Community-based Artists:
Dialogues of Identity and Learning

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Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

All research procedures reported in this thesis were approved by the relevant Ethics Committee (Approval No: R027/07).

Signed

Mark Andrew Selkrig  (  /  / 2009)
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- The impact of family.  
- It was the right time and environment.  
- Our experiences of formal education.  
- The need to adapt: We couldn’t hide, we learnt on the job.  

**Why We Work as Artists in Communities**  
- It is never the same; there is unpredictability, variety and energy.  
- We challenge ideas of what being an artist is.  
- There are elements of advocacy and social justice.  

**The Roles We Perform and Ways We Go about Our Work**  
- There is a need to be businesslike.  
- How we work with participants.  
- It’s sort of teaching although we are anything but a teacher.  

**What We Acquire from Working in this Way**  
- It’s based on people interaction.  
- We can move beyond the superficial, with others and ourselves.  
- Unfamiliar contexts allow us to see in different ways.  
- We can change circumstances; our own and other people’s.  

**Ways We Connect beyond community-based arts practice(s)**  

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Abstract

My intention in this study is to examine the experiences of visual artists who involve themselves in community-based arts practice(s). By engaging in a dialogue with artists who work in this way, my aim is to gain and provide some insight into how they, as artists, make meaning or learn from these situations, and how this in turn shapes them. The proposition I am exploring is that when artists are involved in community-based arts practice they learn about their identity/ies. The artists who are the focus of the study reside and conduct their work in regional Australia.

A consideration of literature is outlined in this thesis that relates to arts practices, notions of identity and ways of viewing experience and learning. The conceptual framework adopted for this study is based on sociological perspectives (Bourdieu; Giddens, 1991) and social psychology (Côté & Levine, 2002; Mishler, 1999), where the interplay between our internal, subjective or agentic (Côté & Levine, 2002) world and the external, objective structural world interact to mediate our learning and identities. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concepts of rhizomatics and becoming as a means to describe the ongoing nature of how identities are formed are also considered.

The paradigm employed in this study is a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, utilising hermeneutic phenomenological/narrative research approaches based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with twelve visual artists. Data are analysed using a recursive and spiralling process (Creswell, 2007). The findings and interpretation are presented thematically and structured as a neonarrative or storying place (Stewart, 2007) allowing the artists’ voices to be heard, and considered alongside aspects raised within the literature and my theoretical framework.
Major findings from the study include that artists attempt to reconcile aspects of their individual, social, and cultural identities by challenging communities’ perceptions of artists. The cumulative effect of being involved in community-based arts practice(s) also provide artists with ongoing identity capital where instrumental intentions are transformed, allowing them to realise intrinsic qualities where they learn about themselves by connecting with others.
A Note to the reader

The images that appear on the chapter title pages are photographs of a selection of sculptures that I produced in tandem with this inquiry. They formed a part of my research approach in documenting and making sense of the journey I was taking. My rationale to include these images is referred to throughout the thesis. In Chapter 1, the Background to the Study, I speak about my approach to art-making as a way of thinking with things. The notion of seeing arts practice as a legitimate form of research is considered within the Literature Review, in Chapter 2. I have also provided further description about the sculptures and how they blend with this inquiry, in the data gathering section of Chapter 3, which deals with Methodology.

I refer to the sculptures as Plateaus. They are made from medium density fibreboard and paint. Each Plateau is 140mm wide x 140mm deep. The height of the Plateaus varies between 400mm - 600mm depending on the objects that are situated on each Plateau.
Chapter 1: Background to the Study

Figure 1. “Isolated Plateau”.
Source: (Selkrig, 2008)
Michael Leunig’s cartoon in Figure 2 acts as a map to frame this inquiry. It echoes many of the concepts that are central to my investigation. In both the imagery and text, Leunig prompts us to examine a number of assumptions and questions our understandings of terminology. What does he mean by the World of Art, portrayed as a city or conglomeration of tall buildings that is dynamic, busy, and congested? What goodies do artists have in their carts? What tiny holes are open for the artist to leave the world of art and what dark and dirty tracks can artists take? The cartoon also requires us to examine enduring questions that relate to what art is. Is Leunig’s cartoon art? Who is an artist, and what, or who, shapes the identities of the artist? Is Leunig an artist?

These are by no means new questions and have been matters of debate for centuries, at least in a Western context. In many instances, answers have had a degree of certainty or an agreed mythology attached to them.

Our current globalised world involves rapid transformations and contractions of time and space (Giddens, 1998) as well as shifts in thinking. The pace at which
transformations can occur is evident in the time that has transpired in undertaking my inquiry. During that time new issues shaping our sense of the world have emerged or gained greater prominence. They include global warming, the social and financial inequities that exist both within nations and between nations across the globe, the emergence of Asian countries such as China and India as key global players and the recent collapse of global financial institutions. Issues such as these are cited as marking the collapse of the modernist project and the end of the Thatcher /Regan era (Fukuyama, 2009; Tanner, 2008) that has existed for the last thirty years.

The epoch of the last three decades has been characterised as a time of economic rationalism, neo-conservative and neoliberal ideologies that emphasised the individual over the collective, when the market should prevail and the role of governments should be minimal. Indicators of a popular shift away from this paradigm could also be cited in the election of the “centre left” Rudd government in Australia, and in the United States of America with the election of Barak Obama, America’s first Afro-American president. Giddens (1998) refers to the political centrist movement as the third way to describe attempts at transcending “old style social democracy and neoliberalism” (p. 26), with our need to adapt to the changes that have occurred in the world. With the emergence of third way politics rhetoric has emerged to challenge aspects of neo-conservative ideologies outlining how “the great neo-liberal experiment of the past 30 years has failed” (Rudd, 2009, p. 23). There is talk of hope and change from what has gone before. While we will have to wait to see if the rhetoric results in change, these rapid shifts and transitions in the broader social, economic, political, and cultural realms provide a range of influences that contribute to another reconfiguration of how we view the issues that Leunig raises.

By using Leunig’s cartoon as a map, my intention is not to suggest a plan, blueprint or tracing (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) that implies a structure or supporting axis for this study. Instead,

[w]hat distinguishes the map from a tracing is that it is entirely oriented towards an experimentation in contact with the real.... The map is open and
connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation… A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back ‘to the same’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12).

These sentiments expressed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), outline how Leunig’s cartoon might act as a device to embark on this inquiry and to consider issues that will be raised in navigating the journey.

**Personal Factors**

A photocopy of Leunig’s cartoon (Figure 2) was given to me by a fellow artist in the late 1990s when we were both involved with an artists’ cooperative. Since then, the cartoon has been positioned at eye level on our refrigerator at home, becoming an image that I interact with on several occasions each day. At the time of acquiring the image, I had already rejected the prospective career path of an art teacher in Victorian Government secondary schools and had decided to pursue a passion and try making a living, by producing art. My aim was to concentrate on art and to consider any form of paid employment beyond art-making to be of secondary importance. I wanted to use visual art mediums to make sense of my world. As Pasztory (2005) suggests, creating things is a way to work out ideas and making art is thinking with things.

I can trace the genesis of this inquiry to a range of circumstances related to personal and professional experiences, academic studies and work environments that have occurred since the early 1990s.

While making and exhibiting art, I also found myself entering into many situations where I was performing the role of an educator. Some of my varied work circumstances included working as an artist on community projects, teaching art and art education in tertiary settings, as well as being employed as a sexual health / HIV educator. The range of circumstances in which I worked can be outlined briefly into three categories of me as an educator removed from art,
an educator linked with art and as an artist/educator on decision-making and funding bodies. These different roles challenged my perspectives. Interacting with numerous institutional cultures and personal identities, I became exposed to the multiple realities and truths both individuals and contexts can possess. As an educator, initially my approach had been to focus on the learning that was occurring for the participants, particularly in formal educational settings. That particular mindset was replaced with a different pedagogical lens, through which I began viewing myself as a participant and as being part of the learning. I have become increasingly aware of how the interactions that occur when I am acting as an educator influence me and my thinking.

In 2003, during the incubation stage for this study, I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship, and travelled to Europe. The purpose of the fellowship was to study how visual artists work, both individually and collectively, with communities and organisations to assist in making communities dynamic and vibrant places. That experience, although providing some clarity and insight to frame this study, also gave rise to a range of deeper questions and avenues for further investigation, particularly in relation to how artists work with communities and the types of learning that occur. An excerpt from the report I submitted to the Churchill Trust about my experience highlights this.

All [artists] I spoke to indicated and felt that they had a role to play in education within their communities. This was seen in the context of learning. In most cases it was seen as a mutual and reciprocal arrangement where they could learn from each other and their communities and their communities could learn from them (Selkrig, 2004, p. 15).

Considering the threads of my varied experiences, the term *Bricoleur* has a resonance with how I approach this study. Interpretations of the term are varied. In French, *Bricoleur* refers to someone who undertakes odd jobs and tinkers as a handyman, or Jack-of-all-trades. For Lévi-Strauss (1966) working as a *Bricoleur* to understand humankind provides a contrast to professions such as scientists or engineers, and the way they go about organising their intellectual worlds. According to Lévi-Strauss (1966), a *Bricoleur* is an intellectual handyman, “a kind
of professional do-it-yourself person” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). I am particularly drawn to Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) description of a *Bricoleur*, and their metaphor of a quilt maker; being someone who combines a range of potentially disparate sets of representations, images, or ideas and fits these to the specifics of a complex situation to describe oneself. The diverse factors described above have contributed to the development of my inquiry, which is outlined in the following section.

**Focus of the Study**
The emphasis of my inquiry is to examine the learning or meaning-making that occurs for artists when they involve themselves in community-based arts practice(s) and how this in turn might influence their identity/ies. A rationale for using the plural *practice(s)* will be provided in the literature review. The visual artists who were be involved in this study live and work in locations outside major cities and work beyond what could be seen as the conventional Western sense of the *artworld* (Davies, 2004) tradition. As artists leaving the artworld they are possibly exploring one of the dark and dirty tracks that Leunig refers to, where an artist works as an agent with groups of people in a variety of sites of learning. These sites include formal educational environments and institutions such as schools, as well as broader community and social settings.

**Rationale for the Study**
Government and non-government organisations in many Western countries, according to Yúdice (2003), are turning—or, some might suggest, returning—to an understanding of the vital place culture plays in human existence. When the concept of culture is discussed reference to the arts is often implied (Hawkes, 2003; Yúdice, 2003). Terminology such as social capital, social cohesion, and inclusion are familiar in political and economic discourse, with the arts being seen as providing solutions to key issues.

[It is] more pervasive than ever. They [the government] view the arts as a means of achieving broad economic and social goals, such as education, crime reduction and community development. In other words,
investment in culture is justified in terms of culture’s ability to promote broad public policy objectives (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004, p. 2).

The same agenda of art being used to achieve broader goals has surfaced in governments and the private sector to justify their investment in what Bourdieu (1993) describes as cultural capital. Yúdice (2003) also argues that in recent times there has been a turn to investment in civil society, with culture and art as its prime animator. In an era of measuring impact and requiring identifiable outcomes, various forms of research and evaluations have emerged. These reports have examined areas such as improvements in educational standards (Bamford, 2006; Fiske, 2000; Hunter, 2005); notions of well-being including personal health, personal development, social support, social inclusion, social capital, urban renewal, neighbourhood regeneration, tolerance and cross cultural understanding (McQueen-Thomson & Ziguras, 2002; Mulligan et al., 2007; Myer, 2002; Rogers & Spooks, 2003); and creativity and economic development (Arts Victoria, 2004; Florida, 2002; Robinson, 1999a). In some of these reports and evaluations, there have been positive findings and impacts; others raise questions about the validity of findings (McQueen-Thomson & Ziguras, 2002; Mulligan et al., 2007; Sinclair, 2006), suggesting that many of the approaches to evaluation have weaknesses or flaws such as too narrow a range of projects being examined, evaluations being self-referential and initiated by those with a vested interest, and use of limited or inappropriate research tools.

Although many initiatives that utilise the arts to achieve broad economic and social goals involve artists working in some way with communities to achieve desired outcomes, arts projects and subsequent evaluations tend to focus on the instrumental benefits for people other than the artists (Commonwealth Department of Communication and the Arts, 1995; Costantoura, 2001; Cultural Ministers’ Council, 2004; Department of Culture and the Arts & Department of Education and Training, 2005; Dunn, 2006; Florida, 2002; Galton, 2008; Grogan, Mercer, & Engwicht, 1995; Hawkes, 2003; McQueen-Thomson & Ziguras, 2002; Mills, 2006; Mulligan et al., 2007; Pringle, 2002; Regional Arts Australia, 2006; Regional Arts Victoria, 2005; Sinclair, 2006). When measuring the impact of arts
projects, the emphasis is to ascertain what the community or participants obtained from their experiences. Where the views or voices of artists are sought, artists’ responses in most cases are usually framed with them talking about everyone else. Nevertheless, an interest in the role and identities of artists, when they are involved in what has been labelled as socially engaging, participatory art education practice has begun to surface in the work of Bain (2005), Galton (2008), Monagan (2005), Mulligan et al. (2007), Pope and Doyle (2006) and Pringle (2002). This recent interest also involves studying the pedagogical methods and approaches artists use that assist others to learn in these contexts. Nevertheless, the information that is emerging about artists’ identities and learning from such studies remains thin in parts, or refers predominantly to artists who are situated in the northern hemisphere, live and work in major urban centres, or their work is commissioned by arts organisations or government at various levels.

**Issues to be Investigated**

My intention in this study is to examine the experiences of visual artists who involve themselves in community art-based practice(s), characterised as being dialogical in nature or socially engaging, participatory arts activity. By engaging in a dialogue with artists who work in this way, and providing a vehicle for their voices to be heard, my aim is to gain and share some insight into how they as artists make meaning or learn from these situations, and how community-based arts practice(s) impact on these artists.

The proposition I am exploring is that when artists are involved in community-based arts practice(s), they learn about their identity/ies, as artists. The particular artists that will be the focus of my study reside and conduct their work predominantly outside major capital cities and other major urban areas.

To assist in navigating the above proposition, my inquiry has two interrelated intentions. The first is to gain a sense of the way artists who undertake community arts-based practice perceive themselves. The second is to explore the learning that occurs for them as artists, when they find themselves situated in
contexts that involve working with groups of people. I will consider how working as a community-based artist may influence their ways of thinking, how they make meaning or learn from the situations in which they find themselves, and how that in turn shapes them.

Theoretical perspectives from several fields such as cultural development and cultural studies, critical theory, art, learning, and literature related to identity have been examined to inform this inquiry. In summary, these combined and occasionally overlapping fields have been explored and considered to develop the following questions as prompts to guide this study. They have been organised around the following broad questions of identity and practice.

Identity
1. Why do artists who work with communities or in sites of learning choose to involve themselves in that type of arts practice?
2. Are there any unifying traits or attributes of artists who choose to work with communities or in sites of learning?
3. How does working with communities or in sites of learning influence the artist’s identity?
4. Does location or place (working in regional locations) affect the artist’s practice?

Practice
1. How do artists who work with communities or in sites of learning make meaning or theorise about their practice?
2. How does the practice of working with communities or in sites of learning influence other work the artist undertakes?
3. What are the artist’s views of others when involved in the practice of working with communities or in sites of learning?
4. How does working with communities or in sites of learning differ from other forms of art practice?
Significance and Beneficiaries of the Study

In framing an inquiry, Hammersley and Walker (1992) outline the need to contemplate a range of questions such as: Why is the research being done? For whose benefit is the research being carried out? What are we asking? Why are we asking it? In the context of this particular study, which forms part of a professional doctorate with the purpose to develop professional practice skills and make a contribution to knowledge of direct relevance to the profession (La Trobe University, 2009), there are various levels and circumstances to which these questions could apply.

At a personal level, this research relates to me developing an understanding of scholarly and methodological approaches to academic inquiry. The task should extend my thinking, challenge my ideas and encourage me to persevere in my inquiry. In my current academic role teaching pre-service teachers, developing further understandings of how individuals learn will hopefully assist me to enhance my own teaching, particularly with regard to how learning and meaning-making can occur for the students with whom I interact.

There is also the possibility that my inquiry will contribute to the emerging discourse in some academic circles that work undertaken by artists in their practice is a legitimate form of research.

Rather than adopting methods of inquiry from the social sciences … similar research goals can be achieved by following different yet complementary paths. What is common is the attention given to rigor and systematic inquiry, yet in a way that privileges the role imagination and intellect plays in constructing knowledge that is not only new but has the capacity to transform human understanding (Sullivan, 2005, pp. xi-xii).

Although my study is predicated on social science methods of inquiry, it examines aspects of how artists undertake research by following complementary paths in their work.

The evidence that is starting to appear about the experience of artists who work in community arts-based practice(s) (Bain, 2005; Galton, 2008; Monagan, 2005; Mulligan, et al., 2007; Pope & Doyle, 2006; Pringle, 2002) as mentioned
previously, remains patchy. This study may contribute to the emerging area that examines how artists go about their work. The aspect of my inquiry that relates to artists who live and work in regional locations does not appear to have been similarly documented elsewhere and may therefore prove useful for comparing artists in urban and rural settings. The data that emerge could also assist in comparing or complementing predominantly quantitative studies, such as Throsby and Hollister’s (2003) work that relate to the status of artists, or provide alternative perspectives to that of commissioned studies that may have vested interests—as outlined by Mulligan et al. (2007).

My inquiry could also shed light on the ways in which meaning-making does and could occur, particularly in the diverse fields where artists are now found to work (Myer, 2002; Throsby & Hollister, 2003). These diverse fields are due in part to current approaches to education that acknowledge the value of communities and identify formal learning institutions such as schools not as isolated places but as part of a broader community (Victoria State Government, 2008). In this context, community is seen as a resource, and a range of partnerships are being formed to enhance learning in formal educational settings such as schools. In broader social contexts and working environments “creative industries” have emerged (Arts Victoria, 2004; Caves, 2000; Florida, 2002; Robinson, 1999b). In these creative industries, artists are finding themselves working alongside people from other professions. These industries encompass new forms of work in a range of fields such as advertising, architecture, design, and computer software development.

For the artists who participated in this inquiry, the thesis could provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their practice and to hear the stories of others who work in similar ways. There is also a possibility that organisations or settings that invite artists into their communities may be assisted in gaining a deeper understanding of who or what artists are, in addition to seeing circumstances from artists’ perspectives. The findings and even the methods used for this study may prove useful if applied to the range of employment
settings where artists are now situating themselves, to examine what occurs for individuals when disparate ways of thinking come together.

**Limitations of the Inquiry**

A particular limitation of this inquiry is that the artists who participated in this study are associated with a limited range of settings in which they have worked, the particular types of arts practice(s), and that the number of participants is small in size. This makes it impossible to generate broad generalisations. However, doing so was not the intention. By focussing on a small sample of information-rich cases and considering these in relation to a diverse body of literature, the aim is to describe and interpret how working in various sites of learning impacts on artists’ identities and the meanings or learning that they gain from these experiences.

Some limitations inherent in this study also relate to my involvement in the research and thus my level of intrusion into the process and the potential biases I may have brought to the inquiry. However, using what Patton (2002) refers to as reflexive questioning that continually challenged my thinking and assumptions, my sensitivity to and awareness of these types of limitations were heightened. Throughout the inquiry, approaches such as member checking, peer debriefing that contribute to producing trustworthy and believable research have been employed to identify and address my biases and to minimise their impact. Specific strategies that minimised the extent of my biases in this inquiry will be outlined in the methodology chapter.

Finally, Patton (1990) provides a strong reminder to researchers that “there are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs” (p. 9). Compromises apply to all types of research, and partly relate to the nature or intention of the inquiry as well as approaches to methodology, whether they are quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of both. In broader terms, trade-offs in research arise due to the amount of time and the extent of resources (including money) that are available. The trade-offs I had to make in this study are outlined in Chapter 3.
Overview of the Study
I have commenced this thesis by articulating its nature and context, followed by a brief description of personal aspects that have led me to this inquiry. The particular focus of the study, a rationale based on broader foundations and, the specific issues to be examined has been provided. In the concluding sections of Chapter 1, I also mapped the limitations as well as the potential contributions that this inquiry may make. In Chapter 2, I consider literature that relates to frameworks and theoretical perspectives to explore the particular arts practice(s) that are the focus of this study, notions of identity, and ways to consider learning. The methodology used for this study is outlined in Chapter 3, where the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm is articulated. My rationale for using a phenomenological/narrative approach based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with visual artists is also outlined. Issues that can arise from using this approach, such as subjectivity and reflexivity, are considered. I then describe the forms of data collection used in the study, as well as the subsequent processes and approaches to analysis using a range of checking devices. Chapter 4 contains the findings and interpretation of the study. I have structured and discussed the findings as a neonarrative (Stewart, 2007) to allow the artists’ voices to be heard while linking with material that was raised in the literature review and in my theoretical framework. In the final chapter, I provide a summation of the study. This includes major considerations and implications for professional practice that emerged from this inquiry, as well as some closing remarks.
Figure 3. “Isolated Plateaus”.
Source: (Selkrig, 2008)
In framing this chapter I have examined major concepts and theoretical perspectives that pertain to this inquiry. There is no attempt to develop a comprehensive theoretical model. Rather, the intent is to provide insights into the ideas that have informed the structure and direction of this investigation. The literature consulted can be placed broadly under three areas. The first section involves an exploration of the world of art, and there is a consideration of the meanings, purpose, and notions of how art is positioned. This is followed by a more detailed investigation of understandings and the place of community-based arts practice(s).

The second section provides an examination of the concepts of identity and self. It also includes an exploration of meanings attached to the label of artist and the criteria used to identify those who make art. Emergent frameworks to consider the role and work of artist are also examined. The third section involves an exploration of concepts and theories related to learning, experience and meaning-making. Woven into each of these three areas is a consideration of the broader cultural, sociopolitical, and economic factors that have influenced discourses in prior epochs as well as the era in which we are currently situated.

The final part of this chapter locates the focus of my inquiry and provides an outline of the conceptual framework that informs the study. The conceptual framework I have developed results from a distillation of key conceptual threads from the literature review.

The main fields of knowledge that inform my inquiry such as art, community, identity, self, learning, and experience are multifaceted and can overlap. To ensure the complexities and interrelated aspects of these major concepts and theoretical perspectives are considered carefully this chapter is somewhat longer than usual for a literature review.
The World of Art

Unravelling the artworld: Opening up new possibilities.
An underlying issue in many of the arguments about the purpose, nature, and value of art, is its relationship and relativity to a supposed artworld. There can be a perception that the artworld is an isolated realm that stands outside other forces such as contemporary mass culture, bureaucracy, politics, and education that are part of our lives. The artworld in a Western sense Stallabrass (2004) claims, is often portrayed as a zone of freedom.

This small world – which when seen from the inside appears autonomous, a micro-economy governed by the actions of a few important collectors, dealers, critics and curators – produces art’s freedom from the market for mass culture … this cultural enclave is protected from vulgar commercial pressures, permitting free play with materials and symbols, along with standardized breaking of convention and taboo (Stallabrass, 2004, p. 3).

An artworld viewed in such a way, according to Stallabrass, is overly simplistic and naïve. Becker (2002) contends that it is far more complex, as those involved in the artworld “typically have intimate and extensive relations with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves” (p. 184), and there are varying levels of interdependence with, or independence from other organised groups in society. The concept of the artworld being a zone of freedom is also problematic according to Becker because “before people can organise themselves as a world explicitly justified by making objects or events defined as art, they need sufficient political and economic freedom to do that and not all societies provide this” (p. 185). Recognising this interrelationship Bourdieu (1996) uses the term artistic field to articulate a similar concept of an artworld and how the artistic field is not a separate entity, but rather operates or is a subfield inside the field of cultural production that in turn functions within the broader contexts of power and social space (refer to Figure 4).

The arguments of Bourdieu (1996) and Becker (2002) that the artworld is not a contained entity and that boundaries are porous, as well as there being less distinction about what constitutes a work of art or who belongs to the artworld,
results in the membership of this world becoming quite large and disparate. Viewing the artworld as a broader framework, encompassing all of those involved in the diverse cooperative activities and interactions that contribute to producing or identifying a work of art, an assumption could be made that the field has become more pluralistic (Danto, 2000) and less hierarchical.

Figure 4. The field of cultural production in the field of power and social space. Source: (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 124)

This is far from the reality and, as Becker (2002) contends, there is a great deal of attention, time, and energy devoted to maintaining a power structure by some in the artworld who are “trying to decide what is and isn't art, what is and isn't their kind of art and who is and isn't an artist” (p. 184). Bourdieu (1993) labels those involved in this process as the “agents of consecration” (p. 78). The hierarchies of power and influence that these agents wield will depend on where the emphasis
of the value of art is placed, in terms of possessing either economic or cultural capital. The model provided by Bourdieu (1996) in Figure 4 also represents the way power operates within the field of cultural production and how the dynamics allow certain art forms and artists who produce work to possess various types and levels of capital, hence anointing some art forms or artists and not others. The forms of capital that Bourdieu refers to are discussed later in this chapter in the section that examines concepts of identity.

The perpetuation of an authoritative hierarchy within the art field can shape the discourse of art. Davies (2004) describes this as the artworld relativity problem, where any discussion or views of art as, for example, imitation (Plato, 1992), a medium of the transmission of feelings (Tolstoy, 1992), intuitive expression (Croce, 1992), significant form (Bell, 1914), experience (Dewey, 1958), or as historically reflexive (Danto, 1997) must be authorised by the artworld. According to Davies (2004), referring to art in the ways outlined above “presupposes the existence of a continuous tradition, of an historically and culturally unified body of work, to which the newly created piece [of art] is related in the appropriate fashion” (p. 174). Such a parochial view of art assumes that there is only one artworld, concentrating on the narrow Western context where high art is made, and ignoring low art and non-Western art. Carey (2005) also maintains that we need to consider how art affects or changes peoples’ lives rather than the inward-looking view of art critics located within the artworld, which may be “only of limited and personal interest” (p. 167). Carey then goes on to state that “until that happens, we cannot even pretend that we are taking the arts seriously” (p. 168).

Those within the arts field who continue to employ a limited definition of art can, according to Costantoura (2000), also “hold out-of-date perceptions of who constitutes the Australian public, what motivates them and how to deal with them” (p. vii). The mindsets held by those within the arts field have the ability to permeate the public psyche. In turn, these mindsets act as a form of enculturation (Costantoura, 2000) where views become embedded within
broader communities that can lead to a narrowing of ideas or images of what art is.

This limited spontaneous perception tends to focus on a ‘1900’ definition of the arts which includes those forms of artistic expression that would have existed (mainly in Europe) at the beginning of the twentieth century. These traditional items can be seen as the ‘big A’ arts (p. 21).

Similar to Davies’ label of high art, Constantoura’s descriptor of big A art is used to encompass art forms such as opera, ballet, painting, sculpture and architecture. While perceptions of big A arts featured in the Australian communities’ spontaneous perceptions of art, Constantoura (2000) also reported that when people were offered a broader range of suggestions of what might be, deemed as little a art, respondents were willing to accept these as alternative definitions of art. Areas that were seen as little a art included fashion design, graphic design, shows or bands at local clubs, film and television drama, and the painting and play acting done by small children.

The challenges to a singular authoritative artworld (if it ever existed) have proliferated in recent decades. Art and artists are moving well beyond the confines of traditional boundaries. In part, this shift could be attributed to a legacy of living in a postmodern era or, as some have recently suggested, a move to a post-postmodern world (Kirby, 2006) or a time of Altermodernism (Bourriaud, 2005). The postmodern era was a time where meanings collapsed, or merged, and canonical or grand theories were challenged bringing about a blurring of high art and low art forms, allowing hybrid and multiple interpretations of art to emerge. We have shifted beyond this era according to Bourriaud (2005) to a period of Altermodernism where cultural hybridization and the creation of new forms through interactivity is embraced.

Our ability to participate in a globalised world, together with the rapid transformation and compaction of time and space (Giddens, 1998), the development of new technologies and shifting relations of world powers, territorial boundaries and global issues are also contributing to the fracturing and reconfiguration of notions about art. As a result of new media via the World
Wide Web and other emerging technologies, the ways in which art is made, communicated, and talked about permit multiple voices to be heard instantaneously, creating a quandary for traditional art criticism. Frost (2009) states, “the old-world connoisseur has had his [sic] day. The voice of art criticism has to change with the times or it is doomed” (p. 176).

By reframing the notion of an artworld from one with confined parameters, Sullivan (2005) refers to the emergence of “sites of possibility for making art, thinking about art, or teaching art. Artists and others explore these spaces and places in ways that disrupt assumed boundaries” (p. 152). Sullivan identifies three sites of practice for artists. In the first of these, making in systems, artists move beyond discipline boundaries and interact, or intersect with others. The collaborations that arise are not based on compartmentalising the roles people undertake based on their expertise. Rather, making in systems becomes a shared wonder requiring new ways to conceptualise forms or structures as well as new ways of thinking. The second site that Sullivan refers to is making in communities, which involves “artists working within the orbit of community-based art practice who look to dislodge restrictive paradigms of thought” (p. 153). This site could be interpreted as challenging conventional perceptions about what art is and where it should be located. The third site that Sullivan outlines is making in cultures, inferring that artists use their hybrid experiences and work across countries and cultures. The sites of possibility described here, in particular making in communities, will be explored further in the next section, as they could be seen as sites where the artists who are the focus of my inquiry undertake their work.

**Making in communities: The emergence of community arts practice.**

Tracing the genesis of community-based arts practice(s), Lacy (1995a) suggests that, depending on how the concept is interpreted, its origins could stretch back as far as the cave painting of our ancient ancestors. When considering more recent times, Reiss and Pringle (2003) cite some notable turning points that contributed to the formation of community-based arts practice(s) over the
Twentieth Century. They emphasise the emergence of Marxist thinkers such as Adorno and Horkheimer (1973), and Benjamin (1983), who through avenues such as the Frankfurt School, questioned art’s function, its educative possibilities, and redefined the role of art, artists, and the audience. Within this particular subsection of my thesis, perspectives that outline the emergence of community arts in an Australian context and the trajectory it has taken over the last few decades are considered. The purpose is to provide a background to the environments in which the artists who are the focus of this study are currently working.

From an Australian perspective, Kirby (1991) contends that since white settlement there has been a long history of consciously engaging and organising ordinary people in cultural life. The same might also be said of the original inhabitants of Australia. Kirby, like Reiss and Pringle (2003), suggests that influences have come from the political left, citing eight hour day celebrations organised by the trade union movement, as well as the establishment of mechanics institutes and schools of art in many communities.

The 1960s and 1970s in Australia, and more broadly, are usually claimed to be the decades when the notion of community art became embedded into our psyche, language and mainstream discourse. Binns (1991) argues that the emergence of community art at this time was due to a range of factors as well as a response to the turbulent times. A perceived crisis occurred in the arts and cultural life of Western countries, particularly those that exert a major influence on Australia, such as Britain and America. Challenges to traditional cultural or elitist art paradigms occurred giving rise to concepts such as popular culture, cultural populism and cultural democracy. According to McGuigan (1992), issues of social justice and access, that are embedded in these ideologies, provided the foundations for the community arts movement. At the same time within the artworld, artists rebelled against the markets that began to commodify their work (Kester, 2004). Artists reacted by producing ephemeral and conceptual work. The 1960s and 1970s was also a time when a few very select artists were elevated to celebrity status by the artworld, leaving those “outside the exclusive enclaves angry, disbelieving and alienated” (Binns, 1991, p. 12). A range of other social
and political struggles such as the Vietnam War, feminism, and recognition of minority, migrant, and indigenous peoples were also occurring and contributing to this context.

Waves of action met. Artists disenchanted with the art world and now concerned with political and social issues, moved out to find new languages, other audiences, dialogue and collaboration across contextual boundaries. Others, outside professional arts were being caught up in a crafts revival and the establishment or revitalisation of local arts and community centres.... the arts were on the political agenda in Australia and in this environment, the term ‘community arts’ was born (Binns, 1991, p. 12).

While acknowledging the influence of radical social movements and the power of grassroots initiatives on the emergence of community arts, Hawkins (1993) maintains that to regard community arts as a movement, or as coming from a history of radical cultural activism is a romantic leftist notion. Adopting such a view, according to Hawkins, is ultimately stultifying and does not take into account the phenomenal shift that was also occurring in social policy.

In Australia the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972 is often seen as a watershed moment, heralding change on a range of political, economic, and social fronts. Among the changes that occurred at the time, it is “usually seen as marking the birth of an explicit and comprehensive, as distinct from piecemeal, arts policy at the federal level” (Throsby, 2006, p. 7). The Whitlam era also embedded the notion of community arts and social democratic ideals of access and participation within cultural practice by allocating money to these initiatives according to Hawkins (1993), rather than just acknowledging the concept rhetorically, which had been the case with previous conservative governments.

The label community spread through many areas of public administration during the Whitlam era, “from education to health and welfare to the arts, ‘community’ was invoked in different ways with different effects” (Hawkins, 1993, p. xviii). Programs such as the formal implementation of Artist in Schools in Victoria emerged as a result of this policy shift. Artist in Schools was based on concepts of community arts, with artists adopting “individual ways of working with
children, the artist in schools scheme [being] a learning process for all concerned” (Challis, 1981, p. 2). From Hawkins’ (1993) perspective, community arts was geared to become a form of official intervention related to an experiment in social democracy involving the key aspects of access and participation in the arts, which had no real currency in Australia until it was enshrined in government policy.

As a result of being legitimised through government policy, further layers of politicisation, bureaucratisation, and accountability also began to shape the discourse of community arts practice. The art and cultural sector according to Yúdice (2003) developed into an enormous network of arts administrators who mediate between funding sources and artists and with communities. Similarly, Latham (2004) maintains that the roles of artists and the arts were reoriented.

When government began to allocate funding, establish landmark companies and put board structures in place, the balance of power shifted inexorably from individual artists to corporatized arts infrastructure.... The last thirty years have seen management displace the creators to become the powerful figures of the arts world (Latham, 2004, pp. 11-12).

