trip would have been a more helpful analogy for his story than a river and his story title reflects this.

DRAWING 7A: EARLY PART OF SAGIE'S LIFE



Sagie's story starts in the mountains (Drawing 7A), depicting three foundational elements to his life, namely: his love of reading, education and books; an affinity for spirituality; and role models in his life. Sagie's high school years and undergraduate studies were depicted in this part of his drawing, working from the source of his river showing a trickle that gains momentum as he matures, illustrated by an increasing number of lines.

1977–1981: Initial Formal Tertiary Education

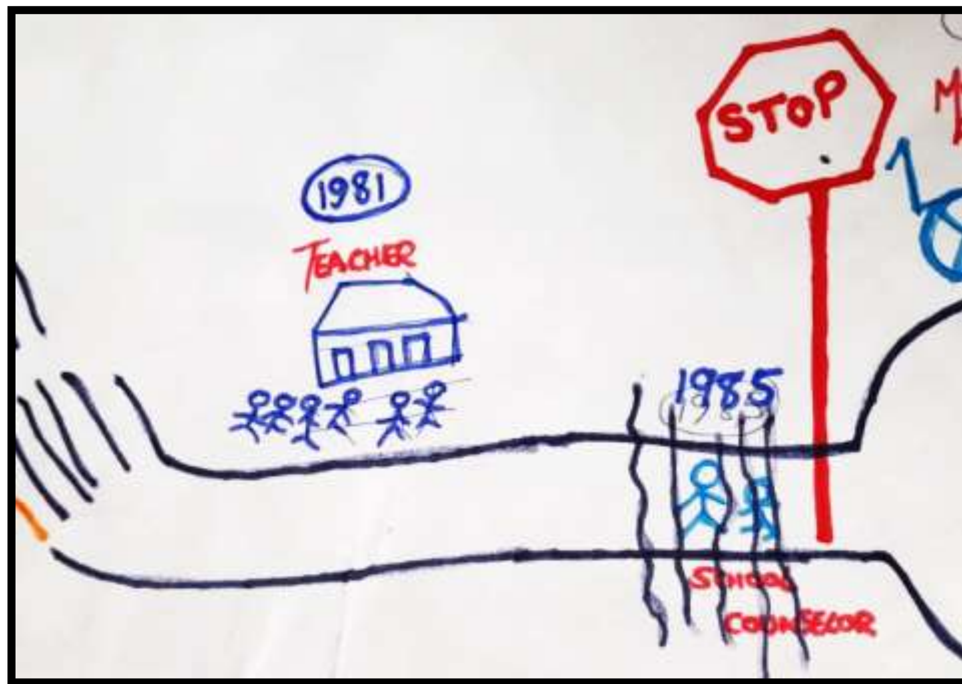
Sagie matriculated in 1976 and obtained his qualification to become a teacher in 1980. He was limited in his choice of careers as his parents could not afford to pay for a tertiary education as Sagie's father worked at a menial job in a factory. So when he was able to secure a bursary to study teaching, it made his decision very easy. Sagie started teaching in 1981, but at the same time continued his formal studies on a part-time basis. He achieved an Honours degree in Arts in 1981. He has returned to formal studies multiple times over his career.

1981–1984: School Teacher

In 1981, Sagie started teaching English and History to grades six to twelve pupils at a rural school in KZN about 60 km south of Durban, seen as a building with lots of children on his river of life (See Drawing 7B). Rural areas in South Africa equate to areas of deep poverty and deprivation. Sagie explained that in the rural schools, young and inexperienced teachers were given opportunities to teach senior classes, something that would not have happened in urban schools. Sagie really enjoyed these four years of teaching, in two different schools. However, through engagement with troubled school children and the encouragement and direction of the school guidance counsellor, he was drawn to the idea of becoming a school guidance counsellor. He explained this transition:

> *When you teach English you give a lot of things we used to call creative writing, free writing, your essays—and in reading them—I started to get drawn to their lives, their difficulties, their challenges—and the pastoral care in me kicked in and I used to accompany the school counsellor on home visits for the kids and during their breaks and chat to them. One day the school counsellor said "Hey, I think you've got a flair for this, why don't you apply for this degree, it's called the Bachelor of Education, Guidance and Counselling, and you can train to become a school counsellor?"*

Drawing 7B: School Teaching



The idea to do this qualification was planted in 1984, but it was only in 1988 that Sagie was able to complete these studies due to a life-defining event in 1985.

1985: Stop Sign Ahead—Becoming a Paraplegic

On the 2nd of December 1985, Sagie's life as he knew it as a 25-year-old came crashing to a stop when he was in a serious motor accident that caused his paraplegia. He depicted this on the river of life drawing with a big stop sign (See Drawing 7B).

Sagie doesn't recall the details of the accident, but when he regained consciousness, the doctors told him that he would never walk or work again. At first, Sagie absorbed what he had been told, thinking that the doctors knew best, but then something inside of him started to challenge their diagnosis. The foundational elements in his life, depicted with the mountain in Drawing 7A helped him through this dark period of his life. He prayed and read a lot, strengthening his mind. In time, he was able to gain some movement in his toes and then gradually, with support assistive devices (callipers), he learned to walk and then he weaned himself off the callipers and was able to walk using crutches.

Sagie was off work for nine months, going back to school in the last term of 1986. He received amazing support from the principal, staff and children in the school. He described his initial return to work as incredibly taxing and he was relieved when schools

closed at the end of 1986, giving him further time to get stronger (Naicker, 2014). Sagie's story of going back to work as a paraplegic are poignantly described in his doctoral dissertation (Naicker, 2014).

Sagie demonstrated strong leadership skills throughout his life, which was well demonstrated in how he was involved in starting a sports club for the disabled in a voluntary role.

1985–1992: School Counsellor

During 1985, before the accident, Sagie had started in his role as a school counsellor and loved this work. In his river of life, he draws some rapids, depicting the troubling times that the children experienced (See Drawing 7B just before the stop sign). It is interesting that he draws these rapids because of the challenges that his pupils experienced and not due to his own challenges, an indicator of his care and concern for them.

Sagie described this time:

> *In that period I entered into the life of a school counsellor, working largely with kids on a one-on-one basis—that is where I drew rapids because they were always in trouble, you know it was either socio-economic, emotional, career choices, decisions, crossroads and some of the kids were really in a bad space of being suicidal and I helped them through that period.*

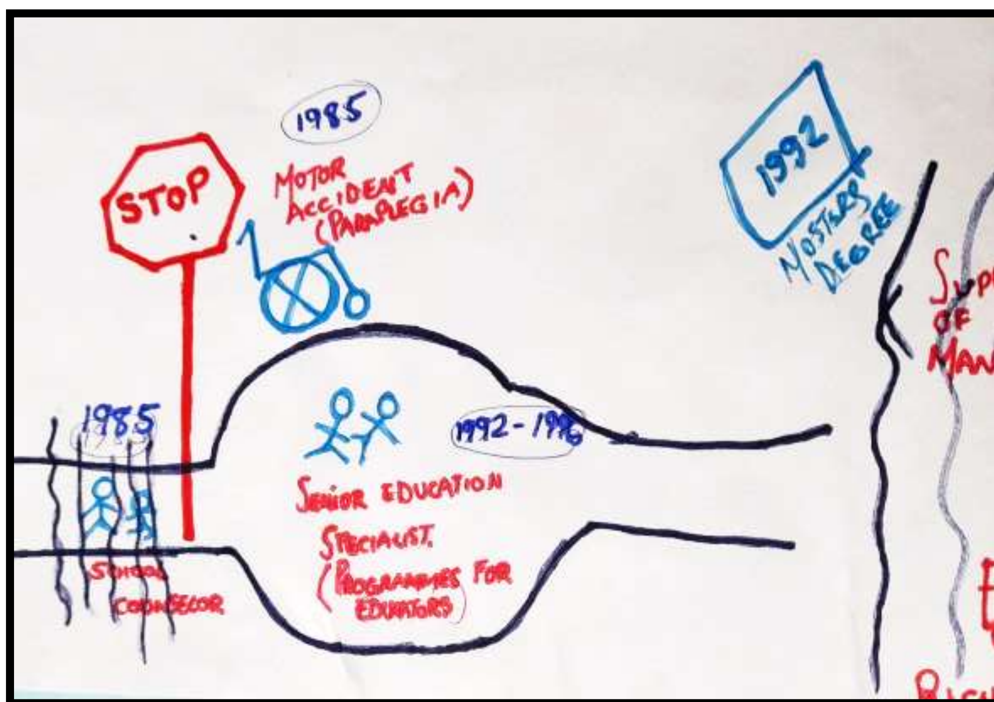
Sagie studied two degrees on a part-time basis during this period. The first was a Bachelor of Education in Guidance and Counselling which he completed in 1988. The training included a range of counselling skills on how to support children who were at risk. The second was a Master's degree in Guidance and Counselling, through Rhodes University which he completed in 1992.

As the school guidance counsellor, Sagie helped learners with emotional, personal and social difficulties as well as providing career guidance. His work included support to other educators, parents and school managers. Sagie worked in this role for seven years before being promoted to senior education specialist in 1992.

1992–1996: Senior Education Specialist—Mentoring

In his new position, Sagie's role was to empower teachers to take care of vulnerable children. When there were difficult cases, he sometimes worked with children, but his role was primarily a mentoring role. Based at the Chatsworth Teachers Centre, which was earmarked as a place for teacher development, Sagie had many development opportunities to attend many of the programmes at the centre. He said that he was like a sponge, just absorbing and growing and developing his leadership skills. Sagie draws this time as a widening out of the river, depicting a more spacious place in Drawing 7C.

DRAWING 7C: SENIOR EDUCATION SPECIALIST



In this period, the new ANC government was implementing changes in many areas of South African life—education being a key area of change. The different education departments that were segregated during apartheid now amalgamated into one. The restructuring that took place saw many people take early retirement, which created a vacuum. Sagie applied for a new position which he felt was an opportunity for him to work towards the building of the new country that was emerging.

1997–2000: Superintendent of Education—Management

Sagie was appointed as Superintendent of Education Management for the Richmond area in KZN (Drawing 7D), a position that involved overseeing the government schools.

This area is notorious for the political violence and bloodshed that took place in these post-apartheid years. Sagie described it as a terrifying time, saying:

> *Richmond from 1997 up to 2000 was a burning playfield for the Inkatha Freedom Party, the United Democratic Movement and the African National Congress [political parties]. At any given day I would have five or six schools closed, I would have phone calls to attend funerals of kids who were killed and families that were massacred. My first visits to schools, I used to go in accompanied by soldiers and police in a police vehicle called a Casspir (landmine resistant, ambush protected vehicle used by the South African army).*

DRAWING 7D: SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

In the deep rural areas of KZN that Sagie visited for this work, he was for the first time exposed to schools that were severely under-resourced. In one of the offices, he found a woman trying to do her work with only an old manual typewriter and a telephone. They had no computers, no library, no photocopy or fax machines. He discovered that the only time the students worked on paper was for their exams. For that to happen, the school principals would have made a 95 km round trip into a nearby city (Pietermaritzburg) to do the photocopying.

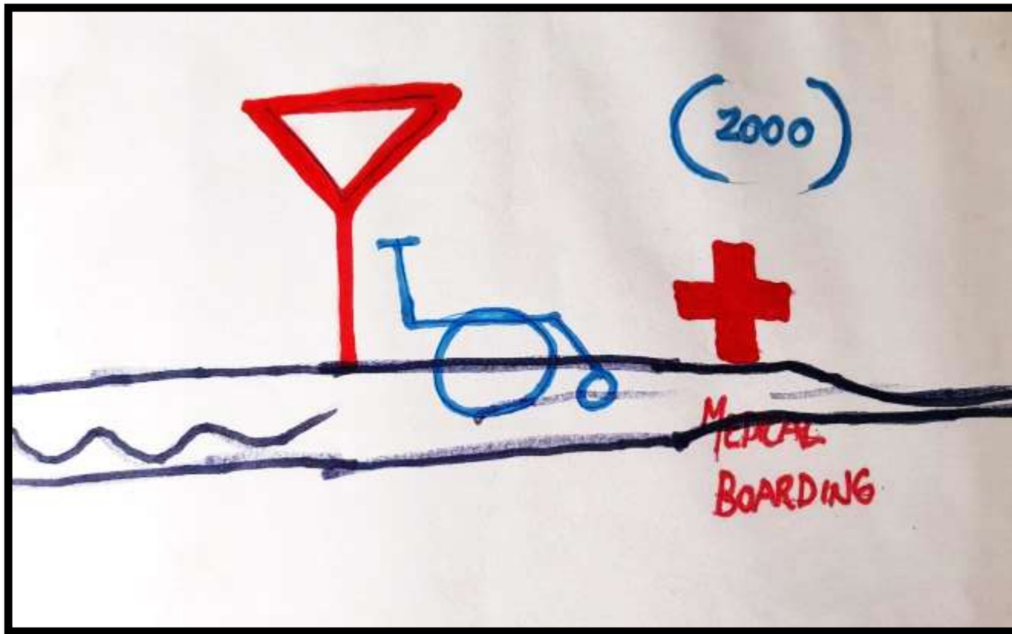
Sagie's exposure to the challenges the schools in this area experienced ignited a vision in him to develop a resource centre in Richmond for the schools in the surrounding district. His strong leadership skills came to the fore as he initiated the development of this resource centre. Sagie worked closely with the schools in the area and with government to raise the funds to make this resource centre a reality. Starting small, with a few photocopy machines, new parts of the centre were built as they secured the funding. The project included building up resources like library books and useful school teaching aids, the establishment of a small lecture room for teacher development programmes, a computer centre and two science laboratories. Teachers in the area could bring students to the Masakhuxolo centre to use these resources. The centre was still being used at the time of the interview (2016). For Sagie and others in the community, it was a legacy to all the souls that perished during the time of violence.

2000: Yield Ahead—Becoming a Non-traditional Worker (NTW)

Despite the prognosis of the doctors that Sagie would not walk or work again, he had managed to do both, being in a traditional full-term permanent role for around 15 years since his accident. His professional development during that time was typical of traditional employment, which included staying in the same organisation and developing up the corporate ladder. Sagie had not let his paraplegia define him or prevent him from professional progress. However, he had health challenges related to his paraplegia, which led to another significant change in his life (See Drawing 7E).

As a paraplegic, Sagie was prone to urinary tract infections. He needed to drink sufficient water and catheterise himself in hygienic conditions to avoid these infections. In the deep rural context in which he worked from 1997–1999, he was not always able to find hygienic toilets, so he didn't drink as much water as he needed to and often picked up infections. Furthermore, 15 years of carrying himself around on crutches had caused the cartilages between his wrists and elbows and shoulders to wear down.

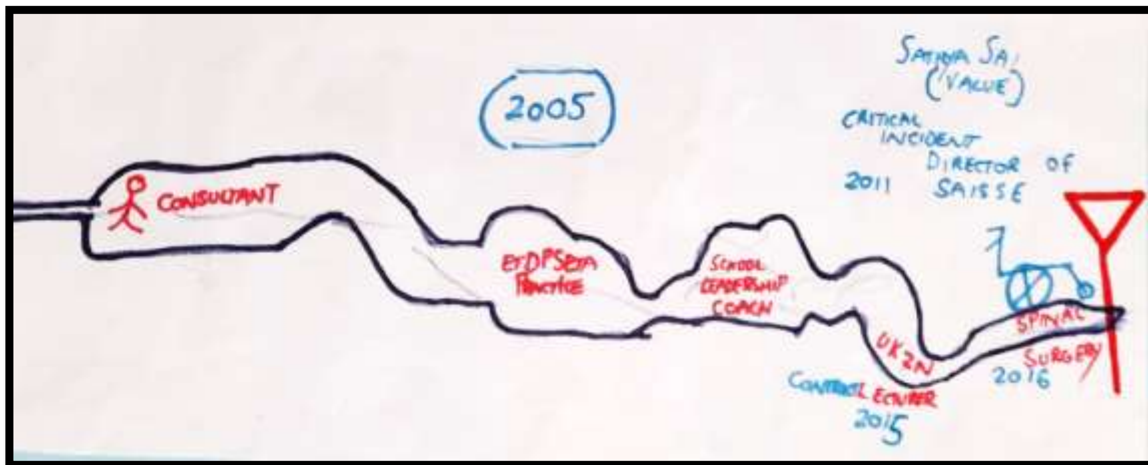
DRAWING 7E: YIELD AHEAD



One morning in December 1999, Sagie said he could not get himself out of bed. Previously when he had felt tired and unable to get up, despite the struggle, he would eventually get up. This time he knew it was different. Sagie’s work was negatively affecting his health. He discussed his situation with his wife, colleagues and health-care providers. The consensus was that it he should apply for medical boarding. This meant that he would receive a small pension from the education department and would not be allowed to take up a similar position in the future. Thus, medical boarding would prevent him from working in a full-time permanent position but would not prevent him working altogether. Still in his early forties, he had a lot of youthful vitality and a positive state of mind. Those he chatted to recommended that he look for opportunities where he could work from home where he would be able to manage his time and his health better.

After being boarded, Sagie initially kept himself busy with a flight simulator which his wife had bought him because of his love for flying. However, it was not long before he was approached by an ex-colleague from the education department to assist with running some education workshops. He would be able to choose which assignments he accepted or rejected. This marked the start of Sagie’s career as a NTW, and is illustrated in Drawing 7F involving numerous bends, widening and narrowing of the river linked to different projects starting or ending.

DRAWING 7F: CONSULTING AND BUSINESS



2000–2005: Consulting Projects

Sagie worked as a consultant on a range of education department projects. One project required the writing up of seven manuals which would help build capacity within governing bodies. It was a big project that lasted close to a year from the end of 2000 and into 2001. A second part of the project involved training of people in school governance positions.

Another project, starting near the end of 2001, involved being a team leader to five consultants who were involved in helping schools develop annual budgets and development plans. His role was to build capacity in these consultants, who in turn would build capacity in the schools in which they worked.

During 2002, a project very close to Sagie's heart came back into his work life when he was appointed as the management consultant to oversee the construction of the resource centre in the Richmond area. He had been the visionary behind the Masakhuxolo Education Resource Centre and involved in the planning of the centre. Now, as a consultant, he could continue and complete his work on that project.

One of the longer projects Sagie was able to secure started in 2003 and lasted about a year and a half. He became the lead developer and project manager to prepare a set of resources to guide school management teams on good governance. The project was called "Towards Effective School Management" and required the development of manuals, videos and posters and included training the master trainers to present the content in the schools.

Consulting projects also came in through other sources. During 2003, Sagie had a role as a tutor mentoring senior education department officials on the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Early in 2004, a smaller contract Sagie secured was a project with the Eastern Cape Department of Education that involved the development of learner and facilitator modules for school managers.

This is how Sagie described working as a consultant, indicating both the positives and negatives of working in alternative ways:

> *I thought life as a consultant was fantastic, because whilst there was flexibility (I stayed at home and I did a lot of work), I could attend to my physical needs, but, as you would know, working at home has its drawbacks too, because you don't keep an eye on the time. Weekends are not yours, public holidays sometimes are gone, you're just working to deadlines. It is a high-stakes game, because there was a contract, we had milestones, we had deliverables.*

Sagie's words reveal the way work and personal life easily blur together when working in a non-traditional way. There is this paradox whereby one is in greater control of projects you accept or reject, but there is also the pressure to get the work done in the designated time and so one often works outside a traditional workday.

2005–2019: Business Venture

In 2005 Sagie ventured into the new territory of starting a business, a leadership development/training company that for the purpose of this study will be called Leadership Development Strategies (LDS). In partnership with his wife, he set up the company and they decided to become accredited with the SETAs. SETA business was booming at the time and many people were setting up profitable training companies. However, the process of getting accredited was lengthy and by the time they had all the policies and manuals in place and got approved accreditation, the boom time for this type of business was over and it was difficult to secure a contract.

Sagie recounted how he eventually secured a contract:

> *So, for the first three months we battled, then the Wildlife Environment of South Africa put out a request for a proposal. We put in [a tender] and I remember also undercutting*

severely, because I just wanted something under the belt to show we have trained and we have blue-chip company like that, you know, in my estimation, that would be good. We did that training and it also helped us to land a contract with the SETA.

Through the SETA contract, LDS trained about 500 learners, with further work coming in after that. One project involved training of educators to support orphans and widows of vulnerable children. Sagie's experience and skills in school counselling that he had acquired very early in his career were particularly relevant for that project.

LDS then secured a contract with the Zenex Foundation for work in a deep rural area in KZN. The contract was to provide leadership coaching to middle management, heads of department, principals and deputy principals in 11 schools. The project lasted about four years. Once again there were few toilets and so they also drank water sparingly, which was not good for Sagie's health.

Sagie shows the end of this project on his drawing as the river narrowing again, because when that project finished they didn't have much work, just doing odd bits of training.

2012–2015: Doctorate

During Sagie's career, he acquired numerous degrees, including a master's degree, and he had the desire to do his doctorate. Throughout his career and in his personal life, he had taken many leadership roles. In 2011 he found himself in a particularly challenging leadership position as the director of an independent group of schools. The position caused him to reflect on his leadership style. It was this leadership experience that brought him to the point of realising that he wanted to do a study of himself, to understand what was going on inside of himself as a leader. He did not know if it was possible to do such a study, but he pursued the idea and found his way to a group of academics experienced in doing research that involves the self, thus his doctoral journey began. It was though this group that I met Sagie.

He said that the self-study methods group was particularly helpful during his doctorate as a support community, as indicated below.

The self-study group was phenomenal—they created the space for me to be open and vulnerable in a trusting environment. I took every opportunity when we were asked:

"Who wants to present?" I would put up my hand. So virtually every chapter, I had it tested by the group and they gave me pointers.

Sagie's reflection on the role the self-study group played for him illustrates the significant role that such a group can provide and is a good illustration of a community of practice, which was the theoretical framework of this study (as outlined in Chapter 4 and discussed further in Chapter 9).

During my interview with Sagie about his doctoral study, something resonated with my own experience of finding a suitable research method that included the self. I recognised in his story a period of methodological wandering, that was noted already in Chapter 5, about my study and the studies of Rosenberg (2016) and Harrison (2009). My methodological wandering brought me to the nexus of autoethnography and narrative methodologies, while Sagie's brought him to a self-study. Although the final locations of Sagie's study and mine were different, the process of finding which is the most suitable methodology seems similar.

2016: Another Yield and Looking Ahead

Drawing 7F shows the section of Sagie's river of life from 2000 when he became an NTW to just before the interview took place in 2016, ending with another yield sign. As before, Sagie signalled the medical challenges in his life as road signs. This yield sign was due to the spinal surgery he had just been through when the interview took place.

Sagie hopes to be able to use what he learned from his doctoral study to teach and mentor others in research methods that use reflective practices. His self-study helped him to see the important role of reflection and reflexivity when trying to make a critical incident into a building block rather than a barrier and he hopes to be able to guide others in these reflective practices. Sagie's desire to pass on what he learns to others speak of his strong leadership skills (leading by example) and his expertise at mentoring others, that have run through his career story.

Sagie's love of learning is well demonstrated through the numerous formal qualifications that he has achieved. However, it also goes beyond that. His CV shows that he has done quite a number of massive open online courses (MOOC's). These are courses that are open to people worldwide. There are a large number of such courses available to individuals on all topics. Many of them don't lead to a qualification or a formal

achievement certificate and are examples of non-formal learning as defined earlier in the dissertation.

By the end of the study…

… Sagie had retired and was not able to participate in the focus group session or provide follow-up detail.

In Sagie's story we see that the alternative way of working (as an NTW) was an opportunity for him rather than a risk, as the traditional employment model became too much for him with his physical disabilities.

PART 3: ‘Arguing is fun’ (Ashira’s Story)

Ashira is a 31-year-old female and comes from a mixed-race family. Her dad is Indian and her mom is Spanish. Ashira has been an attorney since January 2012.

As mentioned in Chapter four where I introduced Ashira, the first time I chatted to her was when I needed some legal advice around the employment of a security company in the block of flats in which I reside.

Ashira’s river of life, Drawing 8 below, runs diagonally across the page from the top left corner to the bottom right. The drawings on the left side of the river depict various events and experiences in her life while the drawings to the right of the river are pictures that depict her emotions about each experience.

DRAWING 8: ASHIRA'S RIVER OF LIFE

1986–1999: Growing up Arguing

Ashira’s parents studied at tertiary level, and expected her to as well. Her dad did a Bachelor of Commerce and now has his own business as a financial advisor. Her mom trained as an English teacher, but never worked in that profession. Instead, she joined

Ashira's dad when he started his business and learned the skills needed to support the business.

Ashira is no stranger to hard work, as she observed how hard her parents worked to build their business while she was growing up. She explained with fondness how her paternal grandmother used to come to watch her and her two brothers when they played games or performed at school functions, because her parents were needed often and were not able to attend, due to work commitments. She didn't sound bitter that her parents were not there but recognised it as something they needed to do to be able to afford them a comfortable lifestyle.

From a young age Ashira loved to argue and her mom often said to her: *"The amount of backchatting and arguing that you do, you are going to be a lawyer."* Ashira's interest in law developed with her grandmother as her ally. She said she used to sneak out of her bedroom and into her gran's room to watch LA Law, The Practice and Boston Legal when she was supposed to be going to bed. She said that it looked like so much fun to be a lawyer. Her drive to become a lawyer was also fuelled by a deep empathy for people and of wanting to see justice done.

1993–2004: Schooling

Ashira went to a small private all-girls' school in Pietermaritzburg for primary school, the first seven years of school life. It was a close-knit community with about thirteen pupils in each grade. She had good friends, enjoyed school life, and excelled academically.

For her secondary education, Ashira's mom wanted her to go to a larger school, as she felt that Ashira needed to encounter higher levels of competition, more realistic of the working world. Ashira went to a public all-girls' high school, with about thirty pupils in her class and roughly 200 in the same grade. The move was an adjustment for Ashira— she was used to being the best at everything, and she quickly learned that in those areas you want to be the best, you had to work very hard.

Ashira thrived at this school, excelling academically, in leadership and in the debating society, where arguing became a sport. Debating developed her skills of persuasion further. Ashira described her experience in the debating society:

> *So, they started to train me, and we lost our first debate spectacularly and then after that we got the hang of it and we were the same team right from grade 8 to matric, so*

we learned how to gel with each other and whatever and so we became really good and we ended up getting really good accolades.

Unsurprisingly, Ashira decided to pursue law as a profession when she completed her schooling.

2005–2012: Becoming a Lawyer

Becoming a lawyer involved obtaining a degree in law (LLB), doing articles and writing the board exams. Ashira went to study at UKZN and obtained her LLB in 2008. She loved studying Law. The next step towards becoming a lawyer, was a six-month course called the Practical Legal Training (PLT) course. It is a full qualification done over six months and its intent is to help prepare students for their board exams and they need to spend less time doing their articles. Attendance is compulsory and the course is challenging. Ashira wanted to do the course because she was scared about doing her board exams and wanted the kind of preparation that this course offered. She did well in this qualification.

The next step to becoming a lawyer was the practical component of her training where she needed to get a position as an articled clerk. It was not easy to find a position as an articled clerk. One reason for this was that Ashira had left it so late to apply and companies she approached already had enough article clerks. A second reason seems to be linked to the South African context and her mixed-race heritage. It was a time when Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) had just been introduced and companies were selecting staff based on race. At this early stage of BEE (that later became BBBEE) points were awarded in a hierarchical way, with the highest points awarded for employing an African person, then for a Coloured person, then an Indian person and none for a white person. Due to Ashira's Indian surname, she did secure some interviews, but when they saw her, they would turn her away when they realised she was 'half' white.

Her mom suggested that she put down on her applications that she was Coloured. Coloured people in South Africa are usually considered those who have a mixed heritage of African and White parents and so it was something different from how she perceived the classification. However, she gave it a try and it was not long after she did this that she managed to secure a position as an articled clerk at Cronje and Crombie Attorneys (name has been changed) in Durban. Ashira had a very positive view of her

mixed heritage, instilled in her through the way that her parents spoke to her about race growing up. However, she was also not so ‘attached’ to a racial identity for this experience to be problematic for her. She was just pleased that she had been able to find a position.

