Negotiation and Learning in Work

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
October 2011
ABSTRACT

The concept of negotiation is often used in contemporary sociocultural and constructivist perspectives and theories of adults’ learning in and for work. It is used to bring a range of meanings to the description and explanation of work learning as an interactive process of active participation in and with the resources that constitute work. At its most fundamental, that interaction is between the worker and their context, between the individual and their immediate situation. At its most complex, that interaction is multiply enacted and dynamically experienced as all the resources – the personal, social, cultural, historic, material, and ideational influences – that shape work and workers’ engagement. These resources are variously mediating how and in what ways workers’ interactions can be observed, interpreted, and understood as the constant flux of reality. Across all these momentary and lifelong interactions, whether as concrete as hammering a nail or as abstract as metaphysics, the concept of negotiation supports understanding workers’ activities as interdependent with and relational to all else that is happening for, by, and to them. This support comes from the broad range of meanings the concept carries, particularly those meanings that evoke notions of joint activity in search of solution and agreement as the means of moving forward from a base of difference. Such joint activity is evidence of needing each other and needing to interact to accomplish something. So, negotiation comes to be synonymous with interaction and co-participation and, thereby, generally descriptive and explanatory of learning in and for work as social activity.

Missing from this generality of use in sociocultural and constructivist work-learning theories are the necessary explicit meanings of negotiation that illustrate and make visible the personal contributions of workers to the participative practices that constitute their work and learning. Generalisations of negotiation evidence a reliance on generic meanings that are insufficient to the task of specifying how workers negotiate their engagement in work. Consequently, the concept of negotiation remains under-theorised and thereby ineffective in current work-learning theory beyond being indicative of personal activity as interactivity with others. So, how can negotiation accurately and unambiguously support description and explanation of learning as participation? How do workers enact this participation? What personal practices evidence their enactment and how can these practices be understood as negotiation practices? Addressing such
questions is the project of this thesis. Its investigation is guided by the central question: How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work?

This question is addressed through a qualified ethnographic methodology that focuses on workers as individuals, as persons enacting themselves in and through their work. This “person” focus, conducted over 18 months and across very diverse workplaces, enables the comprehensive examination of the personal work practices of the 12 workers who participated. What emerges from the data and its analysis presented here, is a conceptualisation of negotiation that elaborates explicit meanings that describe and explain individuals’ contributions to and outcomes of their engagement in the negotiation practices that constitute their learning in and for work.

This conceptualisation of negotiation is “the three dimensions of negotiation.” Personal learning in and for work can be understood as negotiated practice when negotiation is conceptualised across the three dimensions of (a) form, (b) frame, and (c) flow. These three dimensions are not sequenced or phased; they do not follow or cycle. Rather, they are three distinguishable but holistically integrated dimensions of negotiation, that is, analytically separable aspects of a single concept.

The first dimension, negotiation as form, presents the four primary forms of negotiation as a matrix that enables levels of workers’ purposefulness in activity and levels of outcome realisation through that activity to map and identify the kinds of negotiations engaged in through their work. The second dimension, negotiation as frame, elaborates how workers are engaged in multiple and simultaneous negotiations through their work. Some of these negotiations are pre-mediate of current activity and some co-mediate with current activity. Negotiation as frame presents these temporal and co-continuous aspects of negotiation as the personal negotiation frame in and through which workers enact their practice. The third dimension, negotiation as flow, elaborates the means of accounting for the constant state of flux that characterises work. Through the concept of transaction, negotiation as flow outlines how the person and their practice, their values and priorities and the worth these hold for them and the resources that support their engagement in work, are transforming. Negotiation is, therefore, the constant state of transformation into which workers flow as influential resources, unique among the many, that shape and are shaped by participative practice.

Elaborated in these ways, the three dimensions of negotiation enable the concept of negotiation to fully conceptualise the many interdependent and relational properties of
workers, as personal-selves-in-action, who purposefully engage in the individual and collective partnership practices that constitute their work and learning.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALLITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signature: Date:
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the culmination of the efforts of numerous people who gave their time and assistance most willingly and often sacrificially in support of its production. Chief among them were my wife Judith and my sons Isaac and Jedekai who always encroached, skirted, and withdrew in the most helpful of ways. What they gave and gave up, to support the work and me, will always be greatly appreciated.

Special thanks must go to my supervisor Professor Stephen Billett for his patience and guidance throughout and Professor Michelle Barker for her assistance, and to Elizabeth Stevens for her professional editing services.

Final thanks must go to the 12 workers who graciously opened their working lives to the scrutiny of research and became the vital foundation of the ideas presented.
Chapter 1

Work, learning, and negotiation

When fire fighters race to secure their kit and get to the trucks at the sound of the emergency call out bells and when chefs shout a newly arrived service order across the kitchen or when computer technicians remotely access faulty machines in efforts to restore functionality, work is underway. And that work is not unusual. For the fire fighter, the chef, and the technician, these kinds of tasks and their participation in them are fundamental aspects of their everyday work routines. They may perform these tasks well and they may perform them poorly. They may participate enthusiastically and they may not. These tasks may be highly significant to them or they may not. In any case, their engagement in them will enact and evidence their bringing together in personal activity a vast array of resources that constitute their work, that is, the people, things, systems, contexts, and cultures that coalesce in the collective interactivity that is the practice of their work. This thesis presents an investigation into the “bringing together” of the resources that constitute the personal practice of work and, particularly, how that bringing together can be conceptualised as workers’ negotiation of these resources in the process and accomplishment of their learning in and for work.

The array of resources brought together in work includes workers’ personal knowledge, their skills, understandings, attitudes and aspirations, and the very personal biographies they have lived in shaping how these personal attributes are enacted in work. Likewise, these resources include social knowledge, the tools, systems, and ideologies that make up the historic and sociocultural context in and by which work is undertaken. And, further, these resources include the very human actions that unite these seemingly separable personal and social resources in lived experience. This integration of the personal and the social as it is manifest in activity defines the dynamics of interactivity as practice. As such, practice is the interactive enactment of knowledge (Archer, 2000; Billett, 2010) and so identifies the relationship that is the person, their actions, and the sociocultural activity in which they are engaged. Because of this, practice can be seen as the set of shared resources that define, enable, and sustain engagement in action (Illeiris, 2002; Wenger, 1998). The primary concern of this thesis is the personal practice of
learning, and particularly, learning in, through, and for work as it is enacted through the negotiations that constitute work.

Work per se is problematic – as personal practice, as social institution, as the means of personal, indeed national, prosperity and survival in the contemporary economies of a globalised world. Constant change in technology, labour practices, and consumer demand has resulted in what some describe (e.g., Baumann, 1998, 2000; Beck, 2000; Carnoy, 2001; McBrier & Wilson, 2004) as the instability and insecurity that now characterise work and working life. Defining work, what it is, when, where, and how it happens and why it happens, is no simple matter. Work is a highly complex and dynamic socio-personal phenomenon, charged with all the political, economic, psychological, and sociological tension that attends significant action. To address questions of work and the issues and implications arising is to engage in complexity, which is “the only satisfactory way of exploring work” (Noon & Blyton, 2002, p. 338).

Baumann (2000) has described this complexity as “molten capitalism,” drawing on the metaphor of the immense power of volcanoes and the planetary core to capture the force and ceaseless pressures of globalised production, marketing, and consumerism that makes work (as social institution) unstable and unpredictable. In ways that seem to retain this metaphor, Beckett and Hager (2001) describe the personal practice of work as “hot action.” By this is meant that work is increasingly characterised as the personal endeavour of meeting the pressured demands of taking responsibility for being ill-prepared to make the immediate decisions necessitated by newly emergent problems with the “nagging doubt that action might be inadequate – superficial, hasty and inappropriate” (Beckett, 2001, p. 74). Clearly, from these perspectives, danger, risk, and anxiety are central qualities of work (Beck, 2000).

Other perspectives on work and workers emphasise different qualities. Some see work as purposefully dehumanising, following employers’ and managers’ control of labour and the need to reduce production costs and increase efficiency with little concern for employee wellbeing (Braverman, 1974). Others see work and its transformation through the decline of full-time employment opportunity and the rise of casual and contract labour, as increasingly demeaning, socially unworthy, and personally unrewarding as more and more workers are culturally displaced or left scrambling to access the shrinking labour market (Edgell, 2006; Pusey, 2003; Rifkin, 1995; Sennett, 2006). Still others see work in more positive terms, as the life-affirming enactment of self, a vehicle for and by which workers achieve personal goals and secure social capital.
For example, Smith (2006) describes work as psycho-social sites of personal and cultural necessity and workers as epistemic managers who are necessarily and purposefully organising and controlling the diversity of personal and contextual resources that mediate their work practices. Casey (2006) presents work as increasingly the hyper-rationalised production of knowledge and information-rich products that deny personhood. Yet, workers struggle against this hyper-rationalisation, this denial of person, as self-creating subjects who enact their desires and imperatives for better personal conditions. In securing the “decent work” this enables, workers may achieve their social reconceptualisation beyond limiting concepts of labour as capital and human resource.

Vahasanen and Billett (2008) describe workers as negotiators of professional identity and personal strategists who deploy a range of resources in reshaping themselves and their work. And similarly, Hanninen and Etelapelto (2008) describe workers as self-empowering, personally expanding the boundaries of their engagement in work as they learn to strengthen their agency through work. Although limited to specific examinations of specific types of work and workers, these perspectives view work as personal experience enacted through personal agency and directed towards goals that may or may not be shared or realised, rather than solely social experience enacted through subjugation and obligation that emphasises the social press and goals of production for consumption.

So work is complex, and differently so, dependent on the perspective or focus taken and the emphases made in its examination. Learning in, through, and for work is, therefore, equally complex, if not more so. For example, and as noted by some of the participants in the research reported in this thesis, metropolitan fire fighters learn their work by fighting fires and do this in conjunction with rigorous preparatory and on-going training. This training involves structured institutionalised training leading to formal qualifications as well as routine daily skills maintenance and development. Yet, increasingly, the work of metropolitan fire fighters is responding to motor vehicle accidents and other non-fire emergencies. Similarly, chefs learn the requirements of their work through work and are supported in this by regulated preparatory training both on and off the job. This is usually undertaken as apprenticeship that leads to formally recognised trade qualifications. However, such apprenticeships predominantly relate to food science and kitchen practice and do not prepare chefs for the personnel and business management necessary for the successful function of the restaurants in which they work. Equally, computer technicians learn their work by doing it, by fixing broken machines, by installing new ones and staying abreast of the constant changes in hardware and software.
necessary to that work. Such work may or may not be supported by formal accreditation but will demand constant, diverse, and rapid learning as technology changes. Indeed, such change has become so frequent and commonplace that replacement of product and component rather than problem diagnosis and repair is standard response to equipment fault and failure. For all these workers, learning to do their job can be both formal and informal, structured and unstructured, on the job and off the job, credentialed and non-credentialed, compulsory and non-compulsory, supported and unsupported, during, before, and after work, an entry level requirement, an ongoing necessity, and/or a regulated professional condition of practice. In short, learning in and for work is highly complex and multiply demanding. Fire fighters, like chefs and computer technicians, indeed all workers, have learned and are continuously learning the conduct of their work and are doing so through their practice that is their constant interaction with all the resources brought together to constitute that conduct, that occupation or vocational practice.

This thesis presents an investigation into these complexities of work and learning. Two priorities characterise the investigation. They are the primary emphasis and focus. First, the primary emphasis is on workers, as people, unique and individual, and how they personally enact their work. Second, the primary focus is on the bringing together, or more specifically, the negotiation, of the resources that constitute individuals’ work and the learning that supports this work. That is, how the bringing together of resources that contribute to and accomplish individuals’ work and learning can be conceptualised in ways that illuminate work learning as negotiated practice. These two priorities, the person and their personal enactment of work and the negotiation practices that secure work and learning as socially shared accomplishment, are integrated in the central question guiding the investigation reported here: How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work? In this question, the inseparability of the two priorities is achieved in the concept of negotiation and so this thesis presents a critical examination and elaboration of the concept of negotiation so as to enable an understanding of work learning that illuminates the personal practices of the individual worker as contributions to and outcomes of their engagement in the socio-personal practice of work. More than simply interactive and more than simply participative, workers’ engagement in work and learning is negotiated and always in negotiation. Investigating and elaborating this case, that is, what negotiation means and how it is enacted as personal work and learning, is the project of this thesis.
Conceptual foundations
This thesis and its investigation are guided and informed by a conceptual orientation that draws on a range of sociocultural and constructivist perspectives of work and learning, as initiated by the work of Vygotsky (1978), advanced by the theoretical developments of Leontyev (1978), Cole (1985), Wertsch (1995), Rogoff (1995), Lave and Wenger (1991), and Wenger (1998), and now foundational in the work-learning theorising of many contemporary researchers including Billett (2001a, 2004, 2006a, 2008), Engestrom (2002, 2004, 2008), Illeris (2002, 2007, 2011), and Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2009). Taken together, these various perspectives may be described as generative of a participation and practice paradigm by which work learning is theorised as workers’ personal engagement or participation in socially derived practices. This paradigm may be further described as the current and dominant conceptual foundation of work-learning theory. This thesis, like these theoretical perspectives, seeks to “explicate the relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional and historical situations in which this action occurs on the other” (Wertsch, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995, p. 11). From such a perspective, learning, work, and workplaces are viewed as complex domains of personal and cultural interactions. Workplaces, as sites of learning and work, are more than simply sites of employment that bring together labour and capital for the production of goods and services for profit and consumption. They are social arenas of effortful, goal-directed activity that exist to make demands of their participants. Workers must labour, machines must operate and systems must regulate within the purposes and pursuits that give reason and meaning to workplaces as important social institutions. Be they large and global or small and local, they may be conceptualised as bringing together the broad social agendas of histories and ideologies with the immediate and private concerns of individual workers. As such, workplaces are venues of rich interactional complexities that have deep and lasting personal and social significance. In this regard, Billett, Smith, and Barker (2005) liken the workplace to a “test bench” on which issues about the relations between the individual and the social can be examined and discussed: “This is because they comprise environments where social structures are enacted, and knowledge that has historical and cultural geneses is manifested and engaged with by individuals” (Billett et al., 2005, p. 220). Workplaces, then, are enactments of knowledge, socially structured and individually engaged, that witness and manifest the relations on which knowledge practices are created, maintained, and transformed.
Additionally, “there is no distinction between engaging in practice and learning” (Billett, 2010, p. 2). Learning, like thinking, communicating, breathing, and working, is a fundamental human activity. This fundamentality resides in the necessary actions of living, the dynamics of the doing and being that constitute human activity and all its legacies. People learn. They cannot “not learn.” So learning is a personal practice. It is the doing, the practice, of being in and of the world. The world, even at its most insular, its most intimate, its most infinitesimal, is social. Therefore, learning is a social practice. It is the doing, the practice, of being in and of society. Society, even at its most isolated, its most incomplete, is made up of singularly specific persons. Therefore, learning is a person-specific practice. It is the doing, the practice, of being a person, what Merriam and Caffarella (1991, p. xi) describe as an “intensely personal activity.” A person, even at their most worldly, their most social, is unique. Therefore, learning is the uniquely enacted socio-personal practice of being the person one is, was, and is becoming in the world.

Such an understanding of learning sits at the heart of this thesis. It is partly captured by Wenger (1998, p. 8) when he states,

Learning in this sense is not a separate activity. It is not something we do when we do nothing else or stop doing when we do something else… Learning is something we can assume – whether we see it or not, whether we like the way it goes or not, whether what we are learning is to repeat the past or shake it off.

Such an understanding immediately raises issues about all the assumptions and conceptions brought together in its construction. Ideas of humanity, of action, of change, of practice, of person, of society, of scale, and of what is and is not possible, are combined here in efforts to advance a cohesive view of learning that is founded in the inseparability of the personal and the social. Such an understanding is partly grounded in the philosophies, doctrines, and persuasions of existentialism, of phenomenology, of constructivism, of relativism, of participation, of volition, intentionality and subjectivity that inform contemporary work-learning research and theory. From these perspectives, the individual person has and learns personal and social freedoms and capacities to enact themselves within the domains of their experience as influential contributors to the changes in thinking and acting that characterise that domain (e.g., Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998; Jarvis, 2009; McCann, 1998). Together with other enacting individuals, the range of personal and social changes or transformations these enactments accomplish generates the diversity of resources (e.g., ideational, material, cultural,
political, etc.) on which activity is premised and from which subsequent activity progresses (e.g., Dewey, 1961, 2002). So, decisions emerge from consideration (however brief), dissidence from conflict (however significant), production from necessity (however immediate), family from kinship (however bonded) – such are the legacies of learning, the legacies of doing and being a person with others (e.g., Fiske, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Valsiner & van der Veer, 2000).

Being a person is, therefore, something we can assume, an existential fact founded in the ongoing process of living unique selfhood that is “constituted by the things that have happened to us” (Archer, 2000, p. 9). What has happened is what has been lived, experienced, whether proactively or reactively, and as this is always personal, it is equally always social. As Jarvis (2006, p. 5) states, “being is always becoming: human becoming is achieved both through our learning and physical maturing … is never unchanging and always social; we live and move and have our being in a social context.”

There is an ineluctable connection between all the parameters outlined in this broad conceptualisation of learning: between the personal and the social, between being and becoming, doing and changing, activity and legacy, living and experiencing, and all the interrelationships these enable. Such connections and interrelationships constitute fundamental aspects of the ongoing debate within the social sciences about the relationship between the personal and the social. This debate is characterised by questions such as, why is the social order the way it is, how does it change, what forces and activities bring this about and how is the individual, alone and with others, contributing to these forces and activities that are both shaping and being shaped by all the interactions simultaneously enacted as the social order? Learning is evidence of this relationship and a focus within the debate because learning, like breathing, communicating and working, is a fundamental human activity based in the inseparability of the person (i.e., the “who” it is that is learning), their place (i.e., the “when and where” or socio-historic, cultural, and situational context in which their learning is enacted), and their practice (i.e., the “how and why” their enactment of learning is the way it is).