The development of managing structures at a macro level links with Foucault’s (1991) notion of governmentality where a society of security (and control) is maintained by imposing processes of government in organisations and structures that are at arm’s length from government. These processes provide a buffer to the real power, while also impeding progress, allowing real power to retain control, thus “creating an environment where there is a subordination of technicians to administrators” (Castel, 1991, p. 293). Community arts, like other forms of arts practice, were transformed over the last few decades of the Twentieth Century into a type of industry, becoming coded over time through an economic rationalist prism, where humans are referred to as clients or customers and art becomes a product.

In Australia, policy and research developments echo overseas themes. The 1994 cultural policy, Creative Nation, reflected the dominant paradigm of economic rationalism and positioned the arts as a market commodity (Murdoch University Centre for Learning Change and Development, 2005, p. 3).
Community art: A messy concept.
From the supposed halcyon days of the 1970s in many Western countries, including Australia, where community arts started to receive public funding and became embedded in government policy, the ground has continued to shift. Since the focus by governments on social issues during the 1970s, the pendulum over the last thirty years has gradually moved.

The cold winds of what had come to be called ‘economic rationalism’ were blowing through Canberra corridors and the Government was insisting that a wide range of programs and services justify their existence in economic terms. In this way the concept of the ‘arts industry’ was given credibility (Throsby, 2006, p. 8).

Over this period the language used to describe community art has also morphed and the discourse associated with art practice that involves communities has been broadened. By amalgamating two complex terms community and art within government policy-making structures during the 1970s, multiple meanings and interpretations of the concept emerged, making it problematic to pinpoint exactly what community art is or was. As a result, the major Australian arts funding body – that was established as an at arm’s-length body from government during the Whitlam era – the Australia Council, reoriented its community arts funding program in the mid 1980s. In an attempt to remove confusion about the term community arts, the idiom of community cultural development (CCD) emerged to replace it. The shift to CCD also gave the Australia Council a wider brief by establishing culture rather than art as the focus. According to Hawkins (1993) deleting the word art shifted the emphasis to community empowerment and organisation as the primary objective of funding. However, Hawkins argues that for government policy-makers and funding bodies, the shift in focus brought a realisation that defining culture is as difficult as defining art.

Accompanying the move from community arts to community cultural development, Hawkes (2003) claims that there was also a move from spontaneous grassroots initiatives, where the emphasis was not placed on the art product, and did not necessarily involve recognised artists. Hawkes maintains that the arts lobby led a push in the shift in public cultural policies to position
credible artists and art outcomes being of a certain standard within a community cultural development framework. Reid (2000) who describes community cultural development as a process rather than an art form that involves embedding quality art outcomes, along with the instrumental benefits for communities, tends to substantiate Hawkes’ claim.

In 2004 the Australia Council proposed that the Community Cultural Development Board be disbanded and its activities be integrated back into the other artform-specific boards that existed within the structure of the Australia Council. Due to lobbying by a range of arts and cultural groups across Australia, the Australia Council modified its approach and established a Community Partnerships committee, (Australia Council for the Arts, 2008) that aims to develop and sustain a wide range of partnerships to support culturally vibrant communities through engagement with, and participation in, the arts.

Similar to the Australian experience, the messiness involved in characterising community arts and what it actually embraces has seen a range of labels also surface in other parts of the world. These labels seem to portray a range of subtle differences about community-based arts practice(s). For example, new genre public art emerged in the United States of America as a term to describe an arts practice.

[It] uses both traditional and non traditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues relevant to their lives – [and] is based on engagement. It has been a term used since the late 1960s to describe art that departs from traditional boundaries of media (Lacy, 1995a, p. 19).

The concept of social sculpture and its underpinning philosophy developed by the German artist, Joseph Beuys (Beuys & Harlan, 2004), has also been applied to these types of arts practice(s). They have been described as participatory and interdisciplinary processes that expand the conception of art, where we are all active both within and beyond the sphere of art. A social sculpture perspective views everyone as an artist, and maintains we should all “participate in
transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives” (Oxford Brookes University, 2008).

Kester (2004) uses *dialogical art* to describe a particular type of arts practice. He states that the term derives from Bakhtin’s (1990) notion that “art can be viewed as a kind of conversation - a locus of differing meanings, interpretations and points of view” (Kester, 2004, p. 10). Some community arts projects can culminate in a finished art work being deposited into a community. Kester equates this with the concept of *banking* outlined by Freire (1990) as a passive and repressive educational approach. Dialogical art practices on the other hand, according to Kester, are based on artists becoming involved in collaborative production and developing empathic insight of the communities in which they work. Rather than artworks that just appear, dialogical projects unfold through cumulative exchange between all involved in a process of performative interaction. In addition, according to Kester, when judgments are made about the art that is produced in dialogical approaches, the conventions and assumptions of art theory and criticism have to be re-evaluated as they are not relevant. Methodologies that focus on the formal appearance of a physical object that in turn possesses an immanent meaning bestowed on it by art critics from the artworld, do not apply.

Woven into Kester’s (2004) discussion of dialogical art is the concept of *littoral art practice* developed by Hunter and Larner, two community arts project organisers and practitioners in the United Kingdom. Littoral art practices are described as immersive cultural practices requiring those involved to work beyond “the normative assumptions of the art world and art institutions, often through long-term collaborative engagements with specific sites and constituencies” (Kester, 2004, p. 167). The term is used to describe cultural projects that involve interrelationships between disciplines and institutions that also involve activism, elements of art, and public policy.

Bourriaud (2002) in articulating his claim that we are currently situated in a time of Altermodernism describes how art is relational. The concept of art being
relational has connections with the type of arts practice being explored in this study. Relational aesthetics deals with aspects of a co-existence criterion and is premised on an “aesthetic theory consisting [of] judging artworks on the basis of inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt” (Bourriaud, p. 112). Relational aesthetics are linked with relational art, which is “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 113).

The term socially engaged arts (Centre for Creative Communities, 2005) has surfaced in the United Kingdom, to include community-based arts practice(s). According to Doherty (2000) the term arose to align with “Blair’s socially inclusive liberalism [to establish] a so-called Art of the Third way” (p. 1). In other parts of Europe, such as Ireland, the descriptor participatory arts (The Arts Council of Ireland, 2005) has been adopted, with the aim of encouraging a broad range of engagement in the arts. Underpinning participatory arts are the values of “access, ownership, equity, diversity and inclusiveness” (The Arts Council of Ireland, 2005, p. 1).

The various shifts in nomenclature demonstrate a move from a small fixed group of community arts practitioners and organisations, towards an environment that involves more and more artists and organisations working to include people in the process of making and interpreting art.

Activities that fall under these names span an exhaustive array of activity including arts centres, festivals, youth and intergeneration projects, disability projects, community training programs, artist in residence schemes, prison setting and health focused workshops and school programs (Centre for Creative Communities, 2005, p. 1).

Reiss and Pringle (2003) have attempted to encapsulate the current iteration of this conception of arts practice in the United Kingdom, by fusing key terms. They have developed the phrase socially engaged, participatory and educational arts activity. In an Australian context, in government policy (where it exists) and within many arts organisations, a similar ideology is expressed although it continues to be framed in the discourse of community cultural development or as
community partnerships (Costantoura, 2001; Hawkes, 2003; Mulligan et al., 2007; Pope & Doyle, 2006; Regional Arts Australia, 2006; Regional Arts Victoria, 2005; Throsby, 2006).

With broadened notions of the role and purpose of community-based arts practice(s), attempts to communicate what such practice(s) are and provide clearly defined parameters are problematic. The boundaries remain somewhat porous and fluid. Hence, for this study I have chosen to employ the plural community- based arts practice(s) to acknowledge the multiple meanings and possibilities. Cleveland (2002) in Figure 5 has endeavoured to categorise the broad range of environments and contexts where community-based arts practice(s) such as those outlined above are employed. Cleveland introduces yet another label, namely arts-based community development, inspired by ecological systems, to describe the type of arts practice(s) discussed in this section of the literature review. While providing a succinct articulation of the range of approaches, boundaries, and overlaps, Cleveland’s model also demonstrates the messiness and multiple interpretations of what community arts-based practice(s) are, or can be.

![Figure 5](image)

*Figure 5. An ecology of arts-based community development.*

Source: (Cleveland, 2002)
The permeation of community-based arts practice(s) into the diverse fields as shown in Figure 5 highlights the complexity for those artists who work in these arenas. As well as being required to operate within the levels of governmentality and control described by Foucault (1991), that have filtered into the arts field, artists can also be required to navigate a range of control mechanisms imposed by technicians and administrators who reside within each of the bureaucratised arenas outlined by Cleveland (2002). Being mindful of the diverse field where community-based arts practice(s) can be located has implications for the participants who are the focus of my inquiry. The various contexts have the potential to provide a range of experiences and multiple layers of learning for the artists.

*Valuing the arts: Resurfacing in politics and economics.*
The expansion or prominence of community-based arts practice(s) in areas beyond the arts field as shown in Figure 5, linked with Hawkins’ (1993) and other arguments discussed in the previous sub-section, can be traced to the growing interest of governments’ in how culture and the arts can be harnessed for political, social, and economic benefit. Yúdice (2003) argues that in most discussions of culture, “art is completely folded into an expanded conception of culture” (p. 12). A consequence of the blending of the terms art and culture, has emerged when political and economic forums turn to addressing issues such as social cohesion, urban renewal, and inclusion to enhance or regenerate cultural life within communities. According to McCarthy et al. (2004) the arts have been seen as a vehicle to provide the solution. A similar agenda of art being used to achieve broader goals has surfaced in the recent attention by governments and the private sector to invest in what Bourdieu (1993) describes as cultural capital. Yúdice (2003) suggests that the interest by governments and the private sector relates to shortcomings of investment in physical capital in the 1960s, human capital in the 1980s and social capital in the 1990s. He also argues that while economic returns for some were substantial in the 1990s, inequality has increased exponentially, and thus the trickle-down premise of neoliberal economic theory has not occurred. According to Yúdice there has been a turn to investment in
civil society, culture, and art as a prime animator to address our current circumstances.

Investment in art and culture has underpinned global organisations such as UNESCO (1998) and governments at all levels. Presenting art as having some public benefit or instrumental value has been the platform to justify the arts in broader notions of culture such as the economic, social, aesthetic, moral, political, and intellectual fields. Distinctive styles of art have been used as a form of symbolic capital or symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1993) to reinforce a cultural or political ideology. The arts have also been linked with a range of instrumental benefits such as improvements in educational standards (Bamford, 2006; Donelan, Irvine, Imms, Jeanneret, & O'Toole, 2009; Fiske, 2000; Hunter, 2005); notions of wellbeing including personal health, personal development, social support, social inclusion, social capital, urban renewal or neighbourhood regeneration, tolerance and cross cultural understanding (McQueen-Thomson & Ziguras, 2002; Mulligan et al., 2007; Myer, 2002; Rogers & Spooks, 2003); and creativity and economic development (Arts Victoria, 2004; Robinson, 1999a). In relation to urban regeneration and economic development, Florida (2002) introduced the concept of the creative class and developed a bohemian index to measure concentrations of artistically creative people, located in specific geographic regions. Florida cites a strong correlation between having a high concentration of artists within a community and those communities having a greater potential to be sustainable, innovative and economically viable. The following statement encapsulates how the instrumental value of art is being woven into government policy.

[the] Arts sector imbues every aspect of our lives with imagination and a sense of connection. The arts make a vital contribution to our economy, stimulating creativity and attracting tourists. We are all enriched by our engagement with a creative community (Arts Victoria, 2004).

With greater emphasis placed on the instrumental benefits of the arts, McCarthy et al. (2004) argue that vital components and two essential aspects related to the intrinsic worth of the arts are being overlooked. First, individuals participate in the arts for pleasure, stimulation, and meaning, not necessarily for the purpose of
better test scores or to stimulate the economy; intrinsic benefits are the starting point for all other types of benefit. Second, intrinsic benefits are not strictly private and can contribute to the public domain. In Figure 6 a continuum is provided where both instrumental and intrinsic values can have both private and public benefit. In framing this inquiry and listening to the stories of artists, attention will be devoted to exploring the intrinsic benefits they obtain from the work they do when they are involved in community-based arts practice(s).

Figure 6. A framework for understanding benefits of the arts.
Source: (McCarthy et al., 2004, p. xiii)

A range of issues that continue to influence discourse in the diverse sphere of the arts has been explored in this section. The literature referred to outlines the complexity of this realm and the scope of meanings, interpretations and influences that can impact on our understandings of the arts and those who work in this area, artists. The emergence of new ways to interpret arts practice and the nuances involved in the field of community-based arts practice(s) were also examined. Having provided a backdrop, the focus will shift to a consideration of the makers of art works, the artist themselves. In the following section I will consider theories of identity and factors that contribute to these, such as the nature of artists’ work as well as historical and cultural constructions of an artist. A consideration of frameworks to explore how artists currently involve themselves in arts practice(s) is also examined.
Considering Identity: Locating Artists, their Work, Status and Role

Ways of viewing identity.
Considering notions of self or identity and what they might mean, Kidd (2002) suggests that they relate to “being able to ‘fix’ or ‘figure out’ who we are as people” (p. 7) or “know[ing] who you are” (p. 24). Similarly, Josselson (1987) argues that at a basic level identity is concerned with how we make sense of our experiences and then communicate our meaning system to others. While sounding like a simple task, knowing who we are and making sense of our experiences is problematic, fraught with complexities and intricacies. Linked to this complexity, Hall (2006) contends that in more recent times the concept of identity itself has been subject to a discursive explosion and searching critique.

Historically, self and identity were generally perceived as being a descriptive entity or an object of knowledge that represents self-relevant information. Self was considered to be all aspects of one's personality that creates a unified sense of being. The term identity “was used when a writer wanted to refer to a thing or person remaining the same over time, or despite different circumstances” (Connell, 2002, p. 85), thus having connotations of sameness and unity. Combs and Snygg (1959) claimed that self-concept “is the self no matter what” (p. 127) consisting of an individual's stable, rather than changeable, features. A similar view was also expressed by Erikson (1950) who acknowledged that while adult personal identity is formed by long processes, the developmental stage of adolescence is the most important as the search for identity at this point in life involves the integration of the ego as a whole and leads to a unified identity. Hall (1992) refers to these types of thinking about identity as belonging to the Enlightenment subject, where the person is viewed as a fully-centred, unified individual. The centre consists of an inner core emerging at birth and, whilst unfolding over one’s life, it remains essentially the same throughout an individual’s existence. According to Côté and Levine (2002), perspectives outlined above could be seen as belonging to the fields of developmental psychology and self-psychology.
Not unlike Bourriaud’s (2002) notion of art being a relational activity, the view of self and identity according to Giddens (1991) in what he refers to as the late modern age or period of reflexive modernity (Giddens, 1996) is more a dynamic and constructed process. It involves both human agency and social structures and the constant interaction and influence of these upon each other.

[the individual] is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications (Giddens, 1991, p. 2).

Giddens (1991) claims that the continual re-ordering of one’s self-identity occurs “against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions” (p. 186). From Hall’s (1992) perspective these understandings of identity could be described as belonging to the sociological subject:

[The] inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self sufficient, but was formed in relation to ‘significant others’, who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols - the culture - of the worlds he/she inhabited … identity is formed in the ‘interaction’ between self and society. The subject has an inner core or essence ‘that is the real me’ but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds ‘outside’ and the identities which they offer (pp. 275 -276).

Sociological approaches according to Côté and Levine (2002) are traditionally concerned with how groups operate in larger normative social processes and structures that include class, ethnicity, race, social roles, and gender. Studying the interactions of individuals with others Côté and Levine argue, also falls within the domain of social psychology, particularly the personality and social structure perspective (PSSP) outlined by House (1977) and the three levels of analysis—personality, interaction and social structure—that are implicit in this perspective.

When examining adult identity from a social psychology framework, rather than talk of identity development which infers a linear or continuous progression through stages, Mishler (1999) uses the term identity formation. The discussion by Mishler of identity formation is woven into a study based on a re-examination of
data he collected a decade earlier. The data were gathered from five *craftartists* who lived in urban communities in the United States of America, who earned a living through their studio-based practice. Mishler’s term *craftartists* attempted to capture the notion that the participants in his study identified as both artists who created one-of-a-kind original objects, as well as being craftspeople who produced useful handmade objects such as furniture. While my inquiry has some parallels with Mishler’s, my focus relates to artists who are involved in community-based practice(s), (although some studio-based practice may be part of their repertoire). The artists in my inquiry also live outside major urban centres. According to Mishler (1999), the concept of identity formation takes into account the variables of disjunctions, discontinuities, transitions and turning points that occur through “chance events and encounters, [and] the omnipresent contingencies of life, [that] loom large” (p. 80). As a result of these variables on our life-course trajectories, Mishler claims that our identity consists of a “dynamic organization of sub-identities that might conflict with or align with each other” (p. 8). Given that there is a degree of similarity with Mishler’s study and my own inquiry, there are aspects from his work that I will take into account when I interpret and discuss my findings. I am particularly drawn to the concept of identity formation and the variables it takes into account.

Describing how we have a dynamic self, or categorisations of sub-identities Sedikides and Brewer (2001) suggest three fundamental representations of self concept that coexist within an individual. These are the individual self, relational self, and collective self. Kidd (2002) provides the labels of individual, social, and cultural to describe different forms of identity. The categories of ego, personal, and social are used by Côté and Levine (2002) to frame identities. While not providing an extensive interpretation of each category outlined by Sedikides and Brewer, Kidd, and Côté and Levine, Table 1 has been developed to examine potential links or differences between the labels they use. Within Table 1 an attempt has also been made to ascertain how the labels may relate to a personality and social structure perspective provided by Côté and Levine (2002), based on the work of House (1977).
Table 1. Comparative representations of self and identity.

By locating the labels within Table 1 it appears that Sedikides and Brewer, Kidd, and Côté and Levine are all describing categories that at one level relate to identity in the broader context of social structures, identity at another level that involves interaction with others, and identity as it applies to an individual. Both Kidd and Côté and Levine use the descriptor of social identity although there seems to be a difference in how they use the label.

To consider the complex relationship between structures (the objective world) and agency or the individual (the subjective world) and how they interact Bourdieu (1993) provides a framework that involves the interconnected concepts of habitus, capital, and fields. Bourdieu describes habitus as a set of dispositions that incline agents to act and react in certain ways. These dispositions are not consciously coordinated or governed by any rule although they generate our practices, perceptions, attitudes, and how we act in the world, sometimes described as a feel for the game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representations of self and identity</th>
<th>PSSP model</th>
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| **Collective self**  
Self-concept by inclusion in large social groups or contrasting with other groups, derived by common (or symbolic) identification with group | **Social identity**  
Individual’s position(s) in a social structure. Influenced by cultural structures, pressure to fit into identity “molds” created by structures | **Social Structure**  
- ↓↑ Interaction  
- ↓↑ Personality |
| **Cultural identity**  
Sense of belonging to a distinct ethnic, cultural or subcultural group | **Social identity**  
Collective sense of belonging to a group, being similar to or having something in common with others | |
| **Relational self**  
Self-concepts that are shared. Define a person’s role or position within significant relationships | **Personal identity**  
Concrete aspects of individual experience rooted in interactions. Individuals find a fit between social identity and their uniqueness | |
| **Individual self**  
Self-concept that differentiates us from others as the unique individual | **Ego identity**  
Sense of self-sameness over time. Personality agency responsible for behavioural, cognitive and emotional control. | |
Our habitus, according to Bourdieu (1996), results from a long process of inculcation developed in early childhood. Becoming a second sense, it is durable and lasts throughout an agent’s lifetime. While habitus is about learning to behave or act with our bodies in a certain way, culture or structures dictate parts of this. Habitus can be shared by people who have had common experiences. It is also our unique biographies that is the compilation of past interactions and experiences that we store and draw on to assist us to understand. Habitus allows individuals to act in a patterned, regular, and predictable way while also being unpredictable, fluid, and unique.

Acknowledging that agents do not work in a vacuum, Bourdieu (1993) outlines the way agents operate in concrete social situations that are “governed by a set of objective social relations” (p. 6). He refers to these as fields. A field is “a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy” (p. 162). The term field can be applied to areas such as the arts (as described in the previous section), science and education as they have their own distinct regularities, rules and forms of authority.

Each field is relatively autonomous but structurally homologous with the others. Its structure, at any given moment, is determined by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field. A field is a dynamic concept in that a change in agents’ positions necessarily entails a change in the field’s structure (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 7).

Wacquant (1998) describes circumstances that can occur in Bourdieu’s notion of fields as both a force field which imposes specific determinations on those who enter the field, and a battle field where “the bases of identity and hierarchy are endlessly disputed over” (p. 222).

The third intersecting concept employed by Bourdieu (1986) to articulate the relationship between the individual or agent and structure is the notion of capital. According to Bourdieu, capital is any resource effective in a given social arena that enables a person to absorb the specific profits arising out of participation or contest in it. Initially Bourdieu identified three forms of capital: economic (the level of command over economic resources, material, and financial assets); social (the resources acquired by virtue of membership of a group, networks of
influence, and support); and cultural (scarce symbolic goods, forms of knowledge, skills and titles that can give a person a higher status in society). Cultural capital can reside in the embodied state, objectified state, and the institutionalised state. Bourdieu later introduced the notion of symbolic capital to refer to resources available to an individual on the basis of honor, prestige, or recognition. Symbolic capital is always defined by the system in which it is valued. Different systems value the same object differently.

Within the discussion of forms of capital, Côté and Levine (2002) introduce the term identity capital. They blend concepts of cultural capital and social capital described by Bourdieu (1986), with Putnam’s (1995, 2000) notions of social capital, and what Becker (1993) describes as human capital. Putnam maintains that the acquisition of social capital is not only of benefit for the individual, there is also the potential for the collective to benefit. According to Putnam (1995), social capital refers to the “features of social life—networks, norms and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue their shared objectives” (pp. 664-665). In a later text, Putnam (2000) also highlights the important distinction between what he describes as bridging—inclusive social capital, which is outward looking and encompasses people across diverse social perspectives—and bonding, exclusive social capital that can be inward looking and tend to reinforce homogenous groups and exclusive identities.

Human capital as defined by Becker (1993) views the skills and knowledge individuals possess in an economic context and thus contributing to the means of production. Investment in human capital according to Becker, like investment in physical capital such as upgrading machines in a workplace, will improve output. According to Côté and Levine (2002) in an increasingly complex, individualistic and chaotic world, identity capital acts as a framework to illustrate how life passages can be negotiated by individuals. Their framework of identity capital was specifically developed to consider the transition of young people into adulthood. Identity capital involves individuals acquiring or possessing both tangible resources that are visible, such as educational qualifications and membership of groups, and intangible resources that include
self-esteem and critical thinking abilities. Côté and Levine refer to intangible resources as “ego strengths [or] reflexive-agentic capacities” (p. 144) that may remain hidden from the outside world.

Sociological subject approaches, Hall (1992) contends, can be seen as an attempt to stabilise both the subject and the cultural worlds in which they live, supposedly to assist in making it more unified and predictable so as to bridge the gap between the inside and outside thereby suturing the personal and public worlds together.

Recent debates about identity and self attempt to account for our current era, where public worlds are seen as more open-ended, variable and problematic. At the same time, personal worlds are becoming fragmented, suggesting that we are composed of multiple and perhaps even contradictory identities. Hall (1992) refers to this as being the post-modern subject where individuals have no essential, fixed, or permanent identity.

Identity becomes a ‘moveable feast’: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent ‘self’. Within us are contradictory identities pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about…. The fully unified system of meaning and cultural representation is a fantasy. Instead as the system of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with – at least temporarily (Hall, 1992, p. 277).

Aligning with these postmodernist notions of identity, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) challenge the concept that identity infers a fixivity on a subject where identity or identification is established by distinguishing difference. Rather than individuals being in the world, Deleuze and Guattari propose that we are always becoming or in between where “the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities” (p. 249). Woven into Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of becoming are what they refer to as the concepts of rhizomatics and folds.
Rhizomatics describes the multiple inter-relational connections that occur in the process of becoming.

... unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any point and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature... it has neither a beginning nor end, but always in the middle (milieu) [original emphasis] from which it grows ... it has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21).

The concept of fold according to Deleuze (1988b) relates to the effect of the self on the self. The concept considers how our past (memory) and our present (subjectivities) drawn from the events and elements in the world are two sides of a single surface. By creasing the surface a new fold emerges that allows for new trajectories or lines of flight in our becoming.

Identity and subjectivity explored in this section highlight diverse perspectives that continue to be contested. Placing these diverse views on a continuum, interpretations stem from a standpoint where the subjective is not open to social analysis as it “takes subjectivity for granted, as an inherent characteristic of human beings” (Giddens, 1979, p. 120), through to view at the other end of the continuum that “reduces subjectivity to the determined outcome of social forces” (Giddens, 1979, p. 120). Hall’s (2006) perspective is an example of the latter, as he maintains the discourses and practices of history, language and culture “produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’ ” (p. 19). While discussion that centres on identity and subjectivity are closely connected, Barker (2008) provides the following distinctions between the terms: “To ask about subjectivity is to pose the question: what is a person? To explore identity is to inquire: how do we see ourselves and how do others see us?” (p. 216).

By functioning as a Bricoleur during this inquiry, I am adopting a perspective about the nature of identity and self, that blends components of sociological and social psychological perspectives. In doing so, I am suggesting that identity is constructed and is reliant on the interplay of both the objective and subjective worlds. To explore this interplay, the framework of habitus, fields and capital proposed by Bourdieu (1993) and Côté and Levine’s (2002) notion of identity.
capital are employed. Aspects of postmodern approaches that suggest we can possess multiple identities that are not necessarily fixed, predetermined, or linear and remain fluid in a process of always becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), will also overlay my approach.

**Place, community, and identity.**
The concepts of identity and self were discussed in the previous section and references were made to the fact that the formation of identities in part is a relational practice. The process of becoming or developing our identities is shaped by our time and place in the world, the social interactions that occur and the cultural milieu in which we are located. Hauge (2005, October) argues that place is not a category of identity like gender or social class, but rather that places “contain symbols of many [original emphasis] different social categories and personal meanings and represent and maintain identity on different levels and dimensions” (p. 8). Similarly, Carter, Donald, and Squires (1993) contend that our “identities are shaped by embodied and embedded narratives located in particular places and times” (p. x). A range of terms such as state, nation, or society can be used to describe macro social mechanisms to organise and influence individuals’ identities. This section is an exploration of concepts such as communities and place and the relationship of these in shaping identities.

Discussion about the nature of communities is often prefaced by references to Tönnies’ (1887) categorisations of Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society) that attempted to illustrate changes in the structure of peoples’ interaction during the Enlightenment and subsequent Industrial Revolution that occurred in Europe. Côté and Levine (2002) describe this period of time as the transition from the pre-modern to early modern era. The term Gemeinschaft represents how groups of people predominately operated prior to the Industrial Revolution. People’s lives were relatively stable, consisting of established networks and relationships based on mutual obligation, and involved family relationships. The relationships were underpinned by connection with blood, place (land), kinship, and neighbourhood. Gesellschaft relates to the emergence of
circumstances where people become more mobile and concerned with their individual self-interest. Interaction with others came to be based on forms of contractual obligations, and relationships or connection with primary contacts such as family and friends declined, in part due to the emergence of institutions that replaced the traditional roles of community.

The transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* provided greater freedom and opportunities for individuals to navigate their own way through life, by discarding restraints that can be imposed when living in closely-knit communities. Walmsley (2006) outlines one repercussion of this shift.

At the same time, they were deprived of the sense of identity and security that comes from being part of a larger group. This sort of situation provides the preconditions for the development of *anomie*, a term used to describe the way in which individuals can become disturbed by the lack of any feeling of belonging and by an inability to identify with the group among whom they live (p. 6).

While regarded as an over simplistic explanation of the shift in how people congregate as well as questioning the relevance of Tönnies’ descriptions to current circumstances, Walmsley points out that aspects of *Gemeinschaft* are still present in some neighbourhoods and villages such as those in rural areas.

Examining current notions of community can prove to be a challenging task as “the word [community] has such a broad definition that it applies to everything and nothing at the same time” (Mulligan et al., 2007, p. 18). According to Newby (1980), sociologists have defined the concept of community in various ways. Community has been used to describe geographical boundaries that delineate territories, as a network of interrelations in a localised area, or as a people’s sense of togetherness.

Providing an analytical framework to characterise communities Mulligan et al. (2007) outline the following typologies: *Grounded community*, involves people coming together in a particular tangible centre, where there is face-to-face, embodied engagement, they are bound both socially and ecologically and emphasise the particularities of people and place; *Way-of-life community* arises
where particular attitudes and practices are held in common, “there are relationships of trust, co-operation, mutual obligation and reciprocity between people who are lifted out of the immediacy of place and presence” (p. 20), these can also be a de-territorialised, more open and a mobile form of community; *Projected community* is not attached to a particular place or group of people, nor is it defined by a shared set of norms or traditions, it is more nebulous than either of the previously mentioned ideas of community. Projected communities are about the “active establishment of a creative space where individuals can engage in an open ended process of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing identities for living” (p. 18). Outlining these characteristics of community, Mulligan et al. (2007) qualify the unlikelihood that any of these types of communities exist in pure form, as claims for the existence of a pure form would reduce the complexity that is inherent in understanding communities. The framework provided by Mulligan et al. (2007) will inform my considerations of how the artists in this study talk about community. Although aspects of grounded, way-of-life, and projected community are presented as somewhat different, all three conceptions of communities convey a notion of individuals coming together, belonging or connecting to one another through some means.

Rather than describing social relationships or how humans attain *togetherness* by an argument framed in terms of society and community, Turner (1969) identifies the two distinct modalities of *societas* and *communitas*.

It is as though there are here two major "models" for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of a society as a structured, differentiated and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of "more" and "less" [*societas*]. The second ... is of a society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together [*communitas*] (Turner, 1969, p. 96).

Turner’s preference for the term *communitas* over community relates to distinguishing a form of social relationship from “an area of common living”. The concepts that Turner (1969) is advancing are not simply another version of Tönnies’ (1887) *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. Bauman (1993) argues that Turner
does not see them as a “historical succession and temporal exclusivity of the two forms, but their coexistence, interpenetration and alternation and a perpetual and regular one at that” (p. 116). Bauman suggests that it is more beneficial to view *communitas* and *societas* in terms of being two social processes, rather than *states* or structures of society that are functional supplements of each other.

The conditions of *societas* and *communitas* according to Turner (1969) are mutually opposite in virtually every respect. *Societas* is distinguished by aspects such as its inequality, heterogeneity, differentiation of statuses, a system of nomenclature, and selfishness, whereas *communitas* is characterised by equality, homogeneity, absence of status, anonymity, and unselfishness. Turner describes how *communitas* occurs in liminal periods where circumstance become ambiguous and “persons slip through [or] elude the network of classifications that normally locates states and positions in cultural space. They are neither here nor there [they are] betwixt and between” (Turner, 1969, p. 96). The spontaneity and immediacy of *communitas* as opposed to structures can seldom be maintained for very long according to Turner. *Communitas* can soon develop a structure where the free relationships between individuals become converted into norm-governed relationships.

In summarising the tension between modalities, Bauman (1993) states that “*communitas* melts what *societas* tries hard to cast and forge” (p. 117). The notion of *communitas* is also raised by Jarvis (2008) in his discussion of establishing learning societies in the late modern age and this will be examined elsewhere in this study.

*communitas* [original emphasis] is not a utopian state beyond time, it is something that emerges in time – magic moments – when relationships of care and concern are captured and the potential of the I – Thou relationship is rediscovered in a group form (Jarvis, 2008, p. 206).

The political and economic forces that shaped the postmodern era have tended to emphasise the importance of the individual over the collective, contributing to situation where concepts of community and society have declined in significance — best encapsulated in the often misquoted statement by Margaret
Thatcher that “there’s no such thing as society” (Thatcher, 2009; cited in Keay, 1987). The contraction of time and space in our current world due to technological advances means that individuals are travelling more extensively and our modes of communication with others across the globe have expanded. Factors such as these have also influenced how we think about community. According to Cohen (1989), concepts of community do not relate to physical geographic boundaries, instead it is the boundaries of the mind that allowed for the creation of imagined or symbolic communities in a place, and we are now no longer restricted to our physical location. Views such as Cohen’s have contributed to the emergence of communities without propinquity (Webber, 1963) becoming established throughout the globe. Giddens (1984) also contends that by being situated in the late modern world, our current sense of place is different. Rather than occurring in physical places, our interactions with others now occur within spaces and these “locales” determine our interactions and the patterns they take. For Giddens, the idea of locales in both time and space replaces community.

Florida (2002) argues that perspectives such as those of Giddens and Cohen contribute to the myth that geography is dead, by diminishing the significance and importance of our connections to where we are physically located in relation to how we operate in our current world. Florida (2008) contends that place is one of three key aspects that assist in determining who we are. These aspects are the education/career opportunities available to us, the partners and meaningful relationships we have, and the location in which we choose to situate ourselves. Of these, Florida maintains that place can be the most influential, as it can affect every aspect of our being, including our level of income, the people we meet, the friends we make, and the partners we have.

While the current era provides new ways for communities to operate and interaction to occur, James (2006) also claims that we are living in confusing times with a deepening set of social contradictions. On the one hand, globalisation has developed at an unprecedented pace, and, on the other hand:
there is an intense fragmenting and reconfiguring of social relations at the community level of community and locality… Across the world signs of this tension between local and the global have seeped into the popular imagination (James, 2006, pp. 13-14).

With the current tensions, uncertainties, and global shifts that are occurring Ralston-Saul (2005) has argued that we are seeing a re-emergence of identities based on physical location with the fracturing of old empires and the re-configuring of nations based on connections to place.