Ashira had a positive experience doing her articles at Cronje and Crombie Attorneys and she gained invaluable experience in an affirming and social working environment. Ashira’s work as an articled clerk required a huge amount of travel for court appearances all over the province, as well as a lot of drafting of legal documents.

The final step in the journey to be able to be admitted to the bar as an attorney was writing the four board exams. Mr Crombie recommended she just write them all at one time, which she did, and passed them all first time around with distinctions.

Drawing 8A depicts Ashira’s experiences as an articled clerk, moving from the bottom left corner to the top right corner. The three black rectangles are a page with lots of writing on it (symbolic of the many legal documents that she drafted), a page with a big number four, stands for the four board exams that she needed to write and the bottom one has an A on it, illustrating that she achieved a distinction for these exams. Underneath them, the purple road is because the work required huge amounts of travel.

DRAWING 8A: ARTICLED CLERK

The red symbols at the top right of Drawing 8A symbolise the following: The question mark was because she didn't always know what she was doing, but she said she asked lots of questions and learned quickly. The wine glass is illustrative of the very social time they used to have on Friday afternoons when all the staff socialised over a glass or two of wine. The hashtag stands for swearing as she said they used to swear a lot. The smiley face and the heart indicates that Ashira loved working here and they treated her well.

After passing the board exams and being admitted to the bar as an attorney, it was time to find a position as an attorney.

2012–2014: Being a Lawyer—Permanent Employment

In this period, Ashira held two permanent positions and gained valuable experience as a lawyer, but the experiences were very different.

Ashira's first permanent employment position was in a company called GTL Attorneys (pseudonym). It was a really difficult time, as the staff were poorly treated. It was a rocky patch for Ashira emotionally and she described that time below:

> *So it was terrible—a lot of tears—I just hit a rock hard place—I was very sad, I was angry a lot of the time and I was crying—I mean I used to come home and like literally on a Sunday night at nine o'clock she* [the boss] *would say, "You've got to go and do a bail application in Verulam"* [an area 30km away from Durban] *and I'd ask, "Right now?" and she said, "Yes, right now—a client is waiting for you." And I'd need to get in my car drive to Verulam.*

Ashira didn't even know where the police station was in Verulam (a suburb of Durban) but had to find her way there on a Sunday evening and was not paid anything extra for doing work after hours.

The difficulties of this position are shown in her drawings across the diagonal of Drawing 8B, from the bottom left-hand corner to the top right, all drawn in red. The scales of justice and the gavel illustrate that she was now an attorney, and she spent a lot of time in court, and she gained good work experience; the big red X, the road and the rock all depict what a terrible place it was to work, as she said the work was always an uphill battle.

In the top right corner of Drawing 8B there are three sad faces that speak for themselves as a time that was emotionally difficult. One day Ashira's boss threw a Lever Arch file at her, and she made up her mind to leave the company. She didn't quite make it a full year in this position.

Drawing 8B: Permanent Employment—GTL Attorneys

Ashira's second permanent position was at PQR Suppliers (pseudonym) from February 2013 until January 2015. PQR Suppliers was a wholesale holding company for a group of ten companies that imported wheels and tyres, including the inside silvery part of Mag wheels.

This period is shown in Drawing 8C from the bottom left corner to the top right corner. Ashira was the legal advisor for this group of companies, represented with the big purple "L". The black circle with the lines through the centre is a wheel, to represent the nature of this business. Ashira's work included drafting of many legal documents, shown by the black page with lots of writing on it. Ashira gained most of her experience in labour law through this position.

The company was also developing an online technology focus to their business and developed an application that retailers could use to place orders. Ashira needed to draw up legal agreements linked to the technology aspect of this business. It was a huge learning curve for her as it was not something she had done until then. She had to do her own research, which included speaking to colleagues, to ensure that the policies and legal documents she prepared were done properly. The big green drawing that looks like

an inverted comma, stands for the WhatsApp icon, due to the new social media aspect of legal writing she encountered in this position.

The green arrow going directly into the centre of the river signifies the growth that she experienced in this position. However, the black line in the middle of the river is a ceiling, because after a while there was no further room for growth in this company.

It had been a very positive experience and a peaceful time for Ashira, indicated by her drawings in the top right corner of Drawing 8C. There is a big red heart and an engagement ring as it was here that she met her future husband, to whom she was engaged at the time of the interview. There is a very happy smiling face and a purple leaf that signifies peace.

DRAWING 8C: PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT—PQR SUPPLIERS

During this time, Ashira also started studying her Master's in Tax Law. These studies were initiated by her boss at PQR suppliers, who had seen how quickly she got through her work and had paid for her to do some further studying. He wanted her to do something constructive with her time when she completed her work early rather than playing computer games. She had one more semester of coursework to complete by the time she decided to leave PQR Suppliers at the end of 2014 to start her own legal consultancy business.

2015: Becoming an NTW

Ashira's feeling that she had reached a ceiling at PQR Suppliers, combined with her work experience in labour law and in drafting many legal documents, led her towards opening her own legal consultancy. Her mom had encouraged her to do this, saying that if she could be employed as a legal advisor (at PQR Suppliers), then she could provide the same service for other companies. Ashira's boss at PQR Suppliers was sad to see her leave but could also see that it was the best thing for her career. He wanted her to continue the work she had been doing for them, hence PQR Suppliers became her first client.

Ashira called her new company Ad Alta, shown on the bottom left corner of Drawing 8D with the big black letters AA, standing for the Latin term "*Ad Alta"* which means "to grow". The name reflected her desire to grow personally and her desire to see the company grow.

In addition to consultancy work, an opportunity opened for Ashira to do some contract lecturing at GU. She thought that lecturing would be a good way to supplement her income while she got her legal consulting business off the ground. In January 2015 Ashira officially started work in these two roles (legal advisor and lecturer) and became a non-traditional worker.

Ashira had always had an affinity for teaching. During her studies, she had often helped fellow classmates by explaining legal concepts. She had also been a tutor during her studies. She took to lecturing very naturally and enjoyed her dual role of consulting some days and lecturing on others.

By the middle of 2015, things were looking good as Ashira had finished her master's coursework, as well as completed one semester of contract lecturing and been running her own consultancy for six months. However, tragedy struck her family in July 2015, when her youngest brother was murdered. It was an understandably devastating time for her whole family.

In Drawing 8D the big red line down the middle of her river and continuing forward illustrates this tragedy. She also shows a broken heart on the right of the drawing. At that time, she put her master's on hold. She also cut back on her work at GU, doing only

as much as she felt she could cope with. The thumbs up and smiley face are because in terms of her work, it was a good place to be in. She enjoyed the work and the NTW model also enabled her to scale down to give her the space she needed to grieve.

Drawing 8D: Family Tragedy

2015–2019: Being an NTW

At the time of my interview with Ashira, it was three years since her brother's death. She had picked up additional modules to lecture at GU, as her capacity for work had increased. She was also ready to resume her master's study, the research part of the qualification.

One of the biggest adjustments in Ashira's transition from full-time work to freelance lecturing was the freedom to come and go from campus without having to report to anyone. In Ashira's previous workplaces some sort of "clocking in" and "clocking out" took place each day. So, in the early days of her contract lecturing, Ashira would report to a full-time staff member, Reece (pseudonym has been used) whenever she arrived at or was leaving campus. He would tell her she didn't need to come and report to him. This happened several times, until Ashira made the adjustment. She commented that once she understood how it worked, it was so freeing to be able to come to campus to fulfil contractual obligations and then have the freedom to go once she had finished. In Drawing 8E, at the bottom left corner, is a yellow key that stands for the sense of freedom that comes with being this type of worker. There is a feeling of having greater control over your time.

DRAWING 8E: BEING A NON-TRADITIONAL WORKER

In 2017, Ashira had a dilemma I have often faced as an NTW. In her legal consultancy she had secured six retainer clients (clients that pay a monthly amount for ongoing work) and her consultancy work was becoming too much to manage along with her lecturing. She needed to decide whether to stop or cut back on the lecturing and focus on the business. In a lecturing context, this type of dilemma is typical of the start of a year when one needs to confirm what modules to accept or reject. Sometimes modules fall away, and you find yourself with insufficient work, and then at other times, when all the work does materialise, you can find yourself overburdened with too much work. In this instance, Ashira decided to continue the lecturing and was grateful she did, because the following year (2018) the needs of some of her clients changed and though they continued to use her for ad hoc work, they no longer needed retainer arrangements.

When Ashira first ventured into the NTW model, the idea was to do mostly consulting work, supplemented by lecturing, but things have worked the other way around. At the time of the interview, Ashira was doing mostly lecturing (four days a week) with a little consulting (one day a week).

Talking of her development as a lecturer, she explained:

> *I've always had a natural teaching skill and it's been fun to exercise that muscle in the professional capacity.*

Ashira noted that her learning to lecture at GU was very affirming and developmental and took place with and through other people. Ashira first explained how peer reviews were a helpful developmental opportunity for her. She said Reece would sit in on one of

her lectures and then, as they were both smokers, they would have an informal chat over a cigarette about what areas she did well and where she could improve her practice.

A different but equally helpful learning process took place at a group level. Ashira recounted how the faculty of law held at least two developmental workshops each semester, creating a forum for discussion and showcasing of teaching and learning practice. For example, one of the staff or contractors might showcase how to improve slide presentations. Through those forums, she was able to apply ideas into her own lectures and she also shared with others some of her own ideas about lesson preparation and delivery.

Going forward, Ashira's aspirations were to finish her master's and then some time after that to do her doctorate. She was engaged to be married and said she had reached a happy place in her life after the intense sadness she had been through with the loss of her brother.

By the end of the study…

Ashira had moved into a permanent but part-time position which allowed her some of the flexibility of hours that comes from being an NTW (30 hours a week) but the security of a permanent contract. In her personal life, she had married, had a daughter and a second child was on the way. Due to these additional commitments in her life, she had given up the consultancy work. Thus, Ashira was an NTW for a relatively short period of time. She observed that she loved the NTW when she was single, but that the more permanent arrangement was more helpful for her with the additional responsibilities she had in her personal life. She liked the stability of having a set income each month but she still had some flexibility with the number of hours worked. Thus, Ashira seemed to have found a work model that fitted somewhere between the two extremes of full-time permanent work and the NTW model.

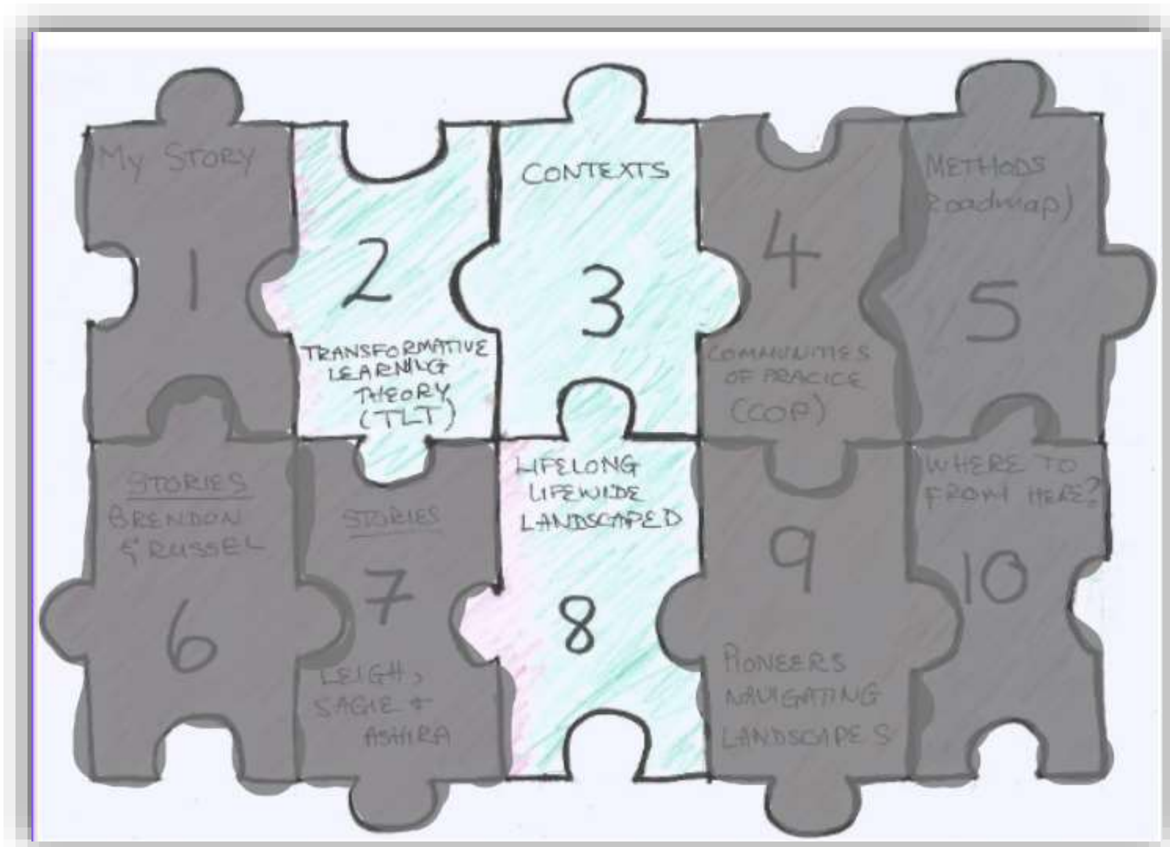
Interlude 7: Increasing Levels of Interpretation

Chapters 6 and 7 have told the stories of five NTWs whose careers intersected with mine and, to some extent, have started interpreting the stories. For example, to separate these five stories into two chapters involved some interpretation, those that seemed to be emergent and developed organically and those that required a reasonable level of design or planning.

My interest in other people's career stories developed in large part due to my own struggle to find my place in the world of work as a young adult. I became curious about how people developed in their careers. I discovered that there are many people who did not start out with a clear idea of what career they want to pursue, but rather that they stepped into opportunities that arose in their lives, just doing the next thing that their hands found to do. Thus, some careers are emergent and evolving rather than being highly pre-planned or designed, such as the stories of Brendon and Russel in Chapter 6 and myself in Chapter 1. The career stories in Chapter 7 differ in that they were pre-planned and there were formal requirements these NTWs needed to accomplish to work in their chosen professions. However, there were some elements of careers evolving or changing for these participants too. Today, due to complexity and change, careers cannot always be strictly pre-planned. I propose that it would be beneficial to think about careers on a scale that on the one extreme is completely emergent and on the other extreme pre-planned, and to acknowledge that all careers fall somewhere on this continuum. Furthermore, the five stories in these two chapters had some of my commentary and comparison woven into the text, thus bringing another element of interpretation to the stories.

The study now shifts from telling the stories and initial interpretations of the stories (Chapters 6 & 7) to greater levels of analysis and interpretation (Chapters 8 & 9). Chapters 8 and 9 involve greater levels of analysis and interpretation, especially bringing in a theoretical and deductive analysis through the theoretical frameworks.

The puzzle image below signals that Chapter 8 connects to Chapter 2 on transformative learning theory and with the contexts laid out in Chapter 3 in answering the key research questions.



In closing this interlude, I highlight the landscapes theme that has emerged during this study. Firstly, the thesis title contains the word landscape, but this was not the original title of the study. Rather, it was near the end of the study when the notion of living landscapes had emerged that the title was changed. Furthermore, the contexts in Chapter 3 were described as learning landscapes; in Chapter 4, the important role of other people in our learning was set up through the theoretical concept landscapes of practice (Wenger, 1998). In Chapter 5, the methodology was seen as a road map that one might use to identify destinations within the landscape. The landscape metaphor now pulls through into Chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 8: Learning is Lifelong, Life-Wide and Landscaped

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deconstructs learning into two dimensions, lifelong (over the lifespan), and life-wide (across the breadth of life) as defined in Chapter 3. Learning is a complex phenomenon that takes place in an integrated way in our daily lives, so although the deconstruction helps to gain a deeper understanding of some aspects of learning, when we break it down into its parts, there is the danger of over-simplifying learning. LLL and LWL are integrated and do not occur separately.

Thus, the second part of the chapter reconstructs learning as I explore how learning is shaped by the landscape. I do this through the development of what I have called “A montage of metaphors”. Various metaphors about space and land have been useful through this study and here I build and develop those metaphors into a composite set of metaphors that culminate in the notion of the careers and learning of NTWs being like a landscape. However, it is not a static landscape but a living landscape, one that is moving and developing and changing all the time. The metaphor of careers as living landscapes also helps us understand the work lives and stories of the participants as learning that includes the whole of their lives and that continues to change and develop beyond what has been written about their stories in this study.

The first part of this chapter involves deductive analysis whereby concepts from theory and contexts of the study are explored. The second part of the chapter does some inductive analysis as I draw together a composite picture of learning as a living landscape.

Part 1: Learning is Lifelong and Life-wide

Lifelong and life-wide learning have been defined in Chapter 3 as important aspects of adult learning, especially in our current contexts of change and uncertainty. Clark (2005) defines lifelong learning (LLL) as learning that takes place from birth to death and life-wide learning (LWL) as learning that takes place across a range of settings and contexts.. Importantly, LWL is a concept linked to lifelong learning rather than a separate concept. The definitions above are how these terms will be used in this study. The reader should keep in mind that although the two terms are discussed separately, in life they are integrated and that learning in both cases includes formal, non-formal and informal learning. I start by exploring the lifelong dimension of learning of the NTWs.

Learning is Lifelong: Dimension of Time

Lifelong learning is essential in the contexts in which we live in the 21st century where the nature of work is changing (World Bank Group, 2019). We live and work in contexts that are volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) (Mack & Khare, 2016). Furthermore, NTWs are not well protected by South African labour law, so we need to keep competitive by developing skills and knowledge throughout our working lives.

The participants' learning across their lifespans has been described through their stories (Chapters 1, 6 and 7) which traced the trajectories of their careers, from their early conceptions about work while growing up through to their pathways into tertiary study and then into the world of work. Their journeys through the world of work were described and it was seen that they moved in and out of the NTW model of work at various stages and junctures in their careers for a variety of reasons. Thus, the NTW model provided the participants with flexibility and a range of options about work.

The lifelong aspects of the participants lives has already been told through their stories in Chapters 1, 6 and 7, as they grew, developed and changed throughout their careers. Thus, in a sense, the lifelong aspect of their careers has already been explored in those chapters. Here, I focus on two aspects of their journeys, namely, how parental models and frames of reference about work influenced career trajectories and then an exploration of their stories through the lens of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). That does not mean that these are the only aspects of their lifelong learning, but that for the purpose of this study, these two discussions have come to the fore while considering LLL.

Career Trajectories Influenced by Racial and Parental Frames of Reference

As outlined briefly in Chapter 3, apartheid has left its mark on South African society regarding what work is considered "good" work and with different types of jobs being reserved for different race groups (Gradín, 2019). During apartheid, elite and professional careers were primarily reserved for "white" people, while menial work like cleaning, gardening or truck driving were largely seen as work for "black" people (African, Coloured and Indian) (Gradín, 2019). However, black people were offered professions like teaching and nursing, and many took these professions as a route to social mobility. Racialised views of work have influenced participants' career trajectories. Parental work models were another factor influencing trajectories. Racial and parental factors are inter-linked as parents' work lives and their mindsets about work would have been influenced by apartheid. Hence, racial and parental influence are discussed together as I consider each participant's story.

A brief summary of the participants' stories follows, leading to a discussion of transformative learning theory (TLT) as a theoretical lens for this study.

As a white South African growing up during apartheid, my mindsets about work were racialised and gendered. My mother wasn't in paid employment but ran a big household as a stay-at-home mom. My step-father was a professional, working in one career and one organisation for life. Those role models influenced how I thought about work and potential careers and what I expected to happen in my life. I was in the privileged position where I could have chosen any professional career.

Brendon, a white male and of similar age to me, had very different mindsets about work. His mom was in full-time traditional employment her whole life, but his dad had many different jobs in diverse fields on short-term or consulting-type projects. Thus, his dad role-modelled the NTW model that he followed. Brendon expected to have a professional career rather than just a livelihood.

Leigh is white female, a generation younger than me. Both her parents worked in non-traditional ways and her dad instilled in her that they were a family who cannot work for others, regularly repeating their mantra: "De Wets are not made to work for others". Leigh has always been an NTW and probably always will be.

Sagie, an Indian male about ten years my senior, pursued teaching as a profession, which was made possible through him obtaining a bursary. His father had a stable job in a shoe factory, but it was menial work, without many career progression opportunities. Thus, Sagie moved away from racialised views of work.

Russel, an African male was the first generation in his family to pursue a professional career. His mom was a full-time domestic worker, work typically undertaken by African women in South Africa. She earned a living, but it was not in a professional career. Due to financial constraints, Russel did not have many options for a career. In a similar way to Sagie, he obtained funding to study at tertiary level, making his career in shipping possible. He had traditional career growth ahead of him if he had stayed in that position. When he ventured out to craft an arts-based career, he considered his experience in shipping as a backup plan. It had more security, but it was not his passion.

Ashira was from a mixed-race family, her dad was Indian and her mom was Spanish and would have been considered 'white' in an apartheid context. Ashira watched her parents work together to establish their own financial planning business. They modelled an entrepreneurial lifestyle that influenced her decision to start her own business and to pursue part-time lecturing at one point in her career. Thus, Ashira is the second generation to have a professional career and to work in non-traditional ways. She did not seem to be as strongly influenced by racialised views of work as other participants, perhaps due to coming from a mixed-race family.

This section has shown how the early parts of the participants' career trajectories were influenced by racial and parental frames of reference. The next section explores career trajectories through a TLT frame of reference.

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) as a Lens for NTWs

In Chapter 2, TLT (Mezirow, 1991) was set out as a theoretical framework for the study as it was helpful to theorise my story in Chapter 1. Hence, I wondered if it might be a useful theoretical framework for other participants' stories, given the contingent, precarious nature of the NTW model. Below. I explore TLT as a framework for the other participants' stories. I start with a summary of the theory and of my story as a reminder of what was discussed in Chapter 2. Then, I discuss how the other participants' stories connect or do not connect with the TLT framework.

Summary of TLT

TLT (Mezirow, 1991) is about how we grow up with frames of reference about life based on our upbringing, family, social groups and/or religion. We use those frames to make sense of our world. When we experience something that does not fit those frames of reference (a disorienting dilemma), we go through a process that might lead to us changing our perspective (Boyer et al., 2006). Mezirow (1991) calls that changed perspective transformative learning. The disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991) discussed above, refers to an epochal event that triggers a process of questioning of frames of reference, but sometimes the triggers that bring about change are incremental rather than epochal. Mezirow (2009, p. 23) states: "Transformations may be epochal (involving dramatic or major changes) or incremental and may involve objective (task oriented) or subjective (self-reflective) reframing."

The process of transformation that Mezirow (1991) proposed has a strong cognitive focus, for which he has been criticised. The goal of moving towards a unified view of TLT considers other ways of knowing, such as conative and spiritual (extra-rational) (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). Furthermore, in the unified view, one needs to hold seeming opposites in tension, such as the way that learning can be individual and social (relational) at the same time. The important role of relationships has also been highlighted in numerous studies (John & Cox, 2018; Mälkki, 2012; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008; Spooner & John, 2020; Stevens-Long et al., 2012; Taylor, 2008).

TLT in my Story

In my story (Chapter 1) I explored how parental, familial work models strongly influenced my mindsets about work and a career. In Chapter 2, TLT was a useful lens to explain key aspects of my career story. I discussed how I went through what Mezirow (1991) calls a perspective transformation about the world of work, because my initial mindsets about work were very different to my experience. The transformation I experienced was initiated by a disorienting dilemma followed by a process of examining and re-evaluating my view of the world and ultimately integrating back into society and work through an NTW model (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Mezirow, 1991).

Next, I consider the usefulness of TLT for the other participants' workplace learning trajectories.

TLT in the Other NTWs in the Study

In Chapters 6 and 7, and also summarised briefly above, I discussed how the participants' career trajectories and their mindsets about the world of work were influenced by their parents' work and some societal expectations. Mezirow's (1991) notion that we develop frames of reference as we grow up and experience life through those frames of reference holds true for all the participants. Furthermore, apartheid's racialised frames of reference about the type of work done by different races (Gradín, 2019) continues to have an influence on careers of NTWs, as explored below.

The participants can be divided into two groups. The first group, Brendon, Leigh and Ashira grew up with frames of reference about the world of work that embraced a range of ways of working and so for them to choose the NTW model was unsurprising. They did not need to go through a perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) about ways of working, as explored in the brief summaries above, near the start of the chapter.

As white South Africans, Brendon and Leigh expected to pursue professional careers and had a reasonable amount of choice of profession. Coming from a position of privilege, racialised views of work affected their career choices in a positive way. However, Ashira is half-Indian, yet her experiences of work were similar to Brendon's and Leigh's. At one stage of her career she followed her dad's example pursuing an NTW model. It was her dad, rather than herself, who broke free of apartheid frameworks about work.

The second group of participants, Russel and Sagie, had experiences more like mine, in that they did need to reframe their notions of work to embrace and venture into the NTW model, as explored next.

As a domestic worker, Russel's mother worked hard to put food on the table, but it was a livelihood rather than a career. Her work was consistent, but not well-paid and there was no prospect of career growth. Thus, Russel's earliest notions of what kind of work he might do one day were that it would be good to get a job in a furniture removal company. That is what he imagined to be a good stable job and he did not initially have notions of pursuing a professional career. However, when Russel left school, he found his way into a career in the shipping industry which included opportunities for tertiary study that he had not anticipated, and so began a traditional professional career. It was a stable job, reasonably well paid and with career progression opportunities.

After some years in this work, and through his interest and involvement in projects in arts, he saw how many people he met made a living in arts-related work through a freelance work model. As he saw that, he began to consider whether the freelance model was something he could pursue. He started to see how he could craft a career for himself (as described in his story in Chapter 6). We can say that Russel went through a perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) about the world of work, firstly in pursuing a professional, traditional career in shipping and then later to consider the NTW model. Thus, he broke some apartheid and parental framing of careers and livelihoods.

The NTW model was not part of Sagie's early conceptions of work either. His father worked in a shoe factory and had a limited income. He was in permanent work, but he had very little opportunity for career growth. Sagie's professional career choice was made possible due to being able to obtain a bursary for teaching. Around that time in the country, opportunities arose for black people to pursue careers such as teaching, which became the start of social mobility. Sons, in particular, were encouraged by their fathers to pursue careers in teaching and so were able to break from the apartheid legacy.

Sagie was making progress in a traditional career path when he went through a life-altering event in a car accident. His paraplegia that resulted from the accident could be seen as a disorienting dilemma, as described by Mezirow (1991). The doctor's prognosis was that he would not walk or work again. He went through a process of challenging what they had said and of intense physical therapy so that he could walk and work again. At that early stage of his career his revised frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991) were more about the ability to work at all than the way of working. Despite the odds, he went back into traditional full-time employment for another 15 years.

Sagie got to a stage where he was physically not coping with the demands of full-time permanent work, and so he was medically boarded, and went into early retirement. Being medically boarded meant that he would not be allowed able to work in a permanent role again. However, he was allowed to take on temporary contracts. He was relatively young and had a zest for life and so he embraced the NTW model as a viable alternative way in which he could still work.

As seen from the previous section, the South African cultural context continues to be significantly influenced by apartheid. Gradín (2019, p. 553) has reported that "Occupations remain highly segmented by race, with blacks disproportionately holding

low-paying jobs.” It was also noted by the ILO (2021) that 40% of the inequality in South Africa can be explained by race.

This study identified that although the racialised views of work are still significant in South Africa, Russel and Sagie were able to break free of apartheid mindsets about work, being the first generation in their families to pursue professional careers rather than livelihoods. They did not grow up with mindsets of an NTW model, because their parents had not worked in this way and apartheid had influenced the type of work that was possible for them. They needed to go through what Mezirow (1991) calls a perspective transformtion about the world of work, much like I did. A closer exploration about the nature of that change is helpful here.