From within this debate and the learning conceptualisation outlined, this thesis pursues its investigation of negotiation and seeks to advance understandings of learning as a socio-personal process. The primary focus on the person of the worker is further qualified here by specifically targeting work and learning enacted by adults through their everyday practices of engaging in paid work and work they are familiar with in that they have been doing this work for some time – they are experienced workers. It will do so by
exploring some of the individual and contextual factors that contribute to and influence learning in and through work by examining and interpreting specific individuals’ personal work practices. Such practices evidence more than the conduct of general task-related competencies or skills necessary to job performance. Rather, within the particularities of the context of their enactment, individuals’ personal work practices evidence what Goffman (1959) referred to as the presentation of self in everyday life. That presentation comprises an array of complexities about how individuals act in and through their personal capacities and dispositions, their associations and interactions with others, the contexts and circumstances they inhabit and the many ways in which these interrelate. These complexities are the lived reality of the individual and the social whereby the person practices or enacts their performances of self (Goffman, 1959) through their personal agenda (Smith, 2005), and so evidence their priorities, what they care most about (Archer, 2000), to demonstrate their own unique voice in the chorus that is the concert of social polyphony (Bakhtin, 1986), which is their accomplishment of what Macquarie (1973, p. 125) describes as existential fact, “the immediately rich and complex reality, ‘I-am-with-others-in-the-world.’” Individuals’ participative practices at work, influenced by and inseparable as they are from these complexities, are person dependent, unique, and idiosyncratic, and evidence how individuals influence the conduct and accomplishment of their actions in and with others.

There are numerous constructivist learning theories from different disciplines that offer insight into how individuals enact and secure this accomplishment. Each offers understandings of what people “do” as they learn, that is, what actions constitute the socio-personal activity of learning. For example, Piaget (1977), who referred to himself as a genetic epistemologist, describes learning activity as “equilibration,” the individuals’ proactive and reactive adaptation of self and environment through their search for “equilibrium.” Equilibrium is the balance between what and how the developing subject knows about themselves and their environment. For Piaget (1977), the individual, be it as worker or learner, is developing, searching, balancing, transforming reality as they build on what they already know (the process of assimilation) and construct what they newly know (the process of accommodation) through their experience. By contrast, anthropologists Lave and Wenger (1991) describe work learning as situational, being based in levels of participation in communities of practice. From this perspective, the individual becomes a more central member of their community, their participation and subsequent learning evidencing growing competence that grants passage and draws them
more fully into their cultural practice. The individual enacts stronger membership, increased belonging to and identification with the community of practice in which they participate. Differently again, socio-cultural theorist Wertsch (1995) theorises learning, like all activity, as mediational, being based in the interplay of a unique combination of personal and contextual moments that constitute the major influences on action. For Wertsch, the individual develops through their actions that correspond with new possibilities enabled by the tensions of co-incidental and competing mediations. The developing individual learner is derivative of new influences (both personally and socially sourced) that generate new possibilities that give rise to new influences, and so on – a constant flow of “dialectically interacting moments … of human action” (Wertsch, 1995, p. 58).

Progressing the interplay of moments to the interplay of activity systems, cultural-historical activity theorist Engestrom (1987, 1999, 2001) theorises learning as expansive. That is, learning is generative of new knowledge or objects of activity through the tensions inherent in activity systems needing to collaborate or connect in collective action. For Engstrom (1987, 1999, 2001) the individual is always a member of an activity system and, thereby, a collaborator, a collective contributor to the transformation of the objects of activity. At work such objects include new work practices and new ways of thinking about those practices. Differently, and from the perspective of cultural psychology, Billett (2004, 2006a) describes learning as relational, being based in the conflation of individual ontogenesis and the affordances and constraints of the particular workplace in which the individual is engaged. From this perspective, individuals’ participation is co-participative, reflecting a kind of joint venture between what the context or workplace enables for its participants and what those participants are willing or able to make use of. The conditions under which this relational interdependence of contextual affordances and participant engagement is enacted are unique to each participant by virtue of their specific life’s history and the legacy this has endowed them. The individual is therefore participatively bound and constituted in this legacy as their capacity to engage with their environment. Differently again, Bailey, Hughes, and Moore (2004), economic and educational theorists, present work learning as experiential, being based in access to and acceptance of the social means of knowledge control to which the individual is subjected. The participative constraints that reconcile the individual and the social through cultural action reside more predominantly in the contextual as structural and political forces to which the individual is subjected and learns through experience to
exert some control over. Learning is participative access to power and the individual is constituted in that access. And again from other perspectives, Rogoff (1995), following from what could be described as a cultural anthropology perspective, defines learning as appropriation when individuals, through their involvement in one cultural activity, are in the process (conscious or otherwise) of becoming prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities. From Rogoff’s perspective, learning is appropriation and “participation is itself the process of appropriation.” (1995, p. 151). The developing individual is basic, and through the learning that characterises this development, is constituted in the changes occurring in the activities in which people participate.

All these different conceptualisations of work learning reconcile the challenging relationship of individual agency and the context of the social world by variably advancing learning as a participative practice in the form of a dialectical interaction between the person and their environment. That is, through individuals’ immersion in the cultural practices of their particular context they become inseparable from it, their interaction with it the very process of learning. This interaction is dialectic, based in contradiction, contest, tension, and compromise through time and experience, as the individual is shaped and directed by their cultural practices and emerges as some form of successful synthesis of personal and social forces. The learner, like the practice of learning, is the participative process and product, the reconciliation of the individual and the social made possible by the necessity of learning to participate, to be active in context. The individual and the social are united as some form of interdependent partnership between the person and their context.

What may be noted through these sociocultural and constructivist perspectives is that by concentrating on learning as the process within and product of that partnership, these theories and models are unable to fully account for the practices on which that partnership is established and importantly, how individuals enter into and sustain their contributions to that partnership. This is partly due, firstly, to the way the partnership is conceptualised as participative interaction that privileges learning as the practice that mediates the partnership and, secondly, to not accounting fully for the ways individuals engage in the processes that constitute the partnership and the learning it supports.

Billett et al., (2005) present these problems in terms of viewing the partnership as the joint exercise of individual and workplace agencies. That is, the conditioned or mediated enactment of personal and contextual capacities, interests, and priorities. The partnership, then, becomes one of relational interdependence because the contributions of
each are not equally arrayed and enacted (Malle, Moses, & Baldwin, 2001). Rather, they are variably contested, supported, construed, adjusted, and withdrawn at times and under equally variable conditions that represent mutuality, hostility, and or indifference (Williams, 2002). Such understandings of how relationally interdependent partners practise their relationship begin to identify notions of negotiation, not as some general form of interactive practice that brings separate sets of resources together, but rather as co-determining influences that rely on mutuality and the transformation of a relationship that is already well established. From such a perspective, the partnership of worker and workplace that manifests as the social activity of work is not an outcome of negotiation, but more, is constituted within it as it begins, transpires, and continues through participative practice that is always both personal and social.

**Negotiation: A generically rich set of meanings**

The concept of negotiation is, not surprisingly, too broad, too ambiguous to stand without qualification as a description, yet alone an explanation, of the kinds of partnership practices that can support an understanding of personal work and learning as a socio-personal endeavour. Negotiation, per se, is a rich generic melting pot of meanings that includes bargaining and deal-making, buying, selling, trading, haggling, colluding and bickering over who has command of the television remote control and at what price point superannuation companies will divest what percentage of their international oil shares to secure the profits that will satisfy their clients and shareholders. Additionally, these meanings include conflict resolution, hostage exchange and release, labour relations agreements, national military alliances, and international strategic diplomacy related to who gets, shares, assumes, and forgoes what and for how long, in the pursuit of equity and advantage in events as disparate as parents’ disciplining children and international Middle East peace efforts. Zartman (2008, p. 4) notes negotiation as fundamental human activity “because negotiation is practiced everyday by everyone” and yet acknowledges that despite this universal reality, “every negotiation is different.” Many negotiation theorists and researchers concur (e.g., Kramer & Messick, 1995; Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2010, Pruitt, 1981; Raiffa, 1990; Saner, 2005; Strauss, 1978) that understandings of negotiation are splintered by association with and examination of so great an array of human activity.

One of those activities is learning in and for work. Within constructivist perspectives on work learning, the concept of negotiation is frequently used as a means of
explaining the nature of individual and organisational participative practices (see for example, Billett, Fenwick, & Somerville, 2006; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004; Mezirow, 2000; Rainbird, Fuller, & Munro, 2004; Wenger, 1998). The purpose and focus of such explanations vary across a broad range of meanings that act to confirm the robust character and importance of the concept as a way of explaining interactive social practices. In its rich generic sense, the term negotiation may cultivate meanings of conciliation and compromise that mark processes of discussion and sharing. These processes may lead to outcomes of mutual and amicable agreement and benefit. Similarly and contrastingly, negotiation may signify meanings of distrust and deceit as adversaries meet in hard fought contest with the aim of securing advantage through defeat of opposing powers and domination of resources. Or further, negotiation may conjure meanings of insightful manoeuvring through the deployment of sharply honed skills or intuitive capacities that evidence mastery over circumstance and opportunity. However nuanced or interpreted, negotiation is a highly evocative term that traverses a broad range of meanings. These broad generic evocations are important sources of meaning that shape understandings of learning in and through work as an interactive social practice. These evocations and other aspects of negotiation in relation to learning are comprehensively examined and elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3 that follow.

Through the research fields and disciplines of psychology, sociology, management, and education, across theories including activity, learning, meaning making, personality, and human capital, these generic evocations are drawn upon to help make sense of numerous assertions about people and their learning practices. It is important to be aware of these evocations and to problematise and interrogate the almost taken-for-granted status the concept of negotiation often carries. Consider, for example, the different meanings implicit in the following claims. From Billett and Smith (2006, p. 142), “both the process and legacy [of learning] are shaped by negotiations, acts of recognition, mutuality and orientation between the personal and the social.” There is an implication here that acts of recognition, mutuality, and orientation could be aspects or qualities of negotiation, but this is not clarified. Equally, there is the implication that such acts are additional to negotiation, perhaps similarly directed yet decidedly different, but this also is not clarified. Consider also, that people “enter their interactions with independent and sometimes conflicting agendas that are resolved through a process of identity negotiation” (Swann, 1987, p. 1038). Here, there is the suggestion that having an agenda is prerequisite to negotiation and that personal conflict, with the self or with
others, can sometimes be such an agenda. And again, consider the claim that “the work of identity negotiation is understood as ongoing and pervasive. This means that the subject’s self is constantly renegotiated in relation to experiences, situations and other community members” (Etelapelto & Saarinen, 2006, p. 159). Such an understanding indicates that negotiation does not stop: it is a continuing personal process that accommodates change and all the resources of activity as part of its verisimilitude. These three statements from contemporary work-learning and vocational identity development literature do not explicitly define their meaning of negotiation. Rather, they hint at qualities and properties considered to be aspects of negotiation – acts of recognition, conflicting agendas, ongoing processes of collective influence, and so on. In the failure to be explicit about negotiation, each of these statements relies on generic understandings of the concept as something (e.g., relationships, priorities, identities, etc.) being worked through or worked out via interactive processes between the people, events, and contexts of social activity.

In their different ways, each of these statements harnesses the rich generic sense of the term “negotiation.” They each begin to elaborate some of the qualities that achieve this common meaning, which at its most fundamental always implies that things are as they are because they are shaped by interactions that bring people, place, and practice together in active connection for the purpose of getting something done that could not otherwise be achieved. Some uses of the term in contemporary work-learning literature elaborate these qualities and the distinctions between them more fully than others. For example, Wenger (1998) draws on the multiple meanings of the concept of negotiation in advancing a broad social theory of learning. For Wenger, individuals’ learning is social participation, that is, the taking part in the actions and connections that constitute experience. This active engagement is enacted as practice that is the lived sets of relations between culture, history, context, action, purpose, and so on. Because these relations are the site of learning, practice (i.e., the doing of participation) is only accessible in community and so Wenger’s social theory of learning is an elaboration of the concept of “communities of practice” developed earlier in work with Jean Lave (see Lave & Wenger, 1991). Central to this theory is the meaningfulness of practice because practice can be considered the sense making of experience, the expression of understanding that holds who we are, what we do, and why we do it, together. Wenger (1998, p. 51) states, “practice is, first and foremost, a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful.” What culminates in Wenger’s theory is that individuals’ learning is the shared and thereby social process of making meaning and that
“making” is the process of negotiation: “In this sense, living is a constant process of negotiating meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 53, italics in original). For Wenger, the concept of negotiation is central to learning because learning is a social process and the concept of negotiation offers a strength and clarity that enables the active sharing of meaningfulness to be grounded in the essential collective activity of experiencing living. That strength and clarity still requires some explanation. Wenger (1998, p. 53) states,

The concept of negotiation often denotes reaching an agreement between people, as in ‘negotiating a price’, but it is not limited to that usage. It is also used to suggest an accomplishment that requires sustained attention and readjustment, as in ‘negotiating a sharp curve’. I want to capture both aspects at once.

From such an understanding of negotiation, Wenger (1998) goes on to elaborate a valuable constructivist theory of learning as social practice. This theory relies on seeing all human activity as negotiated, be that activity ideational – as in the relational interdependencies of conceptual dualities that underpin theory (e.g., participation and reification as the two interrelated aspects of meaning) or be it practical – as in the interplay of personal experience and skill competence that underpins work performance.

For Wenger (1998), negotiation is a broad abstraction, a rich generic concept that achieves explanation of the relational convergence between action and connection, between what things are and how things are. Other learning theorists and researchers use the concept of negotiation in terms that identify certain communication and collaboration activities as specifically negotiation processes that underpin learning practice. For example, in a critical consideration of “culture” and “difference” as key concepts within workplace learning discourse, educational sociologist Solomon (1999) uses the term negotiation in its rich generic sense of bringing together and, thereby, interactively enabling new combinations and understandings of formerly unconnected and disparate features of workers and work. Doing so, Solomon asserts, generates new and greater benefits of acknowledging and valuing diversity and difference as the norm of workplace culture and learning. Learning in the workplace may then be understood “as a concept of ‘repertoire’ rather than as a developmental concept….This view of learning suggests collaborative learning relationships that involve dialogues and negotiations” (Solomon, 1999, p. 130).

The kinds of activities that identify and promote this conception of learning founded in activities of dialogue and negotiation are summarised as including: explicitly comparing and contrasting experience and language in different contexts, examining
relationships and how different representations of meaning operate, and problematising
encounters and broadening communication (Solomon, 1999, p. 130). So, within the
purpose and focus of understanding work and learning as a repertoire of diverse peoples,
roles, tasks, and processes, Solomon (1999) uses the term negotiation to suggest and
advance a comprehensive set of actions and interactions that are necessary to
understanding and developing work and learning as complex social practice.

Equally, however, the range of meanings that the term negotiation carries can act
to diffuse or weakly specify the kinds of activities that constitute participative social
practice such as learning and working. Differently from Solomon (1999) but equally
employed in a rich generic sense, Lave and Wenger (1991) use the term negotiation to
denote sentiments of shared understandings and shared cultural goals within the
workplace. These “sharings” have been arrived at through what were initially different
and independent bases of knowledge becoming common processes of meaning making
and communication, as novices, through their participative actions, move to become more
fully-fledged members of a vocational community of practice (e.g., a workplace). The
processes of this becoming less peripheral and more central or fully-fledged members of
the community enable the construction of mutual agreements about the nature and
meaning of what constitutes participating within their vocational community of practice.
Two premises emerge. First, “participation is always based on situated negotiation and
renegotiation of meaning in the world” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51), and second,
“participation in social practice is the fundamental form of learning” (Lave & Wenger,
1991, p. 54). So, within the purpose and focus of understanding work and learning as
situated practice based in “legitimate peripheral participation,” Lave and Wenger (1991)
use the term negotiation to suggest and advance a very generalised conception of the
social and personal processes that bring together the person, their knowing, and their
community membership as mutually constitutive in work. Relative to Solomon’s (1999)
use of the term, Lave and Wenger (1991) are less explicit about the kinds of activities that
identify negotiation, but are equally reliant on its generic richness to carry the
foundational meanings of their understanding of learning in and through work as social
practice.

Other significant learning theorists have done likewise, that is, rely on the rich
generic and taken-for-granted understandings of negotiation to carry their claims about
learners’ interactions being co-dependent on and with all the resources that constitute
their participation in activity. For example, Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative
learning is premised on interaction with others, with culture, and with self as the successful interpretation of personal experience sufficient to making informed decisions about how to progress future actions and thereby influence the world. The personal experience of the learner “may be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 3). Meaning is what makes sense of experience, what justifies the explanations of who we are and what we do. When meanings fail to do this, particularly at times of stress and conflict, new meanings must be found, constructed, and affirmed. Through this meaning making the person is transformed, reintegrated with themselves and their experience. New meanings, new paradigms, new frames of perception that better “fit” the present circumstance, better enable understanding, and more effectively “guide” future actions are the evidence of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). However, with Mezirow (1991, 2000), as with Lave and Wenger (1991), negotiation is never elaborated, never explained beyond a synonym for interaction, a reference to different ideas and people coming together in experience. Because of this, the concept of negotiation, with its many meanings and qualities, remains little more than a rich generic alert to the fact of others (people, contexts, histories, etc.) populating and mediating individual experience.