Carter, Donald, and Squires (1993) advocate the significance of place in their discussion of identity and location. They argue that spaces become places by being named and “embodying the symbolic and imaginary investments of a population. Place is space to which meaning has been ascribed” (p. xii). Similarly, Mulligan et al. (2007) also contend that place or a sense of place is inextricably linked with communities. Place is integral to what community is, including the relationships and identities that develop within it:

… places rather are imbued with cultural significance and social meanings that are constantly being made or re-made… place, by contrast carries something of a social … even ontological component … entwined with how people understand themselves and the world in which they live (Mulligan et al., 2007, p. 96).

Given that the focus of this study is concerned with artists who live and practise in regional Australia, the significance of place and location in framing identities, as well as the places or spaces in which they live and work will be a theme that informs the interpretation of the lives of the participants in this inquiry.

Identifying artists.
As alluded to previously with Leunig’s cartoon (Figure 2), employing the title of artist to label individuals who produce art is a perplexing task. What does the label infer? Who is or is not an artist? How do we know those who are artists? Bourdieu (1993) also asks the question who creates the creators? Some clues to the answer of these questions were uncovered earlier where the structures and hierarchy that can exist in the field of art were explored. However, further considerations are required. Providing a definition of an artist is fraught with
complexities due to issues such as the scope of perceptions we have about artists, and the range of criteria within various systems or fields that are employed to categorise them. I will explore these areas and how they can impact on identifying artists as it will assist in considering how the participants of this study view themselves or provide some insights into how those they work with view artists.

In an attempt to develop a clear understanding of who might be considered an artist, the UNESCO international conference (held in Belgrade, 1980) in its Recommendation concerning the status of the artist provided the following definition:

‘Artist’ is taken to mean any person who creates or gives expression to, or creates works of art, who considers his artistic creation to be an essential part of his [sic] life, who contributes in this way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognised as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations of employment or association (p. 5).

While the above statement could be seen as legitimate (although now somewhat dated), it articulates an idealistic representation of the artist. It does not seem to take into account the values and attitudes that can circulate in the political, social, economic, cultural, and ideological arenas of most Western cultures. The International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies (IFACCA) (2001), in an effort to form a global perspective on how artists are identified, outlined five common approaches to defining an artist. They were: belonging to a recognised artists’ association; recognition by a committee of experts or peers; delegated by an authority such as taxation departments; having an association with artistic output; or being identified by the nature of the arts activity if the work is undertaken in a business-like manner. According Throsby and Hollister (2003), “even though the delineations of such occupations may seem obvious, the precise definition of ‘artist’ is not as straightforward as it seems” (p. 12). In Australia the difficulty with identifying artists according to Myer (2002), partly relates to the different criteria that are used to identify artists for the purposes of collecting statistics, gathering taxes, assessing employment opportunities, or seeking grant assistance.
Another complexity in classifying artists that does not necessarily apply to other professions relates to the processes of gaining credentials or formal qualifications in becoming an artist.

Membership groups such as artists’ representative organisations, unions and professional associations may or may not require artists to meet a range of educational, training, employment and experience qualifications (Throsby & Hollister, 2003, p. 12).

The processes of preparing artists and providing qualifications through tertiary education, along with traditional art schools becoming embedded into university structures, have created a range of concerns. These concerns include debate about how visual art contributes to new knowledge and what constitutes research in the visual arts (Haseman & Jaaniste, 2008; Sullivan, 2005). A tension has also emerged about the content and guidance provided by tertiary visual art courses and their relevance to the way artists work in the current world. Queries are being raised about whether the tertiary education of artists should be preparing artists to enter into a narrow view of an artworld or consider the broader spectrum of situations where artists now find themselves working when they leave university (Kester, 2004; Stevelt-Kaser, Pennington-Busick, & Rhoades, 2004).

There has also been a shift where more producers of art “see themselves as ‘artists’ rather than a painter or a sculptor or glass artist” (Myer, 2002, p. 30). This shift according to Baker, Webb, and Woods (1999), allows for a very different meaning and connotation to be inferred, where the title of artist conveys the idea of a special kind of person having the potential to improve the status of the individual. From a more pragmatic perspective, Throsby and Hollister (2003) attribute the increase in the number of individuals using the label of artist to advances in technology and materials used in art-making, and how these are permeating many other professions or industries.

...many skills acquired for art-making are also readily transferable across various art forms and an increasing number of artists are finding opportunities to employ their creative skills in areas remote from their core or "home" discipline ... artists often straddle different artistic and
non- artistic professions either by choice or through necessity- and it is hard to say at what point being an artist stops and starts (pp. 11-12).

The difficulty in locating the meaning of the term artist should not be unexpected, as Ting (2002) suggests the categorisation of an artist “refuses to fit into any kind of model [or definition]… since part of the profession’s very purpose is to question notions of norms and standards” (p. 10). Bourdieu (1993) also alludes to this when he describes the nature of the field of cultural production:

[The artfield] represents one of the indeterminate sites [original emphasis] in the social structure, offering ill defined posts, waiting to be made rather than ready made and therefore extremely elastic and undemanding and career paths [for artists] are full of uncertainty and extremely dispersed …[artists] take on the risk of the occupation which is not a ‘job’ (since it is almost always combined with a private income ‘bread and butter’ occupation) (p. 43).

Amidst the ambiguity in determining who are artists and where they may be located in the arts field such as the “avant-garde bohemian artist” or the “consecrated avant-garde artist” (refer to Figure 4), Throsby and Hollister (2003) provide some unifying elements and characteristics for identifying artists. These relate to the notion of intent and purpose and the enduring core elements of a pursuit of artistic vision, a process of creativity and a passionate commitment to art. These qualities, according to Throsby and Hollister, remain true to, and at the heart of, what it is to be a practising art professional.

How we define artists had potential to impact on the selection of participants for this inquiry. Some of the contentious issues described here can provide an understanding of perceptions that may have informed the cultural workers who helped to identify participants for this inquiry. These same issues will also be useful to consider how the participants in this study identify themselves.

Work and vocation as markers of an artist’s identity.
Although examined briefly in the previous sub-section, the concepts of profession and work, and the tensions it creates for artists’ notions of identity are explored further here. Casey (1995) argues that “work remains a dominant
activity in people’s lives and regardless of whether one likes one’s job or not, … work as it is conventionally organised significantly shapes everyday life experience for most people in industrial societies” (p. 25). deBotton (2009) concurs with Casey’s argument, that work remains significant in shaping the lives of individuals, in the character of self and in social organisation.

According to Myer (2002), although many artists have much to offer and their skills are utilised in many other sectors, the contribution they make often remains unacknowledged. As a consequence, practising art can be regarded as a pastime rather than a valid profession or real work with little recognition or value placed on it by communities. The lack of recognition can be attributed partly to the nature of some artists’ circumstances where “individuals tend to work in isolation in largely unregulated environments” (Bain, 2005, p. 25) or due to the situation where

...much of the work in this sector is hidden or unquantifiable. It is the nature of the sector that artists often work alone and working on a grass roots level in their community or workshop (Myer, 2002, p. 50).

Applying conventional notions of a profession raises an anomaly according to Bourdieu (1993) when it comes to the work that artists do. The profession of an artist does not fit with usual interpretations and the benefits that can come with having a professional vocation in legitimising one’s identity:

The ‘profession ‘of writer or artist is one of the least professionalized there is, despite all the efforts of ‘writers’ associations’, ‘Pen clubs’, etc. This is shown clearly by (inter alia) the problems which arise in classifying these agents, who are able to exercise what they regard as their main occupation only on condition that they have secondary occupations which provide their main income (p. 43).

Artists can to be valued for their cultural capital. The Australian Government in announcing initiatives such as artists in residence programs to assist in developing a Creative Australia, while giving artists an opportunity to broaden their experiences and share their skills provides such an example. The aim is to provide “Australian school and university students with greater exposure to the benefits of creative practice” (Garrett, 2008), inferring that artists have value due to the level of cultural capital they possess, and that it should be shared with
others. The same recognition of value does not seem to materialise for artists in terms of economic capital. A series of studies undertaken in Australia since the late 1980s that have examined the status of artists in Australia, have been titled *When are you going to get a real job?* (Throsby & Mills, 1989), *But What Do you Do for a Living?* (Throsby & Thompson, 1994), and the most recent, *Don’t Give Up Your Day Job* (Throsby & Hollister, 2003). Without having to read the studies, these titles imply that the status or work of artists is not taken seriously or valued, when kudos and recognition for an artist’s identity is reflected in an expectation of the remuneration they receive for their work.

The above studies indicate that the income for artists is well below the national averages of other occupations and continues to fall further behind. The working conditions for regional artists, according to Throsby and Hollister (2003) differed from those of their urban counterparts. In relation to “creative practice most regional artists work on a self-employed, or freelance basis rather than an employee working for wages or salary” (p. 67) as was the case for capital city artists. Throsby and Hollister also found that “it remains a disturbing fact that regional artists seem to suffer more extensively from the problems of unemployment than do their counterparts in capital cities” (p. 68). Another difference for regional artists is apparent in relation to professional development. Whereas capital city artists were more likely to identify the most inhibiting factor as the lack of work opportunities rather than lack of financial return, the reverse was the case for regional artists (Throsby & Hollister, 2003). According to the study by Throsby and Hollister (2003), the earnings of regional artists from creative work, arts related work and non-arts work was also lower than the corresponding earnings of capital city artists. An awareness of these issues and the variations that occur in the work and earnings for regional artists when compared to city based artists has implications for the participants who are the focus of my inquiry.
Historical and cultural constructions of an artist.

In discussing factors that can shape artists’ identities and the implications these may have, an examination of shifts in historical and broad cultural values that influence how we view artists is also presented here. In this section I explore how cultural legitimacy can filter our perceptions of artists and also provide some insights into why some artists are acknowledged and celebrated, while others are marginalised or demonised.

Images of the artist in a Western context could be construed in a binary framework where they are either perceived as being removed from society, an outsider, producing nothing of economic worth or at the other end of the spectrum as someone having unique insights into the world, being creative a genius, belonging to a cultural elite, or being what Boorstin (1992) refers to as hero of the imagination. These perceptions of artists have emerged over centuries, and can be traced back to classical times where certain artists were viewed with suspicion, contempt (Baker et al., 1999) or possessed by madness. They were able to lead people away from truth. Therefore, artists were dangerous to society.

The imitator or maker of the image knows nothing of true existence; he [sic] knows appearances only … [they are] far removed from truth, [and] … reason and they have no true or healthy aim (Plato, 1992, p. 34).

The Renaissance heralded a shift in worldviews and also a major change in the way artists were perceived. Artists prior to the Renaissance were not seen as individual entities or as exceptional. They were involved in a trade, based on apprenticeship rather than a personal vocation based on talent. The humanist traditions that developed during this period allowed artists to command greater respect (Woods-Marsden, 1998), and their social status was radically transformed. Artists moved into another realm, becoming a type of learned scholar, with unlimited potential to create original works of art. These perceptions of an artist continued to evolve, according to Bowness (1989) with the mythology of the artist being equated with genius. Manifestations or legacies of this view are still present in our culture, although the emphasis may have moved.
from genius to also include what Stallabrass (2004) describes as the notion of celebrity, perhaps epitomised by artists such as Andy Warhol.

Smith (1988) uses the terminology of hero to describe the phenomenon where communities produce culture figure heads at moments of major change. Smith (1988) aligns the rise of the artist identity as hero, or celebrity with significant shifts in worldviews. The changes worked in the artist’s favour until the late Eighteenth Century. In previous epochs, the artist was cast in the role of a progressive technologist, whereas in the Eighteenth Century the social role of the artist was subject to a radical inversion, where the rise in industrialisation became a major competitor to the role and identity of artists.

[The artist was] thrust from the privileged apex of production towards [the] eccentric edge …[and their] activities come to be viewed increasingly not as an exceptional kind of work but as an exceptional kind of play (p. 24).

Against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution, the oppositional Romantic movement of the time provided a form of refuge for the artist. No longer having to play by the rules of reason, logic, and order of the emergent dominant culture, the now outsider artist’s imagination and thinking could legitimately explore sentiment, intuition, and feeling. The phenomenon of the artist “increasingly dissociated from the mainstream of social life” (Coleman, 1988, p. 78), becoming other, an outsider, or separated also continues to inform current views. As Bain (2005) states it provided a powerful new definition of the avant-garde artist as a Bohemian rebel, outsider and social critic who sacrificed status, money and material comfort for the supposed freedom this afforded the imaginative spirit to pursue individual creative expression (p. 29).

Frameworks for considering the current role and work of artists.
Viewing artists in a binary discourse of either being a celebrity/genius or as reclusive/disturbed individual is limiting in its scope. As Sullivan (2005) has stated, a broader framework is required to consider the practices artists are now involved in and what their role may be. Sullivan (2005) maintains that “the image of the artist as creator, critic, theorist, teacher, activist, and archivist partly captures the range of art practice today” (p. 151), and the artist can easily move
between these categories. He also contends that the work artists undertake is a legitimate authentic form of research practice, and uses the labels of analyst, technologist, and ethnographer to describe the ways in which artists work. Irwin et al. (2006) use the term *A/r/tography* to label a type of arts and education practice-based research methodology, where “the identities of artist, researcher and, teacher (a/r/t), [are] in contiguous relations. None of these features is privileged over another as they occur simultaneously in and through time and space” (p. 70). Taking into account that community-based arts practice(s) involves a form of research provides an approach to consider how the artists in this study describe the way they go about their work.

Lacy (1995b) in describing how artists go about their work sets out a continuum of positions (refer to Figure 7) of the roles that artists can perform. Lacy, like Sullivan (2005) stipulates that these roles are not fixed categories and “at any given time an artist may operate at a different point on the spectrum or may move between them” (p. 173).

![Figure 7. Continuum of positions to classify the work of artists. Source: (Lacy, 1995b, p. 174)](image)

According to Lacy, artists who work as activists are required to develop skills that are not usually associated with art-making. They need to consider how to work in collaboration with people, and understand social systems and institutions. Strategies need to be learned by artists that include how to collaborate, develop multilayered and specific audiences, cross over with other
disciplines, choose sites that resonate with public meaning, and clarify visual and symbol processing for people who are not educated in art.

As a result of her study into the roles and forms of engagement artists adopt when they work in sites for learning, Pringle (2002) identified several categories: *artist as educator*, where artists use co-constructive approaches to knowledge and ideas generation and also employ experiential based learning strategies; *artist as role model*, where artists provide alternative ways of doing things or being, personifying the idea that one can follow one’s passion and be successful; *artist as collaborator*, where a high level of emphasis is placed on working with, as well as seeking input from others; *artist as social activist*, where social or political issues affecting participants are addressed, or artists work to give participants a voice; and finally *artist as researcher/enquirer* where, regardless of the art practice they were involved in, artists view the process as one of enquiry.

Outlining her approach to community arts-based practice, Mancillas (1998) describes community artists as creative problem solvers, unfettered by a particular methodology, who can help communities resolve issues that are intractable. Working with the community where she lives, Mancillas describes herself as a *citizen artist* where “artists who make a commitment to the neighbourhoods in which they live are uniquely positioned to initiate community policy or programming that has far reaching effects” (Mancillas, 1998, p. 339). Working in such a way according to Mancillas, also allows an artists’ community to “see beyond the stereotype of the artist as intruder and view them as partners working toward similar goals” (p. 339). Kester (2004) also describes a range of dispositions or roles artists perform when they adopt dialogical arts practices. They include developing “ethical models of understanding intersubjective experiences” and “connected knowing” where artists have a capacity to listen, openly and actively, and to “organise scenarios that maximise the collective creative potential of a given constituency or site” (p. 24). Kester expands on these ideas later in his text to describe arts practitioners who work in a dialogical framework where artists’
sense of artistic identity is sufficiently coherent to speak as well as listen, but it remains contingent upon insights to be derived from their interaction with others and with otherness. They define themselves as artists through their ability to catalyze understanding, to mediate exchange and to sustain an ongoing process of empathic identification and critical analysis (p. 118).

In addition to these qualities, and expanding on the concept of littoral arts described earlier, Kester (2004) states that rather than usual approaches where “professions ‘aestheticize’ problems by reducing them to neat, enclosed domains, which imply easy, short term ‘elegant’ solutions” (p. 167), the reality is that issues are interconnected and complex. Compared with this approach “littoral arts practitioners are defined by their ability to think outside and across, the parameters of existing disciplinary and professional problem solving” (p. 167).

To succinctly demonstrate the difference in approaches and relationships between conventional notions of how an artist, artwork and audience interact, to that of a socially interactive model of arts practice, Kester provides two models that are represented diagrammatically in Figures 8 and 9. The models were developed by the British community-based artist Stephen Willats.

**Figure 8.** Usual relationship of an artwork between artist and audience. Source: (from the work of Stephen Willats (c.1970) cited in Kester, 2004, p. 93)
In this section of my literature review I have navigated a course through various theories of identity and self, as well as the nature of, and impact that place and community can have to concepts of identity. The complexities involved in identifying artists as a result of cultural, institutional, and historical perceptions were also explored. Current frameworks to consider the work of artists, such as those proposed by Kester (2004), Lacy (1995b), and Sullivan (2005) were also examined. By working as a *Bricoleur* I will piece together the material contained within this section through a process of selective synthesis and distillation to develop my theoretical framework. The framework will inform the interpretation of my findings to consider how the artists in this study describe their learning, how they go about their work, and how they see themselves.

**The Arena of Learning**

Concepts of learning, meaning-making, and the nature of experience are explored in this section of my literature review. My intention is to consider arguments that have existed in discussions about learning and experience for some time, as well as emergent ideas. An examination of what we mean when we talk of experience and learning will also be included. As the focus of my study involves listening to the stories of artists who work in community-based arts practice(s) and is an attempt to make some sense of how their experiences of working in these settings shapes their identities, a discussion of concepts related to learning and experience follows.
**Experiential learning.**

Jarvis (2006) contends that as well as learning being seen as finding out about things, another basic tenet of learning is that all learning is experiential. Although inferred in most learning theories, such as Bruner (1990), Piaget (1954), Skinner (1968), and Vygotsky (1965), Jarvis claims that by attempting to understand and examine learning objectively and scientifically, the human experience of learners has been removed. There is now a *turn* or paradigm shift whereby exploring human experience as a means to understand learning has gained credibility.

Experiential learning theories are underpinned by the view that for learning to be meaningful it must relate to the lived or real world. Dewey (1966) pointed out that education and learning involves living with others, and accentuates the concept of *living* rather than just *subsisting*, and “for the individual learner and for society [education] must be based upon experience -that is always the actual life experience of the individual” (Dewey, 1963, p. 89). Learning according to Dewey is better seen in terms of processes rather than outcomes.

> Every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. That is the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience (Dewey, 1963, p. 47).

Rogers (1969) outlines the notion of authenticity for the whole person and claims that learners have to be themselves to be human, and that learning is a process of becoming a real human being. To advance his argument Rogers maintains that “socially useful learning is learning the process of learning, retaining an openness to experience, so that the process of change may be incorporated” (pp. 157-164). Significant learning according to Rogers is acquired by doing, and occurs when the learner perceives the relevance of the subject matter. Knowles (1984) embraced aspects of Rogers’ ideas with his theory, in which he claims that teaching adults is a unique area of professional activity requiring specialised approaches. Knowles developed the term *andragogy* to describe the approach of teaching adults that involved recognising the reservoir of experiences learners
bring with them to the learning situation. Andragogy has been useful and influential in thinking about learning as an ongoing process and informing current thinking about education. The concept has nevertheless been challenged, as it perpetuates a divide in approaches between the learning of children and that of adults (Mahar & Harford, 2004). Burns (2002) has also described andragogy as “an overgeneralised, humanist theory of education that can be applied to any age” (p. 239).

Building on Dewey’s ideas of experience, Kolb and Fry (1975) attempted to provide a model of how experiential learning occurs. They described this as a learning cycle (refer to Figure 10). Experiential learning in Kolb and Fry’s model is seen as a four-stage recurring process. It typically involves an immediate concrete experience, followed by observation, and reflection on the experience, a theory or hypothesis is then formulated, which is then tested practically. Kolb argues that in any learning there will be a tension between the polarities outlined in the cycle. Although the ideal learner should be able to operate at either pole, and in all dimensions, and that the learning cycle may begin for different people at different stages of the cycle as represented (that is, it may not always commence at the concrete experience stage).

Figure 10. Kolb and Fry’s learning cycle.
Source: (Kolb, 1984)

Kolb and Fry’s (1975) model has become a seminal work for describing a process of experiential learning and has resulted in other derivatives such as Honey and Mumford’s (1982) learning cycle. However, it has also been challenged. Critics argue that it relies on premises such as there being an ideal or complete learner. The learning cycle does not consider the range and intricacy of experiences that
humans can learn from and the contexts in which they occur (Atherton, 2005; Jarvis, 2006; Miettinen, 2000; Tennant, 1997). Viewing learning in all its complexity and as an ongoing lifetime process (the concept of lifelong learning will be examined later in this section), Jarvis (2006) states that his current description of learning is

The combination of process throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person-body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing (more experienced) person (Jarvis, 2006, p. 134).

To complement his description of learning from experience, Jarvis provides a model (refer to Figure 11) that he describes as “the transformation of the person through learning”. Jarvis’ model will provide a structure to consider how the artists in this study describe their experiences and the learning that occurs as a result.

Figure 11. The transformation of the person through learning.
Source: (adapted from Jarvis, 2006, p. 23)

*The nature of experience.*
The concept of experience can easily be taken for granted: It is something in which we as human beings are constantly engaged. As outlined previously, while experience is articulated within the many theories of learning, the concept is open to multiple interpretations. Experience could be described as the event or interaction between our external life world and our internal world or a
“transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his [sic] environment” (Dewey, 1963, p. 43). From a phenomenological perspective, experience is viewed as the immediate point where the individual deals with the world prior to reflecting, categorising or conceptualising the episode (Husserl, 1964). Other perspectives such as that of Oakeshott (1933) suggest that experience is a form of thought and not inseparable from thought as “there can be no experiencing without thinking” (p. 26), which then leads to experiencing differently. The reciprocal connection between thought and the world of experience could be described as one of folds (Deleuze, 1988b) where the fold is “the inside of [original emphasis] the outside” (p. 96), allowing us to unfold and produce new folds that open us to folds that have yet to occur.

Giddens (1979) in his stratification model of personality, which relates to how we act in the world proposes a hierarchy of consciousness. He describes these as tacit or the unconsciousness that includes the taken for granted aspects of our lives; practical consciousness comprises our tacit knowledge that we draw upon when we are involved in social activity; and discursive consciousness relates to a state of awareness of our own thoughts and we can express them as discourse.

Jarvis (2006) proposes four different ways to examine or understand the idea of experience. The first is “Consciousness- the ability to be able to be in the world and ‘know’ it” (p. 71), which is based on the work of Chalmers (1996). Chalmers outlines conscious experience and the concept of mind as either phenomenological, as conscious experience and as a mental state, as a consciously experienced mental state or; psychological as a causal or explanatory basis for behaviour (p. 11). Second, Jarvis (2006) describes “Biography- the outcome of a lifetime” (p. 73), suggesting that in this approach experience is seamless and fundamentally links our external world to our conscious awareness of this throughout our lives. The process involves not only cognitive aspects but also emotive and bodily dimensions. The third approach that Jarvis describes is “Episode- the moment of contact with the world” (p. 73). Episodic experiences can be either direct encounters of the external world articulated as primary experiences (where we interpret the sensations we are having) or those that are mediated described as secondary experiences (where we may be told or taught
about a phenomenon). The two may occur at the one time. To describe episodic experiences Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use the term *plateaus*, a concept initially outlined by Bateson (1972) to articulate a self-vibrating region of intensities. For Deleuze and Guattari, plateaus are combined circumstances that bring an activity to a level of intensity, although a climax may not result at the time. Rather the energies are heightened long enough during the plateau, “to leave a kind of afterimage of its dynamism that can be reactivated or injected into other activities, creating a fabric of intensive states between which any number of connecting routes could exist” (p. xiv). The series of sculptures that I have produced in tandem with this inquiry (refer to Figures 1, 3, 14, 17, 19, and 21) are also entitled *Plateaus*, as their intention and purpose mirror the sentiment of plateaus expressed here by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

The significant point in episodic experiences according to Jarvis (2006) happens when disjuncture occurs, where our biography and the interpretation of the episode are not harmonious, thus forcing us to ask questions. There are aspects of episodic experience that are seen as artificial which make it difficult to pinpoint these episodes. We are in the continuous flow of time and unable to isolate the present from the past or, if we do, the future has arrived. “However the episodic experience begins with those bodily sensations, which we experience in a given social situation at a specific time” (p. 74). Mezirow (1991) articulates a similar view that he describes as being transformative in nature. Transformative learning is “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 12).

Finally Jarvis (2006) describes “Sensation – the ability to be able to sense the world” (p. 74), articulating how our five senses impact on experience. Hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching something triggers sensations in respective parts of our bodies that are then transmitted and mediated to the brain, highlighting the need to understand the relationship between the mind and the body. The external world we appear to experience is not the
instantaneous cause of the meaning we attribute to it; there is correlation between, but not necessarily a causal relationship. As Jarvis states “our experience of whatever it is, is always socially constructed and bodily mediated” (p. 75).

Although not exhaustive, the approaches outlined here inform my study, as they demonstrate the complexities involved in understanding the nature of experience, and how experience impacts on learning or our meaning-making. My inquiry is providing an opportunity for the artists who are the focus of this study to consciously consider aspects of their biographies, as well as the events and sensations they have experienced by involving themselves in community-based arts practice(s) and how those experiences have contributed to their identities.

As I consider the experiences of the artists, and attempt to make sense of what they have disclosed, I will need to be mindful of the difficulties that Scott (1991) describes come with using experience as evidence in research.

Given the ubiquity of the term [experience], it seems to me more useful to work with it, to analyse its operations and to redefine its meaning. This entails focussing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of “experience” and on the politics of its construction. Experience is at once always already an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political. (Scott, 1991, p. 797)

A similar difficulty also arises if all learning is experiential, as Jarvis (2006) maintains. Rather than analysis of experience focussing on the areas of knowledge and skill, broader parameters are required. These include consideration of the multitude of human dimensions such as our physical ability, genetics, knowledge, attitude, emotions and senses that constitute part of our complex minds and bodies. Woven into these dimensions are social or cultural contexts as well as our situatedness in time and space that all interact in framing our experiences. When viewed in this way the disjuncture that triggers experiences can surface in all of these dimensions. Attention of these dimensions
will be woven into my theoretical framework and will also be taken into account when interpreting the stories and experiences that the artists describe.

**Learning sites.**
The terms formal, informal, non-formal, are usually woven into discussions of learning to describe conscious, unconscious, intended, unintended, or incidental ways in which we learn. Jarvis (2007) contends that rather than talk of formal, informal, or non-formal learning, it is more appropriate to talk about learning in formal, informal, or non-formal situations, as it is in these situations that conscious, unconscious, intended, unintended, or incidental learning occurs.

Institutionalised sites of learning such as schools and universities can be viewed as formal learning environments, where learning is conveyed to individuals through conscious, deliberate, and intentional strategies. Similarly unintentional, unconscious, or incidental learning can also occur as a result of being situated in particular times and spaces of a formal learning site.

Formal learning sites, according to Kalantzis and Cope (2008), are peculiar as they are about and for the world without quite being of the world; “their primary reason for being is outside of themselves” (p. 211). Whilst individuals are involved in a primary experience or direct encounter within a formal learning environment, it could be argued that formal learning sites predominantly involve secondary or mediated experiences of the life-world. Dewey (1966) describes this approach to learning as the ordinary notion of education.

> The notion which ignores its social necessity and its identity with all human association that affects conscious life and which identifies it with imparting information about remote matters and the conveying of learning through verbal signs; the acquisition of literacy (p. 9).

Broadening the parameters beyond formal institutions as sites where learning occurs has gained traction, and we are now in a time and space that acknowledges that learning can transpire anywhere or at anytime. Perspectives that view such an approach to learning are not new and have emerged in the work of Dewey (1963). They have also been informed by Peters’ (1966) concepts
of informal education, occurring in the context of social interaction, membership of groups, rituals and shared experiences. Illich (1971) also challenged the nature of formal learning environments, arguing that learning real and meaningful knowledge occurs in informal and random ways and with his notion of learning webs, he outlines numerous sources and resources that are available for learning. Foley (1995) uses descriptors such as formal, informal, non formal, and incidental to describe a range of learning situations where experiences occur. Dewey (1966) maintains that a balance in arenas of learning between formal, informal, incidental, and intentional modes of education is vital for any form of learning to be effective.

On the basis of the premise that learning can occur in every aspect of our lives, the artists who participate in this inquiry may have found themselves working across a range of learning sites. Their experiences include a familiarity with formal and informal learning sites as well as informal, nonformal and incidental learning situations. An awareness of how these various situations and sites have shaped the artists’ interpretation of their experiences is warranted as the range of sites and situations will involve an inevitable interplay of cultural and societal factors that will contribute to their accounts.

**Learning over a lifetime and partnerships.** Along with the recognition that learning can happen anywhere and at any time and the emergence of what Kalantzis and Cope (2008) describe as new learning, the term lifelong learning, has surfaced as a concept in recent decades. Lifelong learning is seen as a set of cultural, social, and institutional processes that occur and are negotiated throughout an individual’s life. Rather than thinking in the context of schooling, training, or education, lifelong learning is becoming the dominant way of thinking about learning:

[Lifelong learning] has overtaken the more limited approach subsumed under the various concepts of vocational education and training, adult education, community education and recurrent education (Burns, 2002, p. xi).
Lifelong learning provides an overarching concept within which the many divergent theories of learning sit. It also merges or blends the roles formal and informal settings play in the process of learning. Governments are espousing the benefits of this view:

[We] are committed to education. The potential of children and adults must be nurtured and developed, not just in schools but through a well resourced network of libraries, museums, galleries, art centres that offer lifelong learning for Victorians (Arts Victoria, 2004, p. 1).

Providing a similar argument, Pringle (2002) emphasises the notion of sites for learning to embrace both formal education settings such as schools, and also more informal educational or cultural locations such as galleries and arts centres.

In tandem with learning being seen as lifelong, Jarvis (2007) describes learning as being life-wide to articulate the expanding, broad parameters of an individual’s life world at any one point in time. Our experiences that result from being located in multiple environments, circumstances, and situations suggest our life worlds and the learning that occurs are not only longer but also wider than they have been in prior eras.

Learning when viewed as lifelong and life-wide build on earlier understandings of learning. Senge’s (1992) learning organisations and other concepts such as situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1999), learning communities, learning societies, and communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) attempt to provide frameworks to discuss learning contexts that occur throughout and across our lives. These concepts emphasise notions of participation and the social nature of learning. According to Wenger’s (1998) approach participation permeates every aspect of us and “it shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do” (p. 3). They are integrated and deeply interconnected components represented in Figure 12.
Figure 12. Components of a social theory of learning.
Source: (adapted from Wenger, 1998, p. 5)

Linked to his ideas of learning as a social process, Wenger has introduced and developed the term communities of practice. Wenger describes communities of practice as groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Emphasis is placed on the learning of people within the group and what they learn through their mutual engagement. Wenger’s concept of a social theory of learning will inform the structure and formulation of my theoretical framework in representing it diagrammatically. The characteristics that constitute a community of practice outlined by Wenger, will also be considered alongside other frameworks such as Turner’s (1969) notion of communitas, and Kester’s (2004) description of dialogical arts practice as a means to examine the learning sites that the artists who are the focus of this study operate in.

Permeating the notion of learning being a social, ongoing process over the width and length of our lives, where formal and informal learning settings can merge, there is a continual reference, particularly by governments that learning should involve broad collaboration or partnerships (Department of Culture and the Arts & Department of Education and Training, 2005; Department of Education and Training, 2004; Dunn, 2006). Studies such as Bamford’s (2006) global research project on the impact of the arts in education also emphasise the need for collaboration. Bamford argues that quality art education programs include...
having “active partnerships between schools and arts organisations and between teachers, artists and the community” (pp. 139-140). Similarly, partnerships between schools and the professional arts sector have been cited as fostering students’ group skills, personal growth and social cohesion (Donelan, Irvine, Imms, Jeanneret, & O’Toole, 2009).

Ling (1993, July) contends that the concept of partnerships is problematic as a multitude of different associations or perceptions can be aroused, particularly in the case when the need for partnerships is expressed in governmental policy documents. A tension can be inherent in perceptions of partnerships, where at one end of a continuum they can be interpreted as embracing the ideas of relationships based on trust, respect, collaboration, and integrity, whereas at the other end concepts of compliance, compromise, unequal representation, and distrust can surface (Selkrig & Keamy, 2009).

Bagnall (2007) also argues that the way collaborations or learning partnerships function is open to a range of interpretations. In an attempt to clarify the range of interpretations Bagnall proposes three categories. They are partnerships towards learning; partnerships for learning; and partnerships in learning. Partnerships towards learning describe situations where neither partner is involved as a designated learner, the learners or intended learners are the objects and are exogenous. With partnerships for learning at least one of the partners is involved as a designated learner of the partnership and one other is not so designated. Bagnall’s third category, partnerships in learning implies that both partners if there are only two, or all partners if there are more, are involved as designated learners. With partnerships in learning, collaboration is voluntary and they are concerned in promoting each other’s learning through the partnership. The notion of partnerships in learning is not dissimilar from Wenger’s (1998) idea of a community of practice.