The Nature of the Perspective Transformation Process

The perspective transformation that I went through started with a disorienting dilemma, as described by Mezirow (1991) and then a process of change. In Chapter 2, I described how I related to the notion of an epochal disorienting dilemma, but that the process of change was more aligned to the unified view of TLT (Cranton & Taylor, 2012) than to Mezirow's (1991) early description of a ten-phase process.

The unified view of TLT (Cranton & Taylor, 2012) was seen to involve the complex interplay between some apparently conflicting ideas. For example, Mezirow (1991) has described a very cognitive process of critical reflection as a key aspect of transformative learning theory. However, others such as Dirkx (2006, 2008) have identified a connection between emotions and learning. Thus, one of the debates in the literature is about whether transformative learning is rational (cognitive) or extra-rational (outside of logical reasoning). Cranton and Taylor (2012), in calling for a unified view of transformative learning, say that we should not be debating whether the learning process is rational or extra-rational but rather embrace that learning involves both. Likewise, we shouldn't be concerned about whether learning is individual or social, but rather acknowledge that it involves both. Cranton and Taylor (2012) refer to these apparently opposing views as tensions. Holding these seeming contradictions in tension such that both can be true at the same time, is helpful for us in understanding the complexity of the learning process. Trying to dichotomise learning as only one concept or the other over-simplifies a complex process.

As has been highlighted in Chapter 2, the process of change that I went through in revising my frames of reference about work was messy and non-linear and involved significant emotional challenges (Dirkx, 2006, 2008), combined with the need to give up trying to figure it all out in a cognitive way. It also involved spiritual questioning (Tisdell, 2008). It was a very individual and lonely journey, but there were key relationships that made the journey possible and helped me eventually to integrate back into society, as identified by numerous researchers (Mälkki, 2012; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008; Ntseane, 2012; Spooner & John, 2020; Stevens-Long et al., 2012). These other ways of knowing (emotional, relational and spiritual) of my learning concur with the unified view of transformative learning as outlined in Chapter 2 and argued by Cranton and Taylor (2012).

Regarding the phases of transformation, MacKeracher (2012) argues that there is much disagreement in the literature about the order of the phases of transformation and that these phases are often described as if they took place in a vacuum, thus circumventing the messiness and chaos that is part of the transformative learning process. My experience concurs with this notion of the transformative learning phases being messy and chaotic, as I cannot identify distinct or separate phases in that process.

Unlike me, Russel and Sagie did not seem to experience a radical, catalytic event (a disorienting dilemma) that initiated their perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) about ways of working. The initiation of the change process was incremental rather than catalytic or epochal (Howie & Bagnall, 2013; Mezirow, 2009).

There were, however, some similarities in our process of change. Most significantly was the role of relationships. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) and Ntseane (2012) identified that in an African context in the country of Botswana, community responsibilities and relationships were reinforced as participants went through perspective transformations. This is the opposite of what Mezirow (1997b) has claimed about TLT resulting in more autonomous individuals. Thus, the need to understand the cultural contexts in studies on transformative learning theory is highlighted. Similar to Merriam and Ntseane (2008), this study, conducted in a South African context, identified relationships as an important aspect of transformative learning theory, as noted next.

Russel identified key relationships with people he met that led him into his shipping career. Later, while still employed full-time but having started to work on arts-related projects as an interest and passion, he associated with numerous people who worked in

a freelance way. Little by little, through observing them, he started to see that this way of working might be viable for him. So, relationships outside his family exposed him to other frames of work that were not part of his early frames of work learned through family and apartheid contexts. Changes in Russel's thinking about the way work is structured and organised could not have taken place without these relationships.

Sagie’s decision to be medically boarded and to venture into more casualised work models was made with the support and discussion with key people in his life, including his wife, his doctors and his friends and colleagues. He did not make an important decision like this entirely on his own, he relied on the views and guidance of those in his social network. He was also introduced to the idea of doing freelance work through collegial relationships he had developed during his full-time permanent work.

What has been noted above as the most significant factor that contributed to revised frames of reference, is the role of supportive relationships. These findings concur with other studies about the transformative learning process (Baumgartner, 2002; Cranton, 2006; English & Peters, 2012; John & Cox, 2018; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008; Ntseane, 2011, 2012). Parental relationships were seen to be significant for early conceptions of the world of work and in line with TLT (Mezirow, 1991), but other relationships were also influential in bringing about changes in mindsets about work. Taylor and Snyder (2012, p. 44) highlight the growing significance of the role of relationships in TLT stating “transformative learning does not happen in a vacuum solely through the free will of an autonomous learner, rather, it is contextually bounded and influenced by relationship with others.”

This section of the chapter has explored the notion of learning in careers as being lifelong, by considering how over that, parental frames of reference influenced trajectories and then exploring how TLT is useful (and in some cases not useful) to understand the participants’ stories.

In Chapters 6 and 7 I discussed how participants moved into and out of the NTW model in different ways and at different times in their careers due to their mindsets about work, but also due to health, family, financial or personal development reasons. Those story chapters demonstrate the lifelong aspect of the learning of the participants.

The need for learning to be lifelong is particularly pertinent to the current times we live in where change and disruption seem to have become the norm in what has become

known in business as the VUCA environment (Mack & Khare, 2016). Furthermore, the TLT lens developed and theorised in Chapter 2 was found to be useful in explaining the work mindsets of some, but not all, the participants. In Russel and Sagie, who did go through a perspective transformation, the process of change resonates more with the unified view of TLT, which seemingly holds more contradictions in tension (Cranton & Taylor, 2012) than the psycho-critical view of Mezirow (1991). Cranton and Taylor (2012) argue that many of those tensions can coexist, and we should not be only focusing on diversity in the views but looking for common threads. Relationships were highlighted as an important common thread in the participants' change process. The importance and role of relationships in the lives of NTWs in this study will be picked up again in Chapter 9 through the social learning theory, communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

This chapter now turns to the notion of learning as being life-wide or across the breadth of our lives, while bearing in mind that lifelong learning and life-wide learning are integrated.

Learning is Life-wide: The Whole of Life

Chapter 3 defined life-wide learning as learning that takes place across the breadth of our lives (Clark, 2005). In other words, it is learning that takes place in all areas of our lives. We are individual beings on a particular career trajectory (experience over time as explored about lifelong learning above), but we are also whole beings (experience in space) in that we are physical bodies with a spiritual dimension; we are beings that think (cognitive) but also feel (emotional) and are fundamentally social (relationships). We have professional lives as well as personal lives. In our personal lives we have multiple identities. We are parents, children, siblings, friends and colleagues at one time. We achieve many things at an individual level, but we would not be able to do so without the relationships we have with those around us. We are relational. We belong to clubs and associations outside of work. It is to these wider aspects of our being that I refer when I say that our learning is life-wide. Such learning includes formal, non-formal and informal ways of learning.

This section of the chapter considers different types of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) in the NTWs' careers and reflects on how the contextual landscape set out in Chapter 3 has influenced the stories and the learning of the participants. It is important to note here that formal, non-formal and informal learning occur across the length and

breadth of one's life, namely that LLL and LWL are integrated. In this chapter, these different types of learning came through most strongly in the section on LWL, but that does not mean that lifelong learning does not involve these types of learning. The final part of the chapter (Part 2: Learning is landscaped) brings together the discussion on the different ways of learning and thus integrates of the types of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) into LLL and LWL.

Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning

Life-wide learning has been defined in the adult education literature as learning that takes place across the breadth of one's life and it may be in formal, non-formal or informal ways (Clark, 2005; Mutlu, 2012). The learning of the participants took place through all these ways of learning. As defined in Chapter 3, formal learning is the learning that leads to qualifications (Commission of the European Communities, 2000; Reischmann, 2014). Non-formal learning could be a short course or any learning that has some structure to it but doesn't lead to a qualification (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). Informal learning happens through day-to-day life as we negotiate work, family and relationships. Informal learning often takes place unintentionally, but its significance should not be underestimated (Commission of the European Communities, 2000).

Below, I identify examples of how these different types of learning have taken place in the participants' career journeys. The examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Formal Learning

All the participants undertook some formal studies at a tertiary (higher education) level after leaving school and some have returned to formal studies during their careers (Sagie, Ashira and myself). Formal qualifications have played a role in the work we have done and are doing now as NTWs. For most of us, our formal qualifications were doorways into the work we do now, which might not be surprising for Leigh, Sagie and Ashira who studied towards a profession and then practiced in that discipline. Brendon and I studied in one discipline and then changed direction, but it was our formal qualifications that initially enabled us to become lecturers. Thus, the formal qualification became the entry point into organisations. However, once in the organisation, it was the less formal ways of learning (non-formal and informal) that helped us develop and grow professionally. Telukdarie et al. (2022) have identified that formal qualifications are

beneficial for finding employment, but that work-based learning is significant once in employment.

Non-Formal Learning

An example of non-formal learning are the peer reviews that Leigh, Ashira and I found really helpful in our development as lecturers at GU. Peer reviews involved another lecturer observing a lesson and then helping us to reflect on our teaching and learning practice to make improvements over the coming year.

When Sagie was not in formal learning contexts, he took online courses known as MOOCs and introduced in his story in Chapter 7. These courses are open to people globally. Their scope is large and can include formal learning, but many of the courses are for interest, not leading to a formal qualification and thus examples of non-formal learning. Non-formal learning could be on-the-job training of one employee by another. There is some structure and form to the training but it does not lead to a qualification. It might lead to a certificate of attendance, but not a certificate that is characterised by levels and qualifications, as recognized in formal qualification systems.

Informal Learning

Informal learning is the type of learning that is most difficult to define and to identify as so much of it happens unintentionally, almost by accident (Reischmann, 2014). It was shown earlier in the chapter that we all acquired initial frames of reference about work, through the racialised views of work from the apartheid era (Gradín, 2019) and through parental influence. Those frames of reference were learned in the home and through relationships with others and are examples of informal learning. However, those of us who established new frames of reference, also learned informally in relationship with others. Russel is a good example of this in that he watched associates of his working successfully in the freelance model in the arts. After some time of interaction with them and of questioning if this might be a suitable work model for him, he made the change.

Some examples of informal learning follow. Brendon learned informally about websites and web-building through his own reading and exploration (tinkering). I learned from Brendon about computer technology and with Leigh about research teaching and supervision, through informal discussions we had between lectures. I once approached Ashira to find out more about legal issues about labour law when I was a trustee for a block of flats. At another time, Ashira came to ask me how to write an abstract, as she knew I had some experience in publishing research articles.

Becker and Bish (2017) say that managers considered their informal workplace learning to be more significant than their formal learning. However, they also wanted to have formal learning opportunities that complemented their informal learning. Milligan et al. (2014) note that informal learning takes place in daily life and work once formal learning is over. Bolt (2008) also argues that formal and informal learning usually take place separately in the workplace, but that it would be beneficial to integrate formal and informal learning. While it may often be true that these types of learning are disconnected, I argue to the contrary that they are often connected, even if unintentionally, as we often learn informally from the most difficult experiences that we face. Leigh's internship year of her formal studies is a good illustration. She experienced some personal tragedies, but had to continue with the formal requirements of the qualification. Later, she reflected that what she learned through that year was that she can get through anything that life throws at her. She was learning a life-lesson informally about her resilience while doing her formal qualifications. Her informal learning was unplanned and unintentional but integrated with her formal learning. Richter et al. (2020) report that informal learning takes place when employees reflect on and find formal training satisfying, thus the role of reflection in informal learning is highlighted here.

It has been noted that all types of learning were significant for NTWs. Sometimes the types of learning were integrated and at other times they were not. Future studies could explore the role of reflection in informal learning and ways in which greater recognition of informal learning could enhance and complement other types of learning. This is suggested as a possible follow up research project (see Afterword, Project A).

In the above examples of informal learning, relationships were seen to play a significant role in learning. The first section of this chapter (lifelong learning) also highlighted the importance of relationships. Social and relational ways of learning align with African ways of knowing and learning. Ubuntu is an African worldview that can be summarised as "I am because we are" (Ntseane, 2012, p.278) which is about viewing the self in relation to others. Relationships and community are significant to life in an African worldview and context (Merriam & Ntseane, 2008; Ntseane 2011, 2012). This stands in contrast to the Western value of achieving autonomy or independence, which is what Mezirow (1997b) claims is an outcome of transformative learning. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) have identified that greater levels of interdependence rather than independence are the outcomes of transformative learning, as this study has also identified. It was primarily through relationships that Russel first found his way into a traditional

employment position in shipping and then later, through other relationships, started to see the potential for making a living in a freelance model. Merriam and Kim (2008) emphasise that community and lifelong learning are perspectives embraced by non-Western views of knowing.

Social (relational) learning also extends to the theoretical framework of social learning theory of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), which was outlined in Chapter 4 and will be explored further in Chapter 9. A future study could explore the principle of Ubuntu and the role of relationships in transformative learning theory, by drawing on a larger and stronger African sample than was used in this study (see Afterword, letter B).

In summing up this section, it should be noted that in the highly competitive and complex environments in which we live and work (Mack & Khare, 2016), professional development or workplace learning is critical for all people, but it is particularly so for NTWs who cannot rely on the formal training opportunities that full-time employees may experience. NTWs must rely on other ways of learning as they are not full members of organisations. Bednall et al. (2014) highlight the important role of informal workplace learning for career development; hence, non-formal and informal learning are essential for NTWs and deserve due consideration in this study. However, more than just recognising these different types of learning, as proposed by Bolt (2008), it is important to note that learning needs to be interconnected and overlap to get the most benefit. I have argued that formal, non-formal and informal ways of learning often did not happen in isolation or separately from one another but included the whole of life and overlapped and connected with each other. Often informal learning happened while other learning was in progress. Reflecting on formal learning is one way to make informal learning more explicit. In other words, being intentional about learning from all of life’s experiences is likely to foster greater learning.

The discussion now turns to the role of contexts in shaping careers of the NTWs in this study.

Contexts Shape and Inform Career Stories

Life and work do not take place in a vacuum. The unique times and places in which our career stories have been unfolding have been influenced and shaped by the contexts outlined in Chapter 3. This section of the chapter discusses how those contexts have moulded and shaped participants’ career stories.

Development, Globalisation, and South Africa

This study is positioned in time at the end of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century, in a global neoliberal context (Youngman, 2000) that has brought about increased casualisation of work in South Africa and globally (McKinley, 2020; NALEDI, 2006; Webster et al., 2017). As work becomes increasingly precarious (McKinley, 2020)the relevance of this study and others like it that explore the learning of NTWs cannot be underestimated.

As identified before, the participants of the study were a niche group of precarious workers, who are well qualified, reasonably well paid, are professionals and have been defined in this study as NTWs. There are other demographics of South African workers whose work is more precarious and vulnerable, seasonal and not well paid; this study does not make any claims about that wider group.

Non-Traditional Workers (NTWs) and Computer-Based Technologies

As identified in Chapter 3, there is a plethora of names to describe alternative work models, which I defined as non-traditional workers (NTWs). I developed the construct NTW which includes the range of types of workers that are not in full-time traditional employment. The term includes people who have their own small businesses (Brendon, Russel & Sagie), those who have some form of practice (Leigh in the latter stages of her story), those who call themselves consultants (me) or independent contractors (Brendon, Leigh, Ashira and myself).

As technology has developed, more terms are arising to describe those who work outside the traditional full-time employment model, such as digital nomads or gig workers (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2020). These recent terms have emerged due to the increased availability and usage of technology in daily life. Furthermore, Internet technologies have been a driver of globalisation (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018) due to their ability to break down geographical boundaries.

In Chapter 3, through my personal experience, I traced the history of the availability of computer-based technology in South Africa through the 1980s, 1990s and the first two decades of the 21st century. The Internet became available from 1994 (Gaitanaru, 2019), making a significant impact on workplaces. Internet technologies have been increasingly integrated into my work life such that they form an essential backbone and infrastructure for me to be able to do the work I do now. I cannot do some aspects of my work without the internet; much of my work is done through online teaching and even the

face-to-face teaching shifted to an online and then blended approach since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brendon's whole career was influenced by the availability of the new computer-based technologies over time, firstly through the availability of personal computers and later the Internet (Gaitanaru, 2019). When computers started becoming accessible in South Africa, Brendon was an early adopter of these technologies and in a position to develop a technology-based business (as described in Chapter 6) or to ride multiple 'waves' of new technologies.

Russel also indicated that much of his work involves internet technologies that enable him to work from anywhere. At the time I interviewed him, he planned to move closer to his mom and gran so that he could take better care of them, which he could do because a large part of his work was internet based.

Ashira was able to service her clients through her work as an attorney at the same time as lecturing because she was able to do a lot of her work for them remotely.

All the participants worked from home-based offices and so even though they did not all have careers in IT or do all their work through internet-based technologies, they needed to have some level of proficiency to work with these technologies. This became extremely important in 2020 when the world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and organisations needed to pivot to the use of online tools. The strength of these technological options for teaching and learning contexts meant that I did not lose work due to the pandemic as I was able to transition to 100% online teaching. Developments in AI are transforming aspects of work such as has been highlighted here of my work in education.

Knowledge Economy / Knowledge Society

The knowledge economy was defined in Chapter 3 as work that requires more reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical labour (Powell & Snellman, 2004). The participants in this study work as part of the knowledge economy. Our products are knowledge based rather than physical products. For example, Ashira provides a piece of legal advice to her clients; Leigh's students take away a better understanding of psychology and Sagie provides leadership in education. Russel co-ordinates arts-related events and conversations. For Brendon, the hardware aspect of his IT solutions are physical, but the software and the strategies are not.

As argued in Chapter 3, Milenkova and Manov (2019) say that we are part of a knowledge society, whereby we access the knowledge we need, when we need it. The examples above, of the knowledge products of the individuals in this study, illustrate that point. Milenkova and Manov (2019, p. 97) argue that “knowledge is at the centre of economic development policies and social growth”, underscoring the important role of knowledge in our current contexts.

South African Contextual Factors

Earlier in this chapter, I identified how the apartheid context influenced and shaped the career stories of participants, but especially those of Sagie and Russel who come from previously disadvantaged race groups, Indian and African respectively. Next I take a closer look at some uniquely South African initiatives that have influenced the participants’ stories, namely the work of the SETAs (UNESCO, 2022) and BBBEE (Funding Hub, 2022).

As defined in Chapter 3, SETAs are government organisations funded by a skills levy paid by companies amounting to 1% of their monthly payroll (UNESCO, 2022) . The SETA’s mandate is to drive and facilitate training and skills development within their business sector (UNESCO, 2022). Three of the participants’ stories had some engagement with the SETAs, each as a different type of stakeholder. Sagie was a training provider who offered SETA accredited training, Russel was one of the learners (students) of SETA-accredited training through the shipping qualifications he did. I was involved with SETAs in multiple ways, namely as a facilitator on SETA accredited training programmes, as a consultant through GVA, and to assist GVA with their own SETA accreditation.

The range of ways in which participants engaged with the SETAs demonstrates that the work of the SETAs in South Africa provided learning and employment opportunities for some of the NTWs in this study. The overall success of the SETAs and their intended role in the development of the country is a point for debate in a different forum and here I do not mean to imply that they have achieved all their goals. On the contrary, Turner et al. (2013) found that only two of the 21 SETAs were deemed efficient in their use of financial resources and only five met their targets in a consistent way, thus putting the success of the SETAs into question. Furthermore, Mothabi and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022) have identified that the Local Government SETA (LGSETA) is not meeting its mandate to provide relevant skills for their sector.

Broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) (Funding Hub, 2022) is another South African context that influenced participants' stories. As a management consultant, I have assisted with BBBEE compliance work and of driving training and development in companies to help them to obtain their desired BBBEE level. Thus, BBBEE has been a work opportunity for me. On the other hand, Ashira, as a younger person, benefitted from her mixed heritage background when she was trying to find a company in which she could do her articles and her declaration about her race made a difference.

Part 1 of this chapter has discussed lifelong and life-wide learning as two separate concepts. However, they are related concepts and cannot be completely separated. LWL is seen as a dimension of LLL. Part 2 (below) reconstructs learning using metaphors of land and space to develop a conceptual three-dimensional space, a montage of metaphors, in which learning of NTWs takes place.

Part 2: Learning is Landscaped

Learning is lifelong, life-wide and is shaped by the landscape. This section of the chapter links previous concepts together and develops a symbolic understanding of a living landscape, using metaphors of land and space. This part of the chapter develops an understanding of the experiences of NTWs in a narrative methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hamilton et al., 2008) incorporating time (when it was happening), place (where it was happening) and sociality (who else was involved).

A Montage of Metaphors

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate that metaphors can be useful in narrative inquiries, but they advise being cautious about their use as they argue that metaphors break down at some point and are not able to express the complexity of the phenomenon. Hence, an important caveat here is that while the complexities of career progression and career decisions cannot be fully represented by a single metaphor, what if we joined a range of metaphors into one picture? This is where the idea of a montage of metaphors comes in.

A montage (as mentioned in Chapter 5) is a combination of short excerpts of film made into a single scene in a movie. A montage (in film) is similar to a collage (in art), it involves bringing together many small pieces of something to be made into a coherent whole. This is similar to quilting, whereby patterns are made with multiple pieces of fabric sewn together. Like in a montage, collage or quilt, this section of the chapter draws together some metaphors that can be useful in trying to understand non-traditional careers while continuing to embrace high levels of complexity. The metaphors build on each other and come together in one final metaphor—that of a living landscape.

Ladders and Climbing Walls

The ladder has for a long time been used as a metaphor for progression in traditional careers, but is this still a relevant metaphor? What does career progression look like for NTWs in the 21st century? I propose that a climbing wall is a more helpful metaphor than the ladder.

PICTURE 3: CAREER LADDER (PIXABAY)[2]

A ladder is a tool used in building, construction and maintenance. The function of the ladder is to facilitate movement in an upward direction, to reach something higher than oneself. The ladder has a vertical trajectory only, one can go either up or down. There are clear rungs on a ladder that signal the placement of the next step in a linear progression.

PICTURE 4: CLIMBING WALL (PIXABAY)

The climbing wall has an upward trajectory, like the ladder but, in contrast, the footholds and handholds are not clear-cut. There are multiple paths you could take to make your way to the top of the wall. The activity is riskier than a ladder, but it is an adventure. There is more likelihood of falling off the wall and having to start again than falling off the ladder. Unlike a ladder, a climbing wall has room for horizontal as well as vertical movement rather than predefined steps to progress up the wall.

[2] Chapters 8 and 9 contain images that were downloaded from the Internet and were free for usage without attribution and/or in the public domain. A list of these images and their website addresses appear in Annexure A after the References.

Sometimes, one has to accept a downward or sideways movement for a short time before creating a new upward trajectory.

A climbing wall requires more physical strength than a ladder does. It requires that one hold one's body weight as you find places for your feet and hands and then pull yourself up a little higher. A climbing wall is used to develop rock climbing skills, an adventure sport that is done on mountainous cliff faces. There is a lot more skill needed for making your way up a climbing wall or a rock face than there is for a ladder. There is also more risk, highlighting the more vulnerable nature of this type of career. The way forward is not always clear-cut and there are an infinite number of possible trajectories up the wall. In all the ways above, the climbing wall metaphor is more helpful than the ladder when considering the careers of NTWs.

The career trajectories of the participants (their stories) were told in detail in Chapters 1, 6 and 7. A brief return to those trajectories, below, illustrate that, for the most part, the participants of the study have not experienced traditional career progressions that could be likened to a ladder. Instead, their careers are more like a climbing wall.

Brendon and Leigh are typical NTWs and have always been involved in multiple projects and activities throughout their lives. Leigh, very intentionally, has never been in full-time employment and has now moved to being fully self-supporting through her psychology practice. Brendon only sought traditional employment quite late in his career as a strategy to emigrate to the UK with his family.

Ashira has shifted between career models, trying a range of ways of working that have suited different stages of her life. Hence, her trajectory has been more like a climbing wall than a ladder, even though she spent a few years in traditional work models.

Russel started out in a career that resembled a ladder-like progression, but early in his career he made a deliberate choice to step away from the ladder and start a journey on a climbing wall, following his passion for the arts.

I never made it onto a career ladder. Rather, my early contractual work mostly involved pioneering or undefined roles. Through circumstances rather than by deliberate choice, I found my way into the NTW model and discovered that it suited me, despite the more vulnerable nature of contingent work.

Of all the participants, Sagie's trajectory was the most like a ladder, in traditional employment, working his way up in one organisation (the education department). He

moved to a climbing wall in the second half of his career for health reasons, when that model provided an opportunity for him to continue working, albeit in a different way. Thus, he used skills learned in traditional employment to contract out as an NTW.

It is pertinent to note that the two participants who were the most vulnerable to the negative impact of apartheid on the type of work undertaken, namely Sagie and Russel, first forged traditional careers and only later moved to the NTW model. Perhaps this was in part because they could not fall back on family due to precarious resources. Russel said that his shipping career was a backup plan and Sagie used the NTW model as a way of being more flexible and in control of what work he undertook for the sake of his health, but only much later once he could not cope with full-time permanent employment.

The climbing wall metaphor is helpful to visualise the career trajectories of the participants and considering how the model helped participants negotiate their way through health, personal and family tragedies in ways that might not have been possible while in a traditional work model on a career ladder. NTW models provided flexibility, independence and freedom and a higher level of control over work environments. All the participants found that at some stage of their careers the NTW model provided opportunities for work that were fulfilling and rewarding. However, the vulnerability of the NTW way of working also came through the stories and at times influenced participants' choices to take on permanent work, which offered higher levels of security, stability and improved ability to plan financially. Furthermore, it is important to remember that this particular niche group of NTWs are likely to have a greater sense of agency than the wider group of precarious workers.

The summaries above indicate that the NTWs had some level of agency and choice, which is characteristic of the specific niche group of casualised workers that have been defined in this study. The wider group of casualised workers who are not well paid, and are not the focus of this study, would not experience the same sense of agency and choice that these participants experienced.