Effectively, and as briefly indicated above, the concept of negotiation stands as a relatively common synonym for interaction and co-participation within contemporary sociocultural and constructivist perspectives on work and learning. The concept affords great opportunity to explain the relationally interdependent processes and outcomes that constitute the partnership practices of workers, work, and learning. However, this opportunity is inadvertently overlooked or too weakly taken up as the detail and pragmatics of negotiation practices are simply assumed in the general use of the term. This results in the concept being under-theorised in contemporary work-learning theory despite its obvious appeal as a rich generic source of meanings that could specify more fully and clearly the kinds of personal learning practices workers engage in through their participation in work. This thesis seeks to contribute to the redress of this under-theorising through its investigation of the personal work and learning practices of individual workers and how these practices can be understood as negotiation processes and outcomes.
Significance of the investigation

As outlined above, better understanding and conceptualising negotiation as the personal bringing together, in collective participative practice, of the resources that enable and support individual workers’ learning in and for work, is the central aim of this thesis. Particularly, this aim concentrates on the ordinary and everyday work practices of individual workers, their routine activities, through which learning most often emerges as incidental to engagement in work task requirements. Realising this aim has conceptual and practical significance across a range of work and learning concerns related to advancing constructivist learning theory. Conceptually, stronger understandings of negotiation may more fully illuminate the relationship between the personal and the social as an active process of unity based in transaction and transformation rather than an interactive process of connecting separates to accomplish something new and different. Practically, such understandings may support a stronger appreciation of the contributions of individuals as “persons-in-action-with-the-resources-of-their-context-in-learning” and so better inform the provision of work and vocational learning experience in both (a) the immediacy of “learning as doing” through on-the-job training and practice, and (b) the greater societal arrangements of institutionalised vocational education and training that characterise contemporary capitalist economies.

Conceptually, negotiation is both a form of interactive practice – a process conducted that secures outcomes of some sort or other – and a form of relational context in flux, an integrative environment in and through which people enact and progress their relationships. Intuitively, this twofold scope, in conjunction with the rich generic meanings and associations noted earlier, seems to capture and articulate the actively lived human reality that is the collective unity of person, place, and practice. This unity sits at the heart of sociocultural and constructivist theories. Through this unity, dualities such the personal and social, sensation and idea, thinking and doing, stimulus and response, subject and object, agency and structure, action and reaction, are overcome, integrated as being but analytical aspects of an indivisible whole. Through this, the false separations of “what we do from who we are” and of “how we are alone and how we are together” collapse as rightfully inappropriate considerations of the relational nature of lived experience and therefore of learning in and for work. These kinds of views have long been advocated by such diverse writers and theorists as Dewey (1896), Dewey and Bentley (1975), Vygostky (1978), Hegel (1977), Pinkard (1996), Archer (2000, 1988), Giddens (1984, 1991), Macmurray (1961), Wenger (1998), Jarvis (2006, 2009), Bordieu
(1998), and Billett (2004, 2006a & b, 2008). These writers, like all those noted throughout this introductory chapter, have approached the articulation of the socio-personal unity in slightly different ways. Some have focused on the intimacy of the individual in close relationship with themselves, others, and tools (e.g., Piaget, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Some have focused on situated collective relationships in vocational communities and specific work contexts (e.g., Billett, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Some have focused more broadly on socialisation (e.g., Bordieu, 1984, 1998; Giddens, 1984). All have focused on explicating human action as always collective and always in flux and so concepts such as co-determinism, co-participation, co-construction, reciprocity, transaction, structuration, communities of practice, and relational interdependencies have been deployed to carry the reality of shared experience that shapes personal development, as work, as learning, as socio-personal activity. Negotiation is a similar concept because it recognises and articulates the ways and means of “bringing together.” Elaborating this concept offers other insights, other sources of explanation about how social activity is enacted as a personally collective practice.

From such a conceptual elaboration and the insights it offers, can emerge stronger understanding of how and why workers engage in their work and learning practices. Practically, better understanding workers’ personal work and learning purposes, preferences, and performance can inform a range of stakeholder interests and concerns, not least of which are workers themselves. As Noon and Blyton (2002) document, work is multiply meaningful for workers who by necessity and choice invest greatly (e.g., morally, psychologically, physically, economically, emotionally, etc.) in securing, sustaining, and progressing their employability. Better understanding how workers personally negotiate their engagement and participation in work and learning can potentially support workers to realise their purposes and secure their aspirations – not just in making deals with colleagues and employers, but in more fully understanding ones’ self through building personal awareness and making more explicit the kinds of practices individuals enact in their interactions with the conditions, events, and changes that characterise their work.

By extension, more fully understanding the personal contributions of workers to their work and learning can better support the provision and implementation of work and learning experience. Governments and vocational training institutions spend many millions of dollars in their efforts to secure the expertise of the labour force that underpins economic prosperity. For example, at the level of Australian federal government
expenditure, in 2005-2006 the then Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) presented a budget of $20.9 billion, an increase of $2.5 billion on the previous year’s expenditure (DEST, 2005). Of this annual spending, more than $2.5 billion was allocated to the provision of publicly funded vocational education and training that supports a national enrolment of approximately 1.7 million students (an increase of 500,000 since 1995) engaged in training to meet competency standards in over 80 industry-endorsed training packages. Similarly, in its latest budget provisions, the now federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations presented a budget allocating $3.02 billion expenditure over the next 6 years for the further development of the national vocational skills base (DEEWR, 2011).

Such expenditure figures are clear indication of the national significance of work-related learning. Industry and employer perspectives strengthen this view. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2003) data reported that in the year ended June 2002, 81% of all Australian employers provided some form of training for their employees. Net direct expenditure on structured training alone was estimated at $3.66 billion for the financial year 2001-2002 and represented 1.3% of total wages bill. Richardson (2004) argued that such figures severely underestimated the actual expenditure made by employers. Based on an analysis of 1997 Australian Bureau of Statistics’ survey of education and training figures, Richardson claimed that the total value of industry and employer contributions to total investment in employment-based training in Australia for 1996 was $16 billion – this figure representing 5% of their wages bill. These figures were based on valuing on-the-job learning as a measure of wages growth due to employees’ additional years in general work experience and tenure with their current employer. Clearly, and by any measure, industry and employer expenditure on training is high. Better understanding how workers engage in learning through this training can bring greater efficiencies to this expenditure by ensuring it targets training provision that more closely aligns with the ways workers learn and particularly the ways they negotiate their engagement in the learning opportunities their work affords them.

The research approach and findings
As stated earlier, the central question guiding the research reported in this thesis is: How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work? As outlined above, two priorities direct the investigation that addresses this question. They are “the person” of the individual worker and their personal enactment of their everyday work practices as
negotiation. To hold these priorities, the central guiding question is supported by the following three subordinate questions:

1. What are workers’ personal work and learning practices?
2. How can these practices be understood as negotiation practices?
3. How can negotiation practices be understood as learning?

These three questions represent a sequenced approach to addressing the central question. First, the focus is on workers’ understandings of themselves, their work, and their engagement practices as they account for them. Such personal accounts of the self-in-action begin to make explicit, that is, open to analysis and interpretation by both participant and researcher, what LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe as subject participants’ meaning and value of their definition of their situation. Second, given that work is purposeful goal-oriented activity (Billett, 2001a, 2004), do workers’ personal work practices represent and reveal directional qualities of individuals’ movement from one understanding to another, thereby evidencing the reflective and evaluative qualities of the negotiation process? Further, do such practices lead to or result in the acceptance, agreed or otherwise, of relatively altered positions of any contextual participants, thereby evidencing negotiation outcomes? This second sub-question is therefore concerned with identifying changes in and through work, either personal or contextual, that result from workers’ personal practices and examining them against conceptions of negotiation as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Third, sociocultural and constructivist perspective see learning as participation in activity. So, if participation is negotiated, how is this enacted and acknowledged as learning? When and how do learning, participation, and negotiation practices cease to be parallel and intersect or become synonymous rather than simultaneous?

Elaborating these considerations fully as the research design and methodology adopted for the investigation reported in this thesis is taken up in Chapter 4. However, in overview, this thesis adopts a qualitative-interpretive research paradigm, defined more specifically as qualified ethnography (see Chapter 4), in its investigation of the personal work and learning practices of 12 individual workers from four different workplaces. Over a period of 18 months and across the conduct of five in-depth semi-structured interviews and numerous workplace observations with every one of the 12 workers, the researcher and the 12 workers individually collaborated to identify, examine, and interpret their personal work and learning practices and how these practices can be
viewed as purposeful interaction, that is, negotiation, in and with the numerous resources that collectively constitute their work.

What eventuates from this is a conceptualisation of negotiation that can better support constructivist understandings of work and learning as participative practice. This conceptualisation presents negotiation as comprising three dimensions. The three dimensions are (a) negotiation as form, (b) negotiation as frame, and (c) negotiation as flow. That is, workers’ personal work and learning practices, as evidenced by the 12 workers who participated in the investigation, can be understood as negotiation when negotiation is conceptualised as the three distinguishable but holistically integrated dimensions of form, frame, and flow. Together, the three dimensions of negotiation enable a comprehensive explanation (i.e., more than is currently presented in contemporary work-learning literature) of how workers personally engage in their work and learning as a socio-personal practice.

Overview and structure of the thesis
To present its case, the thesis is structured through eight chapters. This first introductory chapter sets a context in and from which the investigation progresses to develop further understandings of work and learning as personally negotiated practice. This context is further refined and specified through Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 that together present an examination of negotiation as it is conceptualised in a range of literature. Chapter 2 – Negotiation: Process and Product – examines negotiation as a specific form of interactivity that illustrates how participants come together to make decisions, solve problems, and construct agreements. It draws on the perspectives of experiential learning, organisational behaviour, economics, and management, where work and learning are predominantly about productivity and improved performance. Negotiation from this perspective is about connecting through purposeful influence and understanding in order to identify and manage that connection and the kinds of outcomes this connection enables and accomplishes. The chapter focuses on learning as the experiential process and product of coming to arrangements and making agreements about shared activity. As such, negotiation can be mapped and modelled as sets of phased activity that secure desirable outcomes through planning and “meeting”, that is, bringing together parties who are otherwise separate but now need to jointly create solutions to circumstances that have connected them.
Chapter 3 – Negotiation: Contexts and Conditions – examines negotiation as a meta-activity that shapes the kinds of interactions that can take place between participants in social activity. In this sense, negotiation is about the parameters that frame experience of joint activity as relationships between co-participants. This section draws on social constructivist perspectives that situate and contextualise work and learning as integrated practices. Understanding these practices is about understanding relationships as always interdependent and always occurring within a negotiated space. The chapter focuses on learning as a relationally mediated activity that engages learners in transactions of self, practice, and context.

Chapter 4 – Exploring Negotiation through Personal Work Practice – outlines the methodology and procedures adopted for the investigation. It explains and justifies the qualified ethnographic approach taken as an investigation of the person-in-action, the construction of data through participant and researcher collaboration in interview and observation, and the interpretation and analysis of that data for the construction of explanations of participants’ personal experience as sociocultural activity, namely, negotiation practices. Additionally, the chapter introduces the 12 workers and their work and outlines the interview and observation procedures used to generate the data from which the findings of the investigation emerge as sources of understanding and conceptualising how workers engage in their work and learning practices.

The methodology chapter is followed by the Prelude that introduces the three dimensions of negotiation (depicted in Figure 1.1): a single conceptualisation of negotiation that brings the findings and deductions of the investigation together to present an explanatory account of how individual workers’ personal work and learning practices can be comprehensively described and explained as negotiation. Following the Prelude, the three dimensions of negotiation are elaborated through the following three chapters. Each chapter offers an explanatory account of one of the three dimensions. Together, the three chapters afford a rich and highly personal insight into the 12 workers who participated in the investigation. Their experience, their reflective discussion and personal accounts of this experience, are the foundation of the conceptualisation of negotiation presented.
Chapter 5 – Negotiation as Form – describes and explains a range of types or different forms of negotiation workers engage in through their participative work practices. These forms enable the categorisation of workers’ personal practices as negotiation processes and outcomes associated with varying levels of purpose and outcome realisation enacted through work. At a general level of analysis, workers are found to be engaged in (a) highly purposeful activity that secures objectives – what is referred to as telic negotiations, and (b) incidental activity that does not tend to outcome realisation – what is referred to as atelic negotiations. At deeper levels of analysis, workers are found to engage in one of four contingent forms of negotiation that evidence contrasting high and low levels of intentionality and high and low levels of outcome realisation. The four contingent forms of negotiation are realised, discovered, concealed, and protracted, and these are categorised through the use of a personal work negotiation matrix. Fully explained in Chapter 5, the matrix enables identifying how workers’ perceptions of their personal practices as negotiation forms compound to generate the socio-personal meanings workers use to make sense of their practices and the outcomes they accomplish. The aspects of negotiation that explain how the negotiation base from which this enactment of personal meaning is initiated and achieved are advanced in the following Chapter 6.
Chapter 6 – Negotiation as Frame – elaborates how workers are engaged in multiple and simultaneous negotiations through their work. Workers are found to enact composite negotiations – those negotiations that pre-mediate current activity, and contiguous negotiations – those negotiations that are enacted simultaneously in current activity. Negotiation as frame elaborates these temporal and co-continuous aspects of negotiation as the personal negotiation frame or context in and through which workers enact their practice.

Chapter 7 – Negotiation as Flow – elaborates how workers’ personal practices are aspects of and influential in the constant state of flux that characterises work. Workers are found to be transacting their personal practice through the negotiations in which they are engaged. Through the concept of transaction, the chapter outlines how the person and their practice, their values and priorities and the worth these hold for them, and the resources that support their engagement in work are constantly transforming. Negotiation is, therefore, the constant state of transformation into which workers flow as influential resources, unique among the many that shape and are shaped by participative practice.

Chapter 8 – The Three Dimensions of Negotiation – summarises these dimensions as aspects of a single conception of negotiation that supports clearer understanding of workers’ personal work and learning practices. In doing so, the chapter reiterates the case that participation in social activity is much more than co-participation in interactive activity. Through the three dimensions of negotiation, workers’ personal practice can be viewed as the socio-personal accomplishment of the self-in-action who is engaged in the transformation of all the resources brought together in their enactment. The participation and practice paradigm, as a vehicle for describing and explaining learning as a social practice, can be progressed to better account for how individuals engage in and accomplish their learning when negotiation is comprehensively conceptualised as more than a generic term for the interactive processes of “dealing” with others. Learning is a personal practice, albeit enacted and accomplished, and only enacted and accomplished through engagement or participation in collective activity. That participation, however, is more than co-participation, that is, more than “joining in” the activities of others. Equally, it is more than interacting with others and things, that is, more than “connecting” with the many elements of context and circumstance. The three dimensions of negotiation enable learning in and for work to be described and explained in terms of negotiation that is a collective metaphor of personally transforming others.
Contributions of the thesis to current debate within constructivist learning theory

Through the findings and deductions encapsulated in the three dimensions of negotiation, this thesis makes some distinct contributions to further developing the participation and practice paradigm currently used in constructivist work-learning theories and the descriptions and explanations of personal work and learning this paradigm enables. These contributions are as follows:

- It extends and advances an understanding of the commonly used metaphor of learning as participation to further develop explanation of how individuals accomplish, and thereby, contribute to the collective practices that constitute learning. It does this through:

- Extending and elaborating understandings of the concept of negotiation as a means of explaining how collective action is enacted to transform all the resources, human and other, brought together in work and learning activities. It does this through:

- The three dimensions of negotiation, a conception of negotiation that explains how the individual transacts their personal practice through the enactment of the self-in-action who embodies the unity of the person, their place, and their practice as both in negotiation and of negotiation. It does this through:

- Presenting the three dimensions of negotiation as an analytic framework that enables the differentiation and explication of the array of negotiation practices enacted as personal practice. In doing so, the framework removes a focus on activity as what connects or mediates person and context, or participation and learning, to focus more on how they are connected in the three dimensions of negotiation advanced. It does so by:

- Asserting the primacy of the person as the purpose and locus of social activity and, thereby, it accounts for individuals’ contributions to and of these practices. Workplaces, like all social arenas, are meaningless and account for nothing when the people who create and sustain them are removed. The abstraction of people to mediated subjects of activity is a type of removing the person from the transformations they enact. To focus solely on activity or the results of activity is
to lose sight of the initiating person who is the worker, the learner, the self that activates and animates practice. In doing so:

- The thesis offers an account of learning in and across work life that may be broadly applicable to lifelong learning and development. That is, it suggests ways of examining lifelong learning as a socio-personal practice that identifies the individual within all the activity necessary to its accomplishment. Learning, like working, indeed like all human endeavour, is both the act and context of negotiation: individuals are always “in” and “of” negotiation. So, learning practices are on-going negotiation practices.

In summary, these contributions represent both immediate and developmental progressions to understanding personal work and learning practices within a participation and practice paradigm that seeks to explicate the relation between the personal and the social. Immediately, the thesis elaborates negotiation as the means to comprehensively describe and explain learning in and for work as a socio-personal process. Developmentally, the thesis supports extending its conception of negotiation to other and broader understandings of learning.
Chapter 2

Negotiation and learning: Processes and products

This is the first of two chapters that examine the concept of negotiation as a means of describing and explaining the kinds of actions individuals enact through their active engagement in their work and learning. That engagement brings worker and context together in the interactions, in the socio-personal relationships, that identify individuals’ personal practice as the evidence of their work and learning. Billett (2006b, p. 8) acknowledges this when he states that central to learning is “the negotiation between individuals, their experience and social experience encountered through work.” However accurate such statements may be taken to be, they raise questions about the meanings of the terms used and the actions they purport to explain. So, what is the meaning of negotiation when used by Billett (2006b) in this metaphoric way to suggest that experience relative to one aspect of one’s being acts on other aspects of one’s being? How can negotiation separate individuals from their experiences or divide them along lines of what is encountered, enacted, and experienced? Further, and in terms of praxis, what are the actions performed in attempting and accomplishing this negotiation? How is negotiation enacted as a personal practice that is foundational to self and learning?