Sinclair (2006), when discussing sustained arts partnerships in formal education sites, suggests that many arts and education affiliations may not actually warrant the label of being a partnership. Given the range of understandings of what arts
education practice is, combined with culturally specific issues, and then overlayed by criteria used to describe partnerships such as mutual co-operation, responsibility, and having specified goals, according to Sinclair results in arts education partnerships become extremely complex to articulate. Similarly, it is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of partnerships linked to community arts projects that focus on social benefit or community wellbeing. According to Mulligan et al. (2007), the difficulty is due to a number of flaws in approaches to measuring and evaluating these projects that have been identified through various studies (McCarthy et al., 2004; McQueen-Thomson & Ziguras, 2002; Mulligan et al., 2007; Sinclair, 2006). The flaws relate to aspects such as focusing “on a narrow range of projects funded by arts organisations or government agencies; an emphasis on the self-referential assessments made by project initiators or key practitioners rather than project participants; [and] the use of very limited and often inappropriate research tools” (Mulligan et al., 2007, p. 9).

The artists who are the focus of this inquiry will have had a range of previous learning experiences over the length and width of their lives that have folded (Deleuze, 1988b) into their biographies to shape their understandings. Being involved in community arts-based practice, these artists will have also interacted and worked with other people and organisations. They have been exposed to a range of learning communities, or forms of partnerships as described by Bagnall (2007). Taking into account the nuances or subtle differences between learning communities and types of partnerships and how or if the artists refer to these will assist in considering how relational processes and structures inform their thinking.

**Identifying a Line of Inquiry**
Navigating my way through the literature that related to the topic of artists working in community-based arts practice(s), the discourse in many instances appeared to focus on the need to justify or provide evidence of the instrumental benefits of the arts. The value of the arts was seen as residing in its potential to improve the economic and social wellbeing of both communities and individuals.
Within the arguments, the voices of artists who involve themselves in community-based arts practice(s) and the impact of this type of work on them appears to be missing. As time has elapsed over the course of my inquiry, some new material has emerged to challenge the premise of valuing the arts purely in terms of its instrumental benefits. Similarly, material is also emerging that documents aspects of artists’ experiences (Bain, 2005; Monagan, 2005; Mulligan et al., 2007; Pope & Doyle, 2006; Pringle, 2002), who work in community-based arts practice(s), although it remains thin in parts or refers mainly to artists who live and work in the northern hemisphere or in major urban centres.

My intention here is to examine the experiences of visual artists who involve themselves in community art-based practice characterised as being dialogical in nature, or socially engaged, participatory and arts activity. By engaging in a dialogue with artists who work in this way, and providing a vehicle for their voices to be heard, my aim is to gain some insight into how they as artists make meaning or learn from these situations and how this in turn shapes them. My rationale and an outline of the potential benefits and significance were outlined in earlier sections of this thesis.

I am exploring in this inquiry how artists learn about their identity/ies as a result of being involved in community-based arts practice(s). The particular artists that will be the focus of my study reside and conduct their work beyond urban or major capital cities. The following section outlines a conceptual framework that connects the many dimensions from my review of the literature that will aid in charting a course through this inquiry.

**Conceptual Framework**

The preliminary framework for this inquiry focused on a range of concepts that derived from key words within my initial research proposal. Hence, an early structuring of my literature review attempted to siphon off knowledge, ideas, key theoretical concepts, contextual, and research perspectives into a multitude of separate categories. In crafting the literature review, what has emerged is a level
of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1986), where the categories of literature became intertwined influencing, reacting and responding with each other. To identify clearer linkages, the literature categories for my inquiry were refined to reflect three broad sections. The first section dealt with the nature and difficulty of characterising community arts-based practice within the larger discourse of the arts field. In the second section, the interactions, tensions, and interplay that exist between the individual artist or agent and broader cultural and societal structures in exploring notions of identity and how we can make sense of who we are were explored. The nature of experience, complexity of learning, and what learning might mean particularly, as it relates to concepts of meaning-making in social and experiential learning for artists, were discussed in the final section of the literature review.

Instead of articulating a conceptual framework in text form, I have followed the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994) who suggest that conceptual frameworks are best represented graphically on one page. Synthesising a conceptual framework to one page requires areas of discrete phenomena to be specified and their relationships to be mapped while considering conceptual and functional variables all at the one time. To represent a framework for this inquiry, the notion of a triple helix or web diagram seemed to be the most accommodating. I imagined that while simplifying the representation, the complexity and interconnectedness of concepts that informed my thinking would not be excluded. The framework that emerged is based on Wenger’s (1998) “refined intersections of intellectual traditions” (p. 14) although aspects of Wenger’s model have been specifically adapted to suit this study. My initial attempt at developing a conceptual framework, resulted in a flat two dimensional illustration.

After living with the diagram for some time, it did not seem to adequately reflect all facets of my inquiry. The diagram was then transformed into a three dimensional representation (refer to Figure 13). Including the element of depth to the diagram provides a clearer understanding of the various ways key
concepts interact, overlay, expand, or contract in relation to one another. It also represents how social learning, according to Wenger (1998), is caught in the middle of a range of intersecting factors. Similarly, Jarvis (2006) maintains that whilst it is impossible to provide a comprehensive theory of learning, for learning to occur, certain elements must always be present. He describes these as

the person, as learner; the social situation in which the learning occurs; the experiences that the learner has in that situation; the process of transforming it and storing it within the learner’s mind biography. Each of these four elements has innumerable, interacting variables (p. 198).

Rather than viewing the framework as a meta-theory as Wenger does, my intention is to use my conceptual framework as a tool to highlight the range of complex factors that need to be considered as they potentially impact on individuals (in this instance artists) and their learning. An alternative way to view this framework is to consider the notions of plateaus, rhizomatics, and becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), where a plateau is “any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome” (p. 22). As a rhizome, we are always located in the middle, there is no end or beginning, we are always becoming, and the learner or individual is a rhizome where numerous corms emerge, shifting and morphing in size and shape, surfacing as plateaus as described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in random ways. The way in which the plateaus are represented in Figure 13 do not reflect prominent levels of importance due to their various sizes and shapes, instead the intention is to suggest that they are able to shift in their level of influence. The levels of connectedness and meaning to particular aspects of the rhizome for the individual will relate to the lines of flight that may intersect these.

Within Figure 13, the components belonging to individual artist or agents are located to the forefront (meaning, situated experience, and subjectivity). The external components (power, social structures, and community/belonging) are to be found on the far side or in the background. The plateaus along the central horizontal axis (practice/doing, the artists learning, and identity/becoming) are the links or bridge between.
A range of theoretical discourses woven though the literature review will assist in examining the dynamic conceptual framework articulated here. Working within a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm and adopting the approach of Bricoleur allows for several interpretive threads to emerge and to weave together, rather than what might be seen as distinct or pure disciplined ways of thinking. As Jarvis (2006) suggests, due to the complexity of human learning, any theories that explore this concept must be interdisciplinary as “we cannot divorce our philosophical or psychological thinking about learning from the sociological” (p. 52). The same argument could also be made for the concept of identity, the other key concept of this inquiry.

To assist in the task of crossing bridges between disparate thinking, Bourdieu’s (1993), concepts of habitus, capital and fields and Côté and Levine’s (2002) notion of identity capital will provide a type of scaffold. Postmodern approaches that argue we can possess multiple identities that are not necessarily fixed, predetermined or linear and can remain fluid in a process of always becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), will also overlay my approach.
Having provided a conceptual framework that allows for multiple factors to be considered when analysing and interpreting the artists’ experiences, there are some major linking devices within the framework. They relate to the interplay between the internal, subjective, or what Côté and Levine (2002) describe as agentic world and the external objective structural world that continues to interact to mediate our learning and identities. Jarvis’ (2006) description of learning and his proposed model of the transformation of the person through learning, (refer to Figure 11) will also provide a linking device to consider how the artists in this study describe their experiences and the learning that occurs.

When I come to analysing and interpreting the data for this inquiry I am mindful that aspects outlined in my conceptual framework may act as sensitizing concepts. Blumer (1969) refers to these as concepts that gives the analyst a general sense of reference or direction to look, at and interpret the data. Mertens (2005) also states that in developing a conceptual framework,

[a] researcher’s original conceptual framework influences the planning and conducting of the literature review. However, if a researcher keeps an open mind throughout the literature review process, a more sophisticated and (often greatly) modified conceptual framework should emerge (Mertens, 2005, p. 106).

Reflecting on the process of undertaking the literature review for this inquiry, Mertens’ statement has a strong resonance whereby the conceptual framework outlined here and the review of literature that led to its formation is more sophisticated than my starting point. While aspects of my worldview may have been inferred in both stating the personal factors that contributed to identifying my line of inquiry, and in aspects of the literature review, the following section will provide a more explicit articulation of my personal conceptual framework or worldview and the methodological approaches that are employed with this inquiry.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Figure 14. “Isolated Plateaus”.  
Source: (Selkrig, 2008)
Interpretive Approaches
I have structured this chapter with two particular purposes. Initially methodological issues concerned with shaping this inquiry are outlined. Woven into this discussion is a rationale for the interpretive approaches I have chosen to employ for this study. The subsequent parts of this chapter outline the particular research strategies and methods that were utilised. The research approaches adopted for this inquiry can be broadly outlined as naturalistic, informed by phenomenological inductive viewpoints and narrative perspectives to social research. The study is positioned predominantly within what Mertens (2005) describes as a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm.

Articulating a worldview or paradigm.
Being human involves making sense of our existence in some way, developing an interpretive framework or certain paradigm from which to view the world. A paradigm is “a basic set of beliefs that guide our action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17) or, as Mertens (2005) states it is “composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action” (p. 7). In classifying worldviews, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe positivist/postpositivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical (Marxist emancipatory) and feminist–post structural paradigms. While some are congruent with Denzin and Lincoln’s framework, Mertens (2005) describes the categories of postpositivism, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic paradigms.

Although paradigms are usually presented in the literature as separate entities, situating oneself within a particular paradigm is problematic due to a blurring of genres (Geertz, 1993). Various paradigms have become intertwined, making it possible to blend elements of one paradigm into another if they share axiomatic fundamentals that are similar (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), such as “elements of interpretivist/postmodern critical theory, constructivist and participative inquiry [can] fit comfortably together” (p. 201) if they are suited to the nature of the research. Mertens (2005) also contends that, while it is potentially difficult to
draw lines between paradigms, a researcher should be able to locate a category that most closely approximates their own thinking and practice. Articulating a worldview that encapsulates my thinking, and practice and the philosophical dimensions behind these, my approach to research is predominantly situated within a constructivist paradigm and will be outlined below. By stating that my approach is predominately within a constructivist paradigm, I am flagging that other descriptors can also be used to express or compliment constructivist approaches. These descriptors and aspects of other paradigms that share axiomatic fundamentals inform my thinking and I will also discuss these.

A constructivist worldview is described as a naturalistic approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Borg & Gall, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), where “research is a product of the values of researchers and cannot be independent of them” (Mertens, 2005, p. 13). Such a worldview sits comfortably with my disposition. Unlike the philosophical underpinnings of other paradigms such as positivism and postpositivism, which tend to be reductionist in their purpose, shaped by the belief there are laws or theories that govern the world and that facts and values can be separated (Elliott, Lather, Schratz, & Walker, 1992). A worldview of this sort follows a “scientific approach often termed as nomothetic and assumes [that] social reality is objective and external to the individual” (Burns, 2000, p. 3).

Constructivist perspectives, on the other hand have key philosophic underpinnings, where reality is viewed as being socially constructed such that multiple interpretations of reality can be apprehended even if they conflict with each other. There is an acknowledgement that perceptions of reality may change, that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it, and that the inquirer and the inquired are interlocked in an interactive process (Mertens, 2005). Woven into my constructivist worldview are aspects of an interpretivist/hermeneutic paradigm, which is why I am representing my research paradigm as constructivist/interpretivist. Scott and Usher (1999) contend that “interpretivist research takes everyday experience and ordinary life as its subject matter to ask how meaning is constructed and social interaction negotiated in social practices”
Within this paradigm, rather than reducing meanings to a few categories, the interpretivist approach maintains that meanings are varied and multiple (Creswell, 2003), requiring the researcher to look at the complexity of a situation.

A constructivist/interpretivist way of looking at the world aligns comfortably with my views and the nature of this particular inquiry. I am not concerned to uncover universal truths or amass facts that would be required in a positivist or postpositivist approach. My concern relates to the experiences and perceptions of artists when they are involved in community-based art practice(s), their interpretations of these, and how they may inform their identities and work as an artist.

**Research design: Using qualitative methodology for this study.**
Prior to considering the research design of a study, the question to be examined or the nature of the inquiry needs to be clear, as “methodologies must be chosen that both ‘fit’ the question being asked and the nature of the phenomena being studied” (Caulley, 1994, p. 3). Depending on the aim and purpose of a study research instruments involving qualitative, quantitative or a blend of these (mixed method research) approaches may be the most appropriate tools to utilise. A researcher also needs to be free to construct methods of obtaining data if existing methods are unknown (Elliott et al., 1992). These choices may require taking considered risks in research, or adopting the stance of a Bricoleur (2005), an approach that I have applied in this study.

Mertens (2005) claims that qualitative research is “designed to provide an in-depth description of specific programs, practice or setting, … [it] is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Mertens, 2005, p. 229). In this approach the investigator is involved with the participants, and interprets the world and contexts under investigation in a similar way to the participants. These sentiments echo the nature of my inquiry.
Most qualitative forms of research have common underpinnings, espoused considerations, and procedures. They include, according to Rossman and Rallis (1998) aspects such as research taking place in a natural setting to provide sources of data, multiple methods being used that are iterative and humanistic, and the research is emergent rather than preconfigured, where data analysis occurs inductively, it also tends to be interpretive, and descriptive in nature. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) also maintain that meaning is an essential concern for qualitative approaches, while Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggest that qualitative research is usually grounded in the lived experiences of people.

Researchers who embark on qualitative research such as myself are also inclined to view the social phenomenon of their inquiry holistically. They usually employ complex reasoning that is multifaceted, and will systematically reflect on who they (as the researcher) are, being sensitive to their own personal biography, and how it may shape the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

Qualitative methodologies have been adopted for this study as they appeared to offer the most appropriate research instruments for me to work with, fitting both the nature and purpose of this inquiry.

**A strategy of inquiry: Phenomenological and narrative approaches.**

With qualitative research instruments identified as the tools to explore the experiences of artists who are involved in community-based arts practice(s), characteristics described in forms of phenomenological and narrative approaches offered suitable typologies by which to classify the data in this study. My perspectives on phenomenological approaches have been informed by certain streams that exist within this typology. They include van Manen’s (1997) articulation of hermeneutic phenomenology, whereby the descriptive fundamentals of phenomenology are employed, such as letting experiences or events speak for themselves and being attentive to how they appear. Hermeneutic interpretive elements are also involved due to the claim that all
phenomena are interpreted. According to van Manen while there might appear to be a contradiction between descriptive fundamentals and interpretive elements, [They] may be resolved if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) “facts” of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced. Moreover, even the “facts” of lived experience need to be captured in language (the human science text) and this is inevitably an interpretive process (p. 180).

My thinking has also been shaped by the stream of ethnomethodology which combines a “phenomenological sensibility with a paramount concern of everyday social practice” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 486). Rather than focus on the linguistic analysis that can be emphasised in this stream, I was drawn to Cohen and Manion’s (1989) description of situational ethnomethodology. Cohen and Manion maintain that a situational approach involves examining a wider range of social activity to understand the ways in which people negotiate the social contexts in which they find themselves and make sense of their environment.

Considering phenomenological approaches intend to capture the meanings of experiences, Patterson (2008) outlines how personal narratives can be approached in different ways. At times narrative can be seen as a text, with the function of representing the past events of the teller in the form of a story. It becomes an event, text, story model that can act narrowly to reiterate the told in the telling without taking into account broader contexts that impact on storytelling. According to Squire (2008) such a model also neglects aspects of narrative such as

(a) Talk that is not about events but is nevertheless significant for the narrator’s story of ‘who they are’. (b) Representation itself. The uncertain, changeable nature of written, spoken and visual symbol systems means that stories are distanced from the happenings they described, have many meanings and are never the same when told twice. (c) Interactions between storyteller and listener, researcher and research participant, in the co-construction of stories. (Squire, 2008, p. 41).

Rather than applying an event-centred model to narrative, Squire (2008) argues broader approaches that are experience-centred and culturally-oriented could be more appropriate. These approaches assume that narratives “are sequential and
meaningful, are definitively human, 're-present' experience, reconstituting it, as well as expressing it, [and] display transformation or change” (p. 42).

Other aspects of narrative research approaches that have shaped my perspective for this inquiry relate to the use of voice and authorial representation in academic writing. Research writing can now combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic description, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities, and scientific rigour (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). The shift, in part, can be attributed to feminist and poststructuralist discourse where according to Richardson (2005), there is a “continual co-creation of the self and social science; they know through each other. Knowing the self and knowing about the subject are intertwined, partial, historical local knowledges” (p. 962).

When exploring narrative approaches to research, I was also drawn to the argument advanced by Hamilton et al. (1992), that is, the telling of the story so that it touches peoples' consciousness is the most important part of research. The words of Keamy (2003) have also continued to inform how I would approach this thesis, where he stated “I want to craft a piece that conveys a story that is understandable to the reader. [To include] plainspeaking, as far as possible, without “dumbing-down” what I would be writing about” (p. 117). Richardson’s (2005), argument that numerous qualitative studies become mundane, half read and boring also captured my attention. Unlike quantitative approaches, Richardson maintains that qualitative research has to be read, not scanned, as its meaning is in the reading. To advance her argument that meaning is in the reading Richardson (2005) proposes that we need to acknowledge “writing as a method of inquiry” (p. 960), which involves a creative analytical process (CAP). Rather than seeing the terms creative and analytical as contradictory or incompatible, Richardson (2005) claims

[...]the writing process and the writing product are deeply intertwined; both are privileged. The product cannot be separated from the producer, the mode of production, or the method of knowing (p. 962).

The complexities involved in the writing process are also described by van Manen (1997). He states that writing can distance us further from lived
experiences and in attempting to capture in written text the meanings of lived experiences, the text inevitably assumes a life of its own. Stewart (2007) uses the term neonarrative, as a similar line of thought. Neonarratives are “an amalgam of data and theory to create new stories that are different or richer than those that have gone before... [this can create] a third space, a storying place that links practice and theory” (p. 132).

Embedding the perspectives outlined above, in this inquiry, I have chosen to write in the first person, emphasising that this story has been written by me, the producer. To create a sense of story I have made a deliberate attempt not to include usual conventions such as footnotes or references to appendices that can disrupt the flow. Instead, where further explanation or clarification has been warranted, I have woven this material into the text or it appears as a Figure or Table. Other strategies such as bracketing and reflexivity I used to indicate my presence in the inquiry will be outlined in the following section.

The voices of the artists who participated in this study are also present through direct or paraphrased quotations and used at times as section headings within Chapter 4. Excerpts from the artists’ stories are also interleaved to present their perspectives, various voices, truths, and realities. They include both the multiple selves, subjectivities (Walker & Nias, 1995), and voices (Patton, 2002) that I possess as well as those of the artists. Adopting such a genre of writing allows those involved to be seen as people and fellow human beings who participated in the process rather than as subjects, observed from a distance. Rather than being viewed as superfluous information, including the elements outlined here, contribute to thick description (Geertz, 1973) that assists with interpretation. That, in turn, links with notions of transferability as one of the criteria for presenting trustworthy and believable research by which studies such as this are judged. Although my study is predominately oriented towards qualitative research principles, my aim is to blend aspects of narrative research highlighted in this section to strengthen the nature of the story I am telling.
Subjectivity, reflexivity, trustworthy, and believable research. Narrative approaches that involve situating oneself within the research can lead to questions concerning the legitimacy, rigour, impartiality, and subjectivity. Counter views (Creswell, 1998; Janesick, 2000) argue that within any form of research, the author is situated in the work and it is impossible to be completely removed from the text. The concept of objectivity as aligned with claims of truth and being value free should also be contested and is problematic due to varied understandings of the term objectivity. Sullivan (2005) maintains that the complexities of objectivity can be dismissed when an overly simplistic dichotomous framework is applied, where subjectivity is seen as diametrically opposed to objectivity. Being subjective does not mean that the researcher is placed at the centre of the research, nor should the inquiry be about the researcher, yet clearly the researcher can control what is to be researched and how it is to be reported (Elliott et al., 1992). Situating oneself in the research according to Riessman (2002) “does not assume objectivity; rather it privileges positionality and subjectivity” (p. 696).

Throughout this study the process of reflexivity, or what Gearing (2004) refers to as reflexive (cultural) bracketing, has encouraged me to engage in critical self-reflection on my biases and preferences. Adopting a reflexive approach has also allowed me to maintain awareness that I have been part of the setting, and phenomena investigated, and to critically examine the entire process of this study. At previous points in my life as an artist, I have participated in similar activities to those I am exploring in this inquiry. I was aware that by having these experiences, of being seen or seeing myself as an insider researcher and understand how this may be perceived by both the participants and the readers of the completed study. At the same time I could be viewed as an outsider, as I have not directly been part of the participants’ communities of practice. Figure 15 (Patton, 2002), became a familiar friend throughout this study, acting as a continual reference point to challenge my approaches and assumptions. Acknowledging this reflexive process and my presence contributes to gauging the credibility of this inquiry.
Following an approach that uses qualitative methodologies such as those outlined for this study does not diminish the need for the research to have integrity. Indicators should be established “that provide evidence that the information generated in the research is trustworthy and believable” (Mertens, 2005, p. 346). Rather than using standards based on postpositivist principles such as reliability, validity and objectivity to judge this inquiry, standards that Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue verify qualitative constructivist research approaches were adopted.

![Reflexive Questions: Triangulated Inquiry](image)

Figure 15. Reflexive questions considered in carrying out this inquiry. Source: (Patton, 2002, p. 66)

Indicators that demonstrate credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been woven into this study and referred to throughout my inquiry. They include strategies that Mertens (2005) and Schwandt (1997) claim serve as indicators to meet the criteria in Guba and Lincoln’s model. The concern with credibility was addressed through peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity, and member checks to deal with the issue “of the inquirer providing assurances of the fit between respondents’ views of their life ways and the inquirer’s reconstruction and representation of the same” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 164). Employing thick description and using multiple cases in this study assists with transferability by providing sufficient information that relates to the study and allows readers to make links or transfer meanings between cases (Mertens, 2005). Providing clear, logical and traceable protocols of the way the research was undertaken contributes to the dependability of this study (Mertens, 2005; Schwandt, 1997). Similarly every attempt has been made to track data or
information to sources and the logic I have used to interpret the data is provided to aid with confirmability, which Mertens (2005) argues is concerned with the influence of the researchers’ judgements, and how they are minimised or made clear.

Having identified an interpretive approach that involves qualitative methods and a strategy of inquiry premised on phenomenological and narrative approaches for this inquiry, there are a range of aspects that require further consideration to ensure the inquiry is trustworthy and believable. In the subsequent sections of this chapter I will outline the strategies used to identify participants, gather and analyse the data.

**Identifying Participants**

Selecting and identifying participants for this study involved mixed purposive or theoretical sampling (Mertens, 2005). Using the two procedures of criterion sampling and typical case sampling, my aim was to interact with people who reflect specific criteria, are information rich, and are known to involve themselves in specific practices in a particular way (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Mertens, 2005). The participants were selected as they could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125).

Using criterion sampling to develop distinct parameters for identifying typical case participants required careful consideration. This, in part, was due to the contentious and complex nature of how individuals attain the label of artist, as outlined in the literature review. Other criteria that related to the type of arts practice under investigation, and participants being situated in specific regional locations provided mechanisms to narrow the field of those who could be involved. The geographic areas identified were regional locations in south east Australia, particularly Victoria and New South Wales. The rationale for these locations related to proximity to my home base in north eastern Victoria, this being one of the trade-offs I made and referred to earlier. The locations were also
selected as I also knew of gatekeepers (described in the next sections) in the areas identified.

**Ethics.**
Prior to contacting anyone to seek their participation in this research, ethics approval was gained from the La Trobe University, Faculty of Education Human Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval Number: Approval No: R027/07). When shaping this inquiry I was aware of ethical concerns to ensure the protection of the welfare and rights of the participants. Foremost in my mind was the issue of confidentiality, which applied at several levels.

The method of engaging gatekeepers to act as conduits to participants and providing them with information packages overcame initial confidentiality and privacy issues that may have occurred if I had asked them directly for artists’ contact details.

On agreeing to be involved, participants were clearly advised that, given the nature of the research, ensuring their anonymity would not be possible. As well as interviews, part of data gathering could include visual imagery such as photos of them and their work. With the possibility of including visuals and stories of their experience in the study and depending on the notoriety of the artist, reporting my findings could prevent them from remaining anonymous. Artists were also provided with a copy of the transcript from their interviews. As well as being a form of member checking to ensure the research was credible and reliable, artists were also able to identify aspects in the transcripts that they felt might have adverse consequences for them if it were to be included in my study.

**Finding a pathway in.**
Recommendations for suitable participants were sought from “knowledgeable individuals” (Mertens, 2005, p. 319). For this study, these individuals were attached to organisations such as local government or other organisations involved in community cultural development in specific regional locations. The
assumption was that they would have access to, knowledge of, and possible contact details of artists with whom I could talk. In following this path I was also mindful that the knowledgeable individuals could also act as gatekeepers, “individuals in an organisation that have the power to withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research” (Burgess, 1984, p. 39). Given the nature of the arts field and how my inquiry is situated, gatekeepers can also act as agents of consecration (Bourdieu, 1993) and I was aware that the artists identified by gatekeepers may be skewed by the gatekeepers’ positions, cultural understanding, and their realities.

Phone calls or emails acted as the first point of contact with gatekeepers to outline the nature of the study and to gauge whether they were in a position, or willing to assist. When all of those whom I contacted did agree, a follow-up information package was forwarded to them outlining what would be involved. The gatekeepers were provided with a word picture (see Table 2) that conveyed selection criteria to assist them in identifying artists for the study. Using a descriptive word picture rather than a standard checklist, seemed preferable given the complexity and multiple interpretations of terms such as artist and community arts that could influence their selection of participants.

The gatekeepers were then asked to identify two or three artists in their geographic area. My intention was to achieve a balance of gender, a spread of ages and hopefully also in the cultural and racial backgrounds of participants. In identifying artists from a range of geographic locations throughout rural Australia rather than one specific region, my aim was to represent the views of a variety of artists who work in community-based arts practice(s), whilst also being aware that participants it would not necessarily be representative of all artists who are involved in community-based arts practice(s).
An artist who works in sites of learning for the purpose of my inquiry is, someone who works and practices in ways beyond the boundaries of what might be described as the conventional western ‘art world’ tradition, where artists work in relative isolation, or as individuals to produce work or commissions for exhibitions in galleries and other spaces. In following an alternate path, artists work with others in a range of locations such as formal institutional settings such as schools, and hospitals, or in less informal or broader settings such as service clubs, community groups, or whole communities on arts projects, or community- based arts where the participants’ roles are beyond that of a passive spectator.

In such an approach artists are actively involved and engaged with the participants in a range of ways such as; consultation, research, planning, making and installing the artworks produced. Given the diverse ways in which artists work they may work in traditional approaches as well as community-based arts practice and arts education partnerships, working with communities as a facilitator or agent to provide an arts experience for those involved.

A particular focus with this research whilst it is difficult to provide a contained definition of an artist based on their practice or discipline due to the blurring of art disciplines and the emergence of new art forms, my emphasis is to examine the work of visual artists (rather than performing artists) who live and work in regional locations. I would like to talk with artists who may or may not have had formal arts practice training or education. Ideally they will not have undertaken formal training or education that relates to understanding teaching and learning approaches such as a teacher education program.

Table 2. Word picture to assist gatekeepers identify participants.

By following this approach I was mindful of the possibility that participants who became involved in the study might see themselves as speaking on behalf of their group, or as a spokesperson for artists more broadly, rather than concentrating on their own experiences. There was also a prospect that participants might provide me with information they thought I wanted to hear. By interviewing several artists in various locations, rather than one artist in a particular geographic area, this acted as a strategy to try and reduce the likelihood of these types of issues from occurring.

The only concern that some gatekeepers expressed related to a potential difficulty in identifying artists, without formal teaching qualifications who were involved in community-based arts practice(s) as outlined in my word picture. The gatekeepers indicated that due to the pool of artists in their area, some of the possible participants may have a teaching background. I was able to clarify that finding artists who had not experienced teacher education training was my ideal and, if this was not possible, it should not be a reason to exclude artists from being nominated for participation.
Individual information packages were provided to gatekeepers for them to forward to artists. The artist information packages included a letter of introduction for the artist outlining how they had been identified, an information sheet that described the nature of my research and what I was requesting of them, a copy of the participant consent form (which indicated that the participants’ names and identities would not be withheld), and the word picture. My contact details were included, allowing the artist to make direct contact with me. These packages were placed in sealed envelopes that only required gatekeepers to address and post to the artist. A copy of the documents sent to the artist was also provided to the gatekeepers. From follow-up conversations with all gatekeepers, it appears that apart from one artist, all who had been forwarded an information package from a gatekeeper were prepared to participate and went on to make contact with me.

**Restricting the field.**

Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative research sampling size can be a dynamic process and may not necessarily be determined prior to commencement of data collection. Determining the number of participants to be involved in this study, the purpose of the research, the strategy of enquiry and the data gathering approach of in-depth interviewing that was to be employed were all considered. Borg and Gall (1989) suggest that it is legitimate to involve a small number of participants:

> A study that probes deeply into the characteristics of a small sample often provides more knowledge than a study that attacks the same problem by collecting only shallow information on a large scale (p. 236).

Attempting to ascertain how small the sample may be, Caulley (1994) argues that while it is difficult to provide a definitive number of participants, a minimum sample size should be proposed and that the sampling should continue until no new themes are apparent. Another approach that can assist in deciding a sample size rests with the level of detail or breadth that might be required. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) indicate that a judgement about the level of detail or breadth
needs to be balanced against the resources of time and money available for the research project—yet another research trade-off.

Mertens (2005) provides a rule of thumb of sample sizes for various forms of qualitative research, suggesting that for a study such as this, six participants may be appropriate. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) claim that determining a sample size “is simple: when the researcher is satisfied that the data are rich enough and cover enough of the dimensions they are interested in, then the sample is large enough” (p. 49). The key according to Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) is to concentrate on the insights and meanings gained from the rich information of the participants who are selected. With no hard and fast rules on what constitutes an adequate sample size in this type of study, and considering the nature and aim of this study to involve artists from a range of locations and the resources I had available, my initial thought was to interview somewhere between six and fifteen participants. Twelve artists were eventually involved in this study. My rationale for settling on that number of participants required balancing the need to ensure I had a richness of data that represented the views of a range of artists, as well as being mindful of the resources I had available to undertake this inquiry.

**Introducing the participants.**

In keeping with the sentiments of my inquiry, where an intention is to come to know the participants, it seems appropriate to introduce them at this point. Of the twelve artists who were involved in this study, an equal number of males and females participated. They practised in a variety of visual art forms and were situated in several regional locations across south eastern Australia. To provide some initial information about each participant—the name of the artist, their art form, where they reside and the date on which they were interviewed is provided in Table 3. Where I could locate relevant information about the artists on the World Wide Web such as their personal website, I have also included the URL link to these.
Table 3. The artists who participated in the study.
(note artists are listed in order by their first name)

In conjunction with Table 3, a map of Victoria and southern New South Wales (refer to Figure 16) has been included. The intention of providing a map is to gain a sense of where the artists live, the spread of locations, and the area covered in the course of the study. To glean some understanding of the distances involved, to travel by road from where Leigh, Annie, and Ruth live on the south
coast of NSW, to western Victoria where Peter and Geoff reside, would require travel time of twelve hours, and driving approximately 750 kilometres each way.

Figure 16. Where artists live and the geographic area covered in this study.

Data Gathering
An in-depth interview was conducted with each artist. While the discussion that occurred in the interviews provided the major source of data for this study, other devices to gather data included field notes as suggested by Burns (2000). My field notes contained a range of files that included reflective journals that captured my impressions of the conversations with participants as well as my observations of the settings where the interviews occurred. Over the length of this inquiry I have also used a range of visual imagery such as taking photos, drawing, and producing a series of sculptures as a way to make some sense of my journey. Images of some of the sculpture I made during the study appear on each of the chapter title pages in this thesis. Although working with imagery might appear as somewhat unconventional, such an approach is crucial in my meaning-making process and falls within a framework of seeing myself as a Bricoleur. The data gathering devices outlined here will be discussed and depicted later in this section.

Interviews: Aiming for dialogue.
A semi-structured approach to in-depth interviewing appeared to be the most appropriate means to gather data from participants given the nature and purpose of my inquiry. This in part related to the aim of creating a situation where
dialogue occurred in a relaxed, fluid manner and incorporated “flexibility in the way in which questions are asked or answered” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 702).

Rather than conducting open-ended interviews, a semi-structured approach ensured that conversations remained more focussed on the inquiry. To aid the process, a discussion guide (see Table 4) or what Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) refer to as an inventory was developed with key prompts related to the inquiry. The discussion guide ensured a level of consistency with each interview, acting as a prompt for me, while allowing each participant to diverge if they chose to. The guide also became a gauge to determine if discussions wandered too far and as a check as to whether conversations moved into another area I wished to explore with them.

- Initial introduction clarifying the study I am undertaking and allowing the participant to complete consent form and ask any questions.
- Questions/comments/prompts that relate to the participant’s work as an artist: what sort of art do they do, how long they have been making art, how they came to be an artist (formal / informal education)
- Questions/comments/prompts that relate to the nature of being an artist working with communities, how long? Where has this occurred? What were factors or influences for the artist to decide to work in such environments?
- Questions/comments/prompts related to how the artist describes these experiences of working in sites of learning, have they been different (if they have been involved in more than one?) How?
- Questions/comments/prompts related to any particularly memorable experiences, (trying to draw out any particular significant learning). What did they learn in this experience? Has it influenced any of their art work (or way they look at the world?).
- Questions/comments/prompts related to the artist’s observations about the locations (regional settings) that influenced the experience, (one community compared to another, how might it differ to city urban locations)
- Questions/comments/prompts related to what the artist’s perceptions were of others involved? What did the artist see as their role in the project?
- Questions/comments/prompts related to comparing their experiences working in sites of learning to other ways in which they work, how do others perceive them? (The community with which they have worked, other artists, institutions etc)
- Finally, Questions/comments/prompts related to seeking any further information the artist may wish to contribute.
- Post interview, outlining to the participant what will happen with the transcripts and how we may continue some form of contact.