Rivers, Waves and Roads

The six stories of participants were depicted as rivers, as explained in Chapter 5 and as seen in Chapters 6 and 7. Rivers run through geographical terrains, they have twists and turns and changing characteristics as they make their way from source to end. Each

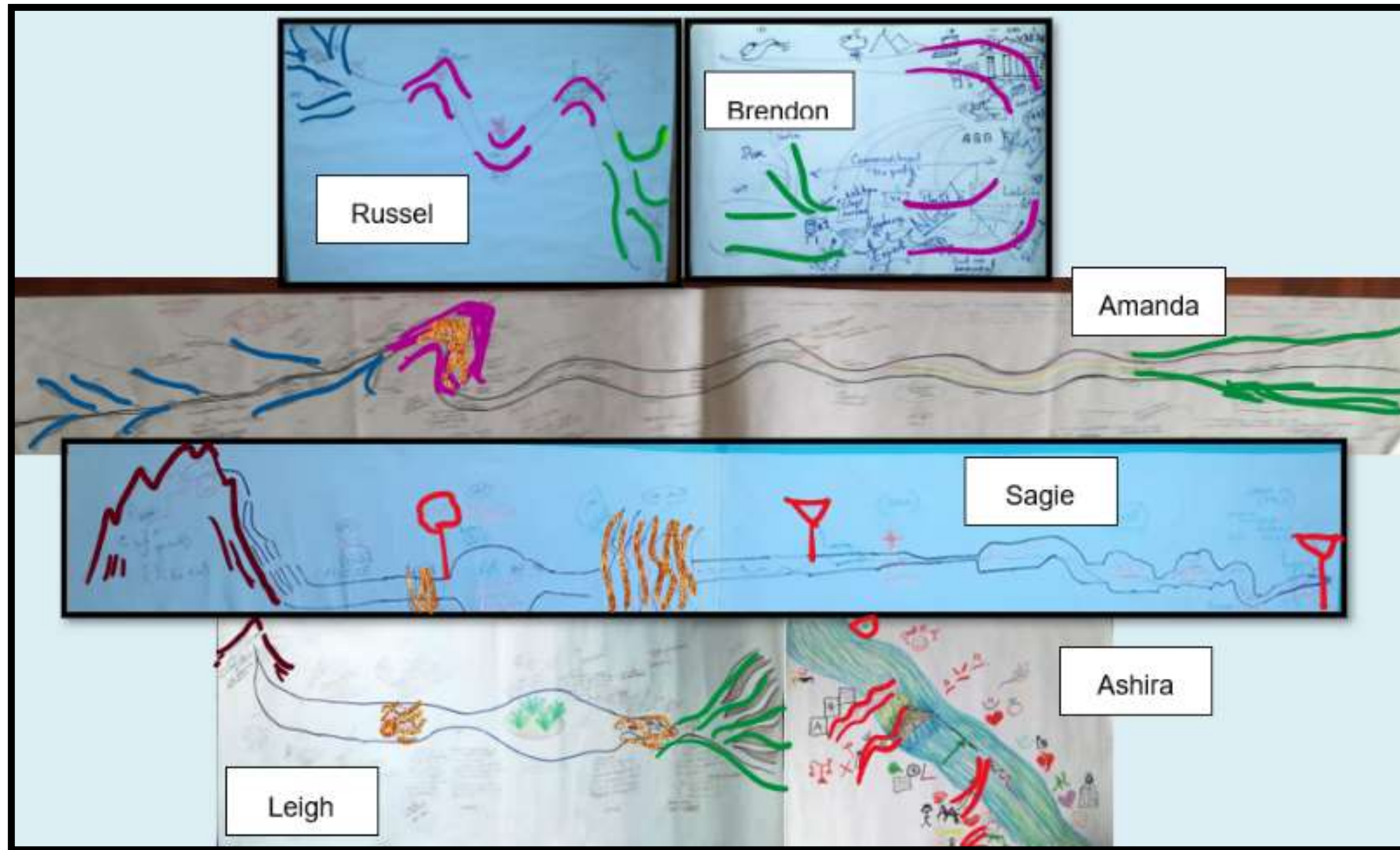
participant's river depicts their unique paths through a common landscape, namely Durban, South Africa in a globalised, interconnected world nearly three decades into democracy in the early 21st century. Some of the rivers are more mature and started in a terrain and landscape that was quite different to the one we live in now, such as Sagie, Brendon and I who grew up in the apartheid era. Other rivers are much younger and cover less terrain, but still experience significant change, such as Leigh, Russel and Ashira. The drawings illustrate uniqueness (as no two drawings are the same in length, shape or form) as well as similarity as will be explored in this section of the chapter. Here, I consider how the river metaphor is useful for understanding participant stories, but also falls short in some ways and identifies other metaphors that are also useful. The stories and the river drawings are analysed with reference to Montage 1 in which all six river drawings have been joined together into a composite image and been annotated with different colours to aid in the analysis. The features of the rivers that are found in more than one of the river drawings are mountains, tributaries, rapids, bends and a widening or opening out at the end.

Leigh and Sagie used mountains to depict the source of their rivers (see brown annotations on Montage 1). They said the mountains represented their foundational values for life, things they return to, especially in times of difficulty or challenge.

Russel and I started our rivers with a few tributaries that came together to make one river. For me, they signified how I tried many different things to find my niche in the working world. For Russel, the tributaries signified different areas of his life, namely economic, racial and social (dark blue annotations).

Three of the rivers (Brendon, Russel and myself) had big bends or turns in our river drawings (purple annotations), signifying key points of change in professional and personal lives. It is interesting that the three participants who drew big bends in their rivers are those who studied in one discipline but changed at some point and now work in different fields than those original studies.

MONTAGE 1: RIVERS OF LIFE



A few of the rivers had rapids, to signify rocky, tumultuous or challenging times. Rapids were seen in my drawing and in the drawings of Leigh and Sagie (light brown and white dappled annotations). Interestingly though, one of the times Sagie used rapids in his drawing, was because of the difficulties that the children he worked with were going through, rather than his own difficulties, illustrating well the depth of Sagie's passion for his work in helping youngsters and pointing towards the significance of supportive relationships.

In the rapidly changing contexts of life and work in the 21st century (United Nations), especially the changes that are taking place with Internet-based technologies (Hillyer, 2020), waves could be a useful way for NTWs to think about the work they want to pursue. Contrary to my parents' experience of choosing a profession for life, younger generations are likely to go through three or four different careers in their lifetimes and so might need to learn to watch for new trends and new career directions, so that they are able to catch and ride the waves rather than being knocked over by them.

Thinking of careers as waves instead of rivers helps us to get a better sense of rhythms and cycles of time. It helps us to envisage the transient nature of work in the 21st century. New technologies can and do change industries, bringing in new types of work, disrupting some, and making others obsolete. Then in time, that technology passes and another one takes its place. The music industry provides us with a useful example of change over the last half century. When I was growing up, music was sold on vinyl records and played using a needle on a record player. I recall the first time I heard about these much smaller discs that were coming out (Compact Disks) that would replace vinyl. I really didn't think that this would happen, yet it did. Now, compact disks are considered old technology as so much music is streamed over the Internet. The metaphor of waves seems more useful here than that of a river.

The second way in which the river metaphor fell short of being able to provide a picture of 21st century careers came through the drawings of Sagie and Ashira. They both used roads and/or road signs (see red annotations on Montage 1) as a key element of their river drawings. The stop sign was a significant drawing in Sagie's drawing as it signalled how his life came to a standstill when he had a serious car accident that left him as a paraplegic. At other times, he drew a yield sign to signify when things slowed down in his life due to health challenges. Thus, Sagie used road signs to signal pauses or stops in his career that came about through health challenges associated with his paraplegia.

Ashira used road signs in some of her smaller drawings on her river. She used robots (traffic lights), roads and bumps in the road in her drawing. We can see that the river on its own was insufficient for Ashira and Sagie as a metaphor for their journeys and that a road and road signs were useful metaphors for them to include. Not unlike in this study, Smith-Ruig (2008) found that participants in the accounting profession used metaphors of paths, journeys and roads to describe their career journeys.

In summary, I have shown that the river is a useful metaphor for a career, in showing movement over time and a constant forward motion. However, it falls short in its ability to capture times when life brings you to a stop or a yield. It also falls short in its ability to depict cycles or rhythms that might occur through new technologies and industries emerging for a time and then passing. Non-traditional 21st century careers need a way to depict stopping or pausing for a time. They also need a way to think about how some trends come and go—there are cycles and rhythms to the type of work that one is able to do at any particular stage of one's career. Hence, we can see that to depict NTW careers, we need to not only consider rivers, but also waves and roads.

Montage 2 is a pictorial representation of the metaphors of rivers, waves, roads and road signs. The map in the background relates to the notion of roads, but also leads to the next set of metaphors I consider—that of journeys and destinations.

MONTAGE 2: RIVERS, WAVES AND ROADS[3]

[3] Montages 2 and 3 were made from free or public domain images downloaded from the Internet. A list of all images is provided in Annexure A after the References.

Journeys and Destinations

Careers can be seen as journeys. Journeys take on many forms and can include travelling by car, airplane, railway or ship. They can also involve walking or cycling. It is most likely that a journey will involve a combination of these modes of transport. Thus, the idea of a career as a journey is more inclusive and allows for more complexity than the notion of a career as a river, road and road signs, waves or climbing walls.

The notion of a career as a journey has already been introduced earlier in the study. The word *journey* first appears in the key research questions (refer to Interlude 1), "What are the career journeys of the participants?" In line with that question, each participant's career story has been told as a journey in Chapters 1, 6 and 7.

The word "journey" reminds me of my two seasons of travel—one to the north and the other to the south of the globe as described in Chapter 1. Each of these journeys lasted around 10–11 months. Within those two journeys, I had multiple destinations. I sometimes stayed in one place for quite some time (such as when I stayed on a Kibbutz in Israel for three months), while on other occasions I did not stay long (such as a one-night stop-over in Malaysia while on my way to New Zealand). Similarly, in some of my work experiences, I have spent a substantial amount of time (as a lecturer and consultant), while other work has been transient (when I was an extra in some television adverts). The first had the intention of being a long-term career, the second was very short-lived and was a stopgap while I looked for longer lasting work.

On my travels to Europe and the United Kingdom in 1991, one of my destinations was London, but within that city there were many destinations worth visiting. There were times to rest and stop, but there were also times to continue to explore new destinations within the main destination. If we draw parallels to this in the stories of Leigh and Ashira, we could say that they each had a very clear goal or intended destination for their careers, a psychologist and lawyer respectively. They knew their intended destination and set out on their journeys to reach it. As soon as they qualified, they could officially claim their professional titles.

As soon as Leigh was able to register herself as a psychologist, you could say that she had arrived at her destination. However, that is not the end of the story but in many ways the beginning. Once she had reached that destination, she took on contract work as a lecturer in the discipline of psychology. Hence, she added to her own conception of what

it means to be a psychologist, by lecturing within the discipline rather than practicing psychology. Since arriving at her destination of being a psychologist, she has in effect visited a range of destinations within that primary destination. After being a psychology lecturer for more than a decade, she has started her own practice, which is more in line with what she originally anticipated about being a psychologist. However, even as she explores that practice, her experience is different because of the journey she has taken and the experiences she has had as a lecturer which give her insights she didn’t have when she first registered and could call herself a psychologist.

In a similar way, Ashira aspired to become a lawyer and from the moment she passed her board exams and registered as a lawyer, you could say she had reached her destination. She had achieved what she aimed to achieve. However, two to three years later, after permanent employment as a lawyer, her title of being a lawyer hadn’t changed, but her experience of practicing law had added to her identity as a lawyer. She had the same title, but she had a greater sense of familiarity and knowledge of what it meant to be a lawyer. She had developed knowledge from her experience that she did not have when she first qualified as a lawyer. She has inhabited a particular workplace, a destination for some time and by exploring that destination, she has gained insight and understanding about what it means to be a lawyer, but she is different from when she first could call herself a lawyer.

Journeys in life can be well planned ahead of time, or they can be more emergent and spontaneous. Some people like to plan their itinerary ahead of time, while others prefer to keep their plans unstructured. These preferences can be likened to the two groups of participants. Chapter 7 told the stories of Leigh, Sagie and Ashira as careers being constructed, because they set out with very clear intentions of their professions and have remained in those professions. On the other hand, Brendon’s and Russel’s stories in Chapter 6 and mine in Chapter 1 have been likened to crafting a career in that there was less initial upfront planning, but an ongoing developing and changing of careers in an emergent way.

A final consideration I want to explore about journeys is that most often they are undertaken with other people. When I travelled to the United Kingdom, I went with a friend. My sister Janine met us in London when we landed. I did a three-week journey within the United Kingdom with Janine and her husband. Later in that year, I travelled to the United States of America. I flew on my own, but met up with a tour group in Los

Angeles. After three weeks of touring, I took a bus trip to visit my step-brother and his family for a few weeks. Hence, on many parts of my journey described above, I was alone. However, I met up with people, toured with them for a time and then moved on to another destination. If I consider the entire ten-month journey, you could say that I undertook it on my own as there was no one person with me the whole time. However, there were many smaller parts of that journey that I did with others. Individual careers are a lot like this. They are individual in the sense that the whole journey is yours only. However, there are parts of that journey that involve other people. Sometimes people travel with you for quite a way, at other times it is much more transient. The important role of relationships is illustrated in the above anecdote and has been highlighted earlier in this chapter as characteristic of African ways of learning and the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Ntseane, 2012).

There have been times that Brendon's, Leigh's and Ashira's career journeys have taken place alongside mine. There has been a sense of being in a journey together because we are travelling in the same part of the landscape, yet our journeys eventually went their separate ways. My journey had a short overlap with Sagie’s through the research methods group where we met. Thus, our doctoral journeys overlapped for a short time. He was at the end of the journey when I met him, while I was at the start of my journey.

My journey with Russel started from a meeting in a common public space (a coffee shop) that is frequented by NTWs and our actual careers do not overlap or coincide. Rather, it is through being this type of worker that we are able to find common ground. Our paths have an overlap due to his participation in this study as I spent time with him, getting to know his career story.

Living Landscapes

The metaphors of land and space that have been described above come together in a final metaphor, that of a landscape. When I hear the word landscape, what comes to mind is the type of photo seen below in Picture 5 below. This is a static image taken while on a walk in the Drakensberg with my family. We were climbing a mountain and we were on reasonably high terrain, looking down over the geographical area we were visiting. From that elevated position, we could see far into the distance but also closer, to the flatter areas of land from which we had just come. On that holiday, we had spent most of our time in the flatter areas of land. We had walked, driven, slept and eaten. I had spent time with others and some time on my own. This idea of doing various

activities during our visit to the mountains links to the previous metaphors of journeys and destinations. Our main destination was to this geographical area of the country. We had a physical place to stay, sleep, rest and eat, but during the day we would go out and visit other destinations in the area.

Picture 5: Drakensberg Landscape Photo (July 2021)

Furthermore, to do this walk up the mountain, we'd had to use roads and road signs to get to our destination. We had crossed a small river. Hence, rivers, roads and roadsigns had been part of our experience within our journey. If we'd had rock climbers with us, they could have found a place for a rock-climbing adventure. What I propose here is that we don't have to choose between metaphors, but rather see them as one picture, one whole. The metaphor of a landscape has the capacity to incorporate the other metaphors and, in so doing, to embrace the complexity of learning of NTWs in our 21st century contexts.

However, the static image of the landscape in Picture 5 above has some shortcomings. Firstly, it represents a single moment in time when we stopped to look at the view and hence a static image. If I'd taken a few more steps there would be some similarity to the picture I took, but there would also be differences to the landscape. Furthermore, when we stopped at the top of the mountain 20 minutes after taking this picture, the view had changed again, even though we were still looking at the same area of land. With each static image taken we would be able to see that our view of the landscape was

changing. I propose that careers are similar to this in that they are moving and changing over time. A video would be more useful in capturing a sense of movement over time to illustrate the notion of a career being a moving, changing and evolving landscape.

Secondly, it is a two-dimensional image of a three-dimensional space. The participants' lives are being lived out in a physical three-dimensional space. The notion of a three-dimensional space also connects with the narrative inquiry methodology where the three commonplaces are time, place and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The career stories are situated in time, place and amongst social groups.

Therefore, I propose that careers and career stories are like living landscapes. The NTWs in this study told their stories at a certain point in time, but those stories continued to change, grow and evolve beyond the interview. A brief update at the end of each story illustrates how much can change in people's lives in a few years.

The notion of living landscapes draws on the concept of *life* that was explored through Part 1 of this chapter, of learning being lifelong and life-wide. The common thread running through Part 1 is that life and living are integral to learning in careers. The *landscape* part of the concept of living landscapes connects to the contexts of the study (as outlined in Chapter 3) and then moves us towards the theoretical lens of landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) which were outlined in Chapter 4 and will be theorised in Chapter 9.

Montage 3 (below) is a pictorial representation of these metaphors coming together as a living landscape. It is a development of Montage 2 but now includes different modes of transport. Importantly, it includes pictures of people. Sometimes the person is alone and other times there is a group of people, linking to the idea that while our whole career is something that is ours alone (individual), we are not completely alone in whatever ventures we take on. The social (relational) element of our interactions in the workplace play a significant role, as will be explored further in Chapter 9 through the concepts of communities and landscapes of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

MONTAGE 3: LIVING LANDSCAPES

In summary, in this montage of metaphors, I proposed that NTW careers are more like a climbing wall than a ladder. I then explored and used the river metaphor as a useful way to illustrate work experiences over time (lifespan). Useful as it was, the metaphor broke down in some places and more useful alternatives of waves, roads and road signs were explored. However, rivers, waves and roads are not unlike journeys; hence, I proposed that NTW careers are like journeys and destinations. Journeys have destinations and they also have rest stops. Furthermore, journeys are most often taken with others. Although each person's career can be seen as a journey that they take on their own, their journeys intersect and overlap with other people's journeys. Lastly, I explored the idea of careers as landscapes. Landscapes are made up of rivers, roads and waves, thus these metaphors are contained within landscapes. However, landscapes should be seen as something living, moving and changing, like a video of a landscape rather than as a static image as the stories of the NTWs continue to move, change and shift with the progression of time.

The landscape metaphor extends to the concept of landscapes of practice, from social learning theory, leading to the next chapter.

Interlude 8: Living Landscapes

In Chapter 8, participants' trajectories in the world of work were explored, noting how each was strongly influenced by their parents' careers and ways of working and by the racialised notions of work initially instilled during apartheid, but continuing to influence many lives today. The transformative learning theory framework was used to explore the participants' lives and it was noted that some were like me, needing to change their frames of reference about the world of work, while others already had frames of reference about alternative models of work.

The first part of Chapter 8 deconstructed learning and explored how workplace learning trajectories took place throughout life (lifelong) and across the breadth of life (life-wide). However, the lifelong and life-wide dimensions of learning should not be separated, but rather integrated, reflecting the whole of someone's life. Thus, the second part of the chapter reconstructed learning through a set of metaphors about land and space, considering how learning is landscaped.

Chapter 8 ended with the notion of careers being like living landscapes that involve activities and contexts that are always changing. Living landscapes also represent three-dimensional space of time, place and sociality that are characteristic of narrative inquiries (Hamilton et al., 2008) that are moving, changing, being formed and re-formed.

The notion of landscapes goes further in this study in that it forms part of the theoretical foundation. Firstly, it reminds us to look back to how the theory was described and outlined in Chapter 4, where the theoretical lens was set up. Secondly, Chapter 8 has described a living landscape and, thirdly, it draws us forward into Chapter 9 where the lives, experiences and learning of the participants are considered through the lens of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

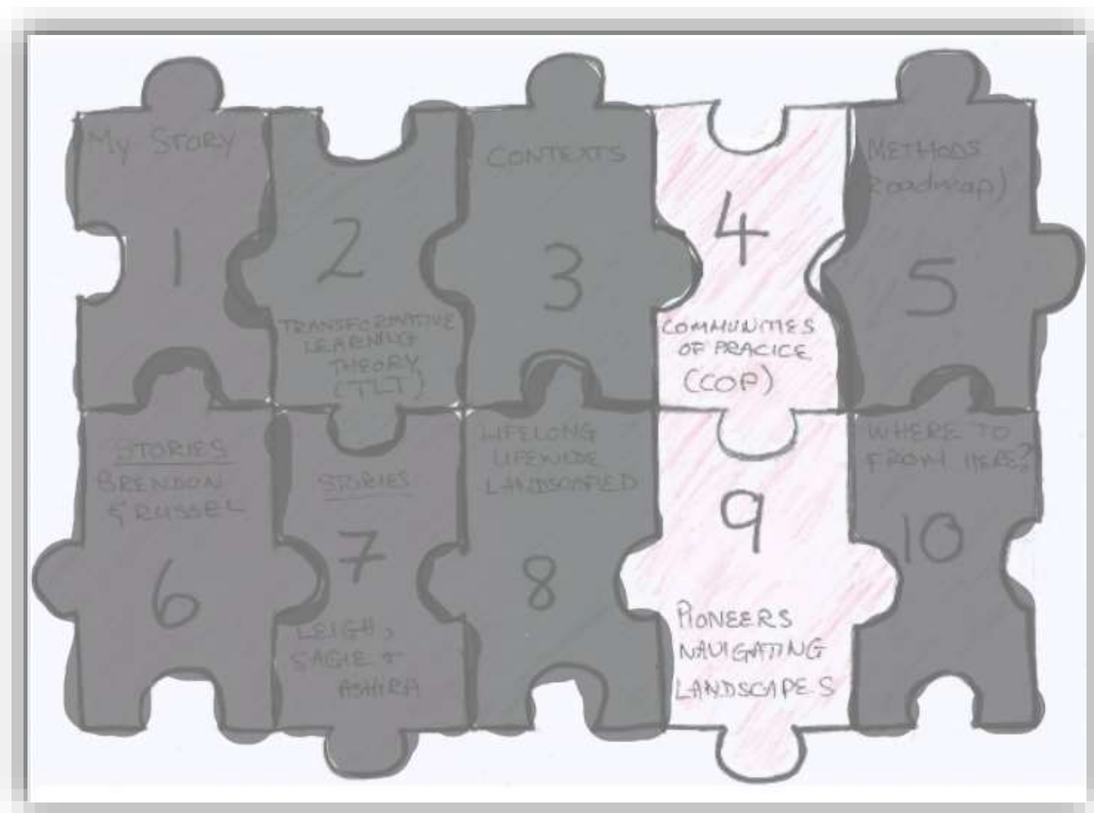
A narrative study such as this is concerned with the commonplaces of time, place and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Firstly, the time in which the study takes place spans roughly 60 years, namely the last four decades of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century.

Secondly, the lives of the participants have been unfolding in a particular place, the city of Durban, in the province of KZN in South Africa, in a globalised world with a strong neoliberal agenda (as outlined in Chapter 3).

Thirdly, the landscapes are not inhabited alone, but within social contexts. Each participant's journey was unique but at times their journeys overlapped and intersected with each other's. Furthermore, they all belong to wider social contexts that I do not belong to. For example, Leigh and I have very different work trajectories and stories, yet we worked closely on a postgraduate research programme, learning from each other over a period of a few years, even though her specialty is psychology while mine is adult education. One of our social spaces overlapped, but we each belong to other social spaces that do not intersect with each other's.

In the time, place and social contexts of the study, the characters' (participants') stories have been playing out in interesting and complex ways across the length and breadth of their lives. There are physical places and social spaces that they inhabit.

The puzzle picture below signals that Chapter 9 connects to the communities of practice theoretical framework that was outlined and discussed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 9, I consider how pioneers navigate their way through contextual and social living landscapes.



Chapter 9: Pioneers Navigating Living Landscapes

In this chapter, I first explore the idea that NTWs are pioneers. Then, through three themes, I explore how these pioneers navigate their landscapes. Each theme is described, illustrated and contextualised using examples from the participants' stories and theorised through social learning theory concepts of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015).

The idea of navigating implies inhabiting places and finding direction, using tools like maps and compasses. It is about being a pioneer who crosses uncharted or less charted territory. What are the tools that pioneers in this study have used to navigate their work landscapes? What identities have they developed? What processes and sources have contributed to their learning? This chapter hopes to answer these questions. However, the notion that NTWs are pioneers is considered first.

A NTW can expect to do some pioneering work. Pioneers take new, uncharted territory. They are out in front of the rest of the crowd, at the forefront of a community or context to which they belong. Great explorers in past centuries have been pioneers, the first to go to a new land and establish a settlement. While some of those explorers discovered new places, others died on their expeditions. Some pioneers conquered places already inhabited by indigenous people. Hence, as I consider pioneering, it is important to note that this concept should not be viewed through rose-tinted spectacles that look only at the adventurous aspect of being a pioneer. We need to also consider that there are vulnerable aspects and risks in being pioneers. Pioneers also pose potential threats to those who already inhabit the land.

Russel's choice to go into freelance work as an Arts Administrator (a title he gave himself), made him a pioneer. He said: *"...but I'm also dealing with new challenges and there's nothing to refer to—there is no precedent."* Russel must find his way as he goes. He doesn't belong to a neatly defined community of practice (COP) from which he can learn. Rather, he belongs to and interacts across multiple COPs (Wenger, 1998).

Brendon was also a pioneer in the early stages of his career, as an early adopter of computers and the Internet when they became accessible to the public in South Africa. His curiosity about how the things worked drove his early explorations and learning to use new information technologies, positioning him to provide training to his lecturers, as

explored in Chapter 8 through the metaphor of waves. Interestingly, when asked about his pioneering role, Brendon saw himself more as a guide than a pioneer, as he helps other people through unknown terrain. I argue that to be able to be a guide to others, he had to do some pioneering first. Furthermore, many famous pioneers in history relied on local guides, who did not get credit for their roles and knowledge of the landscape.

Chapter 1 tells about how I frequently found myself in undefined work roles early in my career, where I needed to create structure and bring some order, thus pioneering the way for others. Sometimes that has worked out for me, at other times it hasn't. My first job as a research assistant to a professor in the chemistry department was not an established role as he was setting up his laboratory. I had to get the machinery working first. Once I had done that, I took the initiative to write user manuals for future students about using the machinery. The chemistry professor let me know the following year that his new postgraduate students had found these manuals useful. I had done pioneering work, figuring out how the machinery worked and then documented it so that others could just follow the steps. However, there were also guides for me within the uncharted territory, such as my boss and an IT specialist that worked in the department.

At another time in my career, in the computer business in Cape Town in the late 1990s, I held a dual role of bookkeeper and knowledge centre co-ordinator. The bookkeeping functions were easier to pick up as there are established processes in business. However, the knowledge centre co-ordinator role was very undefined and I was never sure what I was supposed to be accomplishing (refer back to story in Chapter 1). The knowledge management concept was in its infancy at that time and there was extensive unknown, uncharted territory between what I knew and what I needed to know. I felt lost and uncertain on how to chart my way forward. Thus, I subconsciously avoided the knowledge co-ordinator role by throwing my energy into the bookkeeping. It was while I was in that position that my life started to unravel, things fell apart completely and I resigned. They had needed me to be a pioneer, but I was unsuccessful in that role. There were not enough local guides for me. In hindsight I see how new the field of knowledge management was at the time and how uncharted the territory and I can see why it was such a difficult role for me.

Leigh, Sagie and Ashira had more defined careers in that there are certain practices associated with their chosen professions. However, each of them at some point ventured into starting their own practice or businesses, territory that was new to them.

Pioneering involves the work of engaging with uncertainty, one of three key concepts that define social learning spaces (SLSs) (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) as described in Chapter 4. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) propose that much of the learning we do involves participation at the boundaries and peripheries of the spaces we inhabit and that knowledge at the boundaries and peripheries of communities involves engaging with uncertainty. This idea of learning at the boundaries or peripheries of a community is explored later in this chapter.

Pioneering can be lonely. A pioneer is out in front of everyone else, they may or may not have fellow pioneers or guides with them. Russel expressed the loneliness in his work saying that he missed the team dynamics that can contribute towards one's professional development, something he experienced in his shipping career. Thus, the important role of people in our learning is highlighted and the need for those in undefined roles to look for others in the landscape that can guide their learning. This chapter explores these social elements of our learning as NTWs through social learning theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

We live in a time of rapid change that impacts on work and personal lives. With change comes the need to navigate through new, uncharted territory. The developments with machine learning and AI such as ChatGPT (Jose, 2023; Oyelude, 2023) means that more workers will be forced into finding new roles in their work environment, and thus learning to embrace being pioneers.

Three themes related to being a pioneer have been identified and are presented below as three parts to this chapter. *Part 1: Time on your Legs: The Value of Experience* is about the skills and knowledge gained when we actively participate in work-related activities, gain experience and develop transferable skills. *Part 2: Wearing many Hats: Managing Multiplicity* is about how NTW roles involve learning how to manage multiple identities, disciplines, and/or projects simultaneously. *Part 3: An Autoethnographic Gaze: A Culture of Risk and Reward,* is about understanding and living with the pros and cons of being this type of worker—there are risks, but also rewards.

These themes are discussed with the image in mind of pioneers (the NTWs) navigating their way through contextual (Chapter 3) and social (Chapter 4) landscapes that are constantly changing and shifting.

Part 1: Time on your Legs: The Value of Experience

This theme is about the value of gaining work experience. I learned the phrase *Time on your legs* as a member of a walking club. While training for races, I learned that not every training walk needed to be harder or faster than the previous walk, there was also the need to develop endurance and stamina. One way to do that, was to spend a lot of time walking substantial distances. So, this phrase refers to the value you gain from just spending time walking, not necessarily walking fast but just being out there on the road. Thus, "*Time on your legs*" becomes a metaphor to explore the value that is gained from work experience, even when the work being done seems menial or insignificant. Learning takes place in and through doing tasks.