Similarly, when Wenger (1998, p. 53, italics in original) refers to learning as the negotiation of meaning and states, “living is a constant process of negotiation of meaning [and] I intend the term negotiation to convey a flavor of continuous interaction, of gradual achievement, and of give-and-take,” how is continuous interaction enacted, what is given and what is taken through negotiation, and how is this progressed and accepted?

This chapter commences addressing such questions by examining the kinds of processes and products or outcomes that are generally associated with negotiation. In doing so, it progresses from the limitations and ambiguities of a reliance on the generic meanings of negotiation within work-learning theory that were noted in Chapter 1. However richly imbued these generic meanings are taken to be, such a reliance underspecifies or undertheorizes the nature of individuals’ personal interactive practices. The chapter presents an examination of negotiation and moves to advance an understanding of how negotiation practices can be presented as interactive learning practices. That is, the person as subject, agent or worker, participant in collective activity,
needs to be seen in praxis, as practicing engagement in the interactions, the negotiations, that comprise their work and learning activity. The ambiguities of generic usage need to be clarified, the qualities of participative practice more tightly specified so as to foster a fuller understanding of what it means to use negotiation as a metaphor that may capture the complexity of learning as personal social practice.

The chapter begins its examination from the sense of negotiation as defined by Strauss (1978, p. 2), that is, negotiation is “one of the possible means of ‘getting things accomplished’ when parties need to deal with each other to get those things done.” Such an understanding is the basis of what this thesis refers to as the standard or common understanding of negotiation. This common understanding does not acknowledge that parties (no matter how defined as people, groups, things, systems, contexts, etc.) always need and always are “dealing” with each other in the broad sociocultural sense, that is, the parties are never separate. Such a common understanding of negotiation sits at the heart of the generic meanings evoked whenever the term is used. These generic meanings are thereby based in perspectives of separation that disconnect the continuities Wenger (1998) and Billett (2006b) above seek to emphasise. The chapter then moves to outline some of the models of negotiation used and developed to secure and account for the kind of accomplishments negotiation is associated with in bargaining and mediation practices. These models are examined in conjunction with experiential learning models that similarly present interactive processes and their accomplishments as phases or stages of specific activities enacted as the purposeful seeking of resolution, the realisation of intentions. Such resolution is usually solving problems, making decisions, or reducing conflict. The chapter then moves to examine these resolutions as outcomes of negotiation processes, as agreements or arrangements that support further action, and as the creation of new and different resources, values and relationships. Throughout, parallels with learning as the transformation of experience (Mezirow, 1991, 2000) and learning as the exchange of old meanings for new and more sufficient meanings (Jarvis, 2006) are examined in conjunction with the types of negotiation workers engage in through their personal and organisational practices. Through this discussion, much of the generic meaning the term negotiation carries is made explicit and related directly to familiar understandings and processes of learning in and for work.

So, the chapter elaborates two key points through its examination of the processes and products that are commonly associated with the concept of negotiation. First, there are similarities between negotiation practices and learning practices and these similarities
(both weak and strong) can and need to be made explicit, rather than assumed as common qualities of the familiar, routine, everyday interactions that constitute participation in sociocultural activity. Doing so is the beginning of overcoming a reliance on the generic meanings of negotiation that fail to specify sufficiently the kinds of actions individuals undertake in their interactive practices in and for work. Second and further, the generic meanings of negotiation predominantly derive from viewing the resources of sociocultural activity as separate and only temporarily connected in the need of “getting something done.” It is this perspective of separation that makes negotiation, in the common sense, insufficient for illuminating fully individuals’ personal participative practice in work and learning.

**Negotiation: Common process and product**

At its simplest, negotiation is a very specific form of joint activity that refers to meanings and properties of bringing parties together in purposeful interactions that form new connective processes and outcomes – new because prior to their coming together, these connections and the actions they generate were not possible or not required. In this sense, negotiation begins and ends with the necessary and sustaining separation of parties that enable interaction. That is, those that are brought together, connected by their activities, remain divided and yet defined by their capacity to act on each other through the interactions that connect them. These interactions can be referred to as negotiation. They involve the many processes of communicating, evaluating, interpreting, deciding and so on, that mark joint activity and the many products or outcomes of these processes – agreement/disagreement, the division and exchange of resources, new understandings and relationships, and so forth. Referencing Kissinger (1969), Zartman (1988, p. 32) captures these meanings and properties in defining negotiation as “a process of combining conflicting positions into a common position, under a decision rule of unanimity, a phenomenon in which the outcome is determined by the process.” Illustrative examples abound in the realms of business, law, and politics, where deals are made, conditions arranged and all manner of agreements reached or not reached between participants who are acting on and thereby with each other to secure their objectives (e.g., the desires, interests, needs, etc. that brought them together).

This sense of negotiation represents the common understanding of the concept, its most quickly identified dimension. The focus of such negotiation is the “meeting” or the encounter that “bringing together” in connection and interaction creates and the outcomes
that emerge from this coming together. These meetings or connections can be formal or informal, structured or unstructured, planned or incidental, specified in time and place or ongoing and unbounded. Saner (2005) defines this common understanding of negotiation succinctly – “negotiation is a process whereby two or more parties seek an agreement to establish what each shall give or take, or perform and receive in a transaction between them” (p. 17). At work, this sense of negotiation supports the meetings, the conversations, the shared understandings, the accommodations, and the contests for resources that generate the contractual arrangements, pay and salary conditions, task division and job descriptions that characterise what and how things get done. These processes and products are the kinds of interactions that connect and separate the components or resources by which the social practice of work is constructed.

Such interactions, connections, and separations define participants as co-participants, not equal contributors, but co-contributors in and to the products and processes that evidence their joint activity because that activity would not otherwise occur. In this way, co-participants become negotiators because,

People negotiate every day…negotiation is a common, everyday activity that most people use to influence others and to achieve personal objectives. In fact, negotiation is not only common, it is also essential to living an effective and satisfying life. We all need things – resources, information, cooperation and support from others. Others have those needs as well, sometimes compatible with ours, sometimes not. Negotiation is a process by which we attempt to influence others to help us achieve our needs while at the same time taking their needs into account. It is a fundamental skill, not only for successful management but also for successful living. (Lewicki et al, p. v)

When negotiation is understood in this way, the meanings and properties that identify it come to be seen as residing within the needs, motivations, and skills of participants and the notions of influence and success in which they are inculcated. Together, these factors become the identifiers of the various kinds of negotiations that are generated as purposeful interactions. They act to justify the view that “negotiations occur for one of two reasons: i) to create something new that neither party could do on his or her own, or ii) to resolve a problem or dispute between the parties” (Lewicki, Saunders, & Minton, 2001, p. 3). Learning is always implicated in this because it evidences the processes and products that create and characterise the new: the problem solved and the better or different relationship established (Jarvis, 2004). Learning as participation in negotiation and practice of negotiation is concomitant with negotiation.
At work, the processes and products that identify negotiation as interaction are both common and simple, as when a colleague asks for a hand to complete a familiar task because they need assistance. Equally, the tasks may be unfamiliar and more complex, as when lawyers representing employers and union officials representing employees are embattled with governments and the judiciary in courts of industrial arbitration in pursuit of the goals and interests that motivate them. To such person-to-person and group-to-group negotiations must be added those such as person-to-self where, for example, individuals reflect on their perceived personal strengths and weaknesses before making decisions about whether or not to pursue further action (Jarvis, 2004; Mezirow, 1991) such as study or increased responsibilities at work. Similarly and additionally, are the person-to-artefact negotiations, where the skilful use of tools and technologies has a bearing on work processes and outcomes. In short, negotiation is evident in a multitude of situations and circumstances where interactive processes and products connect participants and define them by their capacities to influence each other. Dependent on the social context, these negotiations may be generally and variously described as the bargaining, deal-making, conflict-resolution, dispute mediation, and contractual arrangements that are commonly understood as the informal negotiation practices of friends, colleagues, and family as well as the more formal practices of diplomats, lawyers, counsellors, and business people. These negotiations, these processes and products of interaction, usually engage parties with identifiable objectives, stated or unstated, in processes, planned and unplanned, of brokering eventual shared agreement through posturing and compromise (Raiffa, 1990).

In terms of individual participants and the sociocultural resources that identify their needs, motivations, and skills in interactive practices of work, the processes and products of negotiation as defined above can support useful understandings that elaborate the nature of personal learning in and through work. Work is negotiated: it is a common everyday activity where people make and break all manner of arrangements; encounter, share, and solve all manner of problems and conflicts; and so personally and collectively engage in the learning necessary to these experiences. Examining these participation and learning experiences in terms of a common understanding of negotiation is supported by a range of negotiation theories and models. The chapter moves to illustrate how such work experiences can be examined through (a) analytical negotiation process and skills practice models, and (b) the functions and types of negotiation these models and skills identify. Such an examination can indicate the different ways participants can be viewed as
interactive co-participants, co-contributors to the processes and products that evidence fundamental learning practices. Being aware of these types and functions of negotiation and the kinds of practices required through them, assists in understanding how workers enact their participation, that is engage, in the interactions that constitute their work and learning. Such an awareness assists making explicit many of the generic meanings of negotiation that prevail in sociocultural learning theory. Particularly useful in this regard are those theories and models that present negotiation as a sequenced set of specific activities enacted in pursuit of desired resolution.

Negotiation models and theories of learning practices

From the political, economic, and management perspectives that research, theorise, and practise negotiation in the terms outlined above, negotiation is viewed as a process that progresses through a series of stages or phases (see for example, Druckman, 2001; Pruitt, 1981; Saner, 2005). Numerous process models present this sequence differently, some with more, some with less steps or periods of identifiably different activities and objectives. The simplest is the three-phase linear model that consists of (a) an initiation phase, followed by (b) problem solving that leads to (c) resolution. Holmes (1992) and Lewicki et al. (2006) suggest that all negotiation models can be seen as variations on these three phases in that different researchers and theorists, depending on their discipline perspectives and whether they are adopting a prescriptive or descriptive stance, elaborate the three phases to more fully detail stages or steps within them. For example, Carlisle and Leary’s (1981) examination of team negotiations at work posits a five-stage model consisting of (a) preliminaries (that includes preparations and introductions), (b) positioning (that includes stating objectives and expectations), (c) bargaining (that includes demand and counter demand), (d) exploration (that includes considering alternatives and possibilities), and finally (e) settlement. In terms of a simple three-phase model, Carlisle and Leary’s second, third, and fourth stages comprise elements of a single problem-solving phase. Similarly, Greenhalgh (2001) suggests a seven-stage model that populates the initiation phase with three stages (i.e., preparation, relationship building, and information gathering); the problem-solving phase with two stages (i.e., information using and bidding); and the resolution phase with two stages (i.e., closing the deal and implementing the agreement). The linearity of these stage models is dependent on reaching the resolution phase. Holmes (1992) notes that unsuccessful negotiations are often characterised by stalling or cycling within the problem-solving phase. Holmes also
notes, by drawing on Gulliver’s (1979, p. 186) cross-cultural eight-phase model, that what drives this linearity is “the basic contradiction between the parties’ conflict and their need for joint action.” That is, the parties need each other but do not want each other.

In this review, three key aspects of negotiation are noted. They are, first, negotiation phase models, second, the skills required and deployed through each of the phases, and third, the primary drive of the need for resolution. Salient here are the strong parallels to be noted between these three aspects of negotiation and some constructivist learning theory. Some of these parallels are elaborated below as illustration of the three key aspects of negotiation noted.

**Negotiation and learning theories**

In the terms of the first key aspect noted, these stage or phase models of negotiation can be likened to some models of learning proffered by constructivist learning theorists. Each, whether cyclical or linear and descriptive or prescriptive, seeks to divide experience into identifiably different actions that sequence a trajectory of activities towards new and hopefully better outcomes. Such understandings support ways of viewing learning practices as common negotiation practices that can be planned, executed, and evaluated in terms of outcomes achieved. In this way, meanings such as bargaining, compromising, sharing, withholding, and strategising that sit within the generic richness of negotiation, in its common sense, come to be directly and often inaccurately associated with personal learning practices undertaken in collective activity.

To illustrate this point, Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle sequences four stages of action as the learning process. The learner moves from what is referred to as (a) concrete experience, to (b) observations of and reflections on that experience, to (c) the formulation of abstract concepts and generalisations that support understanding that experience, to (d) the active experimentation of testing the implications of those concepts and the new situations this implies, to arrive (back) at a new and different first stage of understanding that presents as a new concrete experience. Through engagement in this learning process, the learner moves through the kinds of personal activity phases that Putnam, Wilson, and Turner (1990) identify as the four phases of negotiation. From their negotiation model perspective, the negotiator moves through (a) the concrete experience of recognising a problem, to (b) formulating an agenda based on their observations and reflections on the problem, to (c) narrowing the differences between the parties sharing the problem by developing generalisations around shared understandings and
commonalities, to (d) testing possible new solutions that generate agreements that can be implemented as resolutions that become new concrete experiences of the now transformed original problem. These two cyclic phase models enable learning and negotiation to be seen as very similar processes that generate very similar outcomes that derive from encountering a form of problem that is emergent from current activity. Assuming movement through the cycle is complete and the kinds of problems solved are derivative of the actions taken, then the meanings of the two activities, that is, negotiation and experiential learning, may similarly be similar. Diagrammatically, the models coincide as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 2.1. The coincidence of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model (inner circle) and Putnam, Wilson, and Turner’s (1990) negotiation model (outer circle).*

Additionally, the parallels and similarities between these two models are further emphasised by Kolbs’ (1984) division of the experiential learning cycle across the two dimensions of “prehension” (i.e., ways of knowing represented on the vertical axis) and “transformation” (i.e., ways of operationalising knowing represented on the horizontal
axis). In brief, to recognise a problem requiring attention (negotiation) may be considered as becoming aware, as apprehending a need within current experience (learning). To formulate an agenda (negotiation) is to express an intention (learning) to address that need, to transform that problem into a way of dealing with it. To discover the common understandings on which negotiating parties can agree and move towards resolution (negotiation) is to mutually comprehend the problem (learning), to see it in the same light. Lastly, to implement agreements reached and test their capacities as solutions (negotiation) is to extend agreements as solutions into activities, into actions that transform experience of a problem into experience of resolutions (learning) that are now further concrete experiences to learn from. In short, what Kolb (1984) presents as a model for learning from experience can be used to structure and analyse the kinds of negotiations that Putnam, Wilson, and Turner (1990) describe as a sequence of identifiably different activities undertaken in pursuit of mutual agreements between those sharing a common concern that needs to be jointly addressed. And equally, the negotiation model may be seen as capturing the kinds of sequenced learning processes that individuals move through in their co-construction of the new understandings that become their bases for further action, further learning experience. So, as analytic sequences of aware engagement in activity, Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model and Putnam et al.’s (1990) negotiation model evidence strong similarities that offer ways of making explicit how learning can be understood as negotiation.