Table 4. Discussion guide for interviews.
Digitally recording interviews allowed me to engage with the participants rather than focussing on documenting the discussion. A microcassette was also used as a back up device to the digital recording in each of the interviews. Having two recordings of the interview also assisted with transcription that occurred after the interviews as there were times when other sounds such as the wind blowing a shed door or chickens clucking close by made it difficult to hear the dialogue from one source, while it was clear on the other recording. The interviews occurred face-to-face and in circumstances and an environment that suited the participant. Conducting face-to-face interviews can be seen as restrictive or perceived as intrusive by some participants who may not wish to fully disclose aspects of the issue being discussed. My thoughts were that meeting artists in a place where they felt comfortable, using a discussion guide, and digitally recording the interviews would alleviate this issue. I hoped it would also contribute to what Eunson (2005) and McCracken (1988, p. 25) refer to as a positive a “investigator/respondent relationship” and create a relaxed conversational environment.

The circumstances in which the interviews occurred proved to be quite relaxed and conversational and artists were willing to share their stories with me. I met most of the artists either at their studio or home, and each interview also involved talking over a drink, either coffee or wine. Ruth was insistent that our meeting occurred over an extensive lunch that she provided. When I met artists at their studio or workplace, they were also happy to show their work and, on two occasions, I was also asked to provide some assistance, helping them with a project they were working on at the time of my visit.

Prolonged engagement with participants by the researcher such as meeting on several occasions can be seen as desirable for particular types of qualitative data gathering. It can assist in building greater rapport and trust (Fontana & Frey, 2005) with the participants and can aid in establishing the credibility of the research (Mertens, 2005). Spending time with each participant can also provide opportunities for the researcher to obtain greater insight into each participant’s particular situation. Due to practical limitations such as time, travel and finances,
it was not possible to spend longer than the one face-to-face interview with each of the participants for this study—another trade-off that I had to make. Telephone and e-mail were used prior to our meetings and continued as a means of communication with participants post interview. Further correspondence with the participants after the interview involved sending them a copy of the transcript of their interview, and seeking their authorisation to use the material. There were also subsequent discussions and clarification with those artists who requested changes or wanted to provide additional material to their transcript. These interactions were also relaxed and comfortable.

**Diaries, field notes, and images.**
To organise and structure field notes gathered during the study, Burns’ (2000) suggestion of developing transcript files, personal files and analytic files was adopted. The data gathered from conversations became part of the transcript file that contained a record of each interview. Information included each participant’s name, date, place, and time of the interview, and other relevant information such as other communications that occurred with the artist. The file also accommodated the recording of the discussion and a complete manuscript of the interview once transcribed.

My personal file contained data beyond the participants’ spoken words and what the digital recorder could not capture. During interviews I made notes that focussed on some key points made by the artists or aspects of their body language such as facial gestures, head movements, changes in posture. The locations where the interviews took place also afforded a range of other non-verbal modes of communication (Eunson, 2005) and sources of rich data. My personal file also included reflective journals to record my thoughts in text, doodles and sketches that were generated both electronically and in hard copy. Photographs (with permission) taken of the participants and settings in which the interviews occurred, spending time in my own studio with the aim of producing artworks to aid my thinking, distilling of ideas and acting as a reflective process also became part of my personal file.
My own art-making became part of this research, and consists of forty sculptures. The images that appear on each chapter title page (refer to Figures 1, 3, 14, 19, and 21), and also in Figure 17 are examples of work that evolved during the data gathering and analysis stage of this inquiry.

Figure 17. “Isolated Plateaus”, produced during data gathering and analysis. Source: (Selkreg, 2008)

The series of sculptural forms or isolated plateaus suggest the landscapes I navigated through regional Australia to interview artists, as well as the ideas that were rolling through my mind. The imagery and forms depicted on each of the plateaus reference the artists’ stories that were conveyed to me. The plateaus also serve as platforms to consider the theoretical framework and literature I had read. They became a series of surfaces to construct, place, and arrange my thoughts. The process of making these sculptures allowed me to work out ideas and think with things (2005). When the forty plateaus are congregated in the one place a range of dynamics and dialogues between them and the viewer occur. They can work in harmony or create tensions between each other, depending on which plateaus are selected to be placed alongside other plateaus. The amount of negative space allowed between the plateaus also provides another dimension, whether they are placed in close proximity or further apart from one another. The meanings and sentiments also change if they are displayed as a single line, as a cluster in an orderly arrangement, or in a haphazard fashion. My description of the plateaus shown in this thesis hopefully provides the reader with some sense of their function, purpose, and meaning. Viewing photographs of three
dimensional works can never quite capture all the elements I am attempting to describe; the plateaus have a resonance when they are situated in real space where we can physically interact with them. The work will be exhibited in a public space in mid 2010.

Including this varied material within my personal file assisted me with analysis and interpretation to produce what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) refer to as written portraits that are designed to capture the richness, complexity and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural contexts, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences (p. 3).

Burns (2000) suggests that the analytic file should be used to identify conceptual issues and emergent themes. My approach to data analysis is outlined in the following section.

**Data Analysis**

Wolcott (1994) claims that data analysis is concerned with a systematic investigation of essential features such as themes and concepts and their interrelationships. In qualitative and narrative research, data analysis usually involves ongoing processes that occur simultaneously with data gathering which differs from quantitative approaches where data analysis usually involves a linear process that occurs at the end of the gathering stage. A key criterion of any approach to data analysis, regardless of when it occurs according to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), is that the analysis is carried out with rigour and care, in a methodical way.

*A thematic approach to analysis.*

With the research design and strategy adopted for this study reflecting qualitative methodologies, a range of approaches could be applied to analyse the data. Riessman (2008) outlines the way narrative studies can be approached through thematic, structural, and dialogical/performance analysis. In this inquiry I adopted a thematic approach to analyse the data. The initial stages
involved inductive analysis described by Patton (2002), with the aim to discover patterns, or categories in the data. Intuitive/inductive approaches to data analysis involve immersion strategies where the researcher has no pre-configured categories and “rel[ies] heavily on the researcher’s intuitive and interpretive capacities” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 151).

Although aiming to follow an inductive approach to see what might emerge from the data, I was also mindful that I could not completely remove some pre-conceived hunches or frames of reference that I possessed. Blumer (1969) refers to these as sensitizing concepts, which give the analyst a general sense of reference or provide directions to look at, and interpret the data. My sense of reference was informed by my research paradigm and aspects outlined in my conceptual framework. My approach involved a “version of psychosocial analysis in that it attempts to give equal importance to individual and to social processes” (Phoenix, 2008, p. 66).

**Recursive processes.**
Preliminary analysis involved reading and reviewing all the information/data gathered from each participant, to gain an overall sense of what had been collected. This process involved merging material from my *transcript files* and *personal files* such as the interview transcript that had been approved by the participants, diary notations, sketches, the photographs I had taken of the artists, and situating the sculptures I had made in close proximity to where I was working. The recordings of the interviews also became a valuable reference at this stage. Listening to the recording of each participant again at this point assisted with ensuring the accuracy of each participant’s voice, how I was interpreting their phrases, and the sentiment expressed as they spoke.

Using the range of data gathering tools outlined above, my intention was to develop a *recursive* process of analysis. Mertens (2005) indicates that recursive processes occur when “findings are generated and systematically built as successive pieces of data are gathered” (p. 420). Elliott et al. (1992) also advocate
making use of the data gathered along the way, to live with it and start to write, reflecting as collection occurs, otherwise a researcher may not do justice to the data collected. I had assumed that while collecting data from the artists there would be opportunities and time to undertake some analysis of an interview before more data were collected from subsequent participants. Given the need to accommodate times that participants requested to meet and also the occasions where I travelled substantial distances to meet artists, some interviews occurred in rapid succession. There were instances where interviews took place a day or so apart and on two particular occasions, two interviews with different artists occurred on the same day. As a consequence, I was not able to fully consider the material gathered from one participant prior to conducting an interview with another artist. I became somewhat fluid and adaptive in my recursive processes.

At the initial sorting stage of data collected from each participant, key points that seemed to emerge were summarised and acted as a review or form of what Cresswell (1998) describes as memoing. The memos appeared as notations in each of the transcripts as well as a summary of the major ideas and threads that seemed to run through their interview that related to the focus of my study. The summary became a single page document for each of the artists. During this phase of the analysis, copies of the transcripts were also provided to my supervisors to identify the major ideas or threads that appeared for them. I also provided copies of transcripts to some trusted colleagues who acted as critical friends or what Reupert (2004) refers to as peer debriefers. The critical friends were university lecturers who had experience in the areas of art education and also identity formation. They presented me with another source of major ideas or threads that appeared for them. The responses and subsequent conversations with both my supervisors and critical friends provided the opportunity to compare ideas, clarify, and challenge my lines of thinking.

The major threads that were identified for each participant were then converted into a table, or what Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as a conceptually clustered matrix, “to bring together items that belong together” (p. 127). In conjunction with developing the conceptually clustered matrix, the words of
participants that seemed to provide exemplars were also highlighted in various colour codes within the transcripts and moved into the matrix. As a result of following this process each participant’s matrix—while providing a clearer picture of the key themes for each of them and linked to their quotations—started to become a large document. This made it difficult to begin the process of looking for threads and variabilities across all of the artists.

To make my task manageable, I then developed a single thematic conceptual matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) where “more general conceptual themes can be the ordering principle” (p. 131). The layout of this matrix involved allocating each participant a column with their name appearing at the top. The rows consisted of a list of the major emergent themes, each being allocated a specific colour. The major themes also contained a cluster of related sub-themes that linked with each of the major themes. Each of these sub-themes had the same colour as the major theme they corresponded with, although each sub-theme was allocated a different font type. The different fonts and colours in the matrix matched with sections of each transcript that I revisited and coded using the same corresponding colours and different font types. Where artists’ names and themes converged within the matrix, if the artist had a contribution to make to that particular theme, “x” was entered. The matrix became a quick reference guide to locate evidence within each artist’s transcript or field notes that related to a specific theme or sub-theme in an efficient and manageable way.

During this stage of the analysis I began to see the identified themes as tracks and started to refer to them as such. The tracks became a series of unifying ideas and provided pathways to explore the artists’ experiences. By viewing the themes as tracks, the subsequent sub-themes that belonged with each theme became a series of trails to follow ideas, while remaining connected to the track or potentially linking to another track. The matrix and the corresponding colour coded data became an effective tool to share my thinking with my supervisors and critical friends who could then challenge or seek clarification as to why and how I had identified the specific tracks and trails from the data.
As data were gathered from the artists, the sifting, sorting, and recursive analysis practices I used resembled Creswell’s (2007) description of an analytic circle or data analysis spiral (refer to Figure 18). A data analysis spiral involves thinking, reflecting, classifying, looking for patterns, and then referring back to the data before starting the procedure again. The process also involves a continual winnowing of the data along the way.

While the procedure felt isolating, and on occasions seemed like I was in a freefall or downward spiral, the input I received from others proved to be invaluable. The input occurred at various stages such as the artists reconfirming their transcripts and discussions with peers, critical friends, and my supervisors which occurred on a regular basis throughout the data analysis stage. They provided a type of triangulation, or rather a form of what Richardson (2005) refers to as crystallization. Rather than valorise triangulation as a way to validate findings, where an assumption is made that there is a rigid fixed point, or a two-dimensional object that can be triangulated, Richardson (2005) claims that crystallization acknowledges “that there are far more that ‘three sides’ by which to approach the world” (p. 963). Receiving input from a range of sources such as the artists, my supervisors and critical friends provided a range of prisms to view my thinking, question my approaches, and challenge my assumptions and values. They all contributed to keeping me on track to ensure that what was emerging from the data were credible and defensible.

Figure 18. Data analysis spiral.
Source: (Creswell, 2007, p. 151)
A data analysis approach such as the one described in this section, according to Patton (2002), allows time to work on developing coherent answers to major descriptive questions before rushing into the creative work of interpreting the data which occurs in the following chapter.
Figure 19. "Isolated Plateaus".
Source: (Selkri, 2008)
Following Stewart’s (2007) notion of neonarrative, in this chapter I provide the storying place to consider the findings from my dialogues with artists who are involved in community-based arts practice(s). Prior to discussing and interpreting the artists’ stories an overview of the findings is provided that outlines the tracks and trails that emerged from the data along with relationships in my interpretive theoretical framework.

**Overview of the Findings**

As a result of using a thematic conceptual matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in the final stages of analysis, the tracks and trails outlined in Table 5 surfaced. While it is not surprising that some patterns and trails were informed in part by the sensitising concepts outlined previously, and link with aspects of my conceptual framework, some unexpected tracks and trails also emerged that I will discuss.

While a thematic conceptual matrix proved useful to outline tracks that emerged from the data, there was a need to establish a tool to map how the tracks might link, interact, or even diverge with each other and how my conceptual framework connected to the tracks. To address this need, the tracks and trails were transposed into a lotus diagram (refer to Figure 20). A lotus diagram is a type of “graphic organiser … a tool used to assist thinking when managing information” (Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority, 2008). Within the diagram, the focus of the inquiry was located in the centre dark grey square. Immediately surrounding the focus are the key ideas/concept (in my instance tracks), in lighter shaded squares. These key concepts are then relocated into the next layer out, where they are encircled by trails. The different font styles and colours within the diagram relate to the process outlined previously, where text from transcripts was coded to match tracks by using different colours and fonts. Using a lotus diagram allowed tracks and trails that were associated with other tracks and trails to be placed in close proximity. Surrounding the lotus diagram (represented by cylindrical shapes) are the elements contained in my conceptual framework. The various elements of my conceptual framework have been situated adjacent to related tracks where there seemed to be a significant link.
Track 1: Our way into art-making; our biographies.
  Trail A: Our experiences of formal education.
  Trail B: Support of family or other networks.
  Trail C: The need to adapt or teach ourselves.
  Trail D: It was the right time and place, context and time.
  Trail E: We had always known we could do it.

Track 2: Why we do this work.
  Trail A: It’s got something to do with having a level of independence and the unpredictability of it.
  Trail B: There’s a balance or link with the other work we do.
  Trail C: We challenge ideas of what being an artist is.
  Trail D: The energy and variety of where we find ourselves working.
  Trail E: It’s more than the money or income we obtain.
  Trail F: There are element of advocacy and social justice woven into what we do.

Track 3: What we acquire from working in this way.
  Trail A: It’s based on the people interaction.
  Trail B: It can inform and shape our art practice.
  Trail C: Situations arise where we move beyond the superficial and go deep with others and ourselves.
  Trail D: Working with others allows us to see in different ways.
  Trail E: Working in unfamiliar contexts can have a powerful impact on us.
  Trail F: We can change situations and circumstances, both our own and other peoples.

Track 4: The roles we perform when we work this way.
  Trail A: We can be flexible and adaptive.
  Trail B: There is a need to be business like.
  Trail C: It’s sort of teaching but we are anything but a teacher.
  Trail D: How we work with participants, how we view them.

Track 5: The impact of place on what we do
  Trail A: You need to know or find out about the place.
  Trail B: It’s about belonging and connecting to a place.
  Trail C: The advantages of living regionally.
  Trail D: The relationship with urban centres.

Track 6: Communities we work, live, or circulate in.
  Trail A: Having or gaining trust, respect, and credibility.
  Trail B: The need to put back into a community.
  Trail C: Developing and maintaining relationships.
  Trail D: Dynamics and cultures in formal and informal settings.
  Trail E: Our interactions with the art world the good, the bad, the ugly.

Table 5. Tracks and trails that emerged from the data analysis.
This organisation does not however preclude the surrounding framework from being reconfigured around the lotus diagram to then be positioned closer to another cluster of tracks. By condensing the major tracks and trails into a lotus diagram and then merging this with the elements of my conceptual framework, a map emerged with which to discuss and interpret the findings of this inquiry.

![Lotus diagram: Tracks and trails linked to conceptual framework.](image)

*Figure 20. Lotus diagram: Tracks and trails linked to conceptual framework.*

(Note that the size and scale of cells or the shape of the “plateaus” encircling the lotus diagram that constitute the components of my theoretical framework do not indicate the level of importance they have been configured to accommodate the text and to fit the page. My use of the term “plateau” to describe both the components of my theoretical framework and the series of sculptures featured in this thesis are grounded in the notion of plateaus described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).)
Having reached a point to make sense of, and talk about the findings it became evident that due to the rich data provided by participants, a discussion of all the tracks and trails identified would be impossible within the constraints of this thesis. Balancing my aim that participants’ voices are heard as well as ensuring that a level of depth occurs in discussing and interpreting their stories against the interpretive theoretical framework, the subsequent sections follow the most resonant or significant tracks to inform the focus of this inquiry. It has not been possible, practical or prudent to include the experiences of all the participants for each of the areas discussed or to include all of the elements or plateaus outlined in my conceptual framework to examine each track or trail. Rather, the most applicable elements from my conceptual framework and exemplars from the experiences of the participants have been woven into the narrative to assist with the interpretation of the findings. In following this process I have engaged in a process of selective synthesis in examining and analysing the data.

The headings for the following tracks and trails have been used to capture the voices of the participants. In the process of crafting this storying space, the essences of the participants’ messages have not been changed, although there are instances where I have adjusted some of the tracks and the structure of some trails to ensure that the neonarrative (Stewart, 2007) flows. Where each new track begins in this chapter the corresponding section from the lotus diagram appears as an icon. The reader can refer to the icons, as well as Figure 20 to consider the reconfigurations that occurred during the writing process.

### How We Came to Art-Making and Working with Communities

When the concepts of self and identity are seen as how individuals make sense of their experiences and then communicate their meaning system to others (Josselson, 1987), the learning that has occurred and informed us over the length and breath of our respective lives needs to be considered. Past, present
and future experiences contribute to each person’s biography, which Jarvis (2006) describes as the “outcome of a lifetime” (p. 73). Prior to discussing the learning for artists when they are involved in community-based arts practice(s), I will initially explore the journey and experiences of the participants in becoming artists and subsequently finding themselves involved in community-based arts practice(s).

Of the twelve artists who were introduced in the previous chapter (refer to Table 3), more than half were born or reared in regional settings; some were currently living in the communities they had grown up in. Those who had not spent their childhood or formative years in a rural area had all lived for a substantial amount of time in regional Australia. Ruth was the most recent arrival to living in regional Australia. She moved to Eden on the southern New South Wales coast eleven years ago. Most of the participants who had been born in the country had moved away from home, usually at the end of their schooling either to continue their education or to pursue work opportunities. They said they relocated to larger regional centres, capital cities, or overseas before returning at some later point to live in a regional location.

The myriad of ways, and the range of factors that assisted in shaping these artists’ biographies, are potentially significant for us to come to understand the story of who they are (Squire, 2008, p. 41). Following this track of the findings, there is a particular resonance with Bourdieu’s (1993) concept of habitus, as well as the other two components of capital and fields that constitute his trilogy to articulate individuals’ relationships between the objective and subjective worlds. Côté and Levine’s (2002) concept of identity capital that involves acquiring tangible and intangible resources through human, social and cultural capital, that individuals require to negotiate a pathway through life are also evident.

We have always known we could do it.
Art-making featured as an activity that participants spoke of enjoying for as long as they could remember. Some of the artists such as Andrew, Peter, Stephen, and
Annie, when talking about their early memories did not articulate factors that may have contributed to their enjoyment of art. They described how art had always been an inherent part of them and their world. Andrew claimed that art-making was innate for him and part of being human:

I can’t say any emotional drive to do this thing except for the primitive drive to paint … that primitive drive; I put it down to that. That it’s born in me this fundamental need to.

A similar response came from Peter, where as a child he “always drew – like there was always a visual sense – but it was like – it was just something that occurred – it was an unconscious activity really”. Expressing how art had permeated his world at an early age, without delving into how it may have come about, Stephen stated that “I think it just comes through your whole life – and certainly I was always interested in art, seeing art”. Identifying art-making as central in her childhood, Annie, calmly and directly articulated that art “was always what I wanted to do – I didn’t question anything else in my life sort of as I grew up”. For these artists, art and how they had developed into artists, had become what Giddens (1979) describes as a tacit or an unconscious aspect for them. In turn, they had absorbed this tacit aspect into their habitus that Bourdieu (1996), suggests acts like a second sense, where initially they were not able to articulate explicit influences over their lives that may have contributed to them becoming an artist.

As the stories of these artists and the others who participated in this study emerged, factors were recognised by them that contributed to their disposition in becoming an artist. On occasions, participants were able to identify several factors or points in their lives. For instance, some chose specific focal points such as their early childhood, adolescence, or their early adult life. Others talked broadly about all these aspects. Their responses are provided in the following trails.
The impact of family.
Talking about how they had developed an affinity with art-making during childhood or their early adolescence, participants spoke about the significance of family and other close networks. A major influence from this period in the artists’ lives involved receiving encouragement, acknowledgement, and direction for their artistic endeavours. Andrew described with pride his childhood, growing up in a “working class family … in just a standard Aussie household and it was a big family” in a small town in southern New South Wales. Within this context, he received attention and encouragement from his father for his art-making:

… my dad showed me, because I was one of five. My dad always showed interest in my art work so, reflecting on it, I had enough encouragement and the right times to pursue it.

Becoming involved in community-based arts practice(s) with “youth at risk”, according to Andrew, was also a legacy from his father, as was his quest for “finding the essence of being a good man”. Andrew referred to his need for “being a good man” on several occasions during our interview, suggesting it was a patterned, durable aspect of his habitus and part of the intangible resources that Côté and Levine (2002) contribute to one’s identity capital. The dispositions Andrew linked with being a good man were not necessarily masculinist qualities frequently associated with normative gender roles (Connell, 2002). According to Andrew, his father had always emphasised that “you’ve only got one life” and that childhood has a major impact on an individual’s life. Care and concern for all individuals was an important component for Andrew in being a good man.

While describing that art-making was what she had always wanted to do; on reflection, Annie was also able to identify circumstances that had influenced her. The sensation and positive emotional responses that occurred from Annie’s interactions with her grandmother as well as receiving encouragement and acknowledgement from her, and other close family members had assisted with Annie’s journey in becoming an artist:

My first training was with my grandmother. Just one of those situations where I always loved it and I was a good drawer as a kid, it was just one
of those sort of things where everyone said, ‘oh you’re so good’ and it made me feel good, but my grandmother was a bit of a painter and I used to just adore spending time with her and doing it.

Rather than identifying a specific family member as providing encouragement, Benjamin described the supportive conditions that existed within his family structure that allowed him to inquire and explore “making things”. As a child Benjamin stated that he “was given free range with a bunch of tools and no real master to sort of dictate how they were to be used”. The process of discovering and exploring possibilities without restrictions according to Benjamin was a legacy of his learning. It had become an enduring aspect of his habitus and a resource for him to draw on later in his life.

Along with identifying family as having an influence on their disposition to art-making, participants also outlined how family circumstances had contributed to them becoming involved in community-based arts practice(s). The impact of family on Andrew’s motivations was outlined earlier. For Angie, becoming involved in community-based arts practice(s) in part was a reaction to her childhood. She spoke of disjunctures, contradictions and tensions with her experiences of living in a rural area on a farm, where according to Angie her parents “didn’t quite fit in” with the local community. Her father was “a biodynamic farmer of Italian origin” and her mother an “Anglo-protestant Steiner teacher”. As a result of the family not fitting in, she described how she became insulated on the farm:

I didn’t have a sense of community and I think you know now I’m understanding why I’m so driven to actually pull people together because it’s taken me all my life to actually feel socially apt you know and to know how it works …. I was also very very influenced through my upbringing by a biodynamic Rudolph Steiner philosophy … around sort of a holism in life and the whole person really did influence what I do and where I’m coming from.

In contrast to Angie’s acknowledgement of how the holistic philosophies of her parents had isolated her from broader community as a child, but had also contributed to her disposition, Jo described a very different set of experiences in her family environment. During Jo’s childhood there was continual exposure to,
interaction, and involvement with rural community in which she lived. The notion of what Jo called “community mindedness” that permeated her family, according to her, had possibly influenced the ways she goes about her work:

I think it may have come from my family background. I mean, my grandmother was very much into, you know she used to do meals on wheels and did a lot of community work. She was quite religious sort of thing and my dad was on council and you know we’ve got a family of blood donors, fire brigade and all that sort of stuff so I don’t know, maybe it’s a bit in the background there.

*It was the right time and environment.*

While family life was explicitly identified as contributing to their disposition toward art-making and notions of community, being located in a particular time and environment also emerged as a significant element for the artists’ journeys. The support provided at certain times such as Annie’s description of occasions she spent with her grandmother had particular resonance for some participants in developing identity capital. Artists also spoke of times when circumstances were more or less conducive for them to pursue their art-making.

Before immigrating to Australia in the mid 1980s, Stephen had a passion for taking photographs, although it was impossible for him to pursue this option while he was responsible for the family farm in Scotland. It was not until the time came to sell the farm in Scotland and move to Australia that he began to concentrate on his photography:

I started taking photographs at the age of 11, I processed my first black and white film at the age of 11, I love photography, but I couldn’t afford to get into photography ... I didn’t have the energy to do it. Because of the family farm I was in, there was no room for art in that situation ... it was when we were selling up and so I could, we had the money and so I could actually do it.

While circumstances prevented Stephen from following his passion for photography, the ethos he experienced in rural communities as a result of his farming in Scotland featured in his disposition of how he views art and also influenced the ways he now works in community-based arts practice(s). Stephen described how for him “farming was an artistic form ... a sort of social art” that involved working with the environment, reflecting aspects of Beuys’s (2004) view
of social sculpture. While enjoying working with the patterns of the environment and climate, Stephen explained that it could be isolating and insular, where for days on end his only interaction might be with his animals. As a counter balance to the isolation Stephen spoke fondly of the rituals and patterns that existed in rural areas that were not dissimilar to Jo’s childhood experiences. The ethos that Stephen detailed, echoed many of the qualities that concur with Tönnies (1887) notion of Gemeinschaft. He also detailed how at certain times of the year members of the farming community would congregate and work with each other to complete an identified task. The way Stephen spoke of the gatherings, the environment became one of people working as equals, in unselfish ways. These are elements that Turner (1969) maintains belongs to the modality of communitas. The group activity also became a social occasion, where “learning by doing” and “learning by belonging” outlined in Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning (refer to Figure 12) appear to be at work. They were learning situation that Stephen enjoyed:

I used to love the gatherings and the herdings in Scotland and you’d be working with other farmers who’d come over from other properties and you’d have 1,000 sheep to shear in a day … it would be a group it’s very much a group activity. You’d have to get through that…But that was a group activity with these people. You were actually doing things…you came together 2 or 3 times a year and it was a very social event.

When Ruth identified influences on her in becoming a photographer, while acknowledging family background, she also stated that she was fortunate to have experienced the emergence of a particular social and cultural phenomenon. The period that Binns (1991) characterised as one where “waves of action met … with political and social issues” (p. 12). Ruth described it as

…that time around the 70s, you know the women’s movement and women were kind of replacing – I mean – repositioning what’s valid to use as artwork and … given my own sort of politics at the time and my own background anyway family wise and you know it just sort of fitted in so many ways.

The time of which Ruth spoke involved her living in a shared house in central Melbourne with artist/photographers whose work was being recognised in the avant-garde artworld. Her interest in photography developed as a result of these
circumstances and subsequent experiences. Ruth learnt her initial photographic skills by observing and being shown some photographic processing techniques by these artists over several years.

Being located in a particular time and context to meet people he could learn from was also conducive for Geoff to enhance his art-making skills. He had moved in and out of workplaces, undertaking an apprenticeship as a silkscreen printer before moving to a position with the Post Master General’s (PMG) department in Melbourne.

I graduated from that to be an illustrator, what they called an illustrator, and I was working with probably the best artists in Australia at the time. It was fantastic. And that was really the most exciting time. I was 18, living in Melbourne with these whacky people I was working with so it became quite a time.

Stephen, Geoff, and Ruth’s stories are examples of unintentional, unconscious, or incidental learning that Jarvis (2007) maintains can occur in formal, informal, and incidental learning situations. The artists’ situations also contain elements of them belonging simultaneously to Grounded, Way-of-life, and Projected communities proposed by Mulligan et al. (2007), who emphasise that trying to find a demarcation between forms of community reduces the complexity inherent in understanding communities. The ways in which the three artists described their experiences and learning were underpinned by a shared passion, regular interaction and mutual engagement with others, dimensions which Wenger (1998) contends are required for communities of practice to operate.

Our experiences of formal education.

Institutionalised formal education surfaced with participants as a powerful influence on them, both in positive and negative ways. Artists referred to how it affected their art-making and the decisions they made in becoming artists. Reflecting on the compulsory years of schooling Andrew maintained that being afforded an opportunity to demonstrate his talent to others in class, and like Annie’s description earlier, the recognition that came with that, was important
for him. Andrew became the class monitor responsible for illustrating on the blackboard an image that related to the religious lesson for the week.

So I could always draw but that’s where I was formally asked to do it … having encouragement from my dad at a very young age and being able to be asked by the school to draw, I think that they’re the things that set you on the path.

Benjamin also felt that schooling played a large part in forming his character. He described how school had contributed to the way he works with people in community-based arts practice(s). Benjamin was the youngest of the participants in this study. His formal schooling began in the mid 1980s, and his comments indicate some of the dominant discourses of teaching and education at that time.

[It was] at the expense of good spelling, probably some skills that were forced on us in primary school in that period. A lot of you know, trying to engage others and involve others the anti-discrimination qualities in the education … [although ] I was never a team player. I didn’t like team things; it didn’t make sense at all when I was younger.

As well as inferring a level of indoctrination in the socialisation aspects of his formal education, Benjamin also went on to note the mundane nature of much of his school work. At one point in our conversation he became quite animated and excited in conveying a particular learning episode that Mezirow (1991) would describe as transformational. The learning involved Benjamin revising his interpretations and then internalising these. The episode was powerful for him.

Like you know, we had a travelling artist and they would come around and they’d sort of – you know I remember these little soapstone sculptures … and just the feeling of this, this is me and sort of having that little soap stone and having that feeling of ‘I can do this!’ . It’s like this is what I’m waiting for. I’m spending all this time at school and we’re doing all this shit and this is – like you know I could do this 24 hours a day –just give me food intravenously and let me go and I can show you what I can do.

Like Benjamin, Anita and Stephen also identified a significant teacher or circumstance at school as providing them with resources for their identity capital (Côté & Levine, 2002) and opportunities to consider the possibilities of art.

I was inspired by my art teacher, who was a very charismatic inspirational person, to encourage me to become an artist and he also later in my life, influenced me to become a teacher (Anita).
I think my possibly being an artist goes back to school at the age of 8… just having some inspiration – being inspired by an art teacher… Art was just fantastic. And it was perhaps just for a year at school and that really influenced me, it very much influenced me (Stephen).

From the experiences, of the artists outlined thus far, and others that will follow on this trail, tensions between participants’ dispositions and negotiations with broader cultural and institutional structures begin to emerge. The artists had started to acquire human, social and cultural capital (1986; Côté & Levine, 2002) that assisted in shaping their individual views and encouraged their art making. In tandem with this, they also learnt the cultural conventions of how to behave or interact in various social settings.

While the artists’ “artistic endeavours”, were supported during their formative years by family or formal schooling, a somewhat different picture emerged for them when they moved into late adolescence and early adulthood. Participants spoke of being confronted during those periods of time with mixed messages. They experienced what Jarvis (2006) refers to as disjuncture and contradictions that challenged their assumptions; in particular challenges related to their views of becoming an artist. They “picked up signals” that having a vocation as an artist was not a legitimate career as it did not equate with “real work”. In most cases these different messages came from the same sources that had previously encouraged their endeavours. Artists responded to these mixed messages and conflicts in a variety of ways. Annie, after completing a visual arts degree, chose to resist the advice of her father: “My dad was sort of keen that I did a Dip Ed [teaching qualification] so that I could have a real job, but that just didn’t seem really good to teach anyway’. Family concerns did influence Leigh’s choice of tertiary study, and as a compromise he enrolled in a graphic design course rather than visual arts study.

I probably would have gone into a fine arts school except my parents thought it was better if I went to an advertising based school, which is ok except that it maybe didn’t give me some of the insights into what I would have liked about painting and maybe connections in the art world would have been handy though.
Although enjoying drawing and having a “visual sense” while growing up in his late adolescence, the option of becoming an artist was not afforded to Peter. Instead he became a builder prior to undertaking tertiary study in art later in his life.

I’d always as a youngster drawn and that sort of stuff and it was something that I was interested in but I didn’t ever consider it as something that – I suppose it was never put to me that it would be a life’s work – so I went to art school – I think I was 27, having done another whole lot of other stuff and I guess it was not till the end of art school that I think that that was what I wanted to do.

Difficulties in making decisions about career paths and tertiary study also surfaced with Jo. She described “feeling lost” after initially applying to undertake a degree in archaeology and, while she was accepted into a course, it was not at the university she wanted to attend. Deferring from that course and having a year off, she decided to enrol in an art course the following year. Jo had not considered her career prospects as a result of her decision, although her parents were concerned about her choice.

I remember at that stage my parents saying ‘now we’re going to pay for you to go to university once – are you really sure you want to do sculpture?’ … not a lot of thought went into that one – I just wanted to do sculpting and didn’t think about plans or long term future or any of that sort of stuff.

Although confronted with hurdles that were imposed by others, whose concerns were based on their understanding of the social identities of artists’, the artists in this study found ways of overcoming them. Through their commitment and internal drive, the artists had developed the agentic capacity to overcome the barriers through indirect routes that enabled them to continue their journeys of becoming artists.