Leigh said that a large part of her learning to be a lecturer was through a lot of trial and error and that improvement came the more years she taught. As a youngster, Brendon spent many hours playing around with bulbs and batteries and then with computers when they became accessible. His playing and experimenting with how things worked gave him first-hand experience in computing and he became an early adopter of computer technologies, leading him into his career in IT. Ashira gained a lot of experience during her year as an articled clerk through many court appearances and drafting of many legal documents. She also gained experience in a permanent position, even though it was a difficult year for her. Later she had the confidence to start her own legal consulting business because she had gained experience in legal companies. Sagie gained much of his work experience during the time that he was in full-time traditional employment, showing that the value of gaining experience extends beyond the NTW model to other ways of working. As a NTW, he was drawn into contracts that made use of the skills he'd gained while in traditional roles.

Above I have explored how skills are developed through active participation (Wenger, 1998) in work-related tasks. Learning from experience involves doing things repeatedly and so we become better at what we do. Hence, by participating actively in various contexts and communities, learning takes place and experience is gained (Wenger, 1998). We could say that the participants have learned through "time on their legs".

It should be noted that from an adult education perspective, David Kolb's experiential learning theory would be a useful theoretical lens to understand this aspect of NTW learning (Kolb, 1984). However, as a lens for the whole study, communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and its extension into landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al.,

2015) were deemed more suitable as they enabled me to foreground the social elements of adult learning, which are often not explored. That does not mean that our learning is only social. We learn as individuals, but we learn from the people around us, in and through social contexts. Hence, I propose that a possible future research project seeking to understand the learning of NTWs could explore learning through the theoretical lens of experiential learning (Afterword, Project C).

Practice is described most simply as learning by doing (Wenger, 1998). Thus, practice is the active part of our work lives that we call experience. Practice is also about our participation within a community or group of people or several such groups. It is participation in something that gives us experience (Wenger, 1998). Participation and active involvement in community-based activities are at the core of Wenger's social learning theory. A brief recap of the four assumptions about learning that were described more extensively in Chapter 4, are summarised here (Wenger, 1998).

Firstly, we are social beings born into families and communities. We interact with others at home and at work (Wenger, 1998). Secondly, knowledge is a matter of competence in a particular enterprise (Wenger, 1998). Leigh's clients being helped or Ashira winning a court case for a client involve competence. Thirdly, knowing is about participation in and engagement with a particular enterprise (Wenger, 1998). This refers to the active part of learning of being present with colleagues and participating in something with others, and sometimes pioneering in this practice and thus reshaping communities of practice. Fourthly, meaning is about our ability to engage with and make sense of the world. Wenger (1998) says that learning is a product or result of us making sense of the world.

Wenger (1998) asserts that learning as social participation is the primary focus of communities of practice theory. He further clarifies the meaning of participation as follows: "a process of being active participants in the *practices* [emphasis added] of social communities and constructing *identities* [emphasis added] in relation to these communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). In other words, Wenger (1998, p. 4) says that our participation in communities of practice are "a kind of action" and "a form of belonging". How does learning take place as we actively belong to and participate in a workplace setting? How does participation lead to learning? The answers to these questions will be explored next through Wenger's (1998) concept of the duality of participation and reification. It is through participation and reification that a practice is developed within a community over a period of time (Wenger, 1998).

Learning: Participation and Reification

As was discussed in Chapter 4, the complementary relationship (duality) between two concepts, such as the relationship between participation and reification (Wenger, 1998) is useful in explaining how we learn. Participation is the active involvement or engagement in an activity and reification is the development of an artefact (Wenger, 1998). Here I explore this duality using examples from Leigh's, Ashira's and Sagie's stories.

Leigh spent many years as a psychology lecturer and when I interviewed her, she had a substantial amount of experience, having learned through trial and error over years of teaching and training. It was her participation with her students in the classroom that helped her develop her competence and confidence as a lecturer. Furthermore, it was her participation within a group of lecturers that also informed her practice. This took place informally in the communal room provided for lecturers and through the more formal annual peer review process.

I argue, along with Wenger (1998), that it was through participation and reification that her learning took place, as explained next. Participation as a lecturer required preparation and planning. Lecturers develop lesson plans and/or a set of presentation slides. The lesson plan and the slides are reifications of that lecture, or what Wenger (1998) calls artefacts. The learning takes place at the interface of participation and reification. Participation takes place in the classroom with the students, or afterwards with other lecturers and then those experiences can influence and inform the slide presentations for the next time the lecture is conducted. An artefact is a tangible product that is used as a tool and a guide for a lesson (Wenger, 1998). When Leigh starts her lectures with her students, she uses these artefacts to guide her engagement and participation with them. That constitutes the active part of her learning. Leigh may be teaching a lesson to more than one class and so once she has finished a lecture with one group, she adjusts her slides and her lesson plan to improve her participation for the next time she delivers that lecture. Hence, she moves back and forth between participation (active engagement) and reification (development of artefacts) and it is that interaction between participation and reification that develops and improves her lecturing practice (Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, peer reviews are conducted and feedback given, providing further opportunities for social learning from other lecturers.

Brendon, Ashira and I also learned through this interplay of participation and reification in our lecture rooms and in our communal lecturers' room. It was the reifications of that lecture (the artefacts) that became the guides or tools used by us as pioneers to find our way in new territory, but it was also our interactions and discussions with other lecturers that influenced our practice.

Ashira gained a lot of her legal experience during her year as an articled clerk that involved many court appearances and the drafting of legal documents, two activities that illustrate how participation and reification work together for learning. Court appearances involve participation with others, but some notes and preparation (reifications) of the court case also takes place. Once the court case is over, there are additional reifications of what took place, including the drafting of various legal documents. As Ashira participated in more court cases and drew up legal documents, she became better at her practice of being a lawyer. Her social interactions with more senior lawyers during her articles also contributed to her learning to become a lawyer. Her participation and reification (Wenger, 1998) in the courts, as well as her interactions with other lawyers, developed her skills and expertise as a lawyer. Her learning took place within and amidst other lawyers.

As a doctoral student, Sagie reflected on his own leadership practice through a self-study. His study required conceptual thinking and discussions with his supervisor. It also involved participation in the research methods group where I met him. A doctoral study involves documenting research, reifying it into a readable document. Sagie's participation in the methods group included presenting each of his chapters to the group. His presentation slides were reifications of his doctoral study and then his actual presentation involved participation with the others in the group. From their feedback, he would then go back to his artefacts (documents and slides) to reify what he had learned through his participation in the group.

The examples above illustrate how engagement in work-related communities involves active participation and the development of artefacts (reification). The artefacts guide the participation and then, after reflection, the artefact is adapted to improve our next instance of participation. Thus, as we go about our work, we move between participation and reification and the interaction between the two facilitates learning (Wenger, 1998). According to Wenger (1998), it is this interplay that develops an identity. Furthermore,

Wenger (1998) says that identities are not something that we acquire at some point in time, but that they are negotiated over the course of our lives.

Experience was gained through doing something and learning by trial and error. However, NTWs are contingent workers, without guarantees or expectations of continued work. Despite this, the participants in the study have been recontracted multiple times for this work and so have been able to learn from repetitive work experience, which would not always be the case.

Next, I consider the role that communities play in our individual learning, by exploring what counts as competence and how competence and experience work together in our learning.

Learning: Interplay between Competence and Experience

Wenger (1998) says that learning takes place through an interplay of competence and experience and that sometimes the competence pulls or influences the experience and at other times it is the experience that influences the competence. It is the people that belong to and act in a community that together recognise when someone is competent (Wenger, 1998). Thus, there are practices that are recognised as competence. As new people join the community, they need to gain experience in the community, aligning their practice to that of the community. In this sense, it is the competencies that drive the experience of newcomers (Wenger, 1998).

When Leigh first started lecturing, she was a newcomer to an existing community of lecturers. That community had developed a shared understanding of what it meant to be competent and Leigh had to learn what competence meant in that community. The peer review process was one way she could evaluate her competence. The peer-review document (an artefact), contained a set of competencies that the community considered important to be a good lecturer. The reviewer would rate each competence and give Leigh feedback on things she did well and where there was room for improvement. The process gave Leigh a chance to reflect on which competence she wanted to focus on for the following year. Thus, an artefact was produced (a reification) due to the interactions between Leigh and the reviewer that served to identify competence and to facilitate and encourage Leigh into further learning.

In the early days of lecturing, when Leigh did not yet have much experience, her development was strongly influenced by trying to achieve the accepted competencies of

the community, through the peer review document. These competencies gave direction to the experience that was gained. We can say that the competencies of the community drove and informed her experience.

On the other hand, sometimes the competencies of the community change and then it is experience that pulls or drives the competencies (Wenger, 1998). One change in competence I recall was when there was a shift in our teaching practice towards greater use of IT in the classroom, especially through the introduction of a learner management system (LMS).

We started small, being encouraged to use the LMS in our classrooms and in setting small tasks for students to complete. So, we started to develop the skills needed to use these technology tools in our teaching. Over some time, the LMS became an integral part of our teaching practice and so our experiences of using the LMS developed into what became recognised as competence. Thus, it was the new experiences of lecturers that were developing what it meant to be competent using the LMS. Thus, what was recognised as competence changed over a period of time, and continues to change. In this case, the experience was driving and developing the competence. And this may be more so for pioneers where notions of competence evolve with the practice!

In summary, the learning within communities of practice involves an interplay between experience and competence (Wenger, 1998, 2000). Sometimes the competence drives the experience and at other times the experience drives the competence. It is through this interplay of competence and experience, and through participation and reification that community members develop professional identities and how the practice of a community develops and is established (Wenger, 1998) and also how it changes and evolves.

In this theme, so far I have explored the value of learning from experience using concepts from communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) to gain a deeper understanding of the processes and sources of learning of individuals and the communities in which they participated. However, this raises two important questions, namely: “What is the benefit of having experience?” and “How can experience be gained?” These important questions are particularly relevant for young people who are trying to make the difficult transition from education into the workplace, and will be considered next.

Experience Develops Transferable skills

Transferable skills, as described in Chapter 1, refer to skills that are learned in one context but that can be used in another context or real-life situation. Olensen et al. (2021) discuss the difficulty of defining the term transferable skills. Other terms used to mean the same thing are soft skills, generic skills or personal skill and, like Olensen et al. (2021), when I refer to transferable skills, it is inclusive of this broader set of terms. My position is that not all skills are transferable, but that there are many skills we can develop in one context and use in another. My experience of being a waitress in Cape Town in 1998 provides a simple but helpful example of how a range of transferable skills were developed in that time and that I continue to use and develop today.

Firstly, as a waitress, I developed skills to work with different and sometimes difficult people. Secondly, I extended my skills using computers through the computer-based ordering system we used. Finally, I developed the ability to manage multiple projects at one time.

Waitressing involves serving multiple tables at once, with each table having a unique set of needs and requests at any point in time. I remember moments where I would stop everything I was doing and would systematically work through each of the tables I was serving, to check what they each needed from me, so that I could prioritise what to do next. In my current work as a lecturer, I have multiple modules to monitor and plan around and manage at one time. At other times I have had multiple clients for skills development reporting and I have to keep pausing and checking through the needs of each client to ensure I am not forgetting an important step for any of them. Through waitressing (a job that was a livelihood rather than a career) I was able to pick up skills that are needed for other contexts.

My view is that it is possible to develop transferable skills from any context that we work in, so no matter what work we do, it is not wasted. This is important not only for NTWs but in all work contexts in a world of work that is rapidly changing (United Nations). However, NTWs might be more adept and versatile than traditional workers at transferring their skills from one context to another, due the precarious nature of their work and their experience of working on multiple projects and contexts at one time.

Lim (2015) and Nägele and Stalder (2017) argue that transferable skills increase employability and that this is important because employers are looking for graduates whose skills extend beyond a discipline. Ng and Harrison (2021) report that transferable

skills were developed when a university accounting course had to pivot to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating that change and disruption can initiate the development of transferable skills. Thus, I argue that any work experience can be a source of learning that can develop transferable skills and that young people should look for opportunities for any workplace experience. For those who do not yet have a clear idea of what work they would like to do, it is important to find any form of work and develop skills that can be used in other contexts.

The above discussion leads towards the second question: “How can experience be gained?” A challenge that young people face is their lack of experience, but how can they gain experience if they cannot find work? This leads to a discussion on how paid and voluntary work overlapped and intersected for the NTWs in the study.

Paid versus Voluntary Intersections

An interesting observation arose from the stories of the NTWs in this study, that voluntary work can be a rich and beneficial source of work experience, possibly leading to paid work. However, it comes with its own unique challenges, especially in developing countries such as South Africa.

Most of the NTWs of this study were involved in some voluntary work alongside their paid work. Brendon was in scouting for most of his life and learned a lot about leadership. Leigh volunteered at a crisis counselling centre, developing her skills as a counsellor and building up a good reputation. Sagie started a sports club for people with disabilities. I was involved in a committee of trustees in the block of flats where I own a unit. However, it was Russel who provided the most interesting insights into voluntary work. He told me how voluntary work at times translates into paid work, saying:

> *But you also soon realise that from voluntary work, you get paid work, … through volunteering at an organisation, you meet other people that are working in a certain context and there are some business leads and work opportunities that come out of that…*

Russel believes there is a reciprocal relationship between voluntary and paid work and that volunteer work can be an important opportunity to forge strong relationships with people in other communities, that in time might lead to paid work. For Russel, the division between paid and voluntary work was blurred. Other NTWs in this study agreed with him.

Leigh said that after she completed her qualification and started work (contract lecturing), she looked for opportunities to volunteer and give back to her community and so she did voluntary counselling at a crisis centre. Through that involvement, she developed relationships and built a good reputation in her community. When she opened her own practice, she did not need to formally market herself as many of her clients have come to her through referrals from that community.

When Sagie was a teacher, he accompanied the school counsellor on his visits to the homes of his learners, which was not a requirement of his job. Through that voluntary aspect of his work, he learned that he was actually quite good at playing a pastoral role and so he pursued formal studies so that he could be a school guidance counsellor.

Brendon, who heard Russel and Leigh discuss volunteer work during the focus group session, reflected on his own experience and realised that his whole career was triggered by voluntary action. Initially he volunteered to teach people how to use the Internet. That translated into work with and for the adult education centre at the university, which then turned into corporate training. So, he said: *"My whole career started because I volunteered to show people stuff."* It was not an intentional business plan, but an evolving and emerging career that stemmed from voluntary work (as reflected in Chapter 6).

The participants' experiences above have highlighted an important link between volunteer work and paid work, whereby volunteer work provides an opportunity to build relational networks that lead to paid work. The active participation in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) seemed to open doors for paid work through the development of beneficial relationships. Volunteer work was beneficial as it gave participants opportunities to try out or sample different communities of practice and to develop strong relational networks while doing so. The value of volunteer work was also highlighted as an important part of gaining work experience and learning about individual strengths, through a leadership course run for unemployed youth (Cox, 2013).

However, the challenges of doing volunteer work in a 21st century South African context need to be noted, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. Unemployment is at an all-time high in South Africa, with youth unemployment being particularly high (Statistics SA, 2022). Thus, those who are in the direst need to find work might not be able to take on volunteer work, as even the cost of transport to or from a workplace is prohibitive.

It is important to note that participants' volunteer work mostly took place while they had some paid work. In other words, the remuneration gained from paid work made it possible for NTWs to do volunteer work at the same time. The flexibility of the NTW model made this viable. Thus, I propose that young adults who can find some form of paid contingent work should consider doing some voluntary work at the same time. Such opportunities enable one to develop work experience and build up relational networks that might lead to new work opportunities. Secondary or higher education scholars should also look for opportunities to do paid or volunteer work during their studies, so that they can start to develop valuable transferable skills that will make them more employable.

In Part 1, above, I explored the importance of gaining workplace experience. Through the duality of participation and reification (Wenger, 1998) and the relationship between competence and experience (Wenger, 1998, 2000), I explored how social learning takes place in a community of practice. I also discussed how gaining work experience is important for future work opportunities as transferable skills can be used in different contexts. I concluded this theme by discussing how paid and voluntary work often overlap and intersect, and that volunteer work can be a doorway into new work opportunities.

Volunteer work has the potential to expose people to new communities of practice in a non-threatening way that could be an important relational connection into paid work. NTWs who do not have the security of permanence and need to keep looking for new work opportunities should not underestimate the value that can be gained from such relational networks. However, the challenges of poverty and unemployment in South Africa, especially amongst the youth, can make it difficult to do voluntary work.

In Part 2 below, I explore the next theme, how NTWs (pioneers) manage multiplicity.

Part 2: Wearing Many Hats: Managing Multiplicity

As pioneers, navigating complex and unknown landscapes, the NTWs have learned to manage multiplicity. Three aspects of multiplicity will be explored, namely: multiple professional identities; cross-disciplinary workers (multiple disciplines) and managing multiple projects. It is important to note that the participants were chosen because of their experience of working in multiple roles at one time (as outlined in Chapter 5). Hence, the theme of multiplicity is not surprising. However, what is explored here is the variety of types of multiplicity that were identified and managed. Multiplicity is also explored through the theoretical lenses of communities and landscapes of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) to improve understanding of the fundamentally social ways in which learning takes place for NTWs.

PICTURE 6: WEARING MANY HATS (PIXABAY)

The idea of wearing many hats comes from the notion of a hat representing a particular identity or role and so as the NTWs navigate different aspects of multiplicity, we could say that figuratively they need to put on different hats as they engage in different activities. However, the picture that comes to mind here is not of someone wearing one hat and then taking it off to put on another one. Rather, I propose that the NTWs "wear" multiple professional identities at one time, one hat on top of another and then another, as illustrated alongside by Picture 6 in a vertical way. In this sense, one of the hats might be turned forward and thus foregrounded at one time without taking off the other hats.

In our personal lives, we hold multiple identities at one time quite comfortably. I am at ease with being a sister, a daughter, an aunt and a godmother simultaneously. I don't have to stop being a daughter so I can be an aunt. However, when I am with my nephews, that aspect of my identity is foregrounded, and my 'aunty' hat is turned forward. Similarly, I propose that in the professional lives of NTWs, it is possible to have multiple identities or wear many hats at one time.

Identity is a complex concept to which Wenger (1998) has dedicated half of the book. Some key elements of identity have been drawn into the discussion below, while acknowledging that this short paragraph cannot do justice to the fuller, more complex notion of identity understood by Wenger (1998). Identity is a negotiated experience as we participate in a COP (Wenger, 1998). Identity is formed through community membership, from belonging and participating in a practice. Identity is a learning trajectory whereby we define ourselves according to where we have been or where we are going. Identity is a nexus of multi-membership, meaning that our identities are shaped by bringing different forms of our membership into one identity (Mezirow, 1998).

Multi-Identity Persona

NTWs may have multiple professional identities at one time. I struggled to find a single professional identity and when I did find my niche in the world of work, I had multiple titles. I am a lecturer, a researcher, a consultant and a businesswoman. I am comfortable in having these multiple professional titles simultaneously. This understanding of the self relates to Wenger's (1998) understanding of identity being a nexus of multi-membership.

Leigh was a psychologist, a corporate trainer and a psychology lecturer. On one occasion, she was on campus lecturing and a violent incident occurred. Immediately she switched from a lecturer identity to therapist identity. A typical work-day for Brendon might involve being a lecturer in the morning and then a businessman in the afternoon. Ashira allocated different days to legal consulting and to lecturing.

Not everybody has this perspective. I have often noticed that full-time traditional staff members in organisations ask me how I have enjoyed my holiday when I have not been around for a while. Their assumption is that if I am not at the work premises, I must be on holiday. Often I have been doing consulting work during that time.

Cross-Disciplinary Specialists

The second area of multiplicity is that NTWs are often able to sit across disciplines rather than be specialists in one discipline. This was especially strong for those who studied in one field or discipline, but then moved to another discipline, namely Brendon, Russel (Chapter 6) and me (Chapter 1).

Brendon initially drew my attention to the idea of cross-disciplinary specialists when he explained how the geography department where he studied in the 1990s was very overt about their intention to train students to specialise in one subject, but to also be able to generalise across a range of subjects. This describes the T-shaped individual defined in Chapter 3 where the horizonal bar represents multiple disciplines and the vertical bar the specialisation in one discipline (Gardner, 2017).

This is how Brendon described his work across disciplines:

> *So, I am not an expert on programming, but hell I can talk to programmers like no one else and programmers are absolutely crap (by and large) at talking to actual clients, they just miscommunicate like crazy, so a lot of my expertise is because of my training in the geography qualification. And I've noticed that a lot of people, when they do notice that I'm an expert that's usually what they reflect back that, "you understand how these things fit together."*

Russel attributed his ability to sit between disciplines to his early life on the margins of society, saying he is used to inhabiting peripheral spaces rather than being at the core of a community. He sees this as an advantage as this gives him a unique angle to be able to solve problems. Russel described his cross-disciplinary experiences as follows:

> *My interests stretch from architecture to photography to marketing to media and yes, I can hold a good degree of conversation across all of these fields but then I can't quote recent stories in media or recent trends in architecture, so I can discuss across the spectrum as very few people can, but I can't talk about all subjects to their depth.*
>
> *I can talk to an architect about photography in a way that a photographer can't. I can take theories and principles from the one and extend it to the other just like I can do about media. So that's quite interesting for me to be at a place where I can pull these strands in a way that people who are in these silos cannot.*

Brendon and Russel saw their ability to straddle two disciplines not just as something they could do comfortably, but as a key feature of their work and of their identity. Wenger (1998) says that identities are negotiated as we participate in a community of practice, or multiple COPs. Thus, if we participate in multiple COPs, identities are multi-faceted, yet still integrated (Wenger, 1998).

I relate to Brendon and Russel in being able to engage in the spaces between disciplines, which I attribute to the wide variety of subjects I studied formally in my science degrees and to the diverse range of workplaces I inhabited as a young adult. Brendon, Russel and I are displaying what Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015) call knowledgeability, which was defined in Chapter 4 and will be discussed later in this chapter.

I believe that in the South African workplace landscape, there are places for those who study in one discipline and remain in that for life, such as the way Sagie, Leigh and Ashira have stayed within their respective disciplines. However, I also believe there are places for those who have diverse interests and who have studied or worked across multiple disciplines, as has been explored for Brendon, Russel and me. The need for cross-disciplinary perspectives is growing because of the changing and increasingly complex contexts in which we live and work (Cheng & Leong, 2017).

Multiple Projects

The third area of multiplicity noted amongst the participants was that of managing multiple projects at once. This was most obvious for Russel. He had one identity, but he managed many projects simultaneously. Hence Russel set out his CV according to projects rather than chronologically as would be the case for traditional employment. Although I saw Leigh as having multiple identities at one time, she related more to the notion of working across projects than that of having multiple identities.

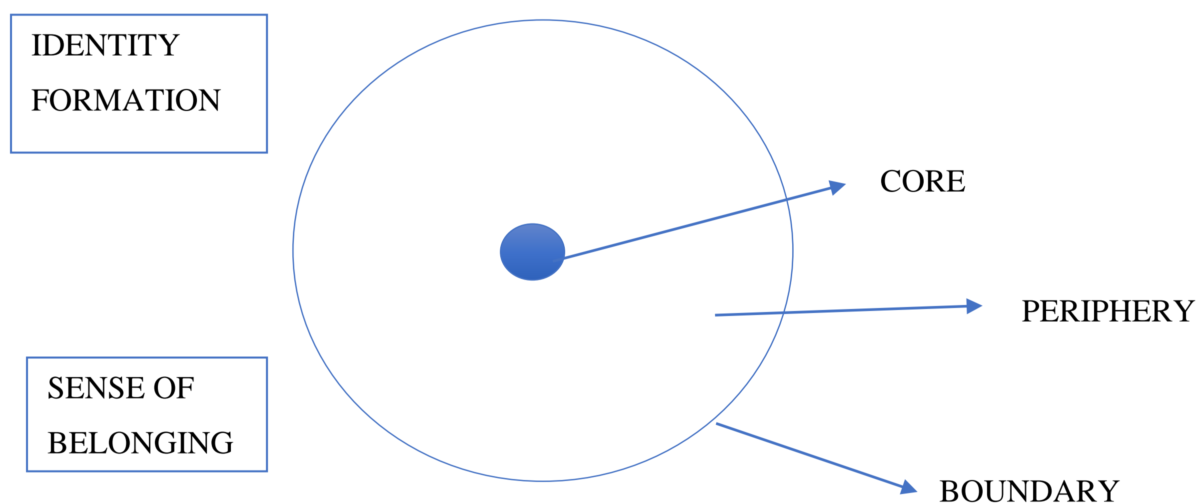
The three categories of multiplicity I have identified above are overlapping rather than mutually exclusive. NTWs could be engaged in any combination of these three categories at one time. Moving from the data presented in the above three sections, I pose a question for the following section about managing multiplicity. “How can multiplicity be understood through the theoretical lens of social learning theory?” The next section of the chapter shifts towards answering this question as concepts defined in Chapter 4 are brought back into focus here.

Managing Multiplicity: Landscapes of Practice

A brief return to key concepts of community of practice from Chapter 4 will be a helpful reminder here of how COP theory evolved from studies of apprentices in single communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to the more recent notions of landscapes of practice that embrace multiplicity (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) and then most recently to the concept of social learning spaces (SLSs) (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

Figure 3 illustrates the key concepts related to a single COP in which someone moves from the periphery (outsides) to the core (centre) of the practice in an inwards trajectory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As one moves towards the core, through engagement with others, they develop an increasingly deepened identity of being a practitioner in that community (Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, they have an increased sense of belonging to that COP. Belonging to a COP means that there are also boundaries to those practices (Wenger, 1998). Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015) talk about how we can easily tell there is a boundary to a practice if we spend some time interacting with others in a community of practice to which we don't belong. The language used, the jargon and terminology are foreign to an outsider. When Russel first talked about his passion for Hip-Hop, I could not make sense of his conversation. It was clear to me that I was outside the Hip-Hop community of practice. I had to do a substantial amount of reading later, so that I could make sense of Russel's story.

FIGURE 3: CONCEPTS IN A SINGLE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



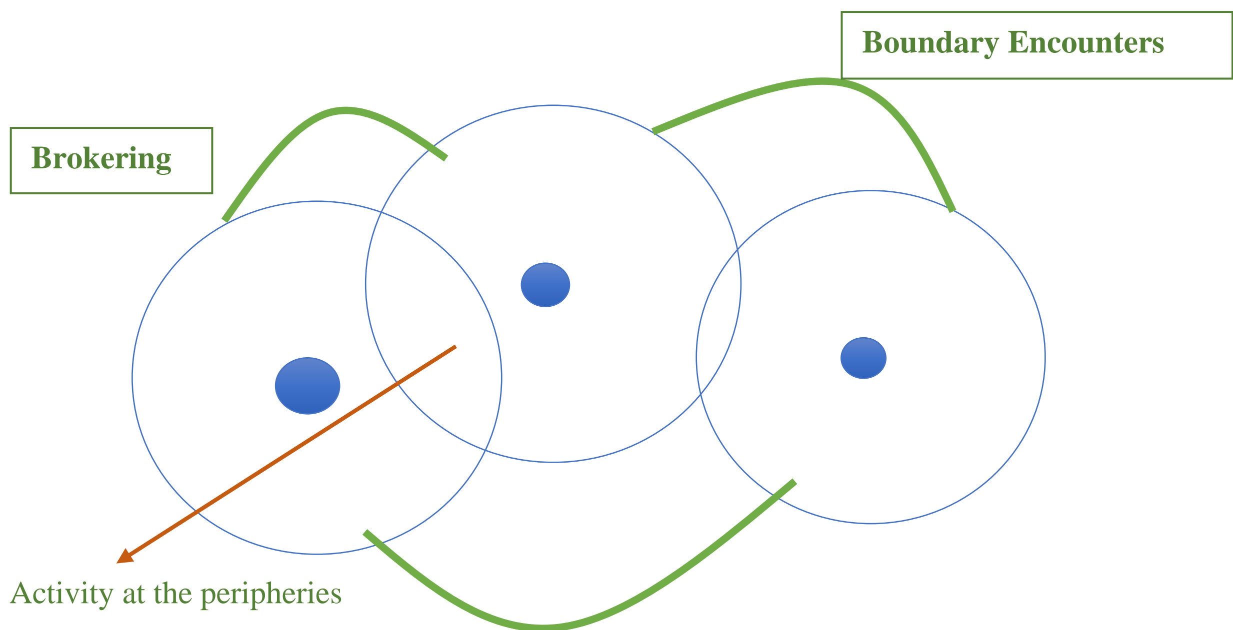
In theme 1 of this chapter, I discussed how learning in a community of practice took place through an interplay between competence and experience (Wenger, 1998, 2000). Competence was about becoming an expert in a single COP (Wenger, 1998). As an example, I explored how Leigh's participation in a COP developed her competence and identity as a lecturer. However, Leigh was not developing a single identity at that time, she was also developing her identity as a psychologist doing voluntary counselling at the Open-Door Crisis Centre. Thus, Leigh was working across different contexts and types of work, developing a multi-identity persona. She often worked on multiple projects at one time. She also worked across disciplines as she taught psychology in the humanities faculty, but she also taught statistics in the business faculty. Leigh was learning to engage with various aspects of multiplicity.