In terms of the second key aspect of negotiation noted earlier, that is, the kinds of activities and skills practised through these phased processes, negotiation models outline a range of what learning theorists would identify as learning processes. For example, negotiation models sequence activities such as information gathering, problem solving, objectives clarification, considering alternatives, and testing implemented agreements, all of which can be considered learning practices. In advancing a general model of negotiation, Lewicki et al. (2006, pp. 115-130) outline a nine-point system for the preparatory planning deemed necessary to the conduct of successful negotiations. Those activities are presented in Table 2.1.
Table 2.1

*Negotiation Planning*

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Defining the issues</td>
<td>“begins with an analysis of what is to be discussed in the negotiation” (p. 115)</td>
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| 2 | Assembling the issues and defining the bargaining mix                        | “the combination of lists from each side in the negotiation determines the bargaining mix” (those issues to be addressed) (p. 117)  
|   |                                                                              | “after assembling issues on an agenda, the negotiator next must prioritise them” (p. 118) |
| 3 | Defining interests                                                            | “If issues helps us define what we want, then understanding interests requires us to ask why we want it. Asking ‘why’ questions usually brings critical values, needs or principles … to the surface” (p. 119) |
| 4 | Knowing limits and alternatives                                              | “Good preparation requires that you establish two clear points: your resistance point [where you should stop] and your alternatives [other possibilities that meet need]” (p. 119) |
| 5 | Setting targets and openings                                                 | “the next step is to define two other key points: the specific target point where one realistically expects to achieve settlement and the asking price, representing the best deal one can hope to achieve” (p. 120) |
| 6 | Assessing constituents and the social context                                | “One way to assess all the key parties in a negotiation is to complete a ‘field analysis’. Imagine that you are the captain of a soccer team … assessing constituents is the same as assessing all the parties who are in the soccer stadium” (p. 122) |
| 7 | Analysing the other party                                                    | “Learning the others’ issues, preferences, priorities, interests, alternatives and constraints is almost as important as determining one’s own” (p. 124) |
| 8 | Presenting and defending issues                                              | “One important aspect of negotiations is to present a case clearly and to supply ample supporting facts and arguments; another is to refute the other party’s arguments with counter-arguments” (p. 128) |
| 9 | Deciding what protocols to follow                                            | “A negotiator should consider a number of elements of protocol or process: agenda (order and priority) … where to negotiate … time period … what if negotiation fails … keep track of what is agreed … know whether we have a good agreement” (pp. 129-130) |
This nine-point plan outlines a preparation system that requires a great deal of inquiry, analysis, and evaluation of self, others, contexts, and procedures, and all within the purpose and anticipation of new futures. Learning is seen by some to be similarly marked by such processes although they are articulated differently across explanations of learning. For example, Schunk (2008) outlines a range of learning processes that characterise self-regulated learning from a social cognitive perspective. These processes are referred to as learning strategies that individuals deploy in the pursuit of personal purposes and goals. They include (a) selecting and organising information; (b) rehearsing tasks and material and monitoring this rehearsal against previous understandings and performance expectations that are targeted, planned, and evaluated; (c) modifying and adjusting plans and expectations through task; and (d) seeking to favourably position performance in relation to contextual standards and procedures. These kinds of learning processes are also similar to those Tennant (2006, p. 130) summarises as indicative of a humanistic perspective on self-directed learning – “learners determine goals and objectives, locate appropriate resources, plan their learning strategies and evaluate the outcomes.” Further, similar processes are described by theorists as the bases of problem solving, the generation of solutions for securing goals and objectives as yet unattainable. The creative problem-solving model presented by Treffinger and Isaksen (1992, 2005) within a social cognitive perspective of educational and organisational psychology outlines a sequence of learning processes that include (a) generating broad, brief, and supporting statements that direct problem-solving efforts; (b) generating and answering questions that focus key information, feelings, observations, and impressions about the task; (c) framing a specific problem statement on which to focus; (d) generating numerous options for analysis, refinement, and decision; and (e) searching for sources of assistance and resistance, and other factors that will influence acceptance and implementation of proposed solutions. Further to this end, acknowledging that such learning processes are always situated in contexts of sociocultural activity that mediate how learning proceeds, Billett (2001a) presents a case for learning through the “every day activity” of work from a cultural psychology perspective. Billett states, through their engagement in workplace tasks, workers have to consider these tasks and determine how they will proceed with them. Hence they have embraced goal-directed activities that require problem solving…. When encountering a new task, workers have to consider and generate possible ways of approaching that task. Then they proceed with the approach they believe will produce the desired outcome. As they do this, they test, appraise the effectiveness of what they have
proposed and modify their approach. Through practice they can improve the effectiveness of their procedures. (pp. 74-75)

As clearly indicated above, there are strong similarities between accounts of negotiation planning processes and learning processes, similarities that clearly traverse a range of disciplines and perspectives, similarities that Kolb (1984) would suggest are based on the general acceptance of the scientific method (and variations of) as the rational model of inquiry in all human activity. It is partly this sense of rationality, articulated in the terms of negotiation and learning practices as similarly sequenced and discreetly directed to securing identifiable objectives, that support the generic base of negotiation as suitable for elaborating learning as personal endeavour enacted in collective interactions.

In terms of the third key aspect of negotiation noted earlier, these similarities are further supported when the primary drive for the need of resolution that underpins negotiation is contrasted with what some learning theorists posit as the primary reason for learning. As stated earlier, Gulliver (1979) notes the basic contradiction between negotiating parties’ conflict and their need for shared activity or joint action as the driver of sequenced progress towards resolution. In this, it is not conflict that brings parties together. Rather, it is the need of avoiding conflict, the need of overcoming conflict, the need of removing conflict, the need of settling conflict and creating or restoring a more harmonious (or less harmful, or more advantageous) relationship that brings differences into an interactive search for what Zartman (1988) describes as a “common” position that can be lived with (even if only temporarily). Conflict here may be synonymous with dispute, contest, and even fighting, but it is also synonymous with less aggressive forms of difference such as contention, contradiction, and incongruity. When negotiating conflict is seen in these terms, as seeking better understanding that overcomes incongruity, as seeking relationship that successfully contends with contradictions, it may be seen as the driver or primary reason some theorists posit as the source of learning.

For example, Mezirow (2000), in outlining the basic premises of transformative learning, explains the root cause of adult learning as the “urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know to avoid the threat of chaos” (p. 3). The threat of chaos (i.e., conflict as utter confusion and disorder) and, thereby, the pursuit of learning, is signalled by a “disorienting dilemma” (p. 22) where currently held understandings of the meaning of experience become questionable, unreliable, insufficient to dependably guiding future actions as feelings, values, and beliefs. Jarvis (2004, p. 36) argues a similar position in that the personal experience of
Conflict as incongruity triggers learning—“when individuals’ biographies and their current experience are not in harmony, a situation is produced whereby they recommence their quest for meaning and understanding. It is this disjuncture that underlies the need to learn.” For both Mezirow (1991, 2000) and Jarvis (2004, 2006), despite their different perspectives on learning (e.g., Mezirow more focussed on individuals’ internal processes of transforming redundant beliefs and assumptions; Jarvis more focussed on individuals’ social interactive processes of life wide development), it is the personal need of better meanings, triggered by the failure of held understandings to adequately address new experience, that drives learning. In both cases, conflict and the need of resolving it drives personal learning.

Dewey (1963, p. 105) is equally assertive of conflict as the driver of learning when learning is understood as the process of inquiry, the seeking for “whatever will provide an answer to a question asked.” Conflict is recognised in the disturbance the questionable invokes, that is, “the indeterminate situation…. A variety of names serves to characterise indeterminate situations. They are disturbed, troubled, ambiguous, confused, full of conflicting tendencies, obscure, etc.” The indeterminate situation becomes the trigger for inquiry that progresses through the subsequent phases: the institution of a problem, the determination of a problem solution, reasoning, the operationalising of the results of reasoning, and the concluding acceptance (or not) of explanation that resolves the original indeterminacy.

Mezirow (1991, 2000) and Jarvis (2004, 2006) are concerned with conflict as incongruity between older deficient and newer sufficient meanings. Dewey (1963) is concerned with conflict as the disturbance encountered in the immediate lack of sufficient answer. Other incongruities are also addressed as the sources of conflict that drive learning. For example, Kolb (1984), in explaining the dynamics of experiential learning, uses the terms conflict and confrontation to elaborate the dialectical tensions between the opposing concepts that comprise the four primary modes of learning—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (see Kolb’s model above). Kolb (1984, p. 29) draws on the learning theories of Lewin (1942), Dewey (1958, 1963), Piaget (1971), and Freire (1974) to assert, “The process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.” These include the conflict between concrete experience and abstract conceptualisation, between observation and action, between impulse and desire, between accommodation and assimilation, and between reflection and action. For Kolb,
learning is the personal confrontation of the tensions between different ways of knowing, different ways of understanding and dealing with the world. In this sense, learning is not triggered by conflict but is emergent in conflict as characteristic of human condition – “we are thus the learning species” (Kolb, 1984, p. 1).

In summary, from the perspectives of the theorists discussed above, negotiation, like learning, can be modelled and described as an interactive process that progresses through a series of identifiable phases, each characterised by analytically discernible action sets following from the need to resolve encountered differences that constitute conflict. This trajectory of need, problem, and solution can be seen as operational at collective and personal levels of social interaction. At the collective level, parties as separate groups and individuals negotiate to reconcile their different interests and desires in common resolution as a way to move forward. At the personal level, separate meanings and ways of knowing are negotiated to reconcile differences in common explanation as the basis of better understanding. Be it negotiation or learning, the process can be claimed as similar, if not virtually the same, within the limitations of viewing negotiation as the interaction of connected separates and viewing learning as the process of that connection. These process similarities can be seen as supporting the capacity of negotiation to describe and explain learning.

**Negotiation outcomes and value**

The strong parallels between negotiation and learning noted above are further revealed in considering the outcomes of these processes. From the understandings outlined above it becomes clear that the move to agreement or resolution of some kind or other is both the reason for and natural outcome of this form of interaction. Negotiations in this sense lead to what Zartman (1988, p. 39) summarises as the three possible products or outcomes of the negotiation process: division, exchange, and creation.

Outcomes of division imply a fixed set of resources that are divided between the parties involved. Importantly, there is an assumption of shared value operating in such outcomes. That is, the whole to be divided, and the parts of which it is constructed, must be equally valued and understood by all parties so as to enable its break up into the proportions specified in agreement. Thereby, division often results in losers and winners as some will get what they want and others will not when winning is premised on getting the greater portion. From business and management perspectives on negotiation, division
outcomes are about “claiming value” at the most advantageous phase of the negotiation process, that is, at that time when the deal can be closed for maximum gain.

Claiming value can be understood in two senses. The first relates directly to all negotiation outcomes and marks the stage at which parties move to decide on the distribution of resources in the resolution phase (Lewicki et al., 2006). To claim value is to declare what is wanted and know when it is attainable. The second sense relates to ensuring the value of the stakes brought to the negotiation are known and appreciated by the other party. Kolb and Williams (2003) note that value unknown and unnoticed goes unrewarded, unaccounted for in the mix of negotiables that make up the issues to be considered and the resources to be divided. “For your value to influence a negotiation, you must take steps, however subtle, to ensure that it is right there on the table for both of you to see” (Kolb & Williams, 2003, p. 84). To claim value is to state and justify worth and use this as leverage in the distribution of resources that will characterise the resolution.

Outcomes marked by exchange indicate a move to resolution through decisions that rely on different values and different priorities in distribution agreements. Importantly, the appreciation of simultaneously operating different values requires those values be acknowledged and understood by all parties involved. Establishing this level of awareness through the negotiation process is referred to as “creating value.” Creating value is the process of building equivalence so that the exchange of resources can be achieved through such mechanisms as compensation, concession, comparability, and accommodation. It is thereby a shared process and ideally, all parties seek to continue cooperatively creating value until such time as all agree they can do no better and then claim value. At this resolution stage, the exchange begins and all involved are considered winners in that they have gained all they want.

Outcomes marked by creation rely equally on claiming and creating value through the negotiation process. However, and significantly, creation outcomes identify and construct new resources above and beyond the stakes at play in negotiation. Where division outcomes are seen as “slicing up the pie” and exchange outcomes are often seen as “enlarging the pie,” creation outcomes are about “baking more pies – together.” In other terms, division is about competition, exchange about cooperation, and creation about collaboration. Menkel-Meadow (2009) highlights the increasing need and incidence of collaboration in negotiation process and product as the basis for the creative solutions and outcomes required by the highly complex negotiations that mark contemporary life –
global, national, local, political, commercial, environmental, personal, and so on. This “complexification” of negotiation (Menkel-Meadow, 2009, p. 415) that now deals with greater numbers of interrelated parties representing more dynamic ranges of interests that will impact wider regimes of influence requires what Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991) described as the need of “inventing options for mutual gain.” It is this invention within increased complexification that underlies creation outcomes in negotiation, that is, the creation of new and genuinely innovative solutions that are above and beyond the resource allocations and expectations parties bring to their negotiations.

As Zartman (1988, p. 32) notes in his definition of negotiation quoted earlier, “the outcome is determined by the process.” If negotiation and learning can be seen as similar processes of purposeful interaction then learning outcomes require similar consideration: what are they, how are they identified and understood? Additionally, and importantly, there needs be consideration of how learning outcomes are valued and how value is both created and claimed through the process and as evidence of outcome. Pursuing this association in the terms of the learning theories and concepts noted above (e.g., Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning, Mezirow’s (1991, 2000) transformational learning, Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice, Jarvis’s (2006) social theory, Billett’s (2001b) and Lave & Wenger’s (1991) situated learning) means examining learners’ participative practice in ways that illuminate learning outcomes. So, in the case of individuals’ personal learning in and through work, it may be that new understandings and meanings secured over time in the move from less experienced to more experienced worker mark outcomes of creation – the creation of new knowledge, new work practices, new relationships with colleagues, and so on. However, as Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 57) note, individual learning is enacted in the “contradictions and struggles inherent in social practice and the formation of identities.” What is new for the individual worker may well be the social reproduction of old practices and relations and this may be welcomed as valued initiation or deeper immersion into desired communities of practice as much as it may be accepted as a cost of employment.

Equally, new knowledge in work may mark outcomes of exchange, the exchange of old for new as equipment is upgraded, of the familiar for unfamiliar as colleagues are promoted to roles of greater responsibility, of the routine for the uncertain as workers transfer their skills across premises, shifts, or different client bases, and so on. In resonance with Piaget’s (1971) concept of assimilation, Mezirow (2000, p. 5) states, “learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or
revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to future action.” In this sense, all adult learning can be understood as exchange. The question of what is transformed becomes answerable in terms of what must the individual learner give up, let go, refute, in exchange for better, more sufficient understandings of their experience.

Similarly, individuals’ outcomes of learning could be viewed as division as when parts or aspects of current understandings are retained and others forgone (if not replaced or transformed). The evidence of learning outcomes in work can, in part, be identified in skill sets or competence attributes that are developed through practice. Billett (2001a, p. 43) notes the importance of this in developing expertise and identifying the goals for workplace learning – “these attributes comprise the ability to respond effectively to both the everyday (routine) and new (non-routine) work tasks.” However, and as Billett (2001a, p. 87) explains, work is a contested terrain of access to the kinds of activities that can support the development of expertise and if “learners are denied engagement in activities – particularly those of a non-routine nature – learning outcomes may be limited.” So, if workers are unable to engage in the scope of activities that constitute their vocational practice (for whatever reason), at least two kinds of division outcomes become apparent. First, the potential whole of work practice that characterises effective performance in terms of expertise is reduced and second, when current skills cease to be practised they can be lost and the whole of a skill set reduced. These kinds of outcomes have been referred to as “de-skilling” and have been associated with all kinds of changes in work and work conditions. For example, Hennessey and Sawchuk (2003) note the de-skilling of public sector welfare case managers following the introduction of computing technology that altered practice protocols. These workers’ discretionary competencies were reduced, as they were less able and then less confident to make decisions about the welfare needs of their clients. Similarly, Baum (2002) argues that the introduction of so-called multi-skilling programs for hospitality workers effectively reduced opportunities for hotel employees to pursue work specialisations that enabled the development of expertise more highly valued in the industry. This represented a broad de-skilling of workers and a de-valuing of work within the hospitality sector.

As illustrated above, similarities between negotiation and learning outcomes can be discerned using Zartman’s (1988) three categories of distribution, exchange, and creation. However, these similarities begin to weaken as the outcomes and legacies of learning become too subtle, too complex, to be translated as products deriving from the kinds of resolutions that characterise negotiation in the common sense perspective.
deployed by Zartman (1988, 2008). This weakness indicates the stronger need of explicit meanings to describe and explain learning in terms of negotiation outcomes. This need is further confirmed when the concept of value, as a measure of resources within and outcomes of negotiations, is elaborated.

As outcomes of negotiation, value stands as a concept of currency, a means of exchange that enables the worth of resources negotiated to be both commonly measured and privately measured. Within negotiation, the value of the resources at stake (i.e., the negotiables) needs to be known and monitored through the whole of the transaction. This is about knowing and appraising how the negotiation process is going as it proceeds, what to do and when to do it through the phases of the process, when to stop and claim value or to continue and attend to creating value, and knowing and understanding what outcomes have been attained at the conclusion of the process. Through this, value may fluctuate as the relative worth of resources alters through the give and take of the process. When value is measured in terms of money as price, worth may be relatively easy to measure and monitor through these fluctuations. For example, the negotiated sale of a car may begin with the seller valuing the vehicle at one price and conclude with the seller having revalued its worth at another price, that is, the actual sale price. As a monetary price, the change in the worth of the car can be measured and stated as the difference between the asking price and the selling price. However, within such seemingly simple negotiations value and worth can be very different measures of very different resources. Worth in this example may be considered as the price of the car. By contrast, its value to both the seller and buyer may be completely separate and better understood by other considerations such as the vehicle’s intended use, the buyer’s capacity to pay, access to other supportive resources such as cheap mechanical repairs, reduced (or increased) insurance costs and, importantly, the relationship between buyer and seller.

Value is clearly a relational concept, enacted via the numerous factors mediating its significance as a measure of resources in activity. In the common sense of negotiation, value is characterised by the interplay of both privately and collectively known and unknown, disclosed and undisclosed, and current and emerging variables that constitute what Lewicki et al. (2006) call the “bargaining mix,” that is, all the issues (and their varying levels of importance) that are brought to and engaged with through the negotiations. Establishing the bargain mix is preparatory practice (e.g., see stage 2 from Table 2.1). For Lewicki et al. (2006, 2010) the complete list of issues at stake in negotiation is best derived from (a) an analysis of all the issues to be decided, (b)
previous expertise, (c) information gathering research, and (d) consultation with associated experts. Further, the assembled list of issues needs to be prioritised to determine the most important issues and how these are related and linked. Through these processes, the negotiables are valued in terms of their anticipated influence within the negotiation, their relationship to expected or desired outcomes, and their relationship to the initiating conflict that brought the parties together in negotiation. In terms of learning (and particularly in terms of learning that is emergent from everyday activity and is far less rigorously planned than negotiations) this bargain mix conception of value raises considerations about the measure or worth of learning outcomes and the evaluative processes by which it is determined. For example, how do learners understand and appraise their learning as personal engagement in a process; as the enactments of choices and decisions through the process; as influenced by tools, tasks, conditions, and others; as fluctuating levels of interest, importance, and consequence; as opportunities to be secured, let go, pursued; as outcomes that evidence gain, loss, and a status-quo that is desirable, undesirable, useful, useless, and so forth? In short, how do learners understand and enact the value of their learning and the relationality on which that value is premised? Can and do learners establish or comprehend a bargain mix and what kinds of value are operational within such an activity, consciously or otherwise?