The majority of the participants involved in this inquiry had gone on to acquire further cultural capital by undertaking tertiary education. Ten of the twelve artists had obtained a formal qualification in the arts. Tertiary study was a transitional progression from school for several of the participants, while others such as Peter who worked as a builder, Geoff as a silk screen printer, and Stephen
who was a farmer in Scotland, initially had alternative careers. It was later into adult life that these three participants gained formal undergraduate arts qualifications and were in the process of, or had obtained, a masters degree. Belinda and Anita had gone on to gain postgraduate qualifications in teaching and other fields. Jo had started a Diploma in Education but withdrew. Angie described that as a result of working as a community artist, it had compelled her to undertake further postgraduate study in the area of community cultural development.

The two participants who indicated they had “no formal training in the arts”, appeared to make the statement with a sense of pride, defiance or as a liberating action. Ruth declared that she “had no art training at all, I’ve never been to art school, except as a lecturer subsequently and had no training as a photographer so I was self-taught”. In Ruth’s circumstances as discussed previously, her experience of a “community of practice”, where she worked with, and learnt from a range of photographers could be seen as a form of apprenticeship. Andrew disclosed that his “training” was as a panel beater and spray painter, although when talking about his art practice learning, he had “no formal training”. Instead, he described how he used the fundamentals of art and had “kind of broken it down to a tradesman’s way”.

Those who had undertaken tertiary education in the arts did not always speak highly of their formal learning experience, or the supposed cultural capital they obtained from the experience. Their education did not necessarily prepare them for being an artist once they left the institution. These claims are echoed by Sullivan (2005) and Kester (2004), who claim that a schism exists between what tertiary establishments charged with “training artists” convey, and the diverse nature of work artists find themselves involved in once leaving the institution.

When I finished university I remember … the whole thrust out the door and you know three years of making stuff and then sent out into the big world. I was – I felt really abandoned by the lecturers and the school system in that thing (Jo).
An important aspect to surface for Jo from her university experience involved the social capital it provided her, with the bonds she developed with her peers that have lasted beyond her time at university. Jo described how these bonds were enduring over almost two decades:

That was one of the main things that I got from my university experience from my peer group. Like it was a really good year that I went through with and I think there’s probably still all of that ... we keep in contact because that sort of helps.

The quality of teaching by academic staff was an issue Annie identified from her university experience, although, like Jo, she developed some strong, lasting friendships with her peers.

I thought the actual training part was sort of – I mean I really consider myself a self-taught artist you know. There really wasn’t a lot of training … I mean the lecturers weren’t really interested – they were on tenure and I learnt from the technician as you do… but made friendships for life and just learnt about sort of doing things yourself without having everything there provided for you.

The importance of establishing friendships and, connecting with other people during tertiary education, and the social capital it provided, was also very influential for Peter and Geoff. They met at art school where they had collaborated on art projects during that time.

I think that probably pre-empted the – you know, that we could, we could work in that way. Even though we were friends we could actually build something – something that was both of us but was also seamless (Geoff).

Considerable time elapsed after art school until Peter and Geoff were reacquainted or, as Peter said, that he “came together with Geoff, who I met at art school, pretty much by accident” when they worked on a project with school children. That project cemented a partnership between them in art-making activities; they formed a business called Ratartat which has now existed for fifteen years.

The need to adapt: We couldn’t hide, we learnt on the job.

Having discussed thus far how most participants had received various levels of encouragement, support, or education in relation to their art discipline or
practice, their entrée into community-based arts practice(s) was a very different prospect. For several of them, there was the pragmatic element of increasing their level of income and diversified work opportunities. Others described how it was a result of feeling compelled to contribute or being recruited by others in their local community. For example, realising that her work as a studio ceramic artist was becoming less commercially viable, Angie initially perceived community arts practice(s) as a way of both transferring her skills to another setting, and also provide some form of income. The position Angie described was one of the omnipresent contingencies that Mishler (1999), describes as shaping our life-course trajectories. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) framework, Angie’s circumstances may be viewed as a rhizomatic event.

I had to find another way to actually be an artist and to do what I want to do and to work with the materials that I want to work with…. It wasn’t something I looked to do … I knew nothing, about community art, but off I went … I didn’t go into this thinking I’m going to create change and I’m going to work magic and all these people are going to be re-born. I went into it because it was a job. Someone was going to pay me to do some art.

Having an ambition to be a practising studio artist who exhibits in galleries can require artists to conform to what Bourdieu (1996) refers to as the “rules” within the field of art, particularly if they want to be “consecrated” as an artist by those with power within the field. Belinda described the tough realities of attempting to become an artist according to the rules of the field, as well as the need for her to sustain herself. Having additional skills such as turning her hand to community-based arts practice(s) was necessary for Belinda to survive.

I was always exhibiting, always entering prizes, always having shows, so, that was my focus always to be a practising artist … but obviously, you need to be able to feed yourself so, I was also teaching and doing other art projects as well, to back it up.

When artists did achieve a level of recognition within the artworld, their individual circumstances did not necessarily become any easier. Becoming a “successful” artist and acquiring cultural capital within the arts field such as belonging to “the stable of a well known gallery” in Melbourne, holding an annual exhibition and having works purchased for collections, Geoff still found “earning a living” from his art remained tenuous and uncertain. The need to
have a less uncertain income became a major factor for Geoff to undertake his first community arts project.

You’d sell a couple of works, but you had to remain on the dole [unemployment benefits], which I call the art grant anyway so the art grant was really keeping us but there was more and more and more restrictions with that… the initial reason I did the Stawell [project] was because I needed money.

The imperative to adapt and find some form of paid employment was also raised by Peter when he described his initial experience of a community arts project (on which he had worked with Geoff).

We both determined that art was something we did want to spend our lives doing. But we both had families and so of course money becomes one of those things …there are some practicalities that need to be addressed and we thought, that opened our eyes and we thought that was a possibility…. and so the first couple of years, it was – and if you look at what it is that drives it a lot of it in the first instance, is desperation – it was economically driven and we did take whatever was offered.

For some of the artists being a member of a smaller community where, as Jo stated, “everybody knows everything about you”, proved to be the catalyst for them to become involved in community-based arts practice(s). Jo described the culture of rural communities that echoed characteristics of Gemeinschaft (1887) and grounded communities described by Mulligan et al. (2007) that require everyone contributing in some way to the community and the ethos of volunteerism. These circumstances meant for Jo that by being an artist, and living in a rural location, she was “drawn into” the community. Similarly, Anita stated that she was unable to isolate or “hide herself away”. Having small children in playgroups or at school acted as the hook for Anita and Jo to become involved in community-based arts practice(s). They described how this was not necessarily of their own volition, for both of them it was due more to the fact of living in a small community.

Your children draw you into things. But [in] the country, I suppose, unless you want to work in isolation everyone around the community knows who you are and you are sort of drawn in… And schools, the small rural schools they call on your expertise… I volunteered my time to do art and craft activities in my kids’ schools. This led to other schools asking me…. In the city I was only involved in the school community. Maybe if we’d stayed longer we would have been involved, but I feel we would
have been too tied up with earning a living. In a way the city gives you the opportunity to opt out more so than the country. Or maybe the fact that there are so many other artists working in the city that opting out is easy (Anita).

I think the only reason I got involved with community groups was because we were living in a very small community and, umm, I had young children and the playgroup met at the neighbourhood house and ummm and so you know we did art with the children there on and you know it sort of grew from there I suppose you know, the coordinator said, oh do you want to have a go at doing an art class with the local – and ummm yeh and it was just lucky – because I was in a very small community anyway and you couldn’t hide if you weren’t helping and everyone – it was a very much a strong community and everyone sort of helped together and worked together so you just had to help out. (Jo)

Jo also raised an observation about the ethos of “volunteerism” or “putting into the community”. While possibly not confined to living in a rural location, she suggested that volunteering can be more pronounced and difficult, in that once becoming involved it was difficult to remove yourself from the role. As she stated, “I think with voluntary sort of stuff, once you volunteer for one thing it’s very hard to unvolunteer”. Jo’s claim was reflected in the circumstances in which I interviewed her for this study. When I arrived she was busily working on a sculpture for a festival in a community she lived in several years ago. The community felt they were still able to request her assistance. She felt she was unable to refuse the request. Jo was making a huge papier mache stingray that would feature in a parade. Dressed in protective clothing that in turn was covered with paper pulp and glue, Jo was unable to stop working—she had a deadline to meet—but was happy for the interview to continue.

Opting to undertake arts projects that involved working with groups of people, a number of unforeseen issues initially arose for artists. Notions of angst, uncertainty, or feeling that they did not have the confidence or skills to draw on were concerns that some of the artists described. The skills that the artists felt they lacked were similar to those that Lacy (1995b) claims are not usually associated with art-making, such as collaboration and communicating with groups of people, although artists who move to become activists need to acquire these skills.
The first time, I was quite young and I really didn't know what was expected of me and it was quite daunting, I wasn't quite confident as an artist in my own right because I was quite young. Knowing what I do now, I think I have a lot more confidence in what I am doing (Anita).

There were also tensions for Geoff in becoming involved in community-based arts practice(s). He questioned his ability to engage or connect with people. It also posed a dilemma for him, as his perceptions of what being a “real” artist meant were challenged. Reflecting on his first project, Geoff spoke of the recognition he received and his sense of achievement.

I was reticent and didn’t know if I could do it even, I didn’t know how good my communication skills were. Also I suppose … I had the idea I should be able to make a living out of my art, not doing community art … I had to work out ways of dealing with people and ways of dealing with workshops, it was a fantastic project and I got a lot of accolades and the results was brilliant.

Taking a leap of faith, and gaining satisfaction from working on group projects, artists as a consequence discovered that a great amount of energy was required from them, and that they could also impose high levels of pressure on themselves. Angie had come to realise that her enthusiasm and passion for the projects she is involved with, and her disposition results at times in exhaustion.

I learnt that I was – I can exploit myself very well. That the actual making of the art sort of took me completely away and so I learnt that that wasn’t a very good thing to do in one sense for me. I was absolutely burnt out at the end of it but the, the outcome was fantastic.

Andrew stated that there was an inherent pressure that came with his work that involved engaging as he described “non-mainstream kids”. There was not only the need to think about the artwork to be made. During the course of a project he came to know the various issues facing the young people with whom he worked. The combination of these factors in a project became weighty and created tensions for Andrew.

[It’s] a double edged sword. The greatest misconception about it is, people say I must really enjoy it. Well I can’t honestly say that that’s really the case. It’s an intense concentration and I don’t actually feel the weight of the commission but sometimes I do, it’s always a struggle when you’re in the middle of it. It’s just difficult.
Although enjoying what he does, Andrew questioned whether he could undertake community-based art practice(s) in a full-time capacity. At the time of our interview he was also working at a major army depot as a spray painter, where part of his work in that setting involved painting camouflage patterns on army tanks. Stephen also doubted if he had the emotional energy for continual involvement in community-based arts practice(s). For him there was a need to balance work as a community artist with other work and family commitments. It was also important for Stephen to have other art interests and time away from community-based art practice(s) as he stated “you’ve got to nourish yourself a bit more, because sometimes I feel a bit empty like at the end of this project”.

Feeling uncertain about entering into community-based arts practice(s), the artists were unclear as to what might have prepared them for this type of work. Rather, they spoke about the range of variables, and about aspects of being unknowable or predictable in a particular project they were involved with, let alone subsequent projects. According to several of the artists, a particular aspect that did assist them initially in learning about community-based arts practice(s) was the fact that it occurred in regional Australia. Peter stated that working regionally meant that he and Geoff were not hampered by the constraints or conventions that can exist with community-based arts practice(s) and the “arts industry” in major capital cities.

I think we were lucky early on with the people that we worked with and also I think because we were outside Melbourne and we didn’t get looked at in terms of working in Melbourne for quite some time...we were looked at as provincial and we worked in a lot of places in regional Victoria and that was fantastic because it allowed us probably a lot more freedom. We didn’t have the pressure of the, you know, the Melbourne arts community and I think that was a great thing (Peter).

Both Peter and Geoff spoke about the relatively nearby Melbourne art community, and they perceived that a hierarchy or regulated industry of sorts exists for community-based arts practice(s). Using Bourdieu’s (1996) framework to interpret this, (refer to Figure 4) the hierarchy has surfaced somewhere within the subfields of cultural production. As well as not becoming immersed in the power structures of community-based arts practice(s), artists also described the
regional ethos of “things being a little more relaxed” and how “knowing people” was a distinct advantage. It assisted their practice whereby potential barriers or bureaucratic issues that may stifle a project could be overcome or negotiated more easily. From Ruth’s experience, compared with living in Melbourne, there is not as much red tape or bureaucracy to wade through when working and living in a regional location.

The participants’ stories that were discussed on this particular track identified some of the influences that contributed to them becoming artists and subsequently being involved in community-based arts practice(s). The influences that did surface are by no means surprising, featuring what might be considered predictable factors such as family, formal education, work, and social environments. However, the level of emphasis individual artists placed on particular experiences and the fact that they could recall specific events or episodes indicates that within this mix of circumstances, certain experiences had a resonance, or were more enduring than others for them. Through an exploration of these past experiences and interactions, it has been possible to gain an insight into aspects of participants’ habitus, or feel for the game that contributes to a sense of individual self, or identity by becoming a part of one’s biographies. The frames of reference that are part of our habitus, according to Bourdieu (1993), are in one sense regular and predictable as well as being fluid and unique. They are a set of dispositions that generate practices and perceptions that guide our understanding or meaning-making. Being mindful of the artists’ biographies also allows us to consider what Côté and Levine (2002) refer to as the development of both the tangible resources of social, and cultural capital, as well as the reflexive-agentic capacities which they refer to as intangible resources. It is these resources that Côté and Levine argue contribute to our identity capital, which assists us in navigating our life journey.

Exploring the participants’ journeys in becoming artists also provides an opportunity to consider how we continue to fold (Deleuze, 1988b) these aspects into our sense of who we are. This track provided a backdrop to consider more broadly how individuals are in part their own biographies which include hidden
and unconscious lifelong experiences as well as past experiences about which we are conscious (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2005). Facets of each artist’s biography will continue to unfold in this neonarrative which explores the learning that occurs for artists who are involved in community-based arts practice(s) and how this in turn shapes their identities by following other tracks and trails in this chapter.

### Why We Work as Artists in Communities

Having considered the artists’ trajectories that influenced them to include making art practice a serious aspect of their lives, on this track I will explore the artists’ perspectives as to why they continue to be involved in community-based arts practice(s). When listening to the artists’ stories, and their reasons for maintaining a connection with community-based arts practice(s), the ways in which they involved themselves occurred to different degrees and at a range of levels. From what I could ascertain in our conversations, all of the artists had “other strings to their bow”. Some of their reasons for the way they worked were alluded to previously and will also unfold throughout the remainder of this inquiry. The following trails explore some major reasons that these artists put forward to describe why they do the work they do. It provides further insights into their learning, and how being involved in community-based arts has contributed to their identity capital and shaped them.

*It is never the same; there is unpredictability, variety and energy.*

The initial process of identifying a time and place to meet with the participants in this study was not necessarily a straightforward process. Referring to field notes related to that particular phase of my inquiry, there were several entries outlining how the ways these artists worked did not seem to follow any sort of regular pattern. During phone conversations and emails with participants, it became apparent that they could be involved on several projects in varying capacities at
the one time; for example, “finishing off” one project, having one or two
currently “in the pipeline” and also exploring future projects. Understanding
that work circumstances may change for them at any time, we were able to
establish firm but “fluid” times and dates to meet.

When eventually meeting the artists, the multiplicity and unpredictable nature of
their work was identified by them as a rewarding aspect. Rather than expressing
concern or unease, they seemed to convey various levels of being comfortable
with uncertainty. It was a “challenge” that allowed projects to remain interesting
for them. Working on a sustained project with a regular group of people, Jo
described how her interaction with participants would continually be in a state of
flux.

[It’s] really interesting, because it’s never the same. Like you know, one
week you might have a connection with one person and they’ll be
fabulous and you think like, cool, I’ll have them next week and then next
week they won’t connect at all. You know that’s, that’s really interesting
and really challenging that way.

In broader terms, artists stated that it was crucial for each project to be different
and remain somewhat fluid. They acknowledged that every context is unique,
requiring different ways of working to ensure participants remained involved.
As artists, the fluid unpredictable nature also assisted their own needs in that
projects did not become tedious for them. Working with uncertainty in the ways
that the artists described, provided them with opportunities to further develop
the intangible resources of critical thinking that Côté and Levine (2002) propose
form part of an individual’s identity capital. Benjamin was direct in his
comments, stating that he liked “making things but I don’t like, I didn’t like
repetitious work”. For both Geoff and Peter, there was the excitement that came
with not repeating or replicating projects. The appeal was in the adventure of
always solving new problems.

… that’s what’s exciting to them and its terrific and it’s exciting because
we’re not real sure what we’re going to get … well every one was different
– every one of our projects had to be different for us to want to do them I
think. We never want to repeat, repeat, repeat (Geoff).
There’s a new – something else that has to be addressed, so I think there’s that – it appeals to us – just as an adventure – that it sets up new problems that need to be solved (Peter).

With the variety of circumstances and the unpredictable nature of projects, artists described how a dynamic energy could also surface reflecting aspects of dialogical, littoral (Kester, 2004) and relational (Bourriaud, 2002) approaches to art. As artists they were working with others. Sharing ideas and thoughts on problems that needed to be solved which meant that new possibilities could emerge. The collective sense that developed in these situations allowed for the realisation of outcomes that would not be achievable if they had worked as individuals.

I don’t know, it’s just something that is really inspired me that, that working, making something happen on a scale bigger than something I would do myself. Getting involved with the energy, the creative energy of other people, especially kids (Annie).

Working with or as part of a group also shifted the emphasis away from these artists being seen as totally responsible for the outcome of a project. Anita described the phenomenon of the community and artist working together, focussed on the same vision where the “community is supporting you in doing things like wanting something creative to happen”. While Stephen felt there was an expectation on him to bring a level of energy to a community project, working with others for him, meant the project became a collective issue and, his sense of being solely responsible was diminished.

You can bring yourself as a catalyst for creating energy and I think that’s very important in a group as an artist in a community but working with groups, you know, I really enjoy it – it’s fantastic, because there’s no pressure on you to actually have to perform. As a group, you know you perform as a group but it doesn’t sort of define down just to you – you know, it’s your responsibility and it’s a group responsibility. So you’re not – the fingers not pointing at you.

Working as a member of a group in the contexts described by artists, the situations became partnerships in learning, characterised by Bagnall (2007) as being one where all involved in the project become learners. The artists by adopting this approach with their work also seemed to be assuming the identity that Mancillas (1998) refers to as a citizen artist, where artists are viewed as
partners working toward similar goals” (p. 339). Stephen’s comments also reflected his previous experiences and fond memories of the gatherings when he was farming in Scotland and the social aspects of learning. With the artists adopting these types of approaches, opportunities arose for artist’s individual identities or self, to converge with a personal or social identity that they were comfortable with. The need for the artists in this study to attain a level of congruence between their internal subjective worlds and the external objective worlds is a thread that weaves through the tracks discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

We challenge ideas of what being an artist is.
The artists, while being aware of the fact that they were employed for specific community-based arts projects, and charged with making some form of art, found that having the label of artist ascribed to them could be problematic. The artists spoke about being confronted with a range of perceptions about what an artist was by those with whom they worked. They were seen by others as being special, unique, or different. As a result, artists described how they would become the centre of attention in a project or community as a type of celebrity or alternately treated with suspicion. The artists who participated in this study did not necessarily want, or to be seen as wanting, the focus put on them. In a similar vein to Stephen’s preference of having responsibility shifted away from him, Benjamin stated that the process was one of mutual sharing.

People tend to you know focus on the artist or the maker because there sort of has to be one figurehead which is –I find odd…. It’s just not the way I operate you know. So this is a way of me sharing with other people and communicating I guess.

Dealing with others’ preconceived notions of artists and how they should perform their role emerged as an underlying agenda for several of the participating artists in this study. Situating themselves in their own grounded community, broader community settings, or institutionalised environments such as schools, provided opportunities for artists to challenge and de-mystify people’s perceptions of who they were. Belinda had a determination to debunk stereotypical myths of artists as she felt “the notion of the artist is not always
highly regarded, there can be that view of the druggie or hippie or what ever. But I don’t think I fit that stereotype”. A similar view was expressed by Anita as part of her rationale for becoming involved in community-based arts practice(s).

I can help break down preconceived ideas about who and what an artist is, which is a positive thing about working in the community and being involved in community events. The community can see that all artists aren’t temperamental, eccentric people, that they are creative thinkers and problem solvers and have an important role in the scheme of things... I like to be breaking down barriers and preconceived ideas about who and what an artist is and to reinforce the concept that we are all creative in different ways.

By applying his spray painting skills to arts projects, Andrew likened his work to that of early artisans who were skilled tradesmen, describing himself as a “journeyman artist”. He also felt that his “masculine” physical appearance and the fact that he rides a motorbike worked in his favour to engage with the “non mainstream young people”. It allowed them to see that “all types” of people make art. He claimed how having “long hair, tattoos and riding a Harley [motorbike] ... here I am bigger than life and I can sketch ... that opens that little window of opportunity and then we paint”.

According to the participants, working as an artist in a regional location raised issues for them, particularly when the community accepted or expected “a certain type of art” from them. The artists described how work they produced as an individual artist was not understood or necessarily valued by their community. Leigh’s arts practice involved painting, playing music, and performing. He described himself in terms that echo Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) portrayal of a Bricoleur, as Leigh stated that “you’ve got to be almost like a Jack-of-all-trades in a way”. When he spoke about being a Jack-of-all-trades, Leigh not only applied it to moving between several art forms. He also described performing his original musical compositions in public. Leigh felt that they were not appreciated and that he was expected to play “familiar” music.

You just really couldn’t get a job if you wanted to play your own stuff and that’s all I really wanted to do, so I found myself playing covers and stuff in pubs and clubs and stuff because that’s where you had to go and work and so I found that wearing; and in the end that wore me down and so I stopped doing that, and that forced change into my music.
Comparing her experience as a photographer when she lived in Melbourne with that of Eden, a small town on the southern New South Wales coast, Ruth labelled the circumstances as being a “parallel universe”. She explained that, in Melbourne, the work she produced and sold did not readily transfer to her new community of Eden. In her current context, Ruth found it confronting when people would ask her for a print copy of her photographs. When she asked for a minimal fee to cover her costs of materials and time, she would be challenged by people. They could not understand why she would ask for such an amount and see no difference in what they were asking of her, compared with having photographs processed at the local chemist. To overcome the awkwardness of these situations, Ruth adopted an approach where “I just decided that I’m giving people prints, which is what I do, you know, in certain situations, I just give prints away – I don’t make money in Eden I make work in Eden”.

Although having a culturally or socially ascribed identity meant that artists at times were seen as different or treated with suspicion, being regionally based and possessing a “feel for” or “knowing about country life” assisted artists in changing peoples’ perception of them. They were seen as being part of a way of life community (Mulligan et al., 2007) where assumptions were made by communities that they would possess particular attitudes and practices in common. Peter talked about strategies that he and Geoff adopted when entering into communities and how their dispositions had assisted in shifting attitudes.

Although we went in as artists, and artists are often seen as being odd or different or whatever, I think we retained the integrity of being different but honouring what that community was about and I think that was something that we learned, it was probably there, but we learned how to hone that through that regional practice. I think all communities are essentially the same. The dynamics differ but we’ve approached most communities in a similar way just by the observation and the honouring of what that community has in itself…. A local farmer got up and he said, you know and I can’t remember exactly, but he said, ‘you know when these guys first turned up I thought they were dickheads but I’ve changed’. You know, the thought was there, his acknowledgement was there, his appreciation was there.

Angie described a similar perspective, although she stated the need to be “humble” particularly working with rural communities beyond her own.
You, sort of in a sense work in a community – you can’t become part of the community but you do have to in a certain way, but it’s a different way. You have to share some sense of solidarity otherwise you’re not believable and you can’t be effective. .. I had to actually sort of prove my credentials in a way and I said, well no, I’m not from Melbourne I’m from Rushworth [a small country town in central Victoria] and I am a rural person it was like oooh – hhahaha- you know so there was a sort of sense, oh she’s sort of one of us.

The notion of “being one of us” or being part of a way of life community was also a phenomenon that Benjamin spoke of, although he described it as a “force”. He stated that once another regional community he happened to be working with discovered he was a “country boy”, a sense of camaraderie and connection emerged. Benjamin became a type of delegate, an assumption was made by communities that because he is regional, not necessarily from their region, that he was one of them.

There’s almost a local feeling there as well. You know, because I work abroad the fact that I’m even in cooee [i.e. in close proximity] of them makes them feel like they can own me a little bit. Like he’s from, like I might be from Victoria, like he’s from our region. Because I’m regional it gives me a force whereas I can go to Tasmania and because I am a regional artist I can do something in Richmond Tasmania like I did last week and there was more value because for some reason it’s because I understand what they’re doing more so – or the way they communicate – who they are. Yackandandah and Richmond are pretty much the same.

In speaking about how they went about challenging or changing others’ perceptions of artists, and the nature of community-based arts practice(s), the artist also found themselves being confronted with how they saw themselves as artists. Due to the nature and varied practices of the participants in this study, it was not surprising that a range of views emerged. Although having been involved in several artists-in-schools programs and community education classes, in articulating her concept of community art, Ruth did not necessarily see her or her work fitting such labels.

[I am] not in the role of other people making work and I’m kind of pulling that together, or whatever, but I do work within communities of specific people you could say, you know... but in terms of community arts I don’t do that thing of we’re going to do a community project.

Ruth stated she was a “photographic artist” as it captured the range of work she does, and the various locations where her work is shown, maintaining that she
“works within a community …. The way that I go about my work is that I’m a quasi sociologist but I just do it with a camera”. Ruth’s description of how she worked had qualities that Sullivan (2005) claims artists possess when their practice is seen as a form of legitimate research. To place Ruth’s work along Lacy’s (1995b) continuum (refer to Figure 7), she was performing the roles of reporter and analyst. Since moving to Eden Ruth’s work has also involved the inclusion of images other people have taken. She had also been instrumental in organising several major public events that according to Ruth “reflects the community back to them”.

Being labelled as a community artist also raised issues for Anita as she felt the title did not describe the work she does. The concept of being a citizen artist described by Mancillas (1998) seemed to sit more comfortably with Anita’s views. She saw herself as a partner with others who were working toward similar goals within their community. This particularly applied to how Anita worked with the community in which she lived.

I seem to think of a community artist as someone who gets grants and works in the community and gets paid to do it, whereas what I do is my way of just putting back into the community.

Working on community-based arts projects also required the participants to consider what it meant for them as artists, and their relationship with other forms of arts practice. Geoff described the dilemmas he faced in shifting from being an established exhibiting gallery artist into what he saw as the less well regarded arena of community arts within the arts field, and indicated that he had approached the shift reservedly.

Community art was a sort of a – it was like teaching – if you can’t do it [be an artist] you teach sort of attitude and I felt that I was a bit reticent but anyway I took it on and enjoyed it immensely… I felt humbled by the treatment I got from the town and I felt humbled by the people who generally came and wanted to learn something. It made me feel, I guess I suppose it made me feel good, and I thought oh this isn’t bad.

Although wanting to challenge community perceptions and the socially constructed identity of an artist in contrast to Anita, Jo also enjoyed aspects of “being an artist” and the enigmatic nature it provided her with.
I’d be quite happy to be ‘Jo’ but most people tend to define me as an artist which is a role that I don’t really quite know what that is. It’s a label that people are quite happy to say and it stops a lot of questions I think. Artist is a really good label to have in the community … people don’t or can’t pigeonhole you. You know they don’t have that expectation, you know I used to find that if, like if I forgot about some school commitment or that sort of thing people would say oh it’s ok Jo’s an artist. Hahahah so you’re sort of outside of everything as an artist, so I think it’s a good label to keep… It’s not so much a bad thing as I actually quite enjoy having that little bit of freedom there… society can’t pigeonhole you completely sort of thing they can’t - because you know, most artists sort of don’t – sort of don’t work proper jobs or they’re doing things for the love of it not for the money and people can’t conceive, understand that concept – why, why would anyone do that.

Like most of the artists in this study, Geoff had found a balance in the community where he lived, stating that although seen as “a whacky artist – [he was] very much part of the community”. Balancing their individual work with community-based work provided artists with a means to maintain their ego or individual identities, and also develop a personal or social identity within their communities that allowed them to feel they belonged.

**There are elements of advocacy and social justice.**
The basis for most community arts, or socially engaged participatory art education practice, has been to provide instrumental benefits (McCarthy et al., 2004) for the participants involved. The arts have been employed in various arenas to enhance the position of a range of marginalised, socially excluded or economically disadvantaged members of society. Reflecting on conversations and field notes collected during this inquiry, it was staggering how many of these artists were prepared to work in these situations. Although not a complete list Table 6, provides an overview of the groups and settings that artists referred to in the course of our dialogues. Viewing the information presented in Table 6, there are strong resemblances to Figure 5, Cleveland’s (2002) model of an ecology of arts-based community development.

When I was exploring the artists’ motives for working on such projects, Leigh described how he worked with people who have a disability. By undertaking art-making with this group, he viewed them through a different lens from how
they are generally viewed in society. He maintained that art acted as a powerful tool and made a difference to their lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Settings and groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Marginalised rural youth, and “non mainstream kids”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie</td>
<td>Isolated rural youth, recent arrivals to Australia, women’s health issues, parenting groups, schools, and communities dealing with drought or economic hardship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>Isolated rural youth, schools, and small rural communities dealing with drought and bushfire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Indigenous communities, isolated rural youth, and schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belinda</td>
<td>Indigenous communities, isolated rural youth, and small rural communities dealing with drought and bushfire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>Isolated rural youth, schools, and small rural communities dealing with drought or economic hardship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff</td>
<td>Indigenous communities, marginalised youth, schools, and rural communities dealing with drought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Indigenous communities, marginalised youth, schools, and rural communities dealing with drought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Aged dementia patients, schools, young people, and small rural communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>People with learning disabilities, and rural communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Rural communities, isolated rural youth, and older people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>Farmers dealing with drought, youth, and schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6. Settings and groups with whom artists worked.*

The work Leigh was undertaking with this particular group was also located in the same broader regional community he outlined previously as not being accommodating or understanding of his individual art-making.

I believe art is really a fundamental – one of the most important things in life, maybe because I’m an artist. Maybe, maybe not – but I’ve thought it through and I think being part of that is important although it is undervalued in our community … in mentoring these people we do add value to their lives for sure. We’re in the lucky situation where most people that we work with disabled people are focused on their disabilities, whereas, we are able to focus on their possibilities – and I’m not particularly interested in their disabilities.

Dominant themes for both Ruth and Annie’s arts practice involved bringing people’s attention to the “commonplace … unrecorded or unacknowledged aspects of ordinary peoples’ lives” (Ruth) and the “moments that just might get missed” (Annie).

[It] was also about and still is, our unwritten history, you know, like who does the work – who built the pyramids … and who doesn’t get remembered like our working lives, that are unrecorded and the non-famous – that kind of stuff – [I need to] just get it down (Ruth).
Outlining why they were willing to place themselves in environments and situations that could be described as difficult and complex, artists were able to build on aspects that they had spoke about previously. They talked about the resources they had accumulated as part of their identity capital. While Jo sometimes questioned why she worked voluntarily on arts projects with aged dementia patients, she drew on her socialisation during childhood and habitus for her response in our discussion. “Maybe it’s a bit in the background there, so if you can and you have the time … you know you should try and help around the community”. Jo’s comments reflect some of Andrew’s sentiments mentioned earlier when he talked about “being a good man” and for him working with marginalised groups was a “just” thing to do. Angie, while initially seeing community-based arts practice(s) as a source of income, later in our discussion described her work with marginalised groups as a process “to create ritual, to create magic” with people. There appeared to be a level of transformation in Angie’s views of community-based arts practice(s). She now saw her work as providing opportunities for people to tell their stories or deal with aspects of their lives that may not have been explored before. The way she spoke about her work was more than seeing it as purely a source of income as she had initially described her entrée into community-based arts practice(s). Angie, like others in this study, such as Geoff, Peter, and Ruth had moved from seeing their work in purely instrumental terms to also embrace the intrinsic benefits described by McCarthy et al. (2004) in Figure 6 in the work they were doing.

Using the arts as a vehicle to enhance people’s lives or to build communities required a continued role of advocacy and lobbying by the artists, particularly with funding bodies or government agencies. According to the artists, there appear to be numerous misunderstandings about the type of work they undertake when it is linked with other terminology such as community cultural development. Perceptions of what art is, from people who do not have an understanding of the field, continue to equate art with high culture, or as Constantoura (2000) described it, as big A arts. Angie, who also works part time as an education officer in a gallery managed by a local government, cited difficulties that arise with organisations when trying to articulate the nature of
the work she does. Rather than “just a job”, Angie was now finding herself advocating the broader social benefits of community-based arts practice(s).

Local government has absolutely no idea of the term community cultural development. They understand a little bit they think of what community arts is but they don’t understand in total the whole social, political thing… you know, so it’s a bit of – it’s a hard one and it’s an ongoing education process – really.

The need to raise awareness of how the arts can be a powerful learning device also featured in the work of Peter and Geoff. The advocacy in which they were involved occurred on many fronts. Like Angie, Peter and Geoff lobbied local government. They were also activists within educational settings where they felt art was devalued or undermined.

We always, every year we worked in schools in some form – whether it’s been primary, secondary or tertiary – there’s always been an educational component. I think we do it well, I think it’s important because it’s one of those areas that’s deeply neglected in a broader sense particularly primary schools because it’s such a good tool for little kids (Peter).

Referring to the teaching of art in certain primary schools, Peter went on to remark that, whilst teachers are required to teach art, they can be reluctant to do so.