I propose that being able to manage multiplicity is an important trait that NTWs display, due to the increasingly complex contexts in the 21st century and the way that the world of work is changing (World Bank Group, 2019). However, it is likely to be beneficial for any workers (and not just NTWs), to learn to manage multiplicity. NTWs are likely to be at the forefront of such learning and may be well positioned to guide others in these complex contexts or, like Brendon's surfing analogy, to catch another wave.

Identity development and career trajectories are more complex for those who work with multiplicity, as illustrated by the montage of metaphors in the previous chapter, whereby a single metaphor falls short of fully describing career stories. Thus, consider that the NTWs in this study belong to multiple COPs, rather than to one (as in Figure 3). Their experience is illustrated more accurately through Figure 4 which shows three COPs as overlapping circles as illustrated in Wenger (1998, p. 105). Wenger (1998) defines this scenario as having multi-membership across COPs. The green lines in Figure 4 represent the interactions that might happen for individuals who engage across communities of practice. In Wenger's (1998) conceptualisation, he calls these boundary encounters, and the interactions across these boundaries, brokering (Wenger, 1998). In Figure 4, one can see how the edges of the circles (the peripheries and boundaries) overlap with each other. Multi-membership means that peripheries and boundaries become very much a part of our day-to-day interactions in the workplace. NTWs may need to cross these boundaries and peripheries multiple times in one day, week, month or year of work.

Wenger (1998) defined this more complex overlapping nature of COPs as a nexus of multi-membership. NTWs, through the piecemeal work they do, are more likely to belong to multiple COPs than they are to only one. In some they remain at the periphery of the community, in others they stay much longer and engage at the core of the practice (Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, engagement at the boundaries and peripheries of their communities of practice are likely to happen.

FIGURE 4: A NEXUS OF MULTI-MEMBERSHIP (ADAPTED FROM WENGER, 1998 - FIG 4.1, P105)



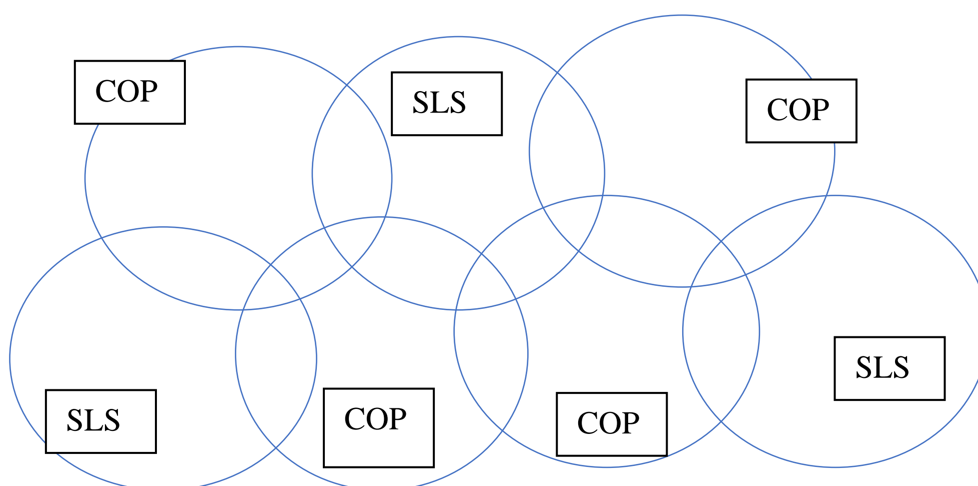
In a nexus of multi-membership, Wenger (1998) says that boundaries are places of discontinuity, and the peripheries are places of continuity. Sometimes it is possible to make links between these spaces (peripheries overlap) and create continuity, but at other times there are discontinuities as boundaries are encountered (Wenger, 1998).

The social learning spaces (SLS) concept developed because not every learning space we engage in can be called a COP (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). In a SLS, there might be different domains of knowledge rather than a single domain (Wenger, 1998). There might not be a regular meeting together or a common practice, yet it is a space where individuals learn. SLSs were only introduced and defined in 2020 (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020), long after the introduction of a nexus of multi-membership (Wenger, 1998). However, I found it helpful to incorporate the SLS concept into the discussion of a nexus of multi-membership. Hence, I added to Wenger's

(1998) notion of a nexus of multi-membership to include not just membership in multiple COPs, but also of SLSs, as depicted below in Figure 5.

This nexus of multi-membership is what Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) call a landscape of practice. In this nexus of multi-membership, NTWs straddle multiple COPs and SLSs, crossing boundaries and peripheries as they move between these spaces. Sometimes it is possible to broker across communities and bring elements of one practice into another, such as the way Brendon and Russel can make connections between two disciplines. Thus, there is continuity (Wenger, 1998) of experience across the landscape as peripheries overlap. At other times NTWs experience the boundaries of practices and find they are not able to make connections across them and hence there are discontinuities (Wenger, 1998). For example, Ashira said that she was not able to make links between the theory (lecturing law) and practice of law, because there was too much of a gap between the two.

FIGURE 5: A NEXUS OF COPS AND SLSS—A LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE



I participated as a lecturer in one COP, while at the same time engaging in a SLS as a management consultant for BBBEE-related projects. My consulting context did not meet the definition of a COP but did fit the definition of an SLS (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). I spent a lot more time in the lecturing role and have a stronger identity in that space than I do as a consultant. I would say that I am engaging at the core of the lecturer's COP. In contrast, as a consultant, my years of experience in this role means I consider myself a senior consultant, but I still operate at the peripheries and boundaries of that space and this role is a secondary professional identity that I hold. There are times when I cross the boundaries of these learning spaces, and can bring my

consulting knowledge of BBBEE, skills development and employment equity into my teaching of business students. Thus, I can act as what Wenger (1998) calls a broker between communities and learning spaces. It is within these complex overlapping COPs and SLSs that multi-identities are formed for NTWs.

Wenger (1998) proposes that our trajectories in the workplace are intricately linked to our identities. In a nexus of multi-identities, Wenger (1998, p.159) describes career trajectories as follows:

> This notion of nexus adds multiplicity to the notion of trajectory. A nexus does not merge the specific trajectories we form in our various COPs into one, but neither does it decompose our identity into distinct trajectories in each community. In a nexus, multiple trajectories become part of each other, whether they clash or reinforce each other. They are, at the same time, one and multiple.

The paradoxical idea that something is one and multiple at the same time cannot fully be understood using logic and reason. However, this is like the idea I introduced earlier, that I can be a daughter, aunt, sister and friend at the same time. I am one person, but I have multiple identities that cannot be fully separated. My multiple identities do not fragment me, but rather portray the multifaceted nature of my identity.

NTWs trajectories are reminiscent of movement and exploration across a changing social landscape of practice. As we navigate these spaces, multi-faceted identities are formed. Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015, p. 22) describe this complex development of identity as follows: “Our trajectories develop sequentially as we travel through the landscape and carry our identity across contexts. It is also simultaneous as we experience identification and multiple locations and boundaries at any given time.” This development of identity along a time trajectory resembles what was explored in Chapter 8 as lifelong learning (sequential), and the simultaneous aspect as life-wide learning (across contexts).

NTWs develop this more complex notion of identity that Wenger (1998) describes as a nexus of multi-membership. We develop parts of our identity in the different COPs and SLSs in which we interact. I have developed an identity as a lecturer, but I don’t stop being a lecturer when I consult with a client on BBBEE. Different parts of myself come to the fore depending on which context I am in and which of my hats is turned forward. This complex formation of identity across multiple contexts requires more identity work than someone who has only one professional identity.

The nexus of multi-membership (Wenger, 1998) has been a conceptual way to understand the complex identities and trajectories of NTWs, as described through the telling of the NTWs' stories (Chapters 1, 6 and 7) and as likened to a climbing wall in Chapter 8. By shifting the focus of trajectories from a career ladder to the metaphor of a climbing wall (Chapter 8), we are better able to understand the complex and multi-faceted career moves that the NTWs in this study have made. Furthermore, it brings to the fore the complexity of trajectories and identities that NTWs in 21st century contexts are likely to experience.

The nexus of multi-membership across COPs and SLSs described above constitute what Wenger (1998) and Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015) call a landscape of practice, which will be explored next.

Landscapes of Practice and Knowledgeability

The landscapes of practice concept (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) is a useful way to explore the experiences of multiplicity of the NTWs in this study. Wenger (1998, p. 118) defines a landscape of practice as follows: "As communities of practice differentiate themselves and also interlock with each other, they constitute a complex social landscape of shared practices, boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections and encounters."

Figure 5 represents this complex landscape in diagrammatic way. It represents how NTWs in 21st century contexts work in a range of overlapping COPs and SLSs. Each NTW's landscape is unique, but they may share one or more COPs or SLSs with others. I inhabit a unique set of COPs and SLSs. Each participant has intersected with at least one of my learning spaces, as outlined in Chapter 5 where I described how participants were chosen. However, there is no COP or SLS to which we all belong.

Early in this chapter, I discussed how learning takes place through the interplay between competence and experience (Wenger, 1998) and how competence is understood as the skills and knowledge that an expert in a COP has. Experts or specialists in a discipline are what Wenger (1998) calls competent. However, I have also noted that the learning of NTWs takes place in a landscape of practice rather than in a single community of practice. In a landscape, knowledgeability is developed in contrast to competence (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015), as was outlined in Chapter 4. Knowledgeability involves knowing enough about a discipline to be able to talk confidently to specialists in that

discipline, without being a specialist. Brendon and Russel are good examples of NTWs who are knowledgeable across multiple disciplines. They can engage comfortably with specialists across disciplines without having full competence in any one. Brendon has extensive knowledge of information systems; he is not a programmer but can talk to programmers confidently. He also has extensive knowledge of education but is not specifically trained in education. His knowledgeability across these disciplines positions him well to be able to provide clients in the field of education with IT solutions, as described in his story in Chapter 6. Thus, his knowledgeability means he can draw from both disciplines to offer innovative and timely IT business solutions for education clients.

Inhabiting the landscape like this requires boundary crossing (Wenger, 1998). Learning to navigate those boundaries is part of the learning journey of the pioneers who pass through this landscape. As outlined above, the landscapes of practice concept (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) is helpful for us to understand the multiplicity that comes with being a NTW. Managing different aspects of multiplicity can be seen through the owning of multiple identities, the ability to sit between disciplines and work as a broker between those disciplines and the ability to work across multiple projects. NTWs have a unique positioning that enables them to work and live at the boundaries and peripheries of communities and see the connections between them. They are engaging in what Wenger calls brokering (Wenger, 1998).

However, we need to be cautious about assuming that it is always possible to sit between disciplines. At times, the place of multiplicity is not favourable for NTWs, and they fall through the cracks. Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015) highlight that boundaries between practices are potential learning assets, but they are also potential sites for failure to learn. For example, most of the lecturing I do is in the business school, even though I have not studied business formally. Yet, when I applied for a senior position within the business school of a university, I was not considered eligible for the position due my lack of a business qualification. In this case, I fell through the cracks and my multi-membership across disciplines did not help me.

The final theme which follows, describes the kind of culture that has emerged and is continuing to emerge around NTWs' work, but also, more recently, in post-COVID contexts, applies to many traditional workers.

Part 3: Autoethnographic Gaze: A Culture of Risk and Reward

An autoethnography is the study of a cultural phenomenon within a particular context (Hamilton et al., 2008). Furthermore, it is a study that involves the self within that culture. The autoethnographic gaze of this study is that, for most of my career, I have been an NTW and thus I came to understand the lived experiences of the other NTWs through my autoethnographic gaze. This theme explores the question: "What are the risks and rewards of being this type of worker?"

The rewards include doing purposeful work, having a love of learning and greater levels of flexibility. The risks include not having benefits like sick leave (no work, no pay) and spreading ourselves too thinly, taking on too much work and therefore not being able to do a job well.

REWARD: Purposeful (Meaningful) Work and a Love of Learning

All participants had a love of learning and a passion and purpose in their work. Their work was about head as well as heart, or of doing work in the service of others.

One of Leigh's foundational values, learned from her family, was a love of learning. She grew up knowing that she would go into a profession in which she was in the service of others. Her work as a lecturer and a therapist fits the description of doing purposeful work in the service of others.

Sagie identified the love of education and reading as part of his foundational or core values from childhood. Reading is an important ingredient of learning. Sagie's love of learning was also demonstrated in how often he has returned to formal studies throughout his career and the non-formal courses he has completed. That is not to imply that only formal studies constitute learning, it is merely one demonstration of an interest in learning. Sagie was passionate about all the work he did, initially as a teacher, then as a school guidance counsellor, and then later his various roles in school leadership management.

Russel's love of learning was seen through his informal explorations into the meanings of Hip-Hop lyrics, which he says helped him to answer some of the burning questions he had about the human condition. He would listen to the lyrics of songs and then do informal research to understand the songwriter's meaning. Russel chose a career he

was passionate about over one that offered security, as reflected by the following quote about the difference between these two jobs:

> *I worked* [in shipping] *because I had to and I had a really good package, but it's not a job that I woke up every morning thinking "Hell yeah, let's do this". It's pretty much like, if I don't get paid then I'm not going to go to work kind of thing. Here in the Arts world, if I don't get paid, I'll wake up and do something about that situation. I'm dedicated to the development of my people and my country, more than I am to what comes in at the end of the month.*

The above excerpt of my conversation with Russel highlights that he is passionate about his work and that passion motivates him to continue in this work. Like Leigh and Sagie, Russel's work is in the service of others, and he finds meaning and purpose in that.

Ashira's story expressed her passion for studying, practicing and teaching law, as illustrated through formal and non-formal learning opportunities. She returned to formal studies (master's in law) and she ascribes great value to the peer reviews with colleagues at GU that helped her reflect on and develop her teaching practice.

Brendon's love of learning was significant from early in his life as he had an insatiable curiosity to find out how things worked. His love of learning is closely linked to his love of teaching. In his story (Chapter 6) he talked about how he would come home from school and 'teach' his mom all the things that he had learned in school that day. He also talked about how he taught the silver surfers (older individuals) basic computer user skills and his passion for this work came through in his explanation:

> *They love me and they love my courses, and it empowers them, and they can now do stuff, and everyone wins. They are highly motivated. The problem is that I don't do it very often, maybe about two courses a month at most.*

Brendon's love of this work is demonstrated by the way he said, "everyone wins". This work is done in the service of others.

My early struggles with work were in part due to not seeing how the work I was doing could help others. The science laboratories did not inspire me. When I did find my niche, it was in teaching maths, work that is in the service of others.

It is important to note that it is not only NTWs that are passionate about their work and love learning. Sagie demonstrated a love of learning throughout his career, starting from when he was in traditional employment. He talked about being a sponge, absorbing knowledge at a time when a lot of training was available to him as a senior education specialist from 1992 to 1996. It is also important to note that not everyone loves learning or is passionate about the work they do. In other words, this is not a generic trait for all workers.

What is noted here is that a love of learning seemed to be a common trait/characteristic of the NTWs of this study as work in the service of others seemed to be a common thread running through their stories. A love of learning and work that is in the service of others also relates to one of the concepts of SLSs defined in Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) which is 'caring to make a difference'. Some participants made deliberate choices to do work in the service of others, demonstrating a desire to make a difference in other people's lives.

Reward: Flexibility—Redefining Luxury

Another reward of being a NTW is flexibility. NTWs don't need to be physically at work premises every day for eight hours. As independent lecturers, we have obligations to be at certain places at certain times, but we come and go as we need to. Ashira shared an anecdote of how she wanted to report to someone when she arrived and left campus each day. She was not used to the flexibility that comes with this type of work, in which we don't have to formally report to anyone. She had to unlearn a culture of clocking in and clocking out that she had become used to while in permanent positions.

Some of my work is done remotely and I enjoy the flexibility that affords me. I have a regular habit, especially when I am working from home all day, to go to a coffee shop where I sit and work with the hubbub of noise around me, as was described in Chapter 4 and which is how I met Russel. One only needs to visit a few local coffee shops in the middle of regular workdays, to see that there are many people who do not work regular full-time hours in a single location. It is not uncommon to see other people sitting on their own or with others, with their laptops open and doing some work. I consider this way of working as a luxury.

As already quoted in Russel's story in Chapter 6, he explained that many of the young people he works with do not consider luxury in terms of how much money one makes,

but luxury is about being able to choose to spend more time with their children and families. This idea tips the notion of luxury on its head, whereby time rather than money is prioritised. The NTW model enables this type of flexibility.

Since the Coronavirus outbreak in late 2019, flexibility and alternate ways of working have been highlighted for all types of work, not solely for NTWs (Bratianu & Iliescu, 2022). Many companies switched to remote working, enabling them to continue trading, involving a significant adjustment to work-related practices (Gollant & Toholka, 2021). NTWs who had been working in flexible ways for some time would not have experienced the same level of adjustment that more traditional workers would have felt. For example, I readily adjusted to moving my 100% face-to-face classes to the 100% online teaching model, as I had already been teaching online. Thus, my learning curve was much smaller than someone who had never done online teaching.

RISK: Vulnerability—No work, no pay

The work of NTWs is precarious and vulnerable. We are not protected by labour legislation, nor by company policies and procedures. NTWs are considered independent contractors and seen as 'outside' the organisation rather than as employees. Our need to attend to our health and family responsibilities can negatively influence our earnings. We don't get paid leave when we are sick; instead, we have to reschedule our work for another time. Sometimes due to deadlines and constraints, it is not possible to reschedule the work and instead we need to let someone else do the work, forfeiting that part of our income.

I have always been a relatively healthy person and when I started this study I had been contracting consistently for 15 years, with very few health concerns or need for time off work. However, during the study I experienced a series of significant health challenges that directly impacted my capacity for work. I had to make choices about what work to keep or to let go. I had to be prepared to get a lower income while I addressed my health issues. Although the work model afforded me the flexibility to be able to do this (reward), I had to bear the financial burden (risk). In traditional employment I would have had paid leave and the benefit of subsidised medical aid and hence no direct impact on my income.

Another leave benefit NTWs miss out on is compassionate leave. Ashira had just started working in a non-traditional way when her youngest brother was murdered. She felt the

need to pull back on some of her work to give herself time to grieve. As in my case, she had the flexibility to be able to do that but didn't receive any paid time off, thus bearing that financial burden herself.

Brendon's story illustrated well the vulnerable nature of this type of worker. The period 2000 to 2015, on Brendon's River of life was busy and he labelled it "brains but no money" (See Drawing 4B in Chapter 6). In that phrase we catch a glimpse into his experience that this time was intellectually stimulating and rewarding (brains), but was not matched with financial reward (… but no money). Brendon eventually left lecturing so he could focus on his business. It was not an easy decision as his business was not yet able to meet all his financial needs and because he loved teaching.

Leigh and Russel acknowledged the risk of being NTWs and of not reaping the benefits of full-time employment but said that the rewards outweigh the risks. Thus, they continue to choose alternative ways of working. On the other hand, Ashira was offered a work contract that offered some flexibility of hours but the commitment of permanence. One of the things she liked about this contract was knowing that a set amount of income was coming in and thus she could budget better, but she did have some flexibility with her hours. She chose a contract with a higher level of security than an independent contractor.

As was highlighted in Chapter 3, labour organisations such as the ILO (globally), or the DOL (locally), do not think favourably about casualised work because of its vulnerable nature (ILO, 2016; NALEDI, 2006) . The permanent part-time contract model that Ashira had taken on might be a helpful middle road between the more flexible independent contractor agreement and the permanent full-time employment. It is a model that provides some stability and consistency but has more flexibility than a traditional model.

RISK: Spreading Ourselves too Thinly

As NTWs, we lack the assurance of ongoing work, which impacts on how much work we take on. Early in the university semester, I find it hard to decide what work to accept or reject, because sometimes the proposed work does not materialise. It is easy to either have too much work, or to not have enough. Hence, one of the risks of managing multiplicity as a NTW, is that it is very easy for us to spread ourselves too thinly. I have often felt the challenge of having too many projects on the go, feeling that I am

overextending myself, or spreading myself too thinly, that I am trying to juggle too many balls at one time and that I might easily drop one of them.

Leigh reflected that in the early part of her career she used to take on too much. Now, as she has matured in age, she was more focused on doing a few things and not taking on too much work. Brendon was stretched too thinly while lecturing and running his own business and eventually left lecturing (although he really enjoyed it) so that he could focus all his time and attention on the business. Brendon's reflections, at the end of chapter 6 about the differences between his South African and UK work experiences are another example of how, in the NTW model, it is easy to spread yourself too thinly across multiple projects.

Risks and Rewards for NTWs

Above I have described characteristics of an NTW culture as I identified some of the risks and rewards of working in this way. These risks and rewards are weighed up and acted upon by NTWs at various stages of their careers. Russel risked leaving the security of permanent employment to pursue a career in the arts, where he is a pioneer going into uncharted territory. Brendon risked leaving lecturing to pay full attention to his business. Leigh has always worked as an NTW, has been very intentional about it, and is likely to continue working this way. For her, the rewards outweigh the risks. I have enjoyed the rewards of this way of working but recent health challenges have brought to the fore the risky nature of my work. I have sometimes wanted the greater level of security that comes with permanent work. Ashira was an NTW for a short period, but opted for a more secure employment contract when it was offered to her.

The discussion below explores the learning of individuals, within the complex contexts of the 21st century, through the social learning theoretical lens (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) and how these contexts make NTWs more vulnerable.

The Burden of Identity: Competence and Knowledgeability

Etienne Wenger-Trayner argued in an interview with Omidvar and Kislov (2014) that there is a shift in responsibility for identity development from the community (in a single COP) to the individual (in a LOP) and how that burden of identity makes NTWs vulnerable.

In COPs, it is the members of a community who collectively establish what it means to be competent as identity is developed within and recognised by a single community (as has been explored in Part 1 of this chapter) (Wenger, 1998). The burden of identity is on the community (Omidvar & Kislov, 2014). If I only belonged to a lecturing COP and was in traditional, full-time employment, it would be the competencies that the community recognised that would identify me as a good lecturer and a single title would encapsulate all my work activities. However, NTWs work in multiple COPs and SLSs, as illustrated in Figure 5, in what has been defined as a landscape of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b). Individuals cannot be competent in every COP or SLS that they work in. Rather, working across COPs and SLSs they become knowledgeable enough to participate productively in some of these learning spaces without being fully competent in all of them (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b).

Russel and Brendon are good examples of displaying knowledgeability. Brendon indicated that he is not a programmer but can talk to and understand programmers in a way that enables him to work confidently with them to provide IT solutions for clients. Russel sees himself at the margins of COPs, saying that he is not a specialist in architecture or photography, but can make connections between these communities, bringing them together to accomplish what he needs to in his multi-disciplinary projects.

In contrast, in landscapes of practice, it is not a community that establishes what is considered competent (Omidvar & Kislov, 2014); rather, the burden of identity falls on individuals. The NTWs in this study charter very individual and varied trajectories across their unique landscapes of practice. They may be accountable to certain communities of practice and develop enough skill and knowledge there to be able to be considered competent (Wenger, 1998). However, there are other learning spaces where they might not develop competence, but are knowledgeable (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). There may also be other spaces where they pioneer and may reshape or define knowledgeability. Knowledgeability is a nexus of identification that is developed as individuals journey through their unique landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). Thus, knowledgeability is the coming together of different aspects of identity from different COPs and SLSs. NTWs need to establish their own identities in the work they do, shifting the burden of identity from a community to themselves (Omidvar & Kislov, 2014).

Russel is a good example of establishing an identity in a complex set of COPs and SLSs. He had to find a title for himself as he started to work in new territory where no one had gone before. He had to create his own identity across a complex landscape of COPs and SLSs. He did not belong to one primary COP or SLS, even though he participated in many of them. His work involved connecting people and communities for various projects, but there is not a primary COP or SLS to which he belongs. In this sense, he is very alone in his work, as he establishes and develops his skills and his identity. His work is typical of pioneers. How does he know if he is improving his practice as there are no benchmarks, guidelines or expected outcomes for his career? Future studies could explore possible theoretical angles that emerge the learning and development of such pioneers.

The burden of identity has shifted to individuals such as Russel to guide, initiate and find ways to monitor their own workplace learning. Thus, identity work for NTWs is more complex than for traditional workers.

NTWs' career journeys reflect the nexus of identification, and they are more vulnerable than traditional workers. Their vulnerability lies in the casualised and precarious nature (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018) of this work (as identified in Chapter 3) but also in the identity work (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b) necessary to chart unique trajectories across complex contextual (Chapter 3) and social (Chapter 4) landscapes, where the burden of identity lies on the individual rather than the community.

Development of communities of practice theory

In chapter 4, I set out the development of COP theory over time including the most recent developments to consider landscapes of practice, knowledgeability and social learning spaces, which were particularly pertinent to this study. In Chapter 9 I theorized these new concepts, linking them to the learning of the participants and I introduced Figure 5 as overlapping circles of COPs and SLS's across someone's life. Thus, I began to develop and build onto the latest sections of theory, namely Social Learning Spaces, Landscapes of practice and knowledgeability.

I have explored how complex landscapes of practice are made up of overlapping COPs and SLSs (Figure 5). Individual, which includes being able to sit between spaces, with learning occurring at the edges and through the interactions across those spaces. Thus,

the concepts of boundaries and peripheries in Wenger-Trayner's most recent theorizing were explored in Figure 4.

In studies of teacher learning, communities of practice were seen to facilitate and support teacher development (Bashir-Ali, 2011; Eshchar-Netz & Vedder-Weiss, 2020 and Feldman,2020). In other words, the studies were able to explore the value of specific COPs on a group of teachers. ***The unique angle in my study regarding*** COPs is that the focus was on the individual and the CoPs and SLSs within which they interacted. There was not a COP to which all of the participants belonged. In the work contexts today, the burden of identity falls to individuals, for their learning is dependent on how they engage, interact and learn from the various different COPs and SLSs to which they belong. One can only explore their learning from their own accounts of their communities and spaces rather than being able to study the community of practice and how they interact within it. Thus, the identity-work that NTWs engage in needs to be self-motivated and self-driven in that they interact regularly across boundaries, peripheries and spaces.