Numerous perspectives offer insights into these questions about the nature of value operational within and accruing from learning as a socio-personal participative practice. For example, at the macro level of social engagement sociologists such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (2002) present value as social capital and address its subdivision into more specific forms of economic, cultural, and human capital. Capital from these perspectives is about accumulated wealth as money, as influence, as social standing, as the holding of whatever means enable the accumulation of more such wealth that in turn secures success. Learning is one way of generating such capital. From the more situated perspective of work and competence development, the value of learning may be related to sustaining employability, securing promotion, and career advancement (Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle, & McGuire, 2002). From a more individual perspective, it is founded in the micro moments of participation such as personal decisions about how to use time between and during work tasks (Smith, 2006). Zartman (1988), like other negotiation researchers, suggests that without such understandings about what value is and how it is comprehended through the skills of observation, analysis, and evaluation that found it, the success of negotiations cannot be identified and thereby the value or
worth of such successes, the issues at stake within them and the relationships on which they are premised, remain insubstantial, baseless. The same may be true of personal learning, particularly when outcomes of success correspond with the development and enactment of expertise in vocational practice and the kinds of value (e.g., social status, organisational respect, personal satisfaction, etc.) such success attains and maintains.

So, learning may be valued in ways similar to valuing negotiation outcomes and the issues brought into consideration to achieve these outcomes. This seems particularly evident when that value derives from learning outcomes represented as forms of social and personal capital that equate to higher wages, stronger employability, and better understandings of how to measure and secure success. However, the relational qualities of the issues brought into consideration through learning in and for work, and therefore the outcomes derived, are far more complex than the bargain mix brought to negotiations. For example, Smith (2006), as noted above, brings the micro moments of the time between immediate tasks into the mix of variables that mediate learning in and for work. For the time-pressured workers in Smith’s (2006) work-learning research, every moment of activity represented a choice to be enacted, a value to be measured, in the progress towards a successful work outcome such as an order filled, a deadline met, and a customer satisfied. Capturing these moments as mediating influences on learning outcomes is beyond the scope of the bargain mix that assembles “all the issues that have been defined into a comprehensive list” (Lewicki et al., 2010, p. 123). This is because such moments may be indefinable, too momentary, to become entries on such a list that is compiled in preparation for and anticipation of measurable outcomes. In other ways, Billett and Pavlova (2005) note the agentic actions of workers who learned to create workplace opportunities that supported personal and organisational goals. These opportunities and the social capital they generated were not predicated on the planned and measurable value of clearly defined issues and accurately monitored progress but, rather, emerged as contingencies that were seized and made valuable by the efforts of committed workers.

When the relational qualities of value and worth and their measure as outcome and mediating influence are considered in the terms of a common conception of negotiation, notions of creating, claiming, and thereby identifying and realising value become important indicators of negotiation processes and outcomes. When these are applied to learning they hold some capacity to describe and explain learning as negotiation but this capacity weakens as the range of mediations increases and
relationality subsequently broadens in efforts to accommodate the resources engaged in workers’ learning practices. This weakened capacity is in turn indicative of the need for clearer and more explicit negotiation meanings if learning in and for work is to be described and explained in terms of negotiation. One way of doing this is to view learning in and for work as a particular kind of negotiation.

**Negotiation types and functions**

Negotiation researchers, theorists, and practitioners often define negotiations on the basis of the parties involved, the goals each seek, and the practices necessary to achieving these goals. Doing so becomes a useful way to distinguish the different functions and types of negotiation that operate in the diverse fields of work activity. So, for example, negotiations between employers and their employees are categorically different from those with customers or with suppliers or with regulators and they are all categorically different again from those between lawyers and clients, or doctors and patients, or teachers and students (see e.g., Harvard Business Press, 2005; Lewicki et al., 2006; Zwier & Guernsey, 2005). Likewise, even similarly focussed negotiations between employers and employees in one organisation and those in another will be very different as the variations in people, purposes, and practices exert their influence on the interactive processes and outcomes that identify particular negotiations (see e.g., Crawley & Graham, 2002; Monk, 2007).

These seemingly obvious observations, that the functions and types of negotiation are different because of their differences, are the beginnings of acknowledging the highly situated nature of learning in and through work (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and that “an understanding of workplace learning means recognising its complexities, its competing interests and the personal, political and institutional influences that affect it” (Boud & Garrick, 1999, p. 3). Categorising these diverse elements of learning within a paradigm of interaction that enables their impact to be observed and accounted is assisted through the utility of categorising negotiations. For example, organisational psychologist Rousseau (2005) presents extensive analyses of the many different kinds of employment arrangements that individual workers have negotiated for themselves. These arrangements are referred to as idiosyncratic deals, I-deals, that “typically manifest themselves in the quiet, informal ways in which workers and employers figure out how to make work arrangements flexible enough to meet each other’s needs” (Rousseau, 2005, p. 3). The analyses focus primarily on understanding the organisational human resource
implications of the different ways in which workers interact with and influence the terms and conditions that define their work. The purpose is to illuminate the business benefits that can arise from the win-win-win scenario that is created when workers, management, and co-workers are able to engage in an explicit and supported interactive practice of negotiating flexible and fair employment agreements (Rousseau, 2005). In doing so, Rousseau formalises some of the diversity and idiosyncrasies that characterise contemporary work as the direct result of employee-employer negotiation practices and thereby illustrates some of the complexities that are the bases on which workers engage in the participative practices that found their work and learning.

Essentially, Rousseau (2005) identifies four kinds of idiosyncratic arrangements that individual workers obtain through their work. They are differentiated across the two dimensions of creation by acquiescence or negotiation and initiation by employer or employee. Such a two-dimensional matrix perspective establishes arrangements that are (a) initiated, either implicitly or explicitly by the employer and accepted by the employee; (b) initiated by the employee and accepted by the employer; (c) co-operatively arranged, that is, initiated and accepted by both the employer and the employee; and (d) unacknowledged but accepted by both employer and employee through unplanned change or happenstance. Rousseau chooses not to focus on those arrangements in the last category, those arrived at through acquiescence from both parties, and instead focuses on those arrangements that can be more clearly identified as negotiated. They are summarised in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2
Acquiescent and Negotiated I-Deals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker-initiated</th>
<th>One-sided acquiescence</th>
<th>Two-sided negotiation (The basis of I-deals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquiescence (e.g., job crafting)</td>
<td>The classic I-deal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal accommodation</td>
<td>Worker proposes idiosyncrasy and then negotiates with employer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker initiates idiosyncrasy and employer acquiesces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer-initiated</td>
<td>Authority-acceptance (e.g., job creep)</td>
<td>A potential I-deal (i.e., if worker feels free to negotiate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer initiates idiosyncrasy and worker acquiesces</td>
<td>Employer proposes idiosyncrasy and then negotiates with worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rousseau (2005) reserves the term negotiation for those arrangements that necessitate acknowledged agreements, “when employee or employer cannot effectively create or alter a condition of employment without the other’s consent” (Rousseau, 2005, p. 36). This distinction upholds the common understanding of the concept of negotiation as the meeting, the encounter or the coming together in pursuit of agreement. However, in elaborating I-deals so defined, Rousseau goes on to categorise and qualify the different and competing interests and influences that characterise the four work arrangement types identified. Negotiations, or I-deals, can be formal or informal “processes of bargaining and joint problem solving” (p. 37) that are “motivated by each party’s desire to retain their autonomy and freedom” (p. 43) and emerge naturally from “the inherent incompleteness in employment arrangements” because “the complex dynamics of organisations and human life make the future uncertain” (p. 24). Such descriptors and qualifiers may be said to apply equally to learning. For example, concepts of formal and informal are familiar (if often poorly defined) descriptors of learning (see e.g., Billett, 2001a; Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcolm, 2003; Illeris, 2007; Marsick & Watkins, 1990).
Formal learning is translated as institutionally directed and structured. Informal learning is translated as learning that occurs in and through or emergent from less regulated activities. Similarly, motivation to learn has been viewed as higher in informal settings because learners are free to pursue their goals in ways that attune more closely with their interests, preferred methods, and support systems, and thereby support stronger learning outcomes in terms of increased performance and skill development (Harris, Simon, & Bone, 2006; Skule, 2004; Tennant, 1999).

In terms of formal learning, understandings of negotiation in its common sense as deal making and joint problem solving are foundational in practices such as negotiated curriculum, where students and teachers make arrangements about “what” will be undertaken and “how” learning will be constituted, assessed, and reported in those undertakings (Boomer, 1982; Boud, 1992). Similarly, such understandings of negotiation sit at the heart of learning contracts, as formal plans and personal psychological processes where learners, as individuals focused on themselves or in collaboration with others invested in their learning, structure plans to achieve specific outcomes (Knowles, 1986). In these kinds of arrangements, learning can be categorised as particular types of negotiations and Rousseau’s (2005) I-deals may be seen as offering a means of doing this more accurately.

Further to this, Rousseau (2005) goes on to qualify negotiated I-deals across dimensions of time of occurrence, whether they are reactive or proactive and whether they are based on negative threat or positive incentive. These, as well as considerations of multiple parties being involved, whether or not agreements made are fixed or open to further negotiation and what kinds of resources are involved in outcomes and agreements reached, become the bases by which workers’ interactions with all the resources that make up their work situations are brought into the considerations that categorise I-deals as one of the four particular types of negotiation. In these ways a variety of mediating factors are accounted for and necessarily used to determine what kinds of negotiations are operational as workers’ work conditions.

So, the question of how learning can be categorised and described as negotiation may be supported by Rousseau’s (2005) four I-deals categories. For example, workers’ voluntary engagement in employer-sponsored training programs may be regarded as genuinely negotiated in that both parties consider and agree to the arrangements. But this is illustrative of the full extent to which Rousseau’s categorisations can be pushed to define learning as a particular type of negotiation. Its focus is the arrangements made
rather than the learning that may or may not be enacted through such arrangements. However, despite this limitation (and Rousseau’s I-deals were never intended as learning categories) the prospect of representing and qualifying learning as a specific type of negotiation, and thereby better describing and explaining learning as negotiation, remains viable in other ways supported by other fields of negotiation research.

For negotiation researchers and theorists, as opposed to business and management researchers and theorists concerned with situated employment contracts and conditions (such as Rousseau (2005) above), negotiation as interaction is reducible to two fundamental types. They are distributive negotiation and integrative negotiation. Each enables the interests and influences Boud and Garrick (1999) note to be situated within the numerous differences (contexts, personnel, practices, etc.) variably operational within work and learning. Each supports potential ways of defining learning as a particular type of negotiation.

**Distributive negotiation**

Distributive negotiation refers to the division and distribution of resources on the basis of agreements reached about how this allocation is to be achieved. Participants essentially bargain through the give and take of goals and compromise, often in a competitive mode, as each party seeks to optimise the value it can secure through the process. In this sense, resources are considered fixed and securing the greater or desired portion of them constitutes a successful outcome (see e.g., Dawson, 2003; Saner, 2005). Typical examples at work include the formal negotiations of individual employment contracts between employees and employers where, for example, better pay and conditions for employees are measured as increased costs to the employer that in turn reduce profit margins. Similarly, purchase contracts with suppliers represent distributive negotiated agreements over prices of goods and services. Higher input prices paid mean lower margins and vice versa. These kinds of negotiations are also illustrated by less formal arrangements where employees trade and swap shifts and tasks among themselves to secure valuable time off for personal purposes or better access to personally preferred conditions.

Distributive negotiations such offer a model of interactive process and product that illustrates how sociocultural resources such as labour, information, time, and price are utilised and thereby mutually valued as a means of engagement and participation in work. The loss-gain or zero-sum nature of this interaction, that is, that one party’s gain is the other’s loss and thus taken together add up to zero, defines participants and resources
as contraventional and counteractive. In doing so, distributive negotiation accounts for the nature and consequential qualities of interactive practice in and through work as contested and oppositional, always in competition for access to and use of the limited resources available in any sociocultural activity: a state of affairs that can be likened to getting the biggest slice of the pie.

Across different theoretical perspectives, these qualities define the employment relationship and, therefore, work learning as embedded in contexts of conflict marked by a constant state of inequitably resolving the power relations by which it is constituted. For example, Marxist perspectives view work as the site of the means of production in terms of the broad reproduction of social relations among people that generate society and the more specific production of surplus value through the supply of goods and services for market (Smith, 2000). These social fundamentals arise from the distributively negotiated antagonism between capital and labour, that is, between those who control the means of production, capitalists, and workers who buy into it through the sale of their labour. Surplus value may be minimally and economically understood as the positive difference between the costs of production of goods and services in its full sense of labour plus material plus capital and the value those goods and services attain in the market (Marx, 1867). The successive creation of surplus value within the market may be equated with the generation of profit, which in turn increases the pool of capital and the price of labour. Work learning may also be viewed as a means of enhancing labour power. From an employer perspective such enhancement offers opportunity to increase surplus value and from an employee perspective offers opportunity to increase the price of labour.

In examining the work learning of Canadian immigrant women from this Marxist perspective, Maitra and Shan (2007) propose two types of worker learning that emerge from the distributive type negotiations that mark this understanding of interactive practice as the struggle between employers’ and employees’ competing goals. The first, conformative learning, positioned the contingent women employees as “left on their devices to learn to meet their employer’s expectations” (Maitra & Shan, 2007, p. 290). The provision of employer-supported learning was minimal and assessed as a cost that could be avoided by the threat of employee dismissal if production targets were not met. The women, in their need to secure their employment, conformed to their employer’s expectations, relying on each other and their own time away from the workplace as the means to ensure their necessary learning progressed sufficient to their immediate performance requirements. On one level and through the lens of distributive negotiation,
learning for these immigrant women employees equates with the loss of personal time that is the employer’s direct gain in production time.

The second of the two types of worker learning, transgressive learning, “refers to the learning experiences of the women challenging their confinements and constraints in their workplace” (Maitra & Shan, 2007, p. 292). One example cited from the Maitra and Shan research relates how some of the immigrant women workers in a garment factory deliberately slowed down their sewing to force their employer to install air conditioning. The strategy was successful and illustrates the women’s collaboratively learned and resultant enhanced position as more influential in the distributive negotiations that shape their engagement in work. In this instance the women learned to gain some control over the resource of production time that equated with the employer’s loss of production time. The women’s gain in labour power represented the employer’s loss in surplus value.

The concept of distributive negotiation, as indicated above, carries the capacity to identify and categorise learning in work as a contested practice, a competition for access to and use of the limited resources available, a struggle for what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as legitimacy, that is, the workers’ right to and recognition of influence in participation. But more than highlight the separation of co-participants in joint activity and the ways and means by which this separation is enacted as connection, distributive negotiation identifies that the processes and products of participation in work, and thereby learning, are characterised by self-interest focused effort and influence, loss and gain, weakness and strength, resistance and submission, action and counter action.

If negotiation is to be an effective metaphor, descriptive and explanatory of learning as socio-personal practice, it must account for the elements of conflict and purpose that distributive negotiation identifies. This necessity sits at the heart of notions of “give and take” that learning theorists such as Wenger (1998) build into their use of negotiation as it applies to learning. So, in some respects, learning in and for work may be seen as distributive negotiation, particularly when the resources that constitute work activity are seen as fixed and, therefore, to be secured through meeting in contest, as Maitra and Shan (2007) illustrate through their categorising learning as conformative and transgressive.

In the terms of negotiation products or outcomes being elaborated here, distributive negotiation can be seen as what Zartman (1988) describes as outcomes of division or exchange that are based in practices predominantly focused on claiming value. The second fundamental type of negotiation that negotiation researchers advance is
integrative negotiation. Its focus is more about creating value and ensuring that meeting in contest culminates in outcomes of sharing and mutuality: meanings that partly comprise the range of common sense generic meanings the concept of negotiation carries.

**Integrative negotiation**

In contrast to the concept of distributive negotiation outlined above, integrative negotiation refers to the utility and allocation of resources on the bases of agreements reached that reflect the integrated interests of the parties concerned. Such negotiation products and processes take account of how different perspectives, needs, and interests can value resources differently. Parties essentially seek to solve the problems of ensuring that each and all participants in the negotiations secure their goals. Resources are not considered fixed but rather variable, their particular value mediated by the range or set of negotiable resources of which they are part. Therefore, resources are relatively positioned within the different value systems and structures of the participants concerned. Successful outcomes are those that enable each of the participants to attain an accrued gain in benefit to them from the re-evaluation of allocated resources relative to their respective interests. In this way, value can be said to be created as the scope of negotiable resources increases through the collaborative exchange processes that define and interpret the relative value of each participant’s perspectives, needs, and interests (see e.g., Saner, 2005; Stepp, Sweeney, & Johnson, 2003). Examples of integrated negotiation at work can include employment contracts that link increases in employee-valued pay and conditions to increases in employer-valued productivity. In this way, gains for one party integrate gains for the other and so offer opportunity for each to secure their goals: what is often referred to as a win-win scenario. Similarly, purchase contracts with suppliers may bring other differently valued resources into the negotiation mix. The securing of preferred delivery times and methods by the purchaser may prove sufficient a benefit to offset demands on price that may be equally offset by the supplier who can secure sole supply rights for extended periods. In less formal situations between fellow employees, work tasks may be valued beyond the single parameter of time obligation to include opportunity for learning, developing experience, relieving boredom, or working with preferred others. Task swapping and sharing that accounts for these variable values constitutes integrative negotiations where the securing of time off for one employee may mean any number of different secured benefits for another.
Integrative negotiations, as such, offer a model of interactive processes and products that illustrates how sociocultural resources are variably valued and thereby differently utilised as a means of engagement and participation in work. Through, characteristically, processes of cooperative problem solving aimed at securing benefit that seeks not to diminish others’ opportunity to equally secure benefit, integrative negotiation defines participants and resources as collaborative and complementary. In this way, integrative negotiation accounts for the nature and consequential qualities of interactive practice in and through work as shared and aggregated, always seeking to increase access to and use of the numerous and variable resources available in the sociocultural context of activity: a state of affairs that can be likened to increasing the size of the pie so as to ensure all concerned get a sufficient slice.