Why don’t they [teachers] get it? Why is it always at the end of the list for kids? The person [teacher], who draws the short straw you just hope, has the integrity to have a crack at it but mostly not … [instead it] bores them [the students] shitless which is really hard to do to bore a kid with art – it’s really hard to do.

Throughout the conversations with artists and when exploring why they undertake the work they do, several of the artists initially entered into community-based arts practice(s) for financial gain. This now appeared lesser of a motive and did not feature as a reason why they continued with their work. In fact, the level of payment they received for their work was dismissed, with comments such as “there’s bugger all money in it” (Geoff) or “you don’t make much money out of it, you only average about $3.00 an hour when you put it all together” (Andrew). It was possible to tease out from the artists’ responses that enduring motivations for them to continue their work related to the variety and energy it provided for them, and how they can challenge or attempt to normalise being artist. They had also come to realise the impact of work they do and the
role that art can play in people’s lives, leading them to become advocates and activists for community-based arts practice(s). There had been a transformative process for them; in many cases the artists in this study had moved along the continuum of positions that Lacy (1995b) outlines in Figure 7 from being an experiencer or reporter to an analyst or activist.

Although demonstrating some deep underlying convictions toward the work they do, for several of the artists, it was difficult to express these. Elements of their rationale seemed to act at unconscious levels or at the practical consciousness level that Giddens’ (1979) describes. The ways in which artists spoke of about the difficulty also reminded me of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concepts of rhizomatics and becoming. For example, while Peter was able to describe some of his reasons for being involved in community-based arts practice(s), he also said it was not necessarily clear for him.

I mean I get lost in all of this… because it is an adventure, most of this – most of it has not been planned in any sense. We’ve just followed this bloody meandering path.

For this study, I interviewed Peter and Geoff separately and although they had worked together for several years and their views were quite similar in many respects, I was taken aback when Peter said that he and Geoff had not spent much time actively articulating what and why they do what they do with each other. Peter stated it was “one of the conversations we’re going to have”.

Angie used similar words in her attempt to “pin down” why she continued with her work. She spoke about how “you’re always working in between – you know you’re actually sliding in between layers all the time sort of, so what you do is a little bit of mystery to most”. Jo’s involvement in community-based arts practice(s) was not always apparent to her at the time; it became a little clearer for her when she looked back.

I can actually see this really strong thread and pattern of progression but while I’m making those decisions, they’re not conscious and I think the more conscious you are of those decisions, the less likely you are to make the right ones.
The Roles We Perform and Ways We Go about Our Work

Becoming involved in community-based arts practice(s) required artists to consider diverse situations as well as a range of tasks that they needed to perform. As discussed previously, while these artists possessed art skills and knowledge, in many instances, they learnt “on the job” strategies to transfer these to people they were working with. The skills they were required to learn not only involved pedagogical approaches for working with participants, but also included developing business skills for managing projects, dealing with funding bodies and organisations. Circulating in various contexts required the artists to perform a number of roles, either in sequence at various stages of projects or, in most cases, simultaneously. In following this track and the subsequent trails, I will outline key aspects of the various roles or tasks that the artists with whom I spoke performed in going about their work. A consideration of these roles and tasks provides another opportunity to consider how these aspects have acted as a form of learning and potentially impacts on their identities.

There is a need to be businesslike.

Most of the artists in this study were currently, or had been involved in exhibiting their work in galleries and conventional artworld environments. They were familiar with the rules of engagement that can exist in the art field. Moving into community-based arts practice(s), they were required to develop broader levels of business acumen to deal with wider situations. They found themselves negotiating with the funders of projects such as government bodies at federal, state, or local level, usually across a range of departments. They were also interacting with business groups, professional bodies, and committees of management. Each situation provided various layers of learning for the artists.

The ways the artists described their business encounters was not dissimilar from how they went about advocating for the arts or challenging peoples’ perceptions
of artists. However, having to be businesslike was in many instances less appealing for them. They found themselves being labelled with a social identity (Côté & Levine, 2002) that was based on stereotypical perceptions of artists. The artists were also perplexed by the barriers and contradictions they encountered, as well as the various types of what Foucault (1991) refers to as governmentality. Inherent in the structures that the artists encountered were forms of power and control that they had to negotiate.

Artists spoke of developing skills in approaching and working with organisations to source funding for projects, convincing people that particular ideas were worthwhile initiatives, or realising that timeframes and decision-making processes may not happen quickly. Entering into the worlds of business and bureaucracy also required the artists to learn about the modus operandi, language, or culture of different organisations. Annie described one particular project and how moving from an idea, to “making it happen” was a complex process that took several years to occur.

It ended up involving a lot of people in the community because we’d keep sort of, you know I hadn’t been here long, so it was you know, an amazing sort of introduction for me too because I just said I’d sort of do that and then I had to go and speak to the Council and I had to speak with the Chamber of Commerce and I have to meet [the local arts development officer employed by state government] and you know it’s one thing to have this idea for a project but then you’ve got to learn the whole protocol of a community.

The nuances of communicating in a businesslike manner also confounded artists. At times their convictions or the way they expressed their ideas were at odds with, or misunderstood by, an organisation, which resulted in them either choosing to forego, or not receiving a commission for a project. Benjamin described how his passion for art could sometimes work against him when he spoke with decision makers.

[It’s] problematic from my point of view because I won’t do things for different reasons or I will be very excited and have a lot of enthusiasm to do those things and those reasons might be difficult to understand ...[it happens] often in conversations with councillors or money people.
Andrew claimed that his major difficulties when working on projects with “non-mainstream” kids did not arise with the young people; instead they were in communicating with coordinators of the programs. The communication difficulties related to various interpretations about the purpose of the project and the envisaged outcome according to Andrew.

I have more trouble with the coordinators than I do with the kids. Because the coordinator thinks this will look nice – we’ll get the kids to paint a horse. Well with these kids – if the horse doesn’t turn out to look like a horse, they’ve failed and we’ve done more damage than good. Most of the time the coordinators have some ideas … [but] they keep losing track of the essence of this program which is to have the kids involved, in an art program they can experience themselves.

Issues of communication when dealing with organisations, including arts funding bodies, also surfaced for Stephen and Angie. There were occasions where they felt that city-based arts organisations’ perceptions of the arts practice(s) that occurred in regional Australia, were vastly different to what the reality was. They stated that the city based views could be condescending and based on assumptions of non-urban Australia being culturally deprived.

They lack understanding. You know, they can explain something away, they can talk in public and they can, you know, you can’t get a word in, you can’t talk to them about it because you’re actually not talking the same language and there’s this difference between you (Stephen).

Melbourne organisations or arts managers have this weird view of what goes on in the country and in the arts you’re sitting in between again… it’s all a bit twee – that it’s all a bit that sort of missionary zeal. You know, sending the troops into the country to do the good work and then very quickly go back to the city because it’s a bit too scary out there with the natives (Angie).

Learning from the early days of their business partnership, Peter and Geoff described a rollercoaster ride of projects being approved, then cancelled and in some instances having funding re-approved. Peter also spoke of being exploited, having their intellectual material used by others, or being underpaid on projects. “We got shafted really badly – we put a proposal to them and they stole it and got someone else to make it … there’s a million of those stories too”.

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Learning to adopt business type approaches to manage community-based arts projects, artists became aware of the contradictions and double standards that existed within the world of business. Dealing with a range of organisations and bureaucratic structures, they were compelled to adopt stringent accountability measures to demonstrate their ability to undertake projects. On the other hand, the bodies that expected a rigorous approach from them did not apply the same criteria in their own business. “It’s bad management, absolutely bad management. And I think if we had managed the projects like a lot of the people who have attempted to manage us, if we used their practices, we wouldn’t be here” (Peter).

While they were aware of the need to be accountable, the artists also attributed the unreasonable or double standards that were applied to them, related to the inherent social misunderstanding or misconception that artists are irresponsible. While they had worked with this type of mindset from local authorities, artists described how circumstances were changing for them. The shift had occurred in part through their advocacy at a local level. They also attributed the change to working successfully in other communities beyond their own locality. By gaining credibility in other communities, their own local government organisations were prepared to work with them. As Geoff stated “it’s changing a bit because we’re getting a lot of people outside the town talking about us and so we’re doing and we’ve done quite a bit of work for them [local government].”

Although artists described how a shift had occurred within elements of bureaucratic institutionalised environments and business worlds, it always remained tenuous. From the artists’ perspectives, these structures wielded a great deal of power, emphasising Latham’s (2004) argument that management has displaced the creators to become the powerful figures of the arts world. The relationships artists developed with the business world could be framed in terms of Bagnall’s (2007) description of partnerships towards learning, where the circumstances are not designated as formal learning situations, although they may lead to more explicit learning situations. Although the artists had developed relationships that were built on trust, respect, and collaboration, they
had to start their interactions with these partners, who from the artists’
perspectives possessed an ethos that was based on compliance, unequal
representation and distrust. Ling (1993, July) describes these characteristics as
being at one end of a continuum of how partnerships can be perceived. They
were characteristics that artists preferred least to work with when they worked in
a partnership. Within these partnerships towards learning, that are non-formal
learning situation, types of learning that Jarvis (2007) describes as unconscious,
unintended, or incidental learning can still occur. Entering into the business and
bureaucratic world required artists to present with, or adopt an identity that was
not necessarily congruent with whom they thought they were, or conflicted with
how they preferred to be.

_How we work with participants._
While possessing art skills and knowledge that they could share with participants
involved in community-based arts projects, as discussed previously, artists
questioned whether they had skills such as how to connect with people. These
are the skills that Lacy (1995b) states artists who work as activists need to acquire.
The issues that artists faced could also be described as pedagogical concerns
related to managing groups, and providing instructions and direction to
participants. The artists’ circumstances were also confounded by the fact that
with each project the cohort size would alter, or participants had particular needs
that they as artists had not experienced before.

Exploring the educative or pedagogical role that artists performed in community-
based arts contexts, discussions focussed on how the artists viewed the
participants they worked with and the approaches they employed to work with a
group. The way Angie spoke about her approach reminded me of _epoche_ or
 bracketing, described by Gearing (2004), Husserl (1964) , and van Manen (1997) as
strategies employed in phenomenological research. This is where a researcher
attempts to suspend their own judgements and view circumstances from others’
perspectives.

_I go in with a sense of curiosity and I probably as I do more of this I
consciously try not to go in with a preconceived idea of anything that I_
might do, of any shape of what this project might be and of any preconceived ideas about who these people are. I actually try and clear that all out and go in there like a sponge sort of thing because I don’t want to go in there and sort of impact me on it. I want to go in there and find out what makes the place tick (Angie).

In the process of finding out about communities, the artists maintained that it was crucial for them to become situated in the community, mirroring Kester’s (2004) description of the qualities required in dialogical art practice. The artists aimed to involve the community in the whole process rather than the artist producing an artwork and then the work appearing in a community. Benjamin stated that it “gave them an opportunity to watch this thing growing; it gave a sense of ownership which is essential in good art-making or whatever”. While Annie was keen to collaborate on projects and work with groups of people, there was also a need for her to have some supervisory role for the outcome. Annie was mindful of how she managed her responsibility.

You know I do try and sort of manage that control thing because I do go into it with my, you know, my vision, with how I want the visual to be because I see it as an artwork to and I dream it up as an artwork and then I collaborate with all the other artists to make it happen... I guess in a way I see them as I’m working with a bunch of other artists.

By using the term “all the other artists”, Annie indicated that it was the way she viewed all of the participants on the project regardless of their age, background or experience. When talking about how he and Peter viewed the participants who were involved in their projects, Geoff also described them as artists.

We believe that they’re the artists. They’re the true artists on these projects, because it’s their – we never, never bugger up [damage] their work – their work has their integrity always – it’s never ever fooled around with and we’ve been very strong about that right from the start.

Complementing her stance of going into communities with “no preconceived ideas”, inherent in Angie’s approach were aspects of valuing and respecting participants as individuals, rather than relying on second hand or hearsay knowledge.

I see them absolutely as people, I mean I suppose you do go into these places and you do have a bit of briefing beforehand and you know, you learn the terminology and the dos and the don’ts and all that sort of thing, but ... I actually do see them as people.
According to the artists, while aware that they were working with a community, they were operating from a premise that the participants were individuals with something to contribute. This outlook encouraged an environment where mutual learning occurred for all involved on the project. Although artists did not explicitly refer to particular theoretical frameworks, elements of New Learning outlined by Kalantzis and Cope (2008) were implicit in their descriptions of how they worked with participants. These included constructivist perspectives (Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1965) where learning and knowledge were sourced by individuals in a range of ways, and also reflected are humanist approaches (Rogers, 1969) that consider authenticity for the whole person, and learning as a social process (Wenger, 1998), where a type of community of practice existed. Elements of these approaches were key components in their approach to pedagogy.

The strategies these artists employed to work with groups also acted as a device for them to challenge the socially-constructed perceptions of artists that can infer status, individuality and selfishness. These are qualities that Turner (1969) suggests reside in the modality of societas. Rather than the artist being perceived by others—or artists perceiving themselves—as the expert whose role is to impart knowledge to the novice in a type of transactional banking model of learning as described by Freire (1990), the learning situations became an interactive and reciprocal relationship. The modality of communitas (Turner, 1969) could emerge as Jarvis (2008) describes in “magic moments – when relationships of care and concern are captured and the potential of the I – Thou relationship is rediscovered in a group form” (p. 206).

When entering into communities, Belinda described how she would not approach the situation in an arrogant manner and realised that for a project to succeed it required not only her skills and knowledge but also the skills and knowledge of the participants.

I can't say you know that I'm the god artist and they are my little sheep that I can mould. No I generally hope that they will come and bring
something to it and that they will maybe have more skills in [certain aspects], than I do.

Getting to know people by building an environment based on trust and respect between everyone was central to the process artists employed in their practice. The artists were aware that they were potentially taking people on journeys that they may not have been on before, or dealing with people who lacked confidence in their abilities. It was crucial for the artists to manage and allay people’s doubts and fears about participating in an arts project. According to Stephen possessing empathy, which Kester (2004) also claims is at the core of dialogical arts practice, was vital in order to create respectful learning situations. As Stephen claimed

There’s always fear, there’s always fear of not wanting to get involved. I think fear is probably the biggest restriction for doing these projects with people and this is why you have to have a spirited approach and an enthusiastic approach and one which is going to make people very much at ease with you. And you have to make people relax, no matter where they’ve come from - no matter what their attitudes are.

**It’s sort of teaching although we are anything but a teacher.**

Woven into the descriptions of how they went about working with groups of people in community-based arts projects, the artists provided various responses to describe the role they performed in this learning process. In framing their descriptions, the artists were mindful of how circumstances can change, and the context, or amount of time they spent with the participants, also informed the labels they chose to apply to themselves.

The notion of being a facilitator surfaced as a common label to illustrate the way in which they worked with communities, although acting as facilitator and what that might entail had several interpretations. Benjamin stated that his work involved trying to manage the whole project, ensuring quality art outcomes, financial responsibilities, and providing opportunities for the community to be involved. According to Benjamin, balancing all these aspects made a project more complex and protracted than it would be if he were to work as an individual artist.

Making decisions about what it was going to look like, the whole structure, the name of the town, the layout, you know … it was difficult to
let everyone have a say but where they could, I involved them. Because I see myself only as a facilitator.

When working with children, Jo described herself as a facilitator. Rather than dealing with difficulties that can be involved with group projects she needed to relinquish control over the process.

It took me a while to learn to let my ideas go which is ego and run with whatever they come up with because they’re always better. You know I don’t know if it’s an evolution thing where they’re just naturally smarter than us but that was an interesting one to learn when working with other people. I suppose you’re more of a facilitator and you can’t control it sort of thing and the less control you have the better your results would be and losing that preciousness of idea and ownership … is really interesting.

Building on the comments of seeing the “participants as artist”, while using the term facilitator to describe the way he and Peter work, Geoff also introduced the term “tweakers”. He used the term to explain what they did to the work that participants produced.

It must be their work – their integrity must stay but we will tweak it, we will tweak it and by tweaking it it’s like putting the frame on it. Tweaking it to give it that little bit of quality that it might not have. And so they are the artists, we are the facilitators and we are, I suppose, the tweakers and we do the logistics of it.

Rather than the term “tweaker”, Peter stated that he was a “re-presenter” of the work the participants make, with the aim to encourage participants to value what they produced and new ways of seeing.

I suppose our role in a lot of that is re-presentation. I mean the kids will work endlessly - what needs to be there at the end is that they see their work in a valuable light. So our job in that sense is to present it back to them and to the community in which they come from.

Depending on the nature of the project, or the cohort with whom they found themselves working, Leigh, Andrew, Benjamin, and Geoff referred to being mentors rather than facilitators. Leigh initially suggested he was a “mentor I guess”, although went on to say “facilitator or helper” to describe what he does, as he felt his work was not necessarily about imparting art skills. Rather Leigh claimed that “what you’re trying to do is enrich their lives … I find it very rewarding – you know mentoring these people”. Acknowledging that he performed numerous roles on a project, Andrew said that his specific purpose for
working with “non mainstream” kids was broader than making the art work: “For the kids it’s not just as a mentor to show them how to produce these artworks, but again those hidden things to show them as well – the humour, warmth, kindness”. Having used the term “tweaker” and facilitator, Geoff also described how he acted as a mentor. He reflected on the powerful impact mentors had on his views during his early working life and apprenticeship years. Geoff was prepared to, and hoped he could, provide a similar experience for young people.

Like when we’re over in the youth works, like we’re old bastards, of course you’re an old bastard to a 15 year old, but you can still keep on going and impart, like we can still mentor lots of people and that’s I suppose a lot of our want is to mentor and I know back in the PMG days when I said a lot of those artists were working with me they mentored me brilliantly and if I could give half of that back to someone I would love it. And so I think that I look at the world, I do look at the world a bit rosier sometimes when I come out of these projects because there is hope.

According to Anita, the skills and approaches she required, particularly when interacting with the participants meant that she had a “myriad of roles” including being a “facilitator, inspirer, role model, and problem solver”. The diverse demands required Angie to be constantly reflexive to past, present, and future aspects of the projects she was involved in.

I think you sort of have to be a master of stepping in and out of lots of different roles and of being really aware that the project that you’re doing that you want people to own it so you’re there – it’s actually more of a parental role in a way – you’re sort of – you’re there to listen and to find out and you go, ‘okay, I get what you need’. How can I then facilitate that – provide that – so you’re sort of just stepping out there and I’m going to now lead in front instead of sort of just sitting in the middle, and go well I’m now part of what’s going on, to actually sort of sitting back behind and looking at the big picture of what’s going on and what’s going to evolve. So you’re actually doing lots of different things at different times.

While acknowledging that their work was a type of “teaching”, when describing the roles they performed, the artists seemed reticent to describe themselves as “teachers”. Peter, Annie, and Angie explicitly spoke of not wanting to be seen as a teacher, particularly when working in institutionalised or formal educational settings such as schools. The reasons they provided were based on their perceptions of the responsibilities, approaches to learning, and duties that came
with being a teacher in school environments. According to Peter, the way he works with schoolchildren was different from what he understood teaching to be. Rather than teaching as he saw it as being about restriction, control, and conforming, Peter offered opportunities for students to be themselves.

[We not only guided] the kids through the material, – we went through every process you can imagine so there was a skill notion and it was teaching, but in a different way, also offering them a liberation to be themselves and to produce and to say yes I am a producer of this stuff.

Being aware that students may view them as teachers, both Annie and Angie consciously aimed to connect with students in different ways from those they had seen teachers work with students.

I am like a teacher but we don’t do anything formal and then they get this great experience of sort of being out of class and come and paint on the wall with me…. I really like to create a situation where I don’t have to be like a teacher so in a school situation I really hope that some other teachers can be around occasionally so that role, you know that sort of disciplinary role, needs to happen. It’s not my sort of place and I can work with them, so I connect on a level as best we can (Annie).

Students actually see you as another teacher and so I do a lot of work to try and not be a teacher … I suppose I speak to them in a different way to how a teacher would speak to them. Umm, they call me by my first name for a start. I like them to ask me any sort of questions that they would like to ask to know who I am. You know they want to know, like are you married, have you got kids. … Kids will actually ask you questions that you know damn well they would never ask a teacher (Angie).

Anita and Belinda had obtained formal teaching qualifications and had worked as teachers in schools. They maintained that working as an artist in school settings was a very different experience from that of being in the role of a teacher. “I like it; it’s different from teaching where it’s not as structured. You have a lot more flow with the kids” (Belinda). Being in a school classroom meant Anita could “step in as an artist and help inspire these kids; to help them to start thinking in a different way” because she didn’t have to “think about those teacher things”. When I asked Anita what she meant by “teacher things” she spoke about the following aspects:

… the learning outcomes and the aims and all that stuff and are we following the curriculum and all that sort of stuff and how you are going to report back and measure it for reporting. Sorry about that, but they are the sorts of reasons why I don't want to be a teacher.
There are similarities in the stories artists provided for this inquiry, and the findings of studies that have examined the work of artists in educational settings. Pringle (2002) examined artists’ perceptions of the role they play in sites of learning and how they engaged participants. While teaching was discussed, the role of “teacher” did not emerge as a label to describe artists’ work. Pringle (2002) described artists’ roles as being an educator, role model, collaborator, social activist, and researcher/enquirer. Galton (2008) refers to artists who work in schools as “creative practitioners”. He identified similar approaches to teaching as those described by artists in this inquiry, and how they varied from formal teaching strategies. Galton states that creative practitioners’ discourse was more dialogic rather than cued elicitations that teachers tend to employ, and artists aimed to extend rather than change pupils’ initial ideas.

Recommendations from studies such as those by Galton (2008) and Pringle (2002) propose that the varied ways in which artists go about engaging people in learning, needs to be seriously considered by those who are given the label teacher and those within the field of education. For example Pringle (2002, p. 25) states:

> Although artistic practice differs from “teaching” it can be argued that the educational role that artists play could, or should, be adopted more closely by teachers. In particular the focus on exploring ideas, remaining open and reflecting on action.

From what the artists in my inquiry have stated, a focus for them being involved in community- based arts practice is to demystify socially constructed perceptions of artists. They spoke about the difficulties they faced in being confronted with a social identity that others assumed they would have, and how this did not match with how they saw themselves. In turn, many of these artists appear to view another socially constructed identity, that of being a teacher within a narrow framework. This is unlike the concept of A/r/tography proposed by Irwin et al. (2006) where the identities of researcher, teacher and artist can be seen as proximate, potentially occurring simultaneously, and none is privileged over another. For these artists, however, a type of divide continues to exist. The artists in this inquiry appear to have concerns about being seen as a teacher. The apprehensions seem to rest with their perceptions of the restrictive
nature of formal learning institutions, and thus they are loath to use the label of teacher to describe the work they do.

**What We Acquire from Working in this Way**

The preceding tracks and trails of this chapter have led us to explore factors that contributed to the participants becoming artists and subsequently working in community-based arts practice(s). The reasons they continue to work in this field and the roles that they perform by being community-based artists were also considered. Some layers of the identities and learning that occur for the artists have begun to emerge from the experiences described. They relate to the ongoing negotiation between themselves as individuals and the social and cultural structures they encountered, as well as the continual acquisition of both tangible and intangible resources that contribute to the concept of identity capital (2002) they possessed to negotiate their life passages. On this track, I focus on the artists’ reflections of how working as a community-based artist impacts on them, to further explore what they learn from these experiences and shapes who they are.

**It’s based on people interaction.**

As well as describing the intensity, energy and variety of community-based arts practice(s), artists recognised the need to step out for a while to re-charge and nourish themselves. Having a range of approaches to their arts practice allowed them to achieve some type of balance. A central reason for them continuing to step back into community-based arts practice(s) was the interaction and connection with others that occurred in these contexts. According to Anita, “being in the art group has at times given me a sense of energy and enthusiasm and a renewal for my own arts practice”. By continuing to work as solo studio artists producing work for exhibitions, Belinda and Annie emphasised how
community-based arts practice(s) provided equilibrium to the isolation they can experience when working in their studios.

As an artist you are isolated in the studio you can be 10 to 12 hours without seeing a person, so I think its, in relation to me I am a fairly sociable person I like being around people and a community arena (Belinda).

Working with other people and bouncing ideas off other people and then, the possibilities of things that might happen because there’s that many people involved, you know, it’s not just a solo venture (Annie).

There was a particular feeling Benjamin sensed when he worked with others and, while the artwork was important, the circumstances became an “event”, and the interaction with others became central.

It’s the beginning of a feeling of, a feeling of potential. There’s an excitement, there’s a feeling which is like a family get-together which happens occasionally, or like a large family gathering. It’s not like a club or a social event which happens and dies away. It’s a real sense of event. The launching of something, like when you’re making something that’s there permanently, or even impermanently, you’re making that event. It’s an expression of minds coming together.

Angie had come to realise that interaction with others was the “bedrock” for retaining her involvement. According to her “you start to understand yourself better because you actually understand yourself through other people and so as humans, we can’t be isolated”. The importance artists placed on interaction with others was a major reason why they continued with community-based arts practice(s), and surfaces throughout the remainder of this chapter.

We can move beyond the superficial, with others and ourselves. When artists spoke of their interactions with others, they were able at times to convey a significant event or experience that went deep, and provided them with a powerful memory, or a sense of déjà vu. Benjamin had spoken earlier about his transformative soapstone carving experience as a school student, later in our discussion related it to a situation where he was working as an artist in a school. He came across a child with whom he could empathise and who mirrored his own earlier experience:

He just wanted to be let loose and just show you what he could do… and I really felt like I’d really gained some piece of me back. You know a
memory of myself back in that. I didn’t know how to sort of you know, push him forward and do what he needed to do but it certainly caught my attention.

Working in a range of settings, these artists expressed a need to make some sense of a place or the communities in which they found themselves. They needed to find ways in. As a way to glean what was happening in a place and make connections with people, artists maintained that there was a necessity for them to look beyond the surface and go deeper with their inquiry. Ruth spoke of being “forever curious about the nature of you know all our lives… [it is] of interest to me and the things that I don’t know”. Angie and Annie had a similar disposition to Ruth, and both used the metaphor of travelling to describe how they went about entering into other social worlds to gain a sense of a place and connecting with people.

I’m not a good tourist. I don’t like to sort of go somewhere and meet people and go oh hi how are you and doing the sort of superficial thing. I like to just get right in there and sort of understand what’s going on so I suppose that’s what drives me – that’s what keeps me going back (Angie).

I mean it’s like going travelling and looking at a place and reading the guide book and moving on, as opposed to sort of maybe knowing a bit of the language and meeting someone and staying in someone’s house and actually connecting with people who live in a different place for a while and working with how they feel about that place can certainly broaden your sense of that place (Annie).

The variety and forms of community-based arts practice(s) in which the artists were involved, allowed disparate groups of people within or across communities to congregate. A particular arts project could act as a focus where opportunities arose not only for participants to interact with one another; but also for artists to meet people who would not normally come into their lives. When projects occurred over a period of time, rather than being one-off events, it was possible over the life of the project to develop deeper and ongoing relationships between all involved. A rewarding aspect for Belinda was “having these people you may never have had anything to do with in the past and sort of form a bit of a bond and relationship with them and having something a little bit out of the ordinary”. Anita and Geoff provided similar responses about the deep connections with people that come from being involved in community-based arts practice(s).
The reason why I keep doing it is that I get to work with people that I normally wouldn't get to work with or meet. I've made some really good friendships and there has been that sense of achieving something, doing something together (Anita).

It’s just part of our life and you learn in every project and you make friends in every project and they’re very important and my life has been much richer for it and it’s something you can keep on doing you know (Geoff).

Moving to Eden several years ago, Ruth spoke of a project she initiated that involved working with teenagers to explore what living in a small rural town meant for them and might mean for their future. In part, she was motivated to undertake this project to make sense of her personal situation. Ruth had raised her family while living in Melbourne. One of her daughters, who now had her own children, had moved to a small town several years previously, prior to Ruth moving to Eden which is further along the coast from where her daughter chose to live. Ruth was interested to know what growing up in a small town might mean for her grandchildren.

This is the first time in our clan there’s kids that have grown up in this environment, and you know that’s been quite confronting for me, coming from my background in some ways. You know everyone I talk to loves growing up as kids and then it all shifts – not for everyone – and that’s also one of the reasons why I became interested in that issue.

Community-based art projects, in providing a forum to explore issues or reflect the ideas of a community, can also become emotionally-charged events for those involved. Agreeing to coordinate a local community exhibition in the place where she lived, Anita stated that it became a very powerful experience for both herself and others in the community. The exhibition focused on recent bushfires that had threatened the district.

[There were] over a hundred community fire photos … part of the healing for the community as we had been through the bushfires. And using just ordinary people's photos to create this exhibition and the feedback, which was really positive and for some people it was still a bit traumatic, but it was really positive and a worthwhile thing to have done.

The emotions that can surface for artists during projects and how they impact on understanding self and relationships with others were also powerful for Angie. Becoming involved in a project where she worked with recent arrivals to
Australia proved extremely complex for her. Tensions emerged and she had serious reservations that the proposed major public event would not materialise. The event did occur and after the event Angie described the wave of emotion that occurred.

there were hugs and tears sort of all round but you know that – you know when you talk about significant moments, that really taught me – a huge, huge thing you know – just that sense of trust that you have to have with people.

Several of the projects that Stephen had worked on involved a form of digital storytelling. He worked with farmers and members of their families to explore how current issues such a drought, economic downturns and uncertainties affected farming life. The digital stories that were produced had been shown at several venues throughout the region. Stephen conveyed how the digital stories had an impact on those who viewed them, where at one particular showing “this one person said to me, he’s a farmer and he said, those are very strong those stories. You’ve got – you’ve really got something there. You really tap into people’s emotions”. As well as being powerful for the audience who viewed the digital stories, Stephen also spoke about how he felt as a result of undertaking these projects, and how digital stories can be powerful for those who made them.

So you feel as though you’ve done a good job, you know, you’ve actually, you’ve gone to a depth of understanding, you’ve gone deeper, you know you’ve gone deeper than a lot of other things go and you’ve got to a depth of understanding – that’s what I try to get at – you know that sort of importance of understanding.

**Unfamiliar contexts allow us to see in different ways.**

The unpredictable and fluid nature of community-based arts practice(s) that also involved working in diverse settings and with a variety of people provided the artists with a broad spectrum of experiences. They spoke of insightful and enduring memories as a result of being located in communities or settings that they were not necessarily familiar with. These circumstances, or as Mishler (1999) describes them, chance events and encounters, acted as disjunctures in the artists’ lives. According to Jarvis (2006), it is when disjunctures occur in our lives that learning can happen. The encounters described by artists allowed them to further understand or question themselves.
Ruth explained how the way of life in Eden was very different, compared to living in Melbourne. Her changed circumstances required her to adopt other ways of working. “I guess in this town you know, I have that opportunity of having come to a completely new environment; it’s just given me access to all different types of people”. One particular type or group of people Ruth discovered was the fishing community in her village. She was exposed to the fragile, uncertain, relentless, and potentially dangerous nature of this industry.

That’s amazing to me – no catch no pay – you know, all day manual – all that stuff’s amazing, but the work – you know, people die – people have died out on the water since we’ve been here and they work – you know, it’s unbelievable what that does to their family life and that’s really interesting stuff and you know and suddenly I go, God, how come fish is so cheap, it’s just ridiculous.

Having gained this insight into the fishing industry, Ruth became more inquisitive and needed to explore this way of life further.

hanging down the wharf …[and] then in the pub [hotel] guys started telling me fishermen starting talking to me about, oh, you should see my photos of, you should see – then I was just knocked out, because it turns out… the fishermen take their cameras on the boats and they always have – I mean, you know. So to me I just immediately saw that in the context of we take our photos – our cameras to work and take photos all the time. I thought no-one does that. I mean, you know, it just seems so unusual – I want to see these photos.

On seeing the images (some dating back to 1935), Ruth became involved in a three-year project to coordinate and curate an exhibition that included the photographs as well as stories of the fishermen who took the images.

Becoming involved in both the “youth” and “fishing” projects, Ruth found that her initial intention for moving to Eden and to remain somewhat private was negated; she had become well known in the community. She had not regretted engaging with people on these projects, and her views had changed. Rather than seeing her work as reflecting the community back to them, Ruth also found that she was learning about herself.

Working with people you learn about them, they learn about you … as a new person I was reflecting the community back to them but they were also reflecting you know, me back to be me, like having been a new person
who came in here you know, with that sort of, no, leave me alone, but at the same time you sort of do – you do form – you do become part of it.

Several of the artists had spent time working or living in and with Indigenous communities in the northern part of Australia. Being situated in these unfamiliar contexts and the disjunctures that arose from what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe as these plateaus of experience had been folded into their identity capital resources. They were learning about themself through others.

[I] realised over time it was a long process of learning from each other because it was such a cultural gap. At first I thought I learnt everything and then over time I realised that I didn’t learn much at all. But there was just, you know, just lots of little things that we shared that had a profound impact … [it] sort of took my life and turned me upside down and sent me on my way (Annie).

Peter and Geoff had been working at Cherbourg, an Indigenous community in Queensland, for the previous five years, making three to four visits every year. They had been involved in one project, using art with the school children as a strategy to improve attendance. Another project involved them working with local artists in the community, assisting them to design a cultural precinct.

According to Peter, the sustained involvement had led to deeper insights for him.

Every time you go back, it’s the layers of the onion, there’s more revealed… The whole Cherbourg has been a huge learning thing for me, you know coming from down here where growing up there were more Chinese influences for me, than Aboriginal influences… So being able to work in a community that has well, it’s worked both ways – I’ve taken a huge amount out of it… the spirit that exists in that community and the way in which they are tackling problems that we just don’t even consider is brilliant. They have accepted us, in an incredible way and within the school it’s been incredible just to go back and see.