Summary of Chapter 9

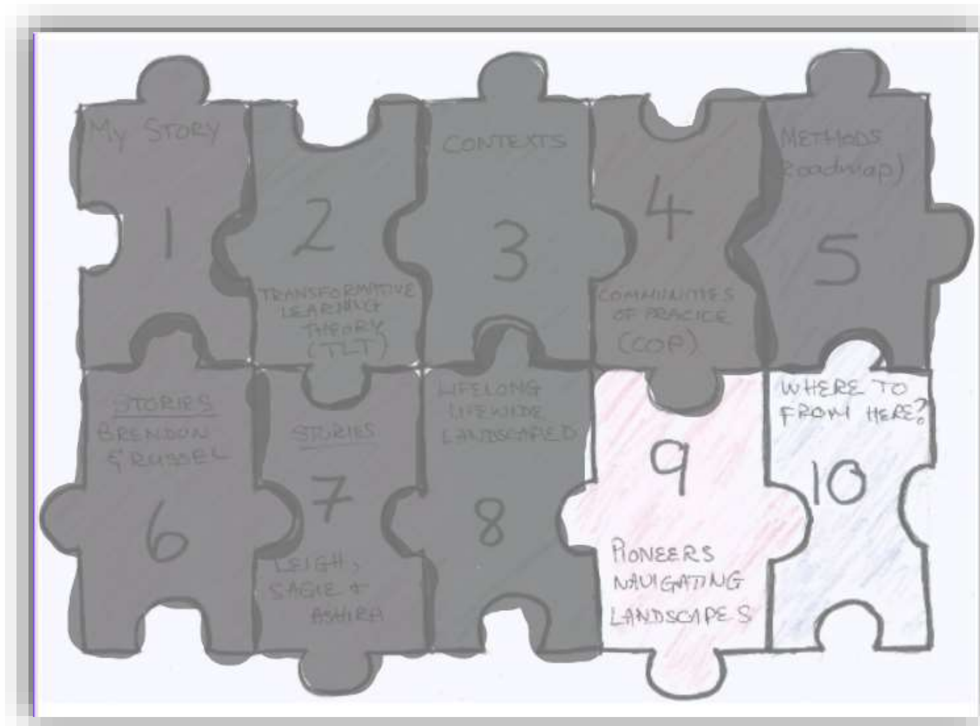
Chapter 9 has discussed how pioneers navigated their way through new or partly inhabited territory which entailed gaining experience, developing transferable skills and pursuing voluntary work that helped them to find paid work (Part 1). NTWs also developed multi-identities and work across disciplines and projects (Part 2). Furthermore, they have come to understand the culture of risk and reward (Part 3) in which they work and do the complex identity work associated with this type of worker. Experiences were theorised through the social learning theory associated with Etienne Wenger-Trayner.

The study brought into focus that complex landscapes and environments exist and that NTWs as pioneers need to learn to navigate these landscapes. Their movement within these landscapes included crossing the boundaries and peripheries between different learning spaces (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). Sometimes they could across these learning spaces, bringing continuity to their experience, but at other times the boundaries of the practices were too different, and they experienced discontinuities broker (Wenger, 1998).

The stories of the participants (Chapters 6 & 7) and then the presentation of themes (Chapters 8 & 9) have demonstrated how NTWs are living, learning and developing through and across multiple COPs and SLSs. Each NTW has their own unique nexus of identity (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b) across their landscape of practice. Furthermore, learning spaces change and evolve continually, making them living landscapes rather than static ones, as proposed in Chapter 8, Part 2.

Interlude 9: Finishing the Research Puzzle

This interlude links Chapter 9 to Chapter 10, the concluding chapter.



In Chapters 8 and 9, I have described the learning of NTWs as nuanced and complex. Learning included formal, non-formal and informal learning. Learning took place across the length of each person's life (lifelong) and the breadth of their lives (life-wide). Learning was influenced by the contexts of the study, referred to as the contextual landscapes (Chapter 3) and the theoretical understanding of social landscapes linked to COP and LOP theory (Chapter 4).

So, what can (or should) we do with what we have learned from these stories? How does a small-scale study of six individuals influence, inform or contribute to the literature about workplace learning? Those questions are addressed in Chapter 10 where I consider “What have we learned from this study?” Hence, Chapter 10 brings together the different strands and discussions from the earlier chapters to identify explicitly how the research puzzles have been solved.

Research is an iterative process and as questions are answered, new questions arise and generate new projects. In the last few chapters, I have identified possible research projects that could develop from this one. Those project ideas are summarised in an afterword, bringing the study to a conclusion.

Chapter 10: What have we Learned?

This chapter closes the thesis, asking "What have we learned from this study?" I explore what has been learned from the methodology, the theoretical frameworks, and about how the research puzzles (key questions) have been answered. Contributions of the study are identified, followed by some reflections. A poem concludes the chapter.

Methodology: Narrative-Autoethnography

Chapter 5 outlined the methodological road map that guided this study. Here, I have reflected on how that methodology played out and what has been learned about it along the way.

This has been a study of the self and of others that has taken place at the nexus between narrative and autoethnography (Hamilton et al., 2008). Narrative inquiries involve three commonplaces: time, place and sociality (Clandinin, 2006). An autoethnography is a study of personal experience to understand a culture (Hamilton et al., 2008). Thus, I suggest that in a narrative-autoethnography, there are four dimensions or commonplaces, namely: time, place, sociality and culture. I reflect on each of these briefly below.

TIME: Past, Present and Future

This study took place in the early 21st century, however, it reached into the past by more than 50 years into the mid-20th century to explore the early parts of some NTWs' stories. The study is written in the present, but that present is changing and evolving. It is a shifting, living landscape. The study also reaches towards the future in considering how what has been learned here could be applied by individuals and/or organisations in the future.

Stories (narratives) have a natural sense of time, as plotlines unfold from the past to the present and towards what might be in the future. The study as a whole has been presented as a narrative, but mini-narratives are also found within the chapters, including but not limited to the participants' stories (Chapters 1, 6 & 7), and the development of two theories over time (Chapters 2 & 4). A narrative style of writing is seen in other chapters too. Some of the contexts outlined in Chapter 3 were told as developments over time.

A sense of movement in time came through my engagement with the participants over the span of the study. Due to personal health challenges, there was a considerable time between when the stories were first written and the final focus group was conducted. Thus, significant change had taken place in the lives of the participants, including Brendon emigrating, Leigh moving fully into her psychologist identity through her own practice, Sagie having retired and Ashira having married and started a family.

Writing stories of career journeys reifies them in time, but their lives and experiences continue to move and change and so cannot be fully encapsulated by written stories. The updates at the end of each person's story were intended to illustrate the element of movement and change in the participants' lives.

PLACE: Durban, South Africa

The study took place in the city of Durban, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, in South Africa. Durban is one of the urban centres of the country and the place where I have resided and worked as an NTW for many years. Other participants were selected from the various contexts in which I work, and all the participants were from Durban.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the study unfolded in a global neoliberal context (Youngman, 2000) in which there was an increase in casualised (precarious) work due to corporate downsizing and other changes in the world of work (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018; Rasak & Babatunde, 2017). The study took place in a post-apartheid South Africa, although for the older participants (Sagie, Brendon and myself), our stories stretch back into growing up during apartheid. The post-apartheid South African contexts such as the changes to the education system and the development of SETAs and BBBEE influenced participants' stories. For Sagie and myself, as the older participants in this study, these contexts provided work opportunities, while the younger participants, Russel and Ashira, were beneficiaries of such programmes.

SOCIALITY: The Need for Relationships

The idea of this study started from my unique and unexpected career journey and my curiosity about how other people find their way into and through the working world. Thus, it stretched beyond my experience to include another five associates who have been NTWs at some stage of their careers. Their stories overlapped and intersected with mine in some way. Their inclusion in the study took the gaze off my story to consider other individuals' experiences of being NTWs, hoping to gain a better understanding of an

emergent culture of workers. Relationships are an integral and significant aspect of life and learning and were explored through Wenger's social learning theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

CULTURE: Autoethnography

A culture of NTWs was explicitly addressed in Chapter 9, Part 3, where risks and rewards of this way of working were identified. Less explicitly, the culture of NTWs has been explored throughout this study, as the phenomenon of being a NTW has been under the spotlight. Alternative ways of working are becoming more common, as illustrated by the wide range of different names in the literature for this type of worker (Chapter 3). The stories (Chapters 1, 6 & 7) and the analysis of those stories (Chapters 8 & 9) have depicted what it is like to live as an NTW in Durban, South Africa. A few aspects of NTW culture are summarised below.

Coffee shops and co-workspaces have become common meeting places for workers who have flexible work arrangements. It was through such a space that I met Russel. The precarious nature of work means that NTWs need to embrace lifelong and life-wide learning, as was explored in Chapter 8. NTWs need to keep upskilling and reinventing themselves to increase their chances of securing contracts and to compete with others in an environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) (Mack & Khare, Perspectives on a VUCA world, 2016). The multiplicity that NTWs engage in (Chapter 9, Part 2) illustrates the complex nature of this culture. NTWs develop multi-persona identities, work across disciplines and/or work on multiple projects at one time.

Closing Thoughts on Methodology

Narrative methodology established a three-dimensional space in which the NTWs, as pioneers, engage, work, change and learn through the three commonplaces of time, place and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A fourth dimension, culture, was introduced through the autoethnographic gaze of this study (Hamilton et al., 2008). It is this complex four-dimensional space where time, place, sociality and culture come together that undergirded this study and in which the NTWs working lives unfolded. This conceptual four-dimensional space offers a methodological way forward for other studies that find the nexus of narrative and autoethnography a suitable methodological space.

Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding NTW Learning?

In this study, the theoretical frameworks were set up in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4. In Chapter 2, transformative learning theory (TLT) linked strongly to my story (Chapter 1) and experience of becoming and being a NTW. In Chapter 4 the development of Wenger's (1998) social learning theory was described. In Chapters 8 and 9 I theorised the participants' career learning through those two frameworks. Below I have reflected on how these two frameworks facilitated my understanding of the NTWs' experiences and hence contributed to answering the research puzzles. I also suggest ways in which both theories could be used more intentionally in future research projects.

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) in the Study

This thesis described two experiences in my life that can be explained through transformative learning theory. The first, in Chapters 1 and 2, described how my mindset about work and work models were challenged and changed through my experiences in the world of work. Secondly, in Chapter 5, significant mindset changes about what counts as research took place for me to embrace qualitative research methods and especially those that include the self (Hamilton et al., 2008). Chapter 8 explored the usefulness of TLT in the stories of the other participants and it was found to be somewhat helpful for the stories of Russel and Sagie. However, TLT was not relevant to all participants' understandings of the world of work (Brendon, Leigh and Ashira), because they already had NTW mindsets about work from their families of origin. Thus, the TLT lens was limited in this study and was a secondary theoretical framework to communities of practice.

However, I propose that future studies that aim to investigate and guide the learning and development of NTWs in the 21st century, could use TLT as a framework to challenge assumptions and foster transformative learning in the increasingly complex and uncertain world in which we live. In the last few years, the world has experienced unprecedented disruption through the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic (Cortes & Forsythe, 2023). Furthermore, South Africa, and especially KZN, has experienced civil unrest, crime and corruption, ongoing electricity blackouts; what Sayed et al. (2021) report as a series of interlocking crises. Kwa-Zulu-Natal also experienced severe flooding in early 2022. We are living in what has become known in business as a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment (Mack & Khare, Perspectives on a VUCA world, 2016). Such environments require different ways of learning and I

propose that TLT could help facilitate such learning. For Individuals, organisations or for anyone considering NTW models, a TLT lens could be used to foster and facilitate transformative learning experiences (Cranton, 2006). The need to challenge one's assumptions, think critically and engage in dialogue with others, is important for navigating the VUCA environments of our 21st century. Likewise, understanding the roles of emotions, relationships and spirituality are important aspects of such transformative learning (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Dirkx, 2008; Tisdell, 2008), as was explored in Chapter 2.

Communities of Practice and Landscapes of Practice Theories

Communities of practice (COP) theory applied to all the participants and was the primary theoretical framework for the study. The introduction of COP theory as part of the theoretical framework (in Chapter 4) brought into focus the fundamentally social way in which much of our learning takes place (Wenger, 1998). COP theory foregrounded that life and learning do not happen in isolation, but in, amongst and through other people (Wenger, 1998). Although individual learning does take place, a significant and often neglected part of our learning happens with and through other people or social environments.

In Chapter 4 and Chapter 9, I outlined how COP theory was a good starting point to understand how learning occurs in a single COP, but fell short because most of us today live and work in and across multiple COPs (Wenger, 1998). Thus, Wenger-Trayner et al.'s (2015) development of the landscapes of practice (LOP) concept is more useful to this study, as it embraces the complexity of the contexts of the 21st century. The concept of SLSs was introduced much later (2020) than the LOP concepts (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) as a learning space that is not a COP but is still considered a significant place of learning.

Landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) have been described and depicted in Chapter 9, Figure 5, as a complex set of overlapping circles, made up of learning spaces (COPs and SLSs) across multiple disciplines and workplaces, with much of the interaction, learning and participation taking place at the peripheries and boundaries of these learning spaces (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b). Boundaries are seen as potential learning assets but can also include discontinuity when it is not possible to broker between learning spaces (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b).

Most of our learning to be NTWs has been incidental and informal as we have gone about our work, actively participating in a range of learning communities across unique landscapes. But what about my future career development? How could I be more intentional about my workplace learning going forward? How could NTWs drive and develop their learning more intentionally? It was noted in Chapter 9 that in landscapes of practice, individuals need to chart their own course, bearing the burden of their identity, as outlined by Omidvar and Kislov (2014) in their interview with Etienne Wenger-Trayner. For individuals (NTWs) to make the most of the contexts in which they were, they need to first recognise the value and role of social learning and then find ways to harness that learning.

Next I reflect on how the research puzzles have been answered through Chapters 6 to 9 of the thesis.

Reflection on the Research Puzzles

The research puzzles were outlined in Interlude 1 and are repeated below, followed by explicit discussions on how the puzzles have been answered:

1. *What is my career **journey (story)** that has brought me to be a non-traditional worker?*
    a. *What **processes** and **sources** of learning have contributed to becoming this type of worker?*
    b. *How have **identities** been shaped or influenced on my career journey?*
2. *What are the career **journeys (stories)** of other non-traditional workers?*
    a. *What **processes** and **sources** of learning have contributed to them becoming this type of worker?*
    b. *How have **identities** been shaped or influenced on these career journeys?*
3. *What **implications** does learning in such changing and flexible contexts have for **individuals** and for **organisations** in the 21st century South African context?*

The career stories described in Chapters 1, 6 and 7 answered the main question of 1 and 2 above, namely telling the career stories of the six NTWs in this study, including their decisions to move in and out of the NTW model at various times and stages of life. The flexibility of the model was suitable for workers at different ages and stages of their careers. Some NTWs started their careers this way, others have only ever worked this way, and still others moved to this way of work later in their careers.

The processes and sources of their learning and the shaping of their identities have also to some extent been answered through the telling of the stories (Chapters 1,6 & 7) but more so through the analysis and identifying of themes in chapters (Chapters 8 & 9). However, this final chapter makes those answers more explicit and addresses the third puzzle question, considering the implications of the findings for individuals and for organisations, which will be explored next.

Identities: Multi-Identity and Evolving Identities

As a young person, I had the idea that a single workplace identity was what I should aspire to. That may have been a wise goal 50 years ago in my parents' era. In today's contexts, and especially for NTWs, a multi-identity persona is more likely and can be a viable and lucrative way of working. I am a consultant and a lecturer at the same time. One of those two identities comes to the fore as I participate as a practitioner within a community, but I don't stop being one when I am engaging with the other. Wenger (1998) says that an identity is not something that you arrive at or achieve as an outcome of your engagement in a practice, but that identities are negotiated as we participate in a practice. It was seen in the stories that identities evolved, changed and continued to be negotiated throughout the stories. As NTWs spent time in the field and gained experience, their identities as practitioners developed and deepened.

By way of example, I achieved a formal qualification as a scientist, and worked in a few different laboratories, but never really identified myself a scientist. I engaged with a scientist identity at a very superficial level, for short periods of time, never moving to the core of those practices. On the other hand, when I started teaching and then later moved to lecturing, I became immersed in teaching practice and fully embraced the role of educator. However, that role evolved from being a facilitator, to a teacher, to a lecturer and a tutor. Now, as I have been in the lecturing role for the longest, I see myself primarily as a lecturer.

NTWs are likely to develop multi-identity personas as they engage across different workplaces, disciplines and projects. The stories of the participants have described the development of complex multi-layered professional identities. These complex identities are developed and continue to evolve for NTWs throughout their careers as they negotiate meaning in their practices (Wenger, 1998). Some examples illustrate this point.

Leigh knew at a young age that she wanted to become a psychologist and so she pursued the appropriate formal process to achieve that goal. However, her first experiences of therapy were emotionally challenging and made her question whether she had made a mistake about her profession. During that questioning, she took an opportunity to lecture in higher education and found that she really loved being a lecturer. She fully embraced her lecturer identity, while not letting go of her psychologist identity. Much later, when she was ready to start a psychology practice, she had a better understanding of herself and could see that there was not only one way of being a psychologist. Hence her notion of being a psychologist evolved over time.

Sagie's early career was in traditional employment and in that context his identity evolved from being a schoolteacher, to being a school guidance counsellor, to a different role as a mentor and capacity builder with the education department. Thus, we see that in traditional, permanent employment, there are changes in identity over the course of a career, but most often only one identity is held at a time. On the other hand, NTWs hold multiple identities at the same time. When Sagie was medically boarded and became an NTW, he was a businessman, a trainer and a leader simultaneously.

Sources and Processes of Learning

Formal studies are one source of learning, which was most obvious for Leigh, Sagie and Ashira who studied in one discipline and continued to work in that discipline/profession. To practice as a psychologist, lawyer or educator, certain formal qualifications are a prerequisite. However, even for Brendon and myself who did not continue in our original disciplines of study, it was the formal qualification that enabled us to get into the workplace initially.

Formal learning also played a role in career progression later in life, as Sagie, Ashira and I returned to formal studies multiple times during our careers. Thus, formal qualifications can be one source of learning throughout life. However, lifelong learning involves a lot more than formal qualifications (discussed in Chapter 8) as **non-formal and informal learning** also contribute to the lifelong learning of individuals. This study showed how informal learning took place in spaces where practitioners meet in everyday life.

Another source of learning is **experience**. As we do tasks repeatedly over a period, we learn how to do them better. I have learned to lecture through consistently and regularly lecturing. It is a very active participation in a particular practice that developed my

confidence and competence as a lecturer. As discussed in Chapter 9, there is an interplay between the competencies of a COP and my experience (Wenger, 1998). We learn by practising and participating in communities and spaces (Wenger, 1998), learning from mistakes, and identifying strengths as we go along.

Experience is gained over time (time on your legs). For Brendon, experience was gained as a youngster when he spent hours tinkering and playing with bulbs and batteries and then, once available, on computers. His tinkering was done because of his curiosity about how things worked at a time and stage of his life where lots of experimental 'play' was possible. The learning from that tinkering contributed significantly to the direction of his career.

Relationships have played a significant role in the living, working and learning of the participants. Supportive relationships led to future work through the development of networks and referrals. Sagie found immense support in his doctoral journey through the methods group he participated in (and through which I met him). Leigh and I identified a communal working space to be helpful for informal learning. She called this space a microcosm of learning. It was a physical space in which relationships were forged and in which insightful discussions often took place that added value to our teaching practice.

But relationships were not always good. Brendon had two failed relationships with business partners that left him in a lot of debt. Leigh identified a toxic business relationship working in another psychologist's practice. Ashira told about a situation where her boss was very unreasonable and did not treat her well. Brendon, Leigh and Ashira learned some helpful lessons about life and relationships through these difficult times, but they needed to leave those contexts and look for positive relationships and learning environments for more sustainable and enjoyable workplace growth.

Boundaries and **peripheries** are another source of learning. In Chapter 9, the concept of LOPs was explored as a lens for the learning of individuals (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b). LOPs were made up of a nexus of COPs and SLSs across which NTWs engage and participate in their work, as illustrated in Figure 5 in Chapter 9.

If there are multiple learning spaces, there must also be significant boundary crossing. Boundary crossing can involve deep learning or can result in lack of learning (Wenger, 1998). Brendon and Russel talked about the ability to sit between two practices and make connections between them, while Ashira found there was too much of a difference between theory and practice of law to make connections from one to the other.

Due to multi-membership within LOPs, NTWs interact and regularly cross the boundaries and peripheries of practices which become sources of potential learning. At the boundaries and peripheries of practices there are continuities and discontinuities (Wenger, 1998), there are places of connection, but also of disconnection.

The NTWs demonstrated **internal motivation** or **inner resolve** to pursue their respective careers, despite significant challenges. I showed inner resolve in my undergraduate degree to see it through to completion, even though I was not passionate about the subject matter I studied. Later, during this study, I faced health challenges and had to put the study on hold. Picking it up again and bringing it to a conclusion, also required inner resolve.

Brendon demonstrated inner resolve to get up again after being knocked over by the business relationships he had. Sagie had to overcome physical difficulties from his accident to get back up and continue working in full-time employment. On an ongoing basis, he needed inner resolve to keep progressing in his career despite the daily physical challenges he faced. Leigh's greatest challenge was her internship year for her psychology qualification where she had to step up and do what was needed to complete her studies on time. Ashira faced the tragic loss of her brother and had to take some time out to mourn but got back up again and continued her career journey. Russel draws his inner strength from his study of and engagement with Hip-Hop, which helped him make sense of disruptive events in his early life. He demonstrated having inner resolve to become an NTW and to craft a career for himself in the arts.

Implications:

This section addresses theoretical, practical and methodological implications of the findings of the study for individuals and organisations. In other words, what are the implications of what we have learned in the previous four chapters, for individuals and organisations? Implications were addressed in this way to answer research puzzle 3.

Careers and workplaces have changed significantly in the last 50 years, and they continue to change even more rapidly since the COVID-19 pandemic. The contexts we live in are volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) (Mack & Khare, 2016). Insecure / vulnerable work is on the increase (ILO, 2016; Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018). Globally, current jobs are being threatened by rapidly developing artificial intelligence, including ChatGPT (Jose, 2023).

An original methodological contribution to knowledge about non-traditional work and workers that this study makes is understanding that in contexts of change, organisations and individuals would do well to understand that they work in or inhabit a four-dimensional space of time, place, sociality and culture and that learning takes place within this space as a living, changing, moving landscape. Within this living landscape, individuals (pioneers) navigate their way in uncertain and changing environments and interact and work in organisations.

Implications for Organisations

As different ways of working increase, what can organisations do to facilitate the learning of their contingent workforce? Two practical recommendations were proposed, namely, informal meeting spaces and peer reviews.

Informal meeting spaces have the potential to be rich environments for relationships to develop and for informal learning to take place. Organisations could foster or cultivate learning for their contingent workers by providing physical and/or virtual spaces for their contingent workers to meet, interact and engage informally. Workers must feel it is their choice to be engaged in these spaces and the involvement of management should not be too controlling or prescriptive (Wenger et al., 2002). The challenge for organisations would be to create and cultivate spaces in which informal and organic meetings and interactions take place, without over-regulating these spaces.

Peer reviews could be a rich source of learning, as identified by Leigh, Ashira and myself. Any companies who want to provide better support for their NTW workforce could develop a semi-formal peer review process that opens conversations between contingent workers and organisational leaders in a self-reflective way (Drabick-Podgórna, 2014). Peer reviews could be applied to contingent workers in most organisations. The process should include establishing a set of competencies within the practice that are explicitly stated in a peer review document (an artefact). Following that, a senior staff member should engage with the contingent worker, observing them in practice, reflecting on what they did well and what needed improvement and planning for development going forward. The peer review process should be seen as developmental rather than punitive.

Peer reviews were seen to be helpful for professional development in the lives of a few of the participants. Mentor-mentee type of relationships such as this, might be called something different, but the principle and idea of pairing people up to develop their skills

is powerful and should not be under-estimated. Various possibilities for this type of relationship could be explored for any workplace learning contexts.

The two practical implications outlined above would contribute towards cultivating communities of practice and/or landscapes of practice, as discussed by Etienne Wenger and colleagues in social learning theory over the last few decades (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

Chapter 8 culminates in the notion of Living Landscapes, which is an early and tentative theoretical implication of the study.

Implications for Individuals

As identified at the end of Chapter 9, in workplaces and career patterns today, especially for NTWs, the burden of identity has shifted from the company to the individual (Omidvar & Kislov, 2014). Thus, the onus is on individuals to drive their own workplace learning and identities.

There are three types of individuals that could benefit from understanding the learning of NTWs. These are, firstly, existing NTWs like myself, Russel and Leigh who want to become more intentional about their professional learning; secondly, those in traditional employment that are considering moving to an NTW model and, thirdly, young people trying to transition from schooling into the world of work may find this a suitable way to work, either in the short-term or the long-term. Unemployment, and especially youth unemployment, is at an all-time high in South Africa (Statistics SA, 2022) and creation of jobs and/or entrepreneurial ventures could be a viable option for many of South Africa's youth. Individuals need to prepare for contexts that are changing quickly and to navigate uncertain environments. Individuals need to understand that learning is needed throughout the length and breadth of one's career, by embracing lifelong and life-wide learning as an integral part of their work life (Clark, 2005 and Mutlu, 2012) .

Young adults should look for ways to get work experience of any kind as early on in their lives as they can. Work experience can be gained through paid and volunteer work (as discussed in Chapter 9, Part 1). Volunteer work can help young people to explore a range of different types of work to see what they like and this can be an important part of building up a network of relationships. It has been acknowledged that the dire circumstances that many young South Africans face can make it difficult to do voluntary work. However, Cox (2013) reported on a life skills and leadership programme in which

young South Africans from poor communities were introduced to doing volunteer work. Although the idea of volunteer work was new to them at first, these young people found it a helpful way to learn about their strengths and weaknesses. Volunteer work can take place in local communities through schools, libraries or churches and could be part-time while still in school, or alongside paid part-time work.

Work experience (paid and voluntary) can be a rich source of development of relationships and networks. In time, those relationships may lead to referrals for further work. Leigh found that the networks she developed in her community became her primary source of referrals when she opened her practice. Work experience also helped develop transferable skills that could be applied to other contexts.

Individuals in 21st century contexts should understand that careers can be multi-faceted and can include having multiple identities at one time and managing the multiplicity that this brings. Individuals need to understand that an NTW work model has its own culture of risk and reward. There are benefits to working this way, such as flexibility and being able to choose which projects to take on and which to discard, but there are significant risks in that one can easily be spread too thinly from taking on too many projects and that when one is not able to work, there is no pay.

In summary, I propose that as individuals interact and participate in work-related social circles, they gain experience and skills that can be used in different contexts. Active participation and the building of relational networks are important for NTWs. Individuals should learn to nurture and cultivate good relationships, as networks and referrals were often seen in the study to lead to paid work for Russel, Leigh and Brendon. Furthermore, as I have been writing up this study, especially as I have read and edited my own story, I have realised that most of the work I have found was through referrals in my social networks.

Contributions

This section of the chapter signals the unique contributions that this study makes to adult education in a South African context.

Firstly, Chapter 8 makes a conceptual and theoretical contribution using deductive and inductive analysis to present a series of metaphors that culminate in the construct of a living landscape, as summarised below.

Part 1 of Chapter 8 explored the notions of lifelong and life-wide learning experiences of participants, signalling the length and breadth of one's life. Lifelong and life-wide learning are key concepts in the field of education. Their use in Part 1 of Chapter 8 signals a deductive element of my analysis of the participants' experiences. These two concepts both contain the word "life", which builds into the "living" component of a living landscape. The living aspect suggests that the learning and trajectories of NTWs are in constant motion rather than being static. They are moving, changing and unfolding all the time.

Part 2 of Chapter 8 introduced the idea of a landscape, which is a three-dimensional area of land. Thus, I extend the notion of learning to take place in the three-dimensional space in which participants live and work. The landscape metaphor was the culmination of a set of metaphors that I have called "A montage of metaphors". A single metaphor, such as a river, used in the data collection, fell short in some ways of being fully able to explain one's experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The use of alternative metaphors of land and space were seen through some of the participants' river of life drawings, from which I developed the idea of bringing together a composite set of metaphors about the work and learning of NTWs. Together, these metaphors provide a more complex picture of a living landscape. Furthermore, living landscapes are incorporated into the notion of landscapes of practice set out by Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner (2015b), which is the social context in which learning is taking place.

Thus, what I see as an original contribution of this study, is that career stories are like living landscapes which are made up of roads, rivers, waves, adventure sports, stops, starts and yields, undertaken at an individual level, but with others in a social landscape.

Secondly, this study has made methodological contributions through the river of life data collection method (described in Chapter 5) and the weaving together of the stories of the participants across the dissertation at the nexus of narrative-autoethnography which invites a four-dimensional conception of commonplaces.