These qualities can come to define the employment relationship and work learning as emerging from contexts of planned compromise marked by seemingly equitable and shared resolutions of the operant power relations. For example, contemporary human resource management practices increasingly include performance management as a fundamental aspect of work. Performance management engages individual employees, in consultation with and at the request of their employers, setting personal work performance goals and appraisal strategies on a regular basis. These may be associated with performance pay increments or bonuses that act as incentives for employees to pursue the set targets. Equally, these performance goals can be associated with non-monetary incentives and rewards such as access to organisational resources, time release to pursue personal projects, or professional development objectives. Reports from analysis of the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey in Britain indicate that up to two-thirds of employers with 10 or more staff are now using such staff management practices for a variety of reasons that include achieving higher productivity and retaining staff (Kersley et al., 2006). Some social and management theorists argue that these practices emerge from unitary or universalist perspectives that assume or desire employees and employers have mutual interests and thereby seek to support themselves through supporting each other in the pursuit of shared personal and organisational objectives (see e.g., Heyes, 2000; Pfeffer, 1998).

Other such theorists view performance management practices as indicative of pluralist or contingency perspectives on human resource management. These practices are seen to represent temporary resolutions or conditions of the inevitable conflict between employees and employers or workers and managers who have very different interests and
operate from inequitable positions of power within the employment relationship (see e.g., Adler & Borys, 1996; Beersma et al., 2003; Fox, 1966). From both perspectives, that is, similar interests or different interests, equitable or inequitable power positions, performance management practices ostensibly represent integrative negotiations that engage employees and employers in the consideration of each other’s variably valued goals and resources for the purposes of establishing an employment relationship that enables each to attain some perceived net benefit. Learning, in terms of access to or requirement of further education and training, or in terms of changes in work roles and collegiate association, may be part of the “bundle” of goals and resources considered through the negotiations. Equally, the negotiation processes may represent learning opportunities where the parties come to know more about themselves and each other through their relational considerations.

Marsden (2004, 2007) addresses these and other labour relations issues in an examination of performance management practices and outcomes for teachers, tax officers, and health care workers in the British public service. These workers, like many in contemporary western economies, have been subject to government policy and management changes requiring new and higher productivity orientations to the performance norms and standards that characterise their jobs (OECD, 2005). For the classroom teachers (Marsden, 2007; Marsden & Belfield, 2006) this meant accepting new wage conditions that effectively linked their pay scale to their students’ test results. Through the relatively slow introduction of these performance regulated wage structures over 4 years and the collective representation of teachers’ unions, the integrative negotiations that marked this management transition enabled teachers a strong voice in defining the measures of student progress that reflected their teaching performance and the criteria to be applied for movement at the different stages of the ascending pay scale. These conditions enabled “the preferences of the two parties and their respective strengths to be discovered in the process of negotiation when people are faced with real rather than theoretical choices” (Marsden, 2007, p. 1269). For the teachers, individually with their head teachers and collectively through their representatives with public service management, these choices ranged around real work relationship issues that included accurately differentiating workloads, the provision of professional development, and addressing morale problems. Such issues could not be understood as peripheral to the centrality of student performance and assessment as indicative of teacher performance. Responses to these and other issues informed and refined the nature of the new
management practices and teachers’ assent to them (Marsden & Belfield, 2006). This give and take across an increasing and variably influential set of issues over time may be said to constitute learning. As Marsden (2007, p. 1273) states, “the negotiation is a learning process for all parties involved.”

Other studies examining the management-worker renegotiation of the employment relationship along lines of higher performance orientations to production and human resource management have highlighted the learning characteristics of integrative negotiation differently. Kalliola, Nakari, and Pesonen’s (2006) ongoing research into the learning and organisational change processes and outcomes of new public sector managerialism in Finland since the 1990s leads them to declare,

practical changes in the modes of operation are more likely to accompany cases where the participants involve themselves in active expressions of varying views, in valuing each others’ perspectives, also opposite ones, and in giving critical, but basically positive feedback … [such] interaction will lead to learning and innovation. (Kalliola et al., 2006, p. 465)

The high levels of collaboration and cooperation necessary to securing these changes in modes of operations across a diversity of profit and not-for-profit government enterprises could not, however, be left to traditional contingency practices where workers reluctantly accommodated top-down management decisions or delegated their assent to union representatives. Rather, such integrative practices needed to be learned and practised prior to and as part of the transition to high performance management. To this end, the Quality Network initiative was established. At the behest of government, it engaged in action research interventions to create the learning and organisational spaces that facilitated the democratic communication processes necessary to engagement in integrative negotiations that could lead to management and worker preferred employment conditions across the Finnish public service. Effectively, in reporting some of the projects of the Quality Network, Kalliola et al. (2006) report the learning to learn qualities of integrative negotiation as a form of bringing participants together through the need of learning to make changes to work that can secure desired social outcomes.

Learning issues are also central to the traditional forms of collective bargaining that are the integrative negotiations between trade unions and employers. Bratton (2001, p. 334) illustrates why workers in the Canadian pulp and paper industry can be portrayed as reluctant learners when their “resistance to learning is part of the contested arena of productivity and job control.” Employer moves, within this industry, toward lean human resource management practices in the late 1990s focussed on the change to enterprise-
specific productivity bargaining away from industry-wide collective bargaining and increased workforce flexibility whereby job demarcation was relaxed and workers enabled to learn new skills. Workers, faced with the loss of learning opportunity that the more flexible work arrangements had previously made attractive for them (e.g., as the means to progress within the industry along personally preferred trajectories), declined to pursue learning that might make them more transferable across their employers’ labour requirements. Resistance to learning thus becomes a form of positioning within the integrative negotiations that mediated the changing labour economics conditions in the Canadian paper industry. The changes were conducted in the context of an antagonistic industrial relations system. Through this antagonism, workers learned to defend their collective interests, to understand the disadvantage that could follow from their unconsidered acceptance of management preferred flexibility models and more generally the political nature of work and learning in and for work (Bratton, 2001). Reluctant learners of productivity related skills that could better support employers’ interests were learning how to better collectively support their own interests which were becoming less valued by employers pursuing enterprise-specific productivity bargaining.

Similarly, trade unions, as individual unionists and as organisational representatives, report valuable learning that emerges from their need to more forcibly negotiate on behalf of their members and to secure the membership base that ensures the industry-wide take up of the employment conditions their negotiations realise. In Australia, through the work of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Brown, 2007) and in Canada, through the work of the United Needletrades, Industrial Textile Employees - Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (Sawchuck, 2007), workers and their organisations are learning new ways to secure the bargaining power needed to buttress their negotiations in national industrial relations environments that increasingly legislate in favour of individual workplace agreements and thereby intentionally marginalise workers’ collective voice (de Turbeville, 2007).

So, the concept of integrative negotiation carries the capacity to identify and categorise learning in work as a contested practice and, thereby, qualify it as a particular type of negotiation. As indicated, that contest is not necessarily about defeating opposing claims on resources that cannot be effectively shared as is the case in distributive negotiation. Rather, it is about recognising, understanding, and appreciating difference as the bases of establishing mutualities, arrangements that enable all parties to achieve their goals. From such a perspective, learning may be seen as one such mutuality, emergent
from and within processes and products of relationship building based on wanting and needing stronger and more enduring relationship (Mouzas, 2006). Separations are maintained, not as loss and gain, but as identifiable differences that meet in agreements characterised as mutual gain.

As a metaphor for learning as participation, as engaged practice, integrative negotiation may support limited understandings of the relational interdependence (Billett, 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1991) between the individual and the mediating influences they contend with in work. These limitations are based primarily in the seeming static states of many of these influences relative to the immediacy and fluidity of the individual. For example, tools, organisational structures, and knowledge systems are often too entrenched, too inflexible to accommodate the willingness of workers to alter their practices, to negotiate their engagement (Bacon & Blyton, 2006). What eventuates as changing practice that may be seen to evidence learning is not so much negotiated shared agreement, that is, outcomes of integrative negotiation, but, rather, workers’ adaptation to or circumvention of difficult circumstance. In such cases, integrative negotiation fails as a metaphor for learning as participation despite its capacity to acknowledge mutual influence.

So, learning in and for work may be, in some respects, described as a type of integrative negotiation. Further, because of the shared acknowledgement of differences as the foundation of this negotiation type, it can be additionally qualified by accounting for these differences and their mediation of process and outcome. As such, and despite the rigidity of influences Bacon and Blyton (2006) illuminate, integrative negotiation, as a type of negotiation that can reasonably detail the mediations with which it grapples, offers greater opportunity to describe and explain learning as negotiation than does distributive negotiation.

Negotiation and learning: Parallels and intersections of process and product
This chapter has outlined and discussed a range of negotiation processes and products or outcomes that identify what has been referred to as the common understanding of negotiation. This common understanding of the concept is the familiar base of the generic meanings that are often deployed in sociocultural learning research to capture, that is, describe and explain the interactive practices that characterise learning in and for work. Through this outline, some similarities between learning and negotiation have been made explicit, particularly those that pertain to both as interactive processes and products that
enable and identify the purposes of activity as finding agreement, overcoming conflict, and making the kinds of arrangements that secure further joint activity.

As a sequenced set of specific actions (evidenced by the process models outlined) and as outcomes of those actions (evidenced by considerations of claiming and creating value), negotiation and learning may be seen as parallel: the one resembling the other. Equally, when negotiation processes such as seeking information, building rapport, and understanding the consequences of action taken (both experientially and experimentally) are seen as informing and progressing the quality and direction of negotiations, then learning and negotiation intersect as one and the same process. Workers learn to negotiate and negotiation is based in learning about self and others in the pursuit of goals, shared or otherwise.

As indicated through the chapter, the depth and diversity of these parallels and intersections are numerous. Because of this they cannot be assumed or glossed over in generalisations about learning and participation being negotiated. Rather, greater specificity is required. Negotiating meaning, in Wenger’s (1998) terms, is very different from Canadian mill workers’ (Bratton, 2001) negotiating their work conditions despite the abstracted parallels conceptual analysis can identify. There is clearly a need to differentiate negotiation processes and products when they are deployed in actual terms (i.e., to describe and explain specific kinds of planned and definable goals-oriented interactions) and when they are deployed in metaphoric terms (i.e., to describe and explain how people accomplish their sense making of experience and the relations on which this understanding is premised).

Further, employing categorisations of negotiation as a means of qualifying learning as a particular type of negotiation offers ways of using the concept of negotiation that can begin to account for the range of mediating influences enacted in participative activity. Reducible to two primary types or forms of negotiation, distributive and integrative, learning can be considered as contested practice that is based in and leads to winners and losers (i.e., those who secure their goals and those who do not) or winners and winners (i.e., where all enact and secure their goals). And these process and products can be viewed as formally and informally accomplished, as purposefully enacted in planned interaction or acquiescent acceptance and, as Rousseau’s (2005) under utilised fourth category illustrates, as the result of accommodating unforeseen change or happenstance.
What maintains from these considerations of negotiation and learning is the necessity of explicitly examining and articulating the practices enacted by those engaged in the interactive processes and products that constitute participation in work when learning is to be described and explained as negotiation. Essential to this requirement is accounting for the diversity and weight of influences mediating processes and outcomes of participative practice. Doing so begins to acknowledge all the resources enacted in sociocultural activity rather than considering only those that hold workers, both individually and collectively, as separable from their contexts and isolatable as negotiating parties who only come together with others (i.e., all resources operant in activity) when specific forms of interaction are required. Negotiation processes and outcomes, like learning processes and legacies, are enacted in contexts that situate interaction in specific times, places, and conditions that have direct influence on how and what happens. It is consideration of this contextual aspect of the concept of negotiation that is taken up in Chapter 3, the second of two chapters examining the capacity of negotiation to describe and explain learning in and for work.
Chapter 3

Negotiation and learning: Context and conditions in relationship

This is the second of the two chapters examining the capacity of negotiation to be used to conceptualise learning in and for work in ways that describe and explain individuals’ enactment of the participative practices that identify them as co-participants, co-contributors to the relationships that enable and support their learning. In doing so, it examines negotiation in the broad sense of conceptualising the environment in and by which interactive practices are enacted. The interactive practices that constitute workers’ enactment of participation in work cannot be adequately understood as learning practices when they are decontextualised as processes and products of parties meeting or connecting in forms of negotiation. Rather, workers’ engagement in their practice needs to be expressed in terms of a conception of negotiation that can fully account for the environment in and by which interaction occurs. There are two aspects of this environmental sense of negotiation. The first is captured by negotiation theorists Lewicki et al. (2006, p. 275) when they observe, “negotiations occur in a rich and complex social context that has a significant impact on how the parties interact and how the process evolves.” From this aspect, the context and conditions of activity are seen as “where” that activity takes place, the environment in which activity occurs. The influence of this environment needs to be accounted for as it mediates activity. The second aspect is that the environment is the activity, that is, the activity (be it work, learning, negotiation, or any other form of interaction), can only be analytically differentiated from the environment, that is, seen as an element of the context and conditions that identify that environment, by holding specific parameters of categorisation. For example such parameters could include the purpose of the activity, its time of occurrence, judgements of its significance, who is involved, and so on, as means of analytically constituting the environment as the sum of its components. This aspect is captured by the socio-historic activity theory perspectives advanced by Leontyev (1978).

In brief, Leontyev’s (1978) activity theory proposed a three-tiered model of activity that qualified levels or scales of action as interactively driven on the basis of corresponding mediators or initiating forces. Activities at the base level of this model are referred to as automatic operations that are driven by the immediate tools and conditions
of the action at hand. At the middle level, activities are group or individual actions that are driven by personal or organisational goals. The upper level refers to actions that are interpreted as collective activity that is driven by socially sanctioned motives. Such motives arise “when a collective need meets an object that has the potential to fulfil the need” (Engestrom, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999, p. 65). The example of the fire truck racing to the rescue of endangered citizens captures well these analytically different qualities of activity. The fire service constitutes a collective activity motivated by social need to ensure safety and protect life and property. The driver of the truck is engaged in the navigation of traffic conditions with the personal and organisational goal of getting to the site of the danger quickly via the shortest means possible. In doing so the driver is seemingly “automatically” operating the brakes, gears, and accelerator of the vehicle in ways that are necessitated by the specific requirements and limitations of the particular truck being driven and the route taken. In categorising activity this way, Leontyev (1978) captures the environmental nature of human activity and begins to articulate the relations that constitute it. These relations involve the interactions of individual and social motives with the conditions at hand. Because these elements of activity cannot be separated (except analytically by the element categories devised) the activity is the environment.

Through either aspect, this human activity environment can be viewed in its entirety as a relationship, that is, as a set of relations that enable, initiate, sustain, mediate, and transform activity that simultaneously enables, initiates, sustains, mediates, and transforms the set of relations of which it is part. Activity comes, therefore, to be seen as not in relationship but of relationship, and the parties co-participating in that activity are the relationship. Within an environment-encompassing conceptualisation of negotiation, interaction as the process and product of meeting comes to be seen as only the particular instance, or the specific isolation in time and circumstance, of a relationship that has already and will continue to hold negotiating parties (indeed all elements of sociocultural activity) connected.

In the broader sense this relationship, this always being in a state of connection, is societal. It is founded on a generational history of activity in the social world with all the cultural traditions and ideologies this history establishes. The activity that marks this relationship is based in the fundamentals of consciousness that enable action in and on this collective world. Freire summarises (1985, p. 68), “It is as conscious beings that men are not only in the world but with the world, together with other men” (italics in the original). To be in the world is to be with others and this existential fundamental of
ineluctable togetherness is the fact of the social that holds us always connected to each other, always in relationship. In a more narrow sense, this connection is situated. It is a relationship that is personally enacted in the immediate necessities and resources of the current events of experience. The current, the here and now, demands action and in so doing defines the specific aspects of the situated relationship that is the singular us (the individual “I” that is enacted within the “we” that are always in relationship) in action. The individual is always only one of those immediately concerned with what is now happening.

Vygotsky (1978) conceptualises this active immediacy as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), that relational space in which interaction differentiates what is separately known as the basis of social connection, that is, what is individually known by the participants that come together to constitute the zone that is their relationship. Working and learning are particularly good examples of this always in relationship connection that contextualises sociocultural activity. The immediate necessities of the work task at hand connect individual workers with others, with tools, with procedures, and with consequences that define and contextualise their activities in the specifics of their situation. Likewise, these situated work activities take place in organisations that together create industries that combine in economies that support nations and global alliances that broadly define and contextualise the sociocultural activity of work in always connected relationships of immense social importance. To acknowledge and account for these always connected relationships that define and contextualise work and learning as participation is to utilise the concept of negotiation as the means of understanding how this participation is enacted. Negotiation conceptualises the always connected relationship as rightfully one of unity in which any and all of the sociocultural resources that constitute that unity are relationally bound in activity that is negotiated, that is, in and of negotiation.

Whether broadly (socially) or more intimately (ZPD), negotiation as the context and conditions of relationship conceptualises the enactment of engagement in sociocultural activity such as work and learning as co-participatory. It enables a contextual understanding of the mutuality that characterises co-participation. It does this in two ways. Firstly, negotiation as relationship accounts for co-participation as being contextually mediated. It encompasses and necessitates a consideration of all the sociocultural resources (be they physical or psychological, macro or micro, strong or weak, past or present, etc.) that impact co-participation. All these resources are contextual
variables that differently and yet simultaneously mediate participant engagement. That is, the context is always operational on and in the activities by which it is constituted and each of the resources contributing in this process is important. Negotiating parties as such are always interacting, always in negotiation, with all the sociocultural resources that contextualise their activity and thereby mediate their engagement. Secondly, and because of this, negotiation as relationship accounts for co-participation as relational and interdependent. It differentiates the varying forces and continuities that hold and sustain the diversity of sociocultural resources operant in activity as the dynamic always-active-unity in which the production and performance of those sociocultural resources (be they goods and services, knowledge and meanings, or persons and organisations) is dependent on the viabilities between them. Moreover, these viabilities are constantly changing, waxing and waning in intensity, importance and purpose as activities change in generation of and response to the personal and social flux of experiential reality. Casey (1999, p. 15) notes,

The contexts in which work is performed and socially positioned are undergoing considerable and enduring change. Every aspect of work, from its practical everyday organisation, its form and function in production and economy, to its meaning and value in individual and collective life, are affected by these changes. These changes are themselves aspects of context, indicators of the relational flux that holds resources together as the context and conditions of activity.