Having been involved in the project for a period of time had allowed trust and mutual understanding to develop between Peter, Geoff, and those in the Indigenous community. The transformation that had occurred became evident for Peter when he had recently witnessed how another white person who entered the community was treated.

This woman from Brisbane walked in and I saw the way that this artist looked at her I recognised as the way she’d been looking at us for years but now it was completely different because now she would tell us stories, she would bring us stuff. It was a real change. But I could see … it was obvious where things had changed … it was a brilliant thing for me,
because I recognised, and I understood. I had to be far more observant about people but that was some fantastic and very clear, lesson for me.

The unfamiliar contexts that artists experienced were not only the result of moving to a different geographic location, they also occurred with their own grounded community (Mulligan et al., 2007). Leigh, Andrew, and Anita spoke of situations they had experienced within the communities in which they had lived for some time. Being involved with people who they described as “non-mainstream” provided both Leigh (who worked with people who have disabilities) and Andrew (who worked with “at risk” young people) with opportunities to see the world differently. Although initially uncertain about working in environments they were not familiar with, they were now enjoying their work and it was having a profound impact on them.

I love the people – you know I love the people. I feel more at home with these people than I do with most mainstream people. I’ve got to say, you know, like straight jobs I just don’t fit there. I tried that and it didn’t work. But here… you know, the feedback that we get off these people is great and it’s just a joy being around and they’re playful and that sort of thing (Leigh).

When I see these kids and they’re fully engrossed and they’re enjoying the experience, some of them, it’s been profound… I come home sometimes – I drive home and it’s just knowing sometimes that you’ve done something fundamentally good and the long term thing I think that warms my heart is knowing that to some of these kids I may have been the only positive male umm influence that they may have seen (Andrew).

Stephen also spoke about the arts projects that he was involved with had changed his perceptions of people and circumstances. He described how he had used reflexive empathic techniques, skills that Kester (2004) claims are at the heart of dialogical arts practices. Stephen had crafted these skills through is work on previous arts projects. He recalled working on a photographic project, documenting the work of farmers and how they cared for the land.

One farmer I thought was just a total redneck to start off, but he appeared, he turned out to be one of the biggest greenies I’d ever met … I wouldn’t have seen that unless I’d– just listened – you’ve got to go in there without yourself.
We can change circumstances; our own and other people's. Most of the artists who participated in this inquiry did not enter into community-based arts practice(s) with altruistic intentions, or with a full sense of what this type of work might entail. Becoming involved in community-based arts practice(s) provided a trajectory where they had been able to witness an array of benefits and transforming possibilities that this type of work can have on those who are involved.

During Angie’s first community arts project, she came to realise the potential impact of community-based arts practice(s). Her brief was to work with school children and cover the entrance way to the toilet block with a ceramic mural. This particular area of the school was such a threatening place that students would avoid using the toilet during their time at school. The finished work had incredible impact; students not only used the toilets, but they also wanted to meet and congregate in the area to view the work they had made.

That was a significant lesson for me because I saw how it can create significant change. I mean it’s not earth shattering but for those kids and that school it made this enormous difference, so I learnt that participatory art can be a really powerful thing when you take people and guide them and provide skills umm and help that they can transform, not only the environment, but themselves (Angie).

The transformation that occurred during arts projects, particularly with young people, also featured in comments from several artists in this study. According to Peter, the Cherbourg project described earlier contributed to the instrumental benefits of reducing school absenteeism and had increased students’ performance against state benchmarks of student learning. Intrinsic benefits for the young people included an increased level of self esteem, as well as a sense of belonging in their communities. Andrew provided a particular anecdote about one of the “non-mainstream kids” he had worked with on several projects, and how it had assisted her to develop the skill and confidence to re-enter a school environment. He went on to describe the impact this had on him.

This little girl had her chest out, her chin’s up, it’s probably the first time she’s ever shone. Well it sent goose bumps down my spine – and I was on such a high for days and that’s the essence that I was talking about. That’s changed that little girl’s life.
Being employed on a project to engage a group of disenfranchised youth, both Peter and Geoff were acutely aware of the issues that they might face. Their concerns related to how they would work with young people who could not see why they might involve themselves in art-making. For Geoff, challenges concerned with changing perceptions and attitudes were at the core of why he was involved: “I really enjoy seeing someone who says they can’t do it, or they won’t do it and they do it, and delight in doing it”.

Over the time that Peter and Geoff were involved in this particular project, they both observed a transformation with the young people. The initial resistance dissipated, and the young people’s energy and interest became focussed on producing art that was then exhibited in the regional gallery. The exhibition was received positively by the broader community which, in turn, assisted in changing others’ perceptions of the young people and contributed to the self esteem of the participants. Both Geoff and Peter spoke of this project and how they had made an impact on the young people.

With youth at risk and they were the people who said “we’re not doing, we’re not doing this fucking art you old cunt” but now they’re standing pretty and tall and happy as pigs in shit (Geoff).

Peter was more specific when relating how a particular individual had been transformed by the project.

It was one who used to just put his head in his arms and not say anything to anyone and wear dark glasses all the time. He’s taken his glasses off and he said something, I can’t remember the quote, but it’s written somewhere but it’s something like “you know you bastards, ever since you started talking about art I’ve started to see things”. It’s extraordinary – an absolutely extraordinary quote from that kid and he ended up making stuff.

Community-based arts practice(s) have the potential to create a range of dialogues within communities, for both those directly or indirectly involved. The artwork could act as a focal point; as suggested in a socially interactive model of art practice (refer to Figure 9). The artwork became a vehicle to encourage conversations and deeper thinking about broader issues. Benjamin described this
as a “fluid universal conversation” where regardless of where people live, it encouraged them to think about our current time and place in the world.

I think that can permeate, that conversation of art as a tool to gauge reality. To develop a healthy sense of reality is a pretty important part of the conversation and that’s as important with elderly people in Coleambally that are wandering past that say, ooooh what’s going on here, to bring their mind to the fact that this is happening at this time in history ...and the fact that it would be quite different somewhere else. I don’t know, there’s a sort of fluid, universal conversation that can take place.

Peter also felt that art projects had the ability to create broader channels of communication. He spoke of a project that he and Geoff had worked on in a rural community involving a parody of Stonehenge. In this context, the structure was titled *Balehenge: an art temple*. The work involved appropriating the design principles of Stonehenge, although the structure was to be built with large round bales of hay from the local district. They had not considered that using the phrase *art temple* might have ramifications in the community. The artwork became a catalyst for the community to examine its values and attitudes. It also forced the artists to reflect on how they would conduct future projects and to question their identities’ as artist activists (Lacy, 1995b), and whether they advocates or agitators.

One morning we got there and there was a fundamentalist Christian community out there and they’d stuck copies of the Ten Commandments to the bales – you know we called it the art temple - so it was paganism and the whole thing. They wanted it pulled down and they got a great amount of publicity up there but then the community came back and said well don’t be silly. This is a celebration of us, we like it, but we didn’t have to answer them, the community answered them. But the following year with the Tower of Babel which is a sound sculpture we did in the same place – we went and talked to the Council of Churches in the month leading up to it and that was an interesting thing because all of the denominations were represented at this council and the same thing happened, with this particular community, when we described what it was they said, nuh, you can’t have that. But I didn’t have to answer that, the other people in that meeting answered it for me. So there was that sort of stuff I find is extremely, you know, enlightening (Peter).

Using an arts project to document and explore farming life as well as seeking to engage farmers, were extremely complex and difficult tasks, according to Stephen as “it was very difficult to get them off the farm, to sit in a hall to write a digital story, which they think is an artistic thing”. By persisting with farmers to
produce digital stories of their lives and subsequently screening them in public, farmers had changed both their perceptions of art and what Stephen was trying to do.

It’s very powerful seeing people’s reactions to those stories and I think digital storytelling is – it’s unique in that people are seeing stories about themselves. It’s not about ego casting – it’s more affirming what they’ve done and it’s a story about them and it’s an affirmation of them (Stephen).

Although artists were able to describe the reciprocity that can be inherent in some community-based arts practice(s), when I asked them about their learning rather than that of the participants who were involved, at times I was met with silence. When some of the artists did respond, it appeared that they viewed learning in the context of acquiring new skills that could relate to their particular form of arts practice. Forthcoming responses included “hhmmmm I don’t know, I don’t know anything that I can think of right now”, or “I’m not sure if I’m the right person or have much to contribute”. Providing prompts that broadened what learning might mean and how learning based on Jarvis’ (2006) model (refer to Figure 11) can occur through an emotion, thought, reflection, or action allowed conversations with the artists to open up.

The results of the discussions are evident in the rich responses covered in this and the other tracks and trails of this chapter. A key aspect that came through these artists’ comments was that it allowed them to be continually challenged and question their understandings. They were able to draw on their resources that Côté & Levine (2002) refer to as identity capital, as well as continue to acquire new resources or adapt the tangible and intangible resources, that were a part of that capital. The following comment by Angie demonstrates this sentiment.

I actually – I invite all sorts of stuff because I get bored very quickly so I actually like to explore other areas, because for me that’s what keeps it interesting. I like to keep learning, I like to keep looking at different parts of the community.
Ways We Connect beyond community-based arts practice(s)

While the focus of this study was to examine the ways community-based arts practice(s) contributes to regional artists learning about their identities, before concluding this chapter it would be remiss not to include some insights that emerged from our discussions that relate to other aspects of the artists’ lives.

Being located in a regional or rural location did not mean that the artists were restricted to immediate localities. They moved in ever widening circles, along unforeseen trails or along “meandering paths” that emerge. In doing so, they have become involved in a range of communities beyond their own that have encompassed characteristics of grounded, way-of-life and projected communities (Mulligan et al., 2007). Depending on their individual circumstances, the geographic boundaries across which they operated, and the communities they have connected with fluctuated. Angie spoke of working within a radius of a three hour drive from her home, which in the state of Victoria where she lives could potentially encompass all of the state. Others like Peter and Geoff were travelling interstate on a semi-regular basis for projects. Benjamin was in a position to undertake arts projects in various parts of the world. Referring to Table 3 some artists were also using the World Wide Web to connect with, and showcase what they do to broader audiences.

The arts practice(s) in which these artists were involved were also diverse. They were not only restricted to community-based arts projects. Many of them continued also to practise as exhibiting artists; although the ways in which they chose to engage with the art field had shifted over time and it was now more on their terms. Anita was exhibiting in a local gallery, rather than attempting to re-enter the “art scene” in Melbourne and what she saw that as entailing, “I don’t like having to sell yourself … [and] probably, I don’t have that ego to be in the arts scene”. Geoff, who like Anita, had been a successful exhibiting gallery artist in Melbourne, had also chosen to not re-enter the commercial gallery world. Instead, he participated in group exhibitions and had an annual exhibition of his work from his studio at home: “I’ll have maybe one a year and it’s always a big party and I make not much money but my work’s out there being seen”. Annie
continued to have solo exhibitions in commercial galleries in Canberra and Sydney and has had her work purchased for various public collections. Being a regional artist and somewhat removed from the art scene allowed her to follow her own passions.

You know, you’re true to yourself, you know, believe in what you do and you’re not swaying this way and that influenced by other things that you think you should be doing and I think, you know I know and believe that that’s one of the benefits for me and the beauties of being a regional artist that I’m not being bombarded by maybe I should be taking this approach or that approach and this is what I’m expected to do. I haven’t really worried about what I’m expected to do because I don’t think I could do it you know.

Ruth has also had her work purchased for prominent public collections, even though she had not relied on conventional artworld systems, such as belonging to a particular gallery.

I’ve shown in commercial galleries but then I’ve gone, thank you but I don’t want to be in this stable – I’ve never wanted to have, you know, – an agent. It’s been a combination of things and one is because I could never get my head around the middle man... I like managing myself I suppose. It’s not about a control thing, it’s about wanting to know those – well it maybe is about a control thing I suppose, but I want to know those processes – I want to deal with them all and I want to know those issues and I’ve always thought nobody’s going to care as much about my work as I do (Ruth).

The artists who participated in this study not only worked in a diverse and variety of community-based arts practices and project where they learnt about themselves, but there were also a range of other facets to their lives and biographies that involved them using their art skills to communicate with others. At times it was difficult for the artists to make a distinction between their various practices, the lines could become blurred. While the following statement was provided by Ruth about the way she works, it could well apply to all of the participants in this study, and demonstrates how they use their identity capital. “My work goes to a lot of different areas as it happens and I don’t differentiate – it gives me a working life” (Ruth).
Chapter 5: Considerations and Implications

Figure 21. “Isolated Plateaus”. Source: (Selkirk, 2008)
While the twelve community-based artists who participated in this study had some aspects in common, they also represented individual voices and unique experiences, demonstrating the complexities involved in exploring this particular field of arts practice. Each artist’s biography, the “goodies that they have in their cart”, and the “tracks they have taken” (Leunig, 1999) with their respective practice, along with the data I managed to gather can only reflect particular aspects of them and their identities. In this concluding chapter, the principal messages to come from this inquiry are synthesised under the major concepts that were at the core of this study. They involve a commentary on the concept of community–arts based practice(s) and how these types of work were interpreted by the artists. The ways in which learning occurred for the artists, and how that learning has shaped their identities is also presented. The implications for my practice that surfaced as a result of undertaking this inquiry are then considered. I subsequently provide some remarks to bring this particular study to a close.

**Major Considerations from the Findings**

All of the artists in this study had been involved in community-based arts practice(s) for some time, although several of the participants indicated they had not fully explored why they do the work they do. It also appeared that they had not been provided with an opportunity to reflect, make sense of, or consider the learning that had occurred for them during community-based arts practice(s). During my discussions with artists, there were occasions where they spoke about aspects of their lives that they had seemed not to have consciously thought about previously. At times they also found it difficult to articulate their circumstances. While describing their work as an adventure, full of challenges, always interesting, and posing new problems they also spoke of how, in trying to make sense of what they did, they could “get lost in it”, or that it was a “meandering path” and they were not really sure what they did, as it “just sort of formed itself”. The ways in which they initially described their experiences appeared to be a series of plateaus as described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), where they could describe situations that had left an impression or after-image, that they had reactivated in other activities in which they became involved. Although many of
the experiences had not consciously been thought about, the artists had folded them into their habitus, resulting in a gradual and ongoing transformation of their identities over time. In providing an opportunity for the artists to reflect on their experiences, they were able to speak candidly about how their experiences had influenced them. By reframing the artists’ thinking to consider the work they do as an interactive and relational process (Bourriaud, 2002) that involves dialogical practices (Kester, 2004) and reflexivity (Giddens, 1996; Patton, 2002), they were able to move from what Giddens (1979) describes as either tacit or practical consciousness to discursive consciousness, or a heightened awareness of both the tangible and intangible resources that comprise their identity capital (Côté & Levine, 2002) came to the fore. This was an unintended consequence of the study, as I had made an assumption that the artists would have, at some point, considered these questions themselves. For those who had previously considered aspects of their work, the discussions I had with them also provided an opportunity to confirm or reconceptualise their thoughts. Through the process of our conversations, what emerged were rich and varied tapestries of these artists’ journeys, exposing some of the meanings of their experiences for them as well as for me.

Within the literature there is a range of descriptors employed to characterise what I have chosen to call in this study, community-based arts practice(s). By attempting to narrow the focus of my inquiry to a specific art medium – namely artists who work in the visual arts within the field of community-based arts practice - I was partially interested to ascertain whether a unified understanding of what community-based arts practice might mean to these particular practitioners. A shared account was not forthcoming. The picture that each individual provided to me, made it difficult to place the collective circumstances within a single model, or category, let alone offer up a one size fits all or collective description of community-based arts practice.

The range of contexts in which the artists worked and the people with whom they worked, demonstrated the shift that has occurred in community arts practice(s). While there were glimmers of the radical halcyon days of community
art in the 1960s and 1970s outlined by Binns (1991), Hawkes (2003), Kirby (1991), and McGuigan (1992) where community art was relatively unstructured and grassroots-driven, the arts practice(s) described by the participants in this study in most cases were more formalised and businesslike. Community-based arts practice(s) had also become a multidimensional phenomenon embedded in a range of sectors such as health, tourism and economic development. The present climate for community-based arts practice(s) is now seen as one of many approaches within socially engaged, participatory and educational arts activity (Pringle, 2002) or echoing an ethos of community cultural development, the term that continues to be used in Australia, where an emphasis is predominately placed on instrumental outcomes (Costantoura, 2001; Hawkes, 2003; Mulligan et al., 2007; Pope & Doyle, 2006; Regional Arts Australia, 2006; Regional Arts Victoria, 2005; Throsby, 2006).

Although the participants’ arts practice(s) and way the artists viewed community-based arts practice(s) varied, there were some common approaches to the ways they worked with people when they were involved in community-based arts projects. Their approaches emulated qualities that Kester (2004) argues are required for dialogical arts practice. They included the artist becoming involved in collaborative production and developing empathic insight of the communities in which they work, and projects unfolded through cumulative exchange and dialogue between all involved in a process that Kester (2004) describes as performative interaction. In most cases it became a socially interactive model of arts practice referred to in Figure 9.

The ways in which artists worked included components of Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice, although artists’ interactions with others were not necessarily ongoing, in their own grounded community (Mulligan et al., 2007), and more particularly when their work occurred in locations beyond where they lived.

The artists described how a liminal state could emerge when they moved into new circumstances or communities with which they were not necessarily
familiar. They were aware that dominant social structures and social identities (Côté & Levine, 2002) within a community could be disrupted from the ways they usually operated. The liminal state that artists described included the qualities of mutuality, absence of status, and unselfishness. Turner (1969) links these qualities with the modality of communitas. The ability for artists to operate in this modality was variable, and dependent on the contexts in which they found themselves. Social structures and institutions such as schools or local government could act as forces of power to challenge or interrupt the ways in which they preferred to work, although they could adapt to these circumstances. By working in such ways, the artists not only disrupted others ways of being; the artists’ own perspectives were also challenged.

Becoming involved in community-based art practice(s), artists learnt about themselves from their interactions with others. The artists entered sites or social spaces where their individual worlds converged with the broader structural/cultural worlds. It is in these social environments that Côté and Levine (2002) argue that our personal identities are negotiated and mediated, where individuals find a fit between their socially constructed identity and their uniqueness. The range of circumstances in which artists worked contained an assortment of uncertainties, variables and what Mishler (1999) refers to as chance events and encounters, providing episodes where disjunctures for the artists could arise. Peppered throughout the findings, artists described being confronted with new situations, solving problems, and adapting to circumstances. Circumstances where the artists’ biographies and their interpretation of the episodes were not harmonious forced them to ask questions, reflecting the environment that according to Jarvis (2006) provides the impetus for change or learning to take place. Similarly, Mezirow (1991) describes these circumstances as the conditions that can lead to transformative learning for individuals. Attempting to outline the learning that occurred for the artists in these contexts, and separate it from how their learning has influenced their identities, proved to be complex, mirroring Jarvis’ (2006) description of learning and highlighted in Figure 11. The synchronicity between these two aspects of
learning and how it shapes identities occurs in tandem and in a multitude of ways.

Many of the artists in this study moved from being practising studio artists to also incorporating community-based arts practice(s) as part of their repertoire either for financial imperatives, or as a result of being recruited from within the communities in which they lived because of their assumed skills. The artists initially saw the community work in terms of an income or a duty resulting from being a member of a particular community. Moving beyond the conventional artworld model and opting to work with communities, some artists were forced to challenge their own perspectives on what being an artist entailed. As a result of becoming further immersed in a range of community-based arts projects, the artists described a transformation where the income they derived (while important) became secondary to their raised awareness of their own values and the dispositions that emerged. The values that emerged reflected social justice, equity and empowerment of themselves and others. Working as a community-based artist had provided a disjunctive for them to question their own philosophical beliefs. This questioning shifted them from purely an income focus to also include an ideologically-driven perspective for the work they did.

Several arts projects undertaken by the artists in this study had been designed to achieve instrumental outcomes prescribed by funding bodies, or government policies. The outcomes to be achieved by these arts projects could include improving the social and or economic capital of communities through boosting notions of connectedness, belonging, and wellbeing in those communities and for the participants in a particular project. The artists initially described how they had not necessarily seen the intended outcomes for the participants applying to themselves. However, the discussions with the artists revealed a clear picture that working on community-based arts projects had also allowed them to connect with others, and develop a sense of belonging. A continual thread in the artists’ narratives from their formative years to their current circumstances related to how significant it had been for them to receive acknowledgement and encouragement from others for the work they had done.
Another major thread that emerged in the course of their lives, and which had nourished the artists, was their interaction with others; to make connections and develop relationships with people. Working in community-based arts practice(s) had provided opportunities for them to continue to develop relationships and connect with a broader range of people and communities. These circumstances in turn had contributed to their sense of who they were at a number of levels. The artists were able to explain how over time they had come to realise that working with others acted as a reflexive process. For example, when Ruth described that while she was a sociologist with a camera, reflecting the community back to them, she had also come to recognise that the community was also reflecting herself back to her. Angie’s remarks also highlighted the reflexive aspect when she stated that “you start to understand yourself better because you actually understand yourself through other people and so we can’t as humans, we can’t be isolated” (Angie). Comments such as Ruth’s and Angie’s demonstrate the interdependence between individuals (in this case artists) and community, where according to Giddens (1991) the constant interaction of human agency and social structures influence each other. Giddens (1984) refers this interaction as the duality of structure which forms the basic tenet in his theory of structuration.

The notion of connecting and belonging surfaced to varying degrees and with different levels of meaning for artists, depending on how connected they were with a community. In the projects that artists were involved with in their own grounded community (Mulligan et al., 2007), they acted as citizen artists as described by Mancillas (1998), allowing their neighbours to see beyond the stereotype of an artist as intruder or different. By working as a citizen artist, they were also seen as a partner, working toward similar goals as others within their community. Being situated in regional locations, where characteristics of Gemeinschaft (Tönnies, 1887) such as everybody knowing everybody, the attributes of everyone putting in, and not being able to hide away were still prevalent according to most of the artists with whom I spoke. Being aware of these cultural values in small communities had permeated the choices they had been able to make.
Becoming citizen artists provided a balance, or an alternative source of identity to their individual ways of art-making. Their individual work could be misinterpreted by the same communities, and resulted at times in a sense of isolation for the artists.

Working on community-based arts projects, the artists became aware of the need to challenge socially-constructed concepts of the artist. They indicated that a schism existed between their dispositions and how they saw themselves, which did not match with those of the normative representations of an artist’s identity that could exist in a community. This clash of perceptions acted as a positive antagonism between them and their communities. Although wanting to connect with their communities, they were also aware that possessing the identity of an artist, provided them with a licence of sorts to challenge or work as an activist to “dislodge restrictive paradigms of thought” (Sullivan, 2005, p. 153) within a community. An explicit focus for them of working in community-based arts practice(s) was to disrupt the community’s perceptions of what an artist is. In their endeavour to change perceptions, while acting as what Lacy (1995b) refers to as activists, their practices were respectful and in most cases sensitive. Shifting others’ perceptions allowed the artists to be seen in a different light. The culmination of the projects resulted in the artists feeling accepted or welcomed within communities. By challenging the social identity of an artist, a mechanism was provided for them to belong, feel valued, and recognised for the work they had done. Artists described how connecting with others assisted in their personal growth; developing relationships with others provided the opportunity for having a group or personal identity with which they could feel comfortable or had greater congruence with how they saw themselves.

By becoming involved with, and continuing to incorporate community-based arts practice(s) as part of their world, the artists in this study have moved along Lacy’s continuum (refer to Figure 7) from the private realm of artists as experiencers and reporters, to the more public roles of being analysts and activists. By entering the public domain, the artists’ worlds have expanded. Engaging with communities provided the artists with diverse and broader opportunities
than they previously had to acquire both tangible and intangible resources—things that Côté and Levine (2002) argue contribute to one’s identity capital. Stating that the formation of identity capital is an ongoing process denotes that the artists’ identities were by no means fixed or set, although certain elements of who they were appeared to be constant throughout their respective biographies. A result of the disjunctures and tensions that arose for each of the artists when their internal worlds interacted with a range of external social structures, also made the notion of them each possessing a single or unified identity problematic. Each artist reflected multiple identities. The identity they possessed, or was assumed by others that they possessed, varied depending on the circumstances in which they found themselves. Their identities were continually being formed, or in a state of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Learning had occurred for the artists as a result of being involved in community-based arts practice(s), which they had folded into their identities and had assisted them to further develop agentic qualities to navigate their respective life journeys. Examining only a certain element of their lives, the part that involved community-based arts practice(s) and the transformations it has provided for them, offers some insights into these artists’ biographies. It also highlights Jarvis’ (2006) assertions, that how learning and meaning-making occurs for each individual cannot be entirely accounted for due to the innumerable and interacting variables that occur when each individual learns.

**Implications for Professional Practice**

In the first chapter I outlined a range of ways in which this study may have some significance or provide benefits. My initial claims were perhaps somewhat ambitious. Being mindful that the emphasis for a professional doctorate is to inform professional practice, skills, and make a contribution to knowledge of direct relevance to the profession, I would like to reflect on what has been learnt from undertaking this inquiry that could relate to professional practice.

I have revealed that the professional practice for artists is complex. Even when focussing on only a particular type of artist (visual artists) and only one form of
arts practice (community-based art); there are multiple practices. From this specific but broad set of circumstances, artists continue to be engaged in an ever increasing range of settings to inspire and mobilise, educate and inform, nurture and heal, or build and improve (Cleveland, 2002). Artists are required to stimulate positive shifts within individuals and communities, which are then measured for impact or outcomes in various ways. Moving the focus of community-based arts projects and practices from a transactional model (Freire, 1990; Kester, 2004) where tangible or instrumental outcomes need to be found, the stories presented here allow us to view what occurs from the other side – the artists’ perspectives on the work they do, what the implications have been for them, and their practice. It also considers the intrinsic benefits such as those outlined by McCarthy et al. (2004) in Figure 6 that are implicit in the work they do.

Artists who have found themselves involved in community-based work are continually required to establish settings or contexts where some form of transformation is meant to take place. This study provides some insight into the cumulative effect on artists when they operate in these environments. It considers how artists who are continually asked to provide energy, stimulus and creativity are able to do so, and what sustains them in their practice(s). There is recognition of the inherent mutuality or reciprocal understandings that occur through the work they do, and the various levels of conscious, unconscious, intended, unintended or incidental learning that occurs for all involved in a project. The stories told here and their interpretations provide further material to the currently emerging literature and research (McCarthy et al., 2004; Mulligan et al., 2007) that questions the dominant way of measuring value, based on instrumental benefits. The findings of this inquiry potentially advance our understandings of the impact at a personal and individual level of the intrinsic benefits, or disadvantages that can be derived from community-based arts practice(s).

Issues raised in this study about the diverse nature of the artists’ work could also be of interest to those who are involved in the formal education of artists, or to
those who choose to undertake arts study, to consider more broadly the options and opportunities for arts practice beyond the formal artworld. The material contained within this thesis could offer some insights for the diverse funding bodies or authorities who employ artists in a partnership to undertake arts-based projects. One example would be the ways in which artists’ work is currently being scrutinised by agencies such as education departments to seek ways to establish creative and engaging learning environments for students (Donelan et al., 2009; Galton, 2008; Pringle, 2002). Rather than focussing on artists’ approaches to pedagogy, or the roles they perform, an examination of the changes to, effects on, and learning that occurs for artists who are continually involved in establishing these environments, may reveal broader understandings of the complexity involved in this work for organisations and government bodies, and in the process reveal a wider range of benefits that can be derived from such projects.

At a more immediate level, having concluded this study, the artists who were participants will be notified that if requested, a copy of my thesis can be provided to them. For those who take up the offer, it could give them an opportunity to further consider their practice and reflect on my interpretations of their stories. If they choose to read the thesis, there is also the possibility that artists may think about their own practice and its relationship with others who are involved in various forms of community-based arts practice(s). They may empathise with other artists’ experiences and examine further how their work impacts on them, and how learning occurs for them. This had already occurred for some of the artists such as Angie and Geoff, providing them with a catalyst to talk.

On a personal level, this study has a myriad of implications for my own professional practice in both the arts and education. As highlighted in the first chapter, I continue to find myself working in a range of settings as an educator— as a participant or artist in community-based projects, as an educator of pre-service teachers and in other contexts. Coming to academia from an arts background and attempting to navigate a path to explore my premise for this study have provided moments of both insight and frustration. The reflexive
process I adopted in this inquiry resulted in ongoing questioning of what I had read, seen, or heard. Deliberating how it applied to my situation, and what was new for me in this understanding. I also queried whether I had interpreted theoretical positions appropriately, or when artists articulated an experience was their meaning congruent with my interpretation. Gaining a heightened awareness of this reflexive process will be woven into my role as an educator.

By adopting the stance of a Bricoleur for this study, I found a sense of liberation. I had permission of sorts, to explore literature from a range of disciplines, theoretical positions, and to consider several methodological perspectives to inform my inquiry. In doing so, I was able to weave what might be seen as disparate fields together. Crossing from purely sociological perspectives to also examine social psychology as well as postmodern literature, and adopting a type of cross disciplinary approach provided multiple lenses to make sense of, and view the focus of my inquiry. This approach has been a valuable lesson for me. It has confirmed my disposition that examining a range of options or opinions can lead to a broader understanding or interpretation of issues. In the process of shifting between disciplines, I became aware of Côté and Levine’s (2002) framework of identity capital. While Côté and Levine’s notion of identity capital was developed to consider the transition of young people into adulthood, the identity capital framework provided a structure in my study to examine the ongoing formation of the artists’ identities throughout their adult life. I had gained the confidence to transpose a theoretical position and apply it to another circumstance.

The scholarly and rigorous approach I have been required to adopt for this inquiry, while demanding and foreign in some respects, also contains elements that appeared familiar to me in the process of art-making. This familiarity became further apparent when speaking with the artists and listening to the way they described elements of how they go about their work. The arguments put that arts practice can be legitimate research (Haseman & Jaaniste, 2008; Irwin et al., 2006; Sullivan, 2005), that can transform human understanding continued to resonate, both in my work and in that of the artists who were involved in this
study. These arguments provided me with the courage to include in this thesis, images of the artwork I produced in tandem with the study. It is a small step at this point in my academic life to consider further, how I might go about legitimising arts practice as an approach to research.

As the thesis progressed and I was confronted with issues of representation, I increasingly found myself relying on art-making and developing visual imagery, such as my theoretical framework, the use of the lotus diagram, and the introduction of tracks and trails. In addition to the usefulness they provided to me, I am also alerted to the previously unconscious ways in which my own meaning-making may—or may not—align with my own students’ learning.

Becoming immersed in literature that provided a range of theoretical positions and discovering the subtle nuances that can exist has heightened my understanding of the complexities involved with learning for individuals, and the range of ways in which learning can occur. The pathway through the literature at times mimicked the notion of rhizomatics described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), where I would surface for a while before heading off on some other trail. Many of the fundamental issues explored in this study that relate to identity formation and learning are applicable to us all. While the focus of this inquiry related to the learning and identities of artists, they happen to be people like the rest of us. The biography of every individual is multifaceted and requires careful consideration when we happen to be in learning situations, wherever and whenever they might be. The frameworks that emerged from undertaking this inquiry have provided me with greater clarity and insights, so that I can engage in a dialogue with the students I encounter in my role as an educator to explore these complexities and to inform my teaching.

**Closing Remarks**

As a starting point for this inquiry I referred to Leunig’s cartoon, (Figure 2) as a map, framed in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of a map being “open and connectable in all its dimensions, it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to
constant modification” (p. 12). Leunig’s cartoon served this function as it provided me with a way in, and along the journey of this inquiry. There were times when the dimensions became connectable and also detachable at the same time, as well as being continually opened up to modification.

In bringing this study to a close I reflect on both the artists’ experiences and my own story of undertaking this study in relation to the text in Leunig’s cartoon. From most of these artists I heard a range of ideas about the world of art. In one sense they had crossed borders from solely being involved in the conventional artworld to broader forms of arts practice(s). In doing so, some had rejected the artworld completely. Others, while being involved in community-based arts practice(s), also maintained links with the artworld and others were not able to differentiate between worlds. Regardless of the track they had taken, they all had an inherent need to be involved in art-making which underpinned and guided who they were and how they lived. These all displayed qualities that Throsby and Hollister (2003) argue are at the heart of what it is to be a practising art professional. Although small in number, the artists in this study have also demonstrated that the artworld a decade on from when Leunig’s cartoon was published has continued to shift, expand, and hybridise. We are perhaps in an era when Sullivan’s (2005) description of art as occurring in “sites of possibility” (p. 152) applies. For all these artists, new possibilities emerged through their artistic practices.

If we view the goodies that artists have in their cart, as both the tangible and intangible resources that Côté and Levine (2002) refer to as identity capital, the goodies the artists in this study possessed have not remained static. Their respective carts have required a continual re-packing. The tracks these artists have taken were perhaps at times dark and dirty, being full of uncertainties, although they have provided them with expanded insights and a broad range of experiences. The same could be said of the tiny holes that they may have initially seen as options to sustain them. The tiny hole of becoming involved in community based arts practice(s) has opened up, to provide them with a range of unexpected opportunities. They have left footprints and have looked back,
recognising aspects of their biographies and previous experiences, but continue to move forward. The artists in this study have not slipped away from, nor are they free of art. They have developed agentic qualities through the acquisition of tangible and intangible resources that comprise their identity capital (Côté & Levine, 2002), to negotiate their own ways through a world of art.

In many regards, the same aspects of Leunig’s cartoon also apply to my circumstances. Through the ongoing process of becoming an artist, researcher, and academic, my paths will no doubt go on to consist of numerous plateaus, disjunctures, and meandering trails. The track may be dirty at times. My learning from this inquiry has folded into my biography and provided me with the opportunity to take stock of the goodies in my cart, adding new goodies, reconfiguring some, and removing others. By regularly taking stock, I also remain open to acquiring further resources or goodies, which continue to shape my identity capital and assist me in negotiating my life journey.
References