There is very little academic literature on the river of life method. Most often it has been used as an activity in workshop contexts (John, 2020; Kendelevu Project, 2006; Moussa, 2009) rather than as a method for data generation as was done in this study. As outlined in Chapter 5, the river of life method is one example of a participatory research method using drawings, as described by Rule and John (2011). Participatory research methods

create a space for participants to reflect on their stories and express themselves creatively, potentially tapping into the subconscious (Rule & John, 2011).

The river of life method was successful in getting the participants to reflect about nodal points in their careers. Rich detailed accounts of different parts of their career journeys arose from this data collection method. However, the method was not without its shortfalls, which signal possible developments or changes to the method for future research studies. For some of the participants, the river metaphor was not adequate to explain the complexity of their trajectories. Brendon used the metaphor of surfing. Sagie and Ashira made use of roads and road signs to describe some aspects of their stories. Hence, if I were to use this method to collect data in future research projects, I would explore ways in which I could use the living landscapes concept (the montage of metaphors) from Chapter 8, Part 2 as a more complex set of metaphors of land and space for participants to consider their career stories, rather than just that of a river.

Another aspect of the methodological contribution came through how I wove my story and the other participants' stories through the larger narrative of the whole dissertation, starting with my story in Chapter 1, to introducing the participants in Chapter 4, telling their stories in Chapters 6 and 7 and then interpreting our stories through Chapters 8 and 9. The river of life method fitted well with the narrative-autoethnographic methodology. Hearing the participants' stories in detail, through this data collection method, enabled me gain depth and detail about their stories that I could weave together into the larger narrative of the study.

A contribution of this study towards methodologies of the self, is the notion of a four-dimensional space at the nexus of narrative and autoethnography, as was identified earlier in this chapter. Future studies could build on this early and tentative idea of exploring such a four-dimensional space.

Thirdly, the research topic has relevance for the contexts we live and work in today, in large part due to the changed and changing world of work (World Bank Group, 2019) and how contract workers, entrepreneurs, gig-economy workers (NTWs) learn, develop and learn. The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for a significant change in ways of working (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020).Where the nature of the work allowed, companies pivoted to remote working methods (Shepherd, 2020). This is true for traditional jobs, not just NTWs. My transition to remote ways of working was seamless because I was already used to working remotely. NTWs might be more advantaged than traditional

workers, in that they are used to flexible and changing contexts. Thus, the topic was relevant when the study started and has increased in relevance over the duration of the study due to the impact of COVID-19 on the workplace (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). There is much room for development of new research projects on this topic, some of which have been identified in the last chapters and presented in the afterword.

Fourthly, the thesis structure and style of presentation exhibits some originality. The use of interludes between chapters to create a narrative thread that runs through the study has not been done extensively. The idea came from De Beer's (2018) doctoral dissertation. De Beer was part of the methodology group I attended as a doctoral candidate and through which I met Sagie. Unlike my study, De Beer's (2018) doctoral dissertation was made up of five published research sources (a chapter and four articles). He used the interludes to link and create a thread through those five publications, in what he described as the connective tissue that held his dissertation together.

My dissertation is similar to De Beer's (2018) in the way that the interludes act like connective tissue to hold the thesis together. However, my dissertation differs from his in the following ways. My dissertation comprises the reporting and writing up of one research project, designed specifically for the doctoral journey, rather than the publication-based dissertation of De Beer's (2018). Furthermore, the content and purposes of the prelude, interludes and afterword differed from De Beer's (2018). In my study, the interludes served multiple purposes. They were used to reflect methodologically on what was happening in previous and upcoming chapters. They were also used at times to summarise key points of the chapters that might usually be found at the beginning or end of chapters in more traditional dissertations. The interludes used puzzle images as a way to visualise and to orientate readers to the progression of the overall narrative of the study. Hence, they acted like compasses or guides to what was being presented in each chapter. Compasses and guides fit in with the notion of landscapes that has flowed through this study. The prelude, interludes and afterword created a narrative thread or a meta-narrative that brought together and developed a story across the whole dissertation.

Fifthly, the thesis as a whole has originality. As far as I could tell from dissertations database searches, a research project on workplace learning of a niche group of casualised or contingent workers in the field of adult education in South Africa has not been done before. However, no topic is ever completely new and the interdisciplinary

nature of the field of adult education means that topics overlap with other disciplines such as business management, psychology and sociology. Studies differ with respect to location of the study, the discipline or subject area, and the methodology. Two studies as examples illustrate this point, one in another part of South Africa, another from Sweden.

Mhlana (2020) investigated how workplaces in the post-apartheid South Africa are becoming more precarious and explored the changes in gender structure in the manufacturing sector. Mhlana's (2020) study was different from mine in that it was about the nature of the workplace rather than about workplace learning which was the focus of my study. Furthermore, the group of precarious workers in her study were not the same niche group that I identified within my study.

Borg (2014) studied the liminality of project-based work in Sweden. There is some overlap with my study in that liminality is about crossing borders and boundaries, as was explored in Chapter 9. Borg (2014) also considered competence as a key concept, much like I did. However, my use of the concept of competence was linked to COP theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015b, 2020). Furthermore, the population group in Borg's study was project-based workers, where my term NTWs is much broader. Borg's (2014) study was on business administration and management and mine was on adult education.

Closing Reflections

This study is significant because the world of work is changing rapidly (World Bank Group , 2019) and unpredictably in response to several factors, including the developments of information technologies. NTWs may be more used to dealing with change and multiplicity than traditional workers are, as they navigate across multiple spaces or places frequently.

This study has contributed towards filling a gap in the literature in that the focus was on individual stories rather than on an organisation. Although there is a focus on social learning, there is not a single community to which all participants belong. More accurately, we each have our unique set of communities that make up our landscapes of practice. The common thread which brought the participants together was that I, as researcher, had a connection with each of them through different communities of practice and social learning spaces to which I belong. Hence it was my

autoethnographic gaze across the whole study that created a common thread, holding the experiences of others within the spaces in which I live, work, learn and grow.

Non-traditional workers have unique living landscapes that overlap with other people's landscapes for mutually beneficial or conflictual relationships to exist. Survival in increasingly complex neoliberal, global contexts will require greater intentionality and strategic planning and learning to live with ambiguity and complexity.

As identified by Etienne Wenger-Trayner, individuals have the burden of responsibility (Omidvar & Kislov, 2014) for their own growth and progress and are reliant on changing, shifting social networks. However, I propose that NTWs can develop a sense of agency by tapping into the wealth of relationships and connections that exist in their landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015).

New aspiring NTWs and those of us who have navigated the NTW landscape for some time, need to learn how to learn in complex and changing environments. We need to learn in the middle of contradictions and discontinuities. We need to learn from our mistakes, learn as quickly as possible. We need to learn when to move on to new projects and when to persevere with old ones. We need to learn to navigate a changing and evolving living landscape.

In today's working environment, change is arguably the only certainty that we have and so learning to navigate change becomes the primary skill we need to learn as NTWs and increasingly so for all workers. Thus, in concluding this thesis, I propose two key lessons that could facilitate learning for NTWs or for organisations that hire and support NTWs. The first is to be intentional about learning, which includes learning how to learn; the second is learning to work with ambiguity, paradoxes, contradictions and multiplicity.

Intentional about Learning / Learning how to Learn

Much of the learning that took place for the participants in this study happened unintentionally as NTWs went about their work. Learning took place through formal, non-formal and informal methods. However, it was identified that combining these types of learning could be beneficial (Becker & Bish, 2017; Milligan et al., 2014). NTWs could benefit from being more intentional about all types of workplace learning and would need to identify and develop informal ways of learning that can complement or work well with formal and non-formal learning opportunities. One example would be to use a reflective journal to log thoughts and emotions linked to formal learning.

NTWs could be more intentional about learning by understanding how learning takes place through the two adult learning theories from this study and then applying those principles to their own contexts. As explored earlier in the chapter, the theoretical frameworks of this study have identified two important aspects of learning—how to challenge and change one's assumptions (through TLT), and being able to collaborate, learn and work with other people (through COPs and LOPs).

In contexts of change, the need to challenge one's assumptions becomes an important skill. TLT is a useful framework to understand change that requires reframing of mindsets. Intentional fostering of transformative learning (Cranton, 2006; Spooner & John, 2020) should be considered as a pedagogic tool for individuals and for organisations who are serious about guiding their workplace learning in the VUCA contexts we live and work in today.

Learning to learn includes recognising the fundamentally social ways in which we learn and being intentional about nurturing and building relationships that facilitate such workplace learning. Social learning theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) has been seen to be a helpful lens to understand the social and collaborative aspects of learning for NTWs.

It is important to note that these are not the only ways that learning takes place. However, they do foreground aspects of learning that are not always considered in learning contexts, such as the challenging of assumptions and the social aspects of learning.

This study is significant because it has brought to the surface some of the informal and unintentional ways in which learning took place for NTWs as they went about their work. Making this learning explicit is the first step towards being more intentional about future learning. However, there is a paradox here, in that as we make informal learning explicit and intentional, it loses its informal nature. Future studies could explore ways to recognise informal learning and how it might be harnessed to complement formal and non-formal learning. I propose that in the current contexts in which we live, in the rapidly changing 21st century, it is pertinent to learn how to learn and to be intentional about learning from all experiences. Such learning leads to my final point.

Learning to Navigate Ambiguity, Paradoxes, Contradictions and Multiplicity

By the end of the study, I had changed from being primarily a maths lecturer to being primarily a research lecturer. I had obtained a significant amount of experience in online (distance) tutoring and continued to do face-to-face lecturing. I had also gained first-hand experience of the vulnerable nature of being this type of worker, due to numerous health challenges I experienced. There were times when I had to give up paid work due to my health. Although I have enjoyed the NTW model of work, such vulnerabilities are a challenge that NTWs like myself need to learn to navigate.

NTWs live and work in a culture of risk and reward, as was explored in Chapter 9. Other characteristics of this culture include the establishing of lifelong and life-wide learning mindsets (Chapter 8) and learning to manage multiplicity (Chapter 9, Part 2). It is a culture that contains a lot of ambiguity, paradoxes and complexity.

Thus, in closing, I propose that to be able to navigate and make sense of the contexts of 21st century living and working, we need to learn to embrace the contradictions, to explore them, challenge them and find meaning within them. As we work towards finding meaning in what we do, we face continuities and discontinuities as a normal part of human experience (Wenger, 1998). I argue that to live in our current contexts (the VUCA world) with so much uncertainty and disruption, we would do well to learn to live with paradoxes and seeming contradictions. Major disruptions to the world of work are taking place due to advancing technologies and artificial intelligence, as was outlined in Chapter 3. Such changes do not only affect NTWs but have implications for all workers. However, NTWs are likely to experience more continuities and discontinuities than traditional workers as they navigate across multiple COPs and SLSs. Life is full of paradoxes, contradictions, continuities, and discontinuities. Making sense of and gaining meaning and purpose for our lives involves learning to live with and navigate those contradictions. Thus, I end with a poem I wrote about my experiences of living in contexts of uncertainty and change.

Paradoxical Life

Many elements of my story have been paradoxical

What I wanted to become, I didn't become – a wife and a mother

What I didn't want to become, I became – a teacher/ educator

When I tried so hard to work out what I wanted to do

– the answer seemed to elude me.

When I stopped looking for an answer, it seemed to find me.

What I heard about the world of work growing up

is not how the world is now.

I was taught that you get a good education,

a good job and you stay in it for life.

Today, that is not the norm.

My life is full of paradoxes like this.

What I thought my life would be like

is significantly different to how it turned out.

Sometimes I am ok with this - at other times I am not.

How do I make sense of my life amidst these paradoxes?

Learn to live with ambiguity. Learn to live with contradictions.

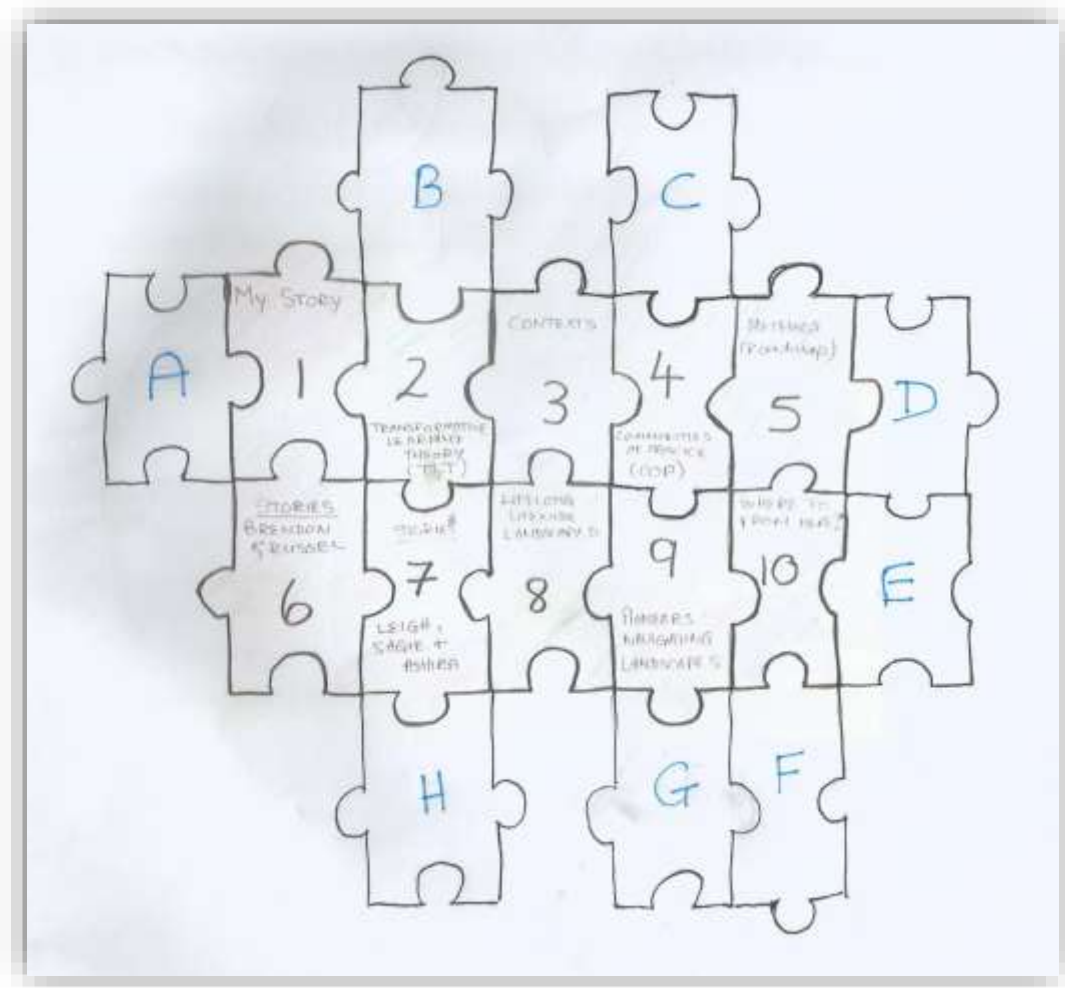
Learn to navigate the continuities as well as the discontinuities

that are inevitably part of the lives

of non-traditional workers in the early 21st century.

Afterword: Where to From Here?

In telling a story in narrative inquiry, the temptation could be to try to wrap up all parts of the story into a neatly packaged ending. However, as a research project, it is inevitable that as research questions are answered, new questions arise. Hence, the ten pieces of puzzle that have represented this study throughout the dissertation did not have straight edges, to portray the expectation that the study would lead to other potential studies. In this afterword, I have added puzzle pieces called letters A to H below to depict some of the specific research projects that could arise from this study. Projects A, B and C have already been identified within the text in Chapters 8 and 9, projects D, E and F have only been identified here. Projects G and H symbolise other research projects that could emerge from this study, but have not been explicitly identified.



A. From Chapter 8: Project A could explore the role of reflection for informal learning and explore ways in which informal learning can become more recognised and integrated in the learning of NTWs in new and changing contexts.

B. From Chapter 8: Project B – An exploration of workplace learning grounded in the principle of Ubuntu and with a larger sample could explore and interrogate African ways of knowing and learning through a transformative learning lens.

C. Chapter 9, Part 1 identified the valuable role of learning from experience. As an adult education study, experiential learning theory (David Kolb) is a possible theoretical framework that could be used in future studies to explore NTWs' learning in more depth.

D. It was seen in Chapter 8 that the river metaphor on its own was inadequate to explain the complexity of 21st century careers. A composite set of metaphors about land and space were used to describe the learning of the NTWs as living landscapes. Future studies could explore living landscapes and the related metaphors to portray learning journeys or life stories of the self or of other participants.

E. Some interesting but tentative observations were shared by Brendon, following his move to the UK, about the strong influence of context on NTW learning. It would be interesting to conduct a study similar to this, but from a different part of the country or of the world, to gain a deeper understanding of how contexts influence NTWs' experiences and stories.

F. A quantitative study of a diverse sample of participants in South Africa could be conducted to observe choices about NTW models of work across race, age and gender. For example, younger people seem to be choosing this way of working whereas older people (Sagie and me) got into this way of working through circumstances rather than choice.

G. Other projects not yet conceptualised

H. Other projects not yet conceptualised

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Annexure A: Website Addresses of Free Images

In Chapters 8 and 9, free images that were downloaded from the Internet were used to illustrate concepts discussed. Two montages (collages) were created from some of the images. The list below contains the URLs (web-addresses) at which these images were found. Images were accessed in May 2023. Images appear below in the order in which they appeared in the thesis.

Chapter 8 – Individual pictures

Career Ladder https://pixabay.com/photos/ladder-success-beyond-clouds-2713349/

Climbing Wall https://pixabay.com/photos/climber-woman-arm-strength-powerful-486023/

Chapter 8 – Pictures making up Montage 2 & 3

Map with pencil https://pixabay.com/photos/map-pencil-navigation-road-gps-5911003/

Person on dirt road https://pixabay.com/photos/path-rural-nature-road-countryside-6567149/

Tar road with trees - https://pixabay.com/photos/road-path-trees-pathway-northwest-5918359/

Stop sign https://pixabay.com/photos/stop-sign-traffic-sign-road-sign-634941/

Yield sign https://www.photos-public-domain.com/2011/11/22/yield-sign/

Ocean wave breaking https://pixabay.com/photos/sea-wave-splash-big-wave-ocean-5499649/

Winding river https://jooinn.com/large-body-of-water-stream-during-dawn-2.html#google_vignette

Group of people silhouette https://www.pexels.com/photo/silhouette-of-people-during-sunset-1000444/

Commuters on train https://pxhere.com/en/photo/1476975

Airplane https://pixabay.com/photos/plane-flight-sunset-sun-sunlight-513641/

Ship at sunset https://www.pexels.com/photo/a-pirate-ship-sailing-on-sea-during-golden-hour-37730/

River and mountain landscape https://pixabay.com/photos/landscape-river-nature-mountains-2833078/

Chapter 9 – Individual picture

Many hats https://pixabay.com/illustrations/woman-with-many-hats-5331347/

Annexure B: Ethics Approval Letter

22 June 2016

Ms Amanda Jane Cox 871871599
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Cox

Protocol reference number: HSS/0816/016D
Project Title: An exploration of professional development learning in work contexts of change, uncertainty and flexibility.

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 09 June 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

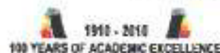
....

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr Vaughn John
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo & Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 **Facsimile:** +27 (0) 31 260 4609 **Email:** ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

Annexure C: Renewed Ethics Letter

27 July 2021

Ms Amanda Jane Cox 871871599
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Tatira

Protocol reference number: HSS/0816/016D
Project Title: An exploration of professional development learning in work contexts of change, uncertainty and flexibility.

Approval Notification – Recertification Application

Your request for Recertification dated 10 March 2021 was received.

This letter confirms that you have been granted Recertification Approval for a period of one year from the date of this letter. This approval is based strictly on the research protocol submitted and approved in 2016.

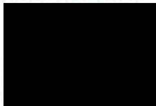
Any alteration s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Cc Supervisor: Dr Vaughn John
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo & Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Annexure D: Change of Title Approval Letter

29 May 2023

Amanda Jane Cox 871871599
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear AJ Cox

Protocol reference number: HSS/0816/016D
Project title: An exploration of professional development learning in work contexts of change, uncertainty and flexibility
Amended title: A river runs through it: landscapes of learning, development and change of non-traditional workers
Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 16 May 2023 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

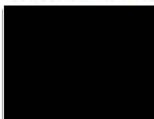
Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



....

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Annexure E: Information Letter & Informed Consent Form

PhD RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION LETTER / FOR PARTICIPANTS IN A STUDY OF LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NON-TRADITIONAL WORKERS

1) Study title and researcher details

- Department: School of Education / Adult Education
- Project title: An exploration of professional development learning in work contexts of change, uncertainty and flexibility
- Principal investigator: Amanda Cox 082-699-7972 coxamandajane@gmail.com

2) Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in this educational study. To help you decide if you would like to participate in the study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Hence, please read this information letter carefully, feel free to discuss it with other potential participants and ask me anything you are not clear about. Take your time to decide whether or not you would like to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3) What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of the professional learning of non-traditional workers. This includes people, like you, who do not work in traditional full-time employment, but work multiple jobs at the same time and/or in flexible ways. As a non-traditional worker, I have experienced the risks, challenges and also the rewards of this way of working and how critical it is for us as individuals to take responsibility for our own professional development. Through this study, I aim to gain an in depth insight into the learning and experiences of other non-traditional workers and to include my own experiences as this type of worker.

I believe the findings of such a study could be empowering for non-traditional workers in planning and being more intentional about their professional journeys. I also hope to add to the scholarship on professional learning of individuals, since not much research is done on professional development from an individual perspective. (Most research in this area is from an organisational perspective.) This study is not linked to one organisation and I have invited people that I have met in many different contexts to participate in the study.

4) Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are a particularly good example of the non-traditional worker I have just described and so your story and experiences have are likely to add value to

1

the findings of this study. As mentioned above, you have been chosen as a potential participant based on your individual experience and not based on an organisational affiliation. From the small part you have told me about your professional journey, I am confident that your input can make a significant contribution to the study.

5) Do I have to take part?

You have no obligation to take part. The decision to participate is entirely yours. If you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you will still be free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason. Nothing will happen to anyone who decides to withdraw from the study.

6) What will happen to me if I take part?

I will ask you to provide me with an up to date copy of your CV. I will analyse your CV to identify and plot out a timeline and key points in your career journey. After this, I will ask you to participate in three data collection sessions each of them lasting between 1 to 2 hours. The first session is a participatory workshop with some of the other participants in the study, in which you will create a collage of your learning journey. The second session will be an individual interview which I will conduct with you to talk about your learning journey and experiences. Based on the data collected, I will write your story and then ask you to read and check it for accuracy. Thirdly, once I have completed the learning stories of all the participants, I will ask you to participate in a focus group session with the other participants. This data collection process will take place between September 2016 and March 2017. After the final research report is completed (estimated for early 2018), I will invite you to attend a feedback session where I will present the findings.

***NOTE: I have outlined / summarised the participation in the study at the bottom of the letter.**

7) Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, you have a right to anonymity and so your name will not be used in the study (unless you request that I use your real name). A pseudonym will be used so that you will not be recognised. The hard copies of the information collected will be destroyed. You will also have the chance to review your story once it is written so you have opportunity to exclude any parts that you do not want published.

8) What will happen to the results of the research study?

The final research report will be made available at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The results of this study will be presented to the research participants through a workshop. The results may also be presented at a conference and published in a journal. I will not write your name or address in any report or book.

9) Who is organising the research?

I, Amanda Cox, as a Phd student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal

10)Who has reviewed the study?

The University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee

11)Contact for further information

If you have any concerns regarding conduct of this research project please contact:

Dr Vaughn John, Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Education Building, Pietermaritzburg, Email: johnv@ukzn.ac.za OR

HSSREC Research Office (Ms. P. Ximba, Tel: 031 260 3587, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Summary of participation, including anticipated time frames / time-lines:

1. Once you have asked any questions for clarity, and decided to participate, please sign and return the informed consent form (last page of this doc).
2. Send me your latest CV (I will analyse it and use it to understand aspects of your professional learning journey and time-line).
3. **1st meeting** – meet with a few of the other participants for a creative workshop to map out your professional journey (estimated 2 hours) – 2nd and 3rd weeks of September (12th to 23rd Sept)
4. **2nd meeting** – I will arrange a time to meet with you indivdually to find out more about your professional journey, using your mapped out learning journey from the first session (estimated 1 hour with possible follow up questions and clarity by e-mail) – September following the 1st meeting.
5. **3rd meeting** – focus group – this will be conducted much later – once I have written your stories – most likely early in 2017 (about March/ April). This focus group might need to include use of a video conference facility if some of the participants are no longer in Durban

Thank you.

Amanda Cox

Date: 2 September 2016

3

INFORMED CONSENT / *Please sign this form if you consent to taking part in this study*

<table>
<tr><td>Project Title</td><td colspan="2">An exploration of professional development learning in work contexts of change, uncertainty and flexibility</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project Aim:</td><td colspan="2">To understand learning / professional development of non-traditional workers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Researcher:</td><td>Amanda Jane Cox</td><td>082-699-7972 coxamandajane@gmail.com</td></tr>
<tr><td>Supervisor:</td><td>Dr Vaughn John</td><td>033-260-5069 johnv@ukzn.ac.za</td></tr>
<tr><td>Participants:</td><td colspan="2">Individual adult, non-traditional workers</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">I have read and understood the information letter about this study. In agreeing to participate in this study by Ms. Amanda Cox, I understand that:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">a. The information collected will be used for the researcher's doctoral thesis, and may be presented at a conference and for publication in journals.
b. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time of my choice.
c. The data will be kept confidential and that I will remain anonymous throughout the study and in the reports, unless I ask to have my real name used in the reports.
d. I have the discretion to allow the researcher access to others documents which she might find useful for the research purposes. Examples of such documents would be journals or diaries.
e. If I need further information, I can contact the researcher or her supervisor whose contact details have been included in the information letter.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Declaration:

I _ (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project and that I consent to participating in the research project. I hereby provide consent to:
Audio-record my workshop, interview and focus group discussions YES NO
Video-record my workshop, interview and focus group discussions YES NO
Use of my photographs for research purposes YES NO</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</td><td>_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
DATE</td></tr>
</table>

4

Annexure F: Focus Group Questions

<u>Question 1</u> (15 – 20 mins)

I have identified six ideas from the data and summarised them in the attached document. Please review them respond to the following two things

1. Do you connect with any of the ideas? If so, which one's and why?
2. Is there anything you would expect to be here that isn't?

The Headings of the six IDEAS are as follows:

i. Holistic learning: Lifelong, Life-wide and across the landscape
ii. Time on your legs: Experience and resilience
iii. Wearing many hats: Managing multiplicity
iv. Culture of NTW's - Culture of Risk and Reward
v. Pioneering
vi. Cycles/ Rhythms of time

<u>Question 2</u> (15 – 20 mins)

Think about your experience of being a NTW. Now I'd like you to plan course that equips young people who are choosing this type of work to be better prepared. In other words, if you were to set up a training course/ programme for someone who wants to become this type of worker, what would that 'look like' for you?

1. What? Curriculum (Content)
2. How? Pedagogy (How you would present, teach… what it would 'look like'?)- How would it be structured?

<u>Question 3 (5 – 10 mins)</u>

What advice would you give to your younger self about being an NTW? Habits, practices or advice, or warnings that you would deem helpful.

<u>Question 4 (5 – 10 mins)</u>

What do you think organisations (businesses, governments, NPO's) could or should do to support NTW's better?

Annexure G: Turnitin Report & Similarity Index

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This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

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File size:	5.25M
Page count:	351
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Character count:	603,535
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A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT: LANDSCAPES OF LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE OF NON-TRADITIONAL WORKERS

by

Amanda Jane Cox

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Adult Education) in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Supervisor: Professor Vaughn John

June 2023

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