At work, the activities that identify the contexts and conditions of negotiation are the relationships that define these viabilities and the processes and outcomes by which they are realised. As noted earlier, some are highly situated and intimate as when colleagues support and or hinder each other in the completion of essential tasks. Some are more expansive and yet no less direct as when organisational procedures are dictated by undesired legislative regulation or guided by informed market research. Through all the breadth and depth of the diverse relationships that negotiation accounts for, what persists is the immediacy (be it weak or strong) of all these relationships in shaping the nature of individual engagement in the co-participatory practices of their work and learning. Work is not haphazard. It is regulated, managed and enacted with purpose and intention by all participants (Billett, 2006b; Smith, 2006).

Numerous researchers from a diversity of fields have addressed these issues in ways that assist an understanding of participation in work as a learning practice that is contextually negotiated. What follows is a brief examination of just some of these
theories and models and how they differently contribute to elaborating the contexts and conditions of negotiation as essential aspects of conceptualising personal learning as negotiated social practice. This examination proceeds in three sections. The first begins with the idea that contexts and their conditions are constructed by a range of structural and personal variables or mediations that need to be accounted. Doing this identifies the primary influences that shape activity and so identifies negotiation as a composite of interrelated factors. The second section moves to consider these influences as relational spaces and how they can be conceptualised to account for the interdependencies between these mediating factors. Doing so identifies negotiation as more than the sum of its parts because these parts are always in negotiation. The third section moves to elaborate the person of the worker as the locus of the relationships these mediating factors and spaces sustain. It is the personal activities of workers who animate and substantiate the contexts and conditions in and by which negotiation practices are evidenced as relationships and it is the person-in-action, the self-in-action, who initiates the transformations that mark these relationships as learning.

**Context and conditions: The mise-en-scène of mediating factors**

At its most fundamental, the context of any particular working and learning activity can be understood as an amalgam of mediating factors that each and variably influence the nature of the interactions that constitute that activity. Negotiation as relationship supports the differentiation of these influences, this amalgam of physical artefacts, norms, ideas, actions, and relationships and so on, as sets of necessary but differently categorised and nuanced mediations that impact the ways in which workers can enter into the forms of negotiation that characterise their interaction. Defining and presenting the amalgam is akin to taking stock, accounting for the diversity of elements and associations that come together to construct the context and conditions in and through which activity occurs. In this way, and all together, these numerous elements constitute the mise-en-scène of mediating factors, the setting, in and by which action is enacted. Such accounting is typically guided by the paradigms and priorities of the different perspectives from which it is conducted.

Ellstrom (2001) offers one such account from a human resource development and organisational learning perspective. Ellstrom identifies individual learning in and through work along a continuum between two different activity modes: the adaptive (or routine and reproductive) and the developmental (or creative and innovative). Workers’
positioning on this continuum is assessed against three aspects of their situation: “the
tasks to be performed, the methods and procedures to be used, and the results to be
achieved” (Ellstrom, 2001, p. 423). At the adaptive end of the continuum, the tasks to be
performed, the procedures used, and the results achieved are “‘given’ in the sense of
being prescribed in detail and not officially open to definition (or redefinition) by those
involved” (2001, p. 423). By contrast, learning at the developmental end is marked by the
three aspects being “‘not given’, meaning not prescribed in detail, and when the actors, on
the contrary, have to use their own competence and authority to define and evaluate the
task, methods and results” (2001, p. 423).

Through this view of work learning, Ellstrom (2001) begins to account for the
mediations that contextualise workers’ participative practice. That practice is defined as
learning “in terms of the discretion (scope of action) of the learning subject with respect
to the interpretation and definition of the three aspects of the work-learning situation”
(2001, p. 423). Worker learning as such is a function of individuals’ actions against the
degree to which contextual factors are “given” aspects of the work-learning environment.

Ellstrom (2001) elaborates five groups of mediating factors that contextualise
work and learning. They act to constrain and or facilitate the workers’ movement between
the adaptive and developmental modes of learning, that is, hinder or support workers’
enactment of their “scope of action.” These factors are (a) the learning potential of the
task; (b) opportunities for feedback, evaluation, and reflection on the outcomes of work
actions; (c) the formalisation of work processes; (d) employee participation in handling
problems and developing work processes; and (e) learning resources.

To illustrate, in terms of the first factor, the learning potential of the task is
constituted in the relation between its so-called objective characteristics, such as task
complexity, procedural variation, and how this is controlled, and subjective factors, such
as workers’ knowledge and understanding, performance skills, confidence, and task
acceptance. In terms of the second factor, opportunities for workers to examine and
monitor their work actions are constituted in a complex state of varying degrees of
connection and disconnection with work, the certainty and uncertainty of work conditions
remaining consistent and the completion and incompletion of work activities such that
outcomes can be realised or passed over. Ellstrom (2001) elaborates all five groups of
factors and so details a range of influences shaping workers’ “scope of action.”

In detailing these sets of factors, Ellstrom (2001) begins to list and connect some
of the many elements of the work-learning context that constitute workplace participation.
Work learning, as the enactment of workers’ scope of action, is enabled by the negotiations between the elements of these sets of mediating factors. Workers’ learning comes to be seen as individuals’ negotiations of the tasks, methods, and outcomes enabled by the relational interactions (i.e., negotiations) between the sets of mediating factors that together constitute the context and conditions in and through which workers participate. Learning is thus a function of the mise-en-scene of inter-related factors that constitute the work context.

Other perspectives catalogue this mise-en-scene of contextual factors differently. Ashton (2004, 2008) is concerned with worker skill and organisational performance development and focuses on structural aspects of the work-learning context to identify the institutional conditions and organisational structures that “shape” the workplace learning experience. Drawing on the work of Koike and Inoki (1990) and Darrah (1996), Ashton (2004) developed and tested a workplace learning and skill formation model where, individual’s motivation to engage in the process of learning is seen as determined by their previous experiences, but these interact with organisational constraints in four main areas: in the extent to which the organisation facilitates access to knowledge and information; in the opportunity it provides to practice and develop new skills; in the provision of effective support for the learning process and in the extent to which it rewards learning. (pp. 44-45)

In elaborating these four sets of organisational factors, Ashton (2004) catalogues an extensive account of contextual variables that support this model. For example, in relation to the first aspect of access to knowledge and information, these variables included seniority and status of staff (e.g., senior managers invariably secure greater access), staff networks (e.g., knowing who to contact and being familiar with them could overcome access restrictions), job function (e.g., some work requiring levels of secrecy or privacy), staff attitudes (e.g., gatekeeper mentalities and personal insecurities operated to reduce access) and wage scales (e.g., as indicators of staff status). In relation to the second aspect of opportunity to practise, variables included, similarly, staff status (e.g., senior staff support being far greater than that offered junior and subordinate staff), membership of prioritised project teams (e.g., such team members being more supported than non-members), levels of delegation and acting positions (e.g., better delegators afforded their staff more opportunity to take on other duties or temporarily act in higher positions as a means of pursuing practice) and staff movement (e.g., staff, junior staff in particular, could be moved to jobs where the skills learned from previous tasks could not be applied in the new work thereby risking the loss of those earlier skills). And so the list
of factors continues through the others sets of mediating factors as Ashton (2004, p. 51) “illustrates the ways in which the learning process is embedded in the workplace and shaped by organisational decisions and practices.”

But Ashton (2004, 2008) is concerned to halt the relegation of such organisational factors to the background of work-learning analyses that focus too narrowly on an “inward” view of the individual’s learning process. To this end, Ashton (2008) deepens an analysis of these structural and contextual factors and proposes conceptualising workplace learning, not as simply embedded in such mediations but as deriving from them. This analysis brings all these factors together as organisational learning cultures and the specific business strategies that drive the purposes of work as the production of goods and services. This sharpened focus on culture and strategy is important because “once this is identified we can then focus on how the organisation seeks to deliver the goods and services it produces, and identify the place occupied by skills and workplace learning in the process of production” (Ashton, 2008, p. 34). In this way Ashton (2008) seeks to differentiate organisational cultures and the learning that derives from them on the basis of production processes and the different ways in which these processes prioritise and structure the technical and interpersonal relations of production. The mise en scene of mediating factors that begins the account of the context and conditions constituting work learning is now categorised as two sets of structural determinants. These are the technical, those that identify “the actions of owners and senior managers in shaping the division of labour in the organisation,” and the interpersonal, “those which shape the ways in which employers and senior managers shape the behaviour of employees and their motivation to work and learn” (Ashton, 2008, p. 35). The actions of employers and managers that shape the interactions of these two sets of relations of production are the operational business and organisational decisions and strategies that drive production.

Effectively, Ashton (2004, 2008) constructs a cultural model of the organisational structure of work learning by bringing together an account of all the identified mediating factors that impact its purpose as the production of goods and services for consumption. Work learning derives from organisational culture that is comprised of the purposively enacted interaction of technical and interpersonal relations of production. Organisational culture as such is understood as the mise en scene of mediations that constitute that enactment. Like Ellstrom (2001) above, Ashton (2004, 2008) begins to list and connect some of the many elements of the work-learning context that constitute the negotiation
relationship of workplace participation. Where Ellstrom (2001) grounds work learning in the individual’s enactment of their “scope of action,” Ashton (2004, 2008) grounds work learning as deriving from work culture that is organisationally structured on strategies to achieve production purposes.

Other perspectives approach the mise en scene of mediations from the employees’ perception. Smith (2005, 2006) proposes what neither Ellstrom nor Ashton offer, that is, a means of individual workers’ enactment of the many mediations that constitute their participation. From a sociocultural activity perspective that embraces the personal and the structural as fundamental aspects of context, Smith (2005, 2006) proposes that workers, through their participative practices, are “epistemological managers” of their own workplace agenda. That agenda is identifiable as the specific set of contextual mediations that constitute the individual worker’s priorities in meeting the necessities of their work. These mediations are categorised through five sets of interrelated actions: actions that are socially enacted albeit as personally prioritised. The five sets are (a) time, (b) the organisation, (c) motivation, (d) learning strategies, and (e) identity (Smith, 2006). Together, these sets “constitute an inventory of the participant new employees’ self-perceived reagents that enable their learning to proceed” (Smith, 2006, p. 296).

The first of the actions sets is time. Time is both an objective commodity that is imposed by work schedules, customer demands, employer expectations, and so on, and a subjective experience that is personally accepted, variably perceived through its passing, and differently or idiosyncratically utilised to meet different sets of goals. Time is presented as a set of action mediations that is personally managed and deployed through work participation to secure personal learning that is necessary to successful participation. For example, some staff would use brief breaks between tasks as time out to smoke and chat. Others would use this time as preparation for the next tasks.

The second action set is the organisation. This action set constitutes those contextual mediations that identify workplace culture. Fundamental to this culture are the structural processes and knowledge bases with which employees must engage. These actions are predominantly concerns of access to information and the communication essential to building the relationships that support such access. Employees are obliged to manage these relationships as the means to securing the kinds of information that support their work and learning. For example, some staff avoided conversation with the boss while others sought such opportunity.
Motivation, the third set, is concerned with the goals and aspirations of learning for work. Workers engage differently, with less or more effort, with less or more desire, with less or more urgency, to the necessities of their work. The decisions and choices made through the performance of their work are presented as both responsive to and productive of their participation. For example, some staff avoided particular tasks, some saw records of task completions favourably, others not so.

The fourth set is learning strategies. This set captures those learning actions that are brought to work as previous experience and those developed through the work. Questioning, listening, watching, experimenting, and evaluating are all common practices that are variably deployed and developed as the means of engaging in the new and sustaining the familiar. Workers must actively support their learning and participation in work through the considered practice of such learning strategies. For example, one staff member had previously used notebooks to record important information and continued this strategy. Another staff member always asked questions of the same colleague.

The fifth action set, identity, concerns issues of what constitutes the “who” that is learning and working. The individual worker manages themselves in action as a diversity of identities that include the private, the colleague or co-worker, the team member, and the company representative. These multiple identities move through the enactments of “I,” “me,” “we,” and “us” and become markers and identifiers of “who” a worker is in relation to their work. For example, some staff quickly accepted their role as organisational representative and talked of “we” more readily than others.

Across these five sets of actions, individual workers develop a personal agenda of participative practice. Who they are, what they do, and how they do it, inseparably constituted in where they are and the necessities of that situation (Gherardi, 2009), become the parameters and elements of this workplace agenda that is enacted and thereby developed through their engagement in their work. Such an agenda “presents a way of unifying the personal and contextual influences of learning in the actions of the learner who is constantly negotiating their participation in the cultural practices of the workplace through their management of the mediations that characterise it” (Smith, 2006, p. 302). In this way, the mise en scene of mediating factors that is the negotiated context and conditions of work includes individual worker personal priorities and actions. Workers’ agenda, their personal ways of “doing” work, are fundamental elements of the totality of mediations that comprise the context of work and learning.
Other researchers similarly account for the highly personal nature of activity in context as fundamental to learning and cultural change. In doing so, they elaborate further detail of individual difference in the negotiations between the mise en scene of mediating factors that characterise individuals’ participation.

For example, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), from a perspective that draws on considerations of the influence of personal life history (Jorgenson & Warring, 2002), communities of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and Bourdieu’s (1998) sociological conceptions of social practice, argue the case for the need to account for individual dispositions in theorising workplace learning because, “it is not just that each person learns in a context, rather, each person is a reciprocal and mutually constitutive part of that context” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004, p. 168). Personal dispositions comprise the attitudes, values, interests, and preferences that support identity and idiosyncratic capacities to act (Perkins, Jay, & Tishman, 1993). The enactment of individual disposition through social activity in context identifies the particular practices, values, emotions, and understandings that personally express that context as social structure. To accommodate this individualism as expressive of and inseparable from social structure, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) draw on Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of “habitus.”

Habitus is a conceptualisation of disposition that internalises and subconsciously holds the history and influence of social structure as a set of propensities to action within each individual. As such, habitus represents the personal set of sociocultural resources as orientations to action by which the individual enacts their participation. Habitus enables the expression of the social and the personal as mutually derivative of lived experience and thereby indivisible as mediating factors of that personal enactment of participation. Through this, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) account for the very different ways two similarly positioned teachers within the same secondary school perceive and enact their work as learning experience that mediates their engagement in their practice of teaching. So, where one sees employer-initiated training as wasteful, the other sees it as opportunity. Where one experiences performance management policy as supportive and reinforcing of established personal practice, the other experiences it as authoritative external control that is undermining of autonomous practice. Both are subject to these structural mediating factors and both work successfully with them but with different levels of engagement and different understandings of how these common factors influence their engagement in the practice of their teaching. Personal dispositions to
work, to learning, to the perception, interpretation and enactment of structural influences on participation, are clearly accounted for as fundamental elements of the range of mediating factors that constitute the work participation context. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004, p. 180) conclude that “workplace learning cannot be understood through the abstraction of any one of these elements at the cost of excluding the rest,” and by elements here, they mean all the mediations that together comprise the mise-en-scene of factors that make up the complexity of work as social activity.

In summary, to understand the relationship that is the set of interactions that constitute work and learning as social practice initially requires an accounting of all the mediations that shape and are shaped by the activities that influence participation in that practice. Such an accounting establishes a conception of this relationship as a mise-en-scene of mediations, a fluctuating amalgam of connections and influences that together constitute the context and conditions of sociocultural activity. The researchers noted above identify (in their different ways) a vast array of these mediations, not as static elements that combine, but as dynamic forces that guide and shape activity and participation within it. These mediations can be seen to be in negotiation, in constant interaction with each other, to frame and reframe activity, to form and reform participation as engagement in that activity. This flux can be likened to a multi-party negotiation of sociocultural resources, a “multiplxity” (Lewicki et al., 2006) that is a dynamic relationship, the environment of the context and conditions in and through which individuals participate.

**Context and conditions: A relational interdependence**

Negotiation as the context and conditions of participation supports and acknowledges the relational properties of all the elements that come together to constitute the unity of work, worker, and learning. These relational properties can be viewed as networks, systems, associations, connections, relationships, or mutualities that identify and define the parameters of negotiation as environments or psycho-social spaces of activity. Learning is participation in these spaces and the activities that define them. Conceptualising these spaces and thereby the relational properties that constitute them is an important aspect of negotiation.

The complexity of such spaces requires a variety of perspectives to illuminate the many ways in which the diverse elements or mediating factors that constitute them interrelate to co-create them as learning contexts and conditions in and through which
individuals’ participation is enacted as negotiation. This variety is illustrated, for example, by the number of different terms that are and have been used to define the psycho-social spaces of work and learning. These terms include the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), learning organisation (Garvin, 2005), learning territory and learning environment (Fuller & Unwin, 2003), regions of perception (Goffman, 1959), fields of social and cultural relations (Bourdieu, 1984), activity systems and knotworks (Engestrom, 1987, 2004), the tension field (Illeris, 2002), formalised pathways of experience (Billett, 2001a), and planes of activity (Rogoff, 1995). Each stands as psycho-social conceptions of aspects of the complex space or frame in and by which working and learning practices are enacted. Each of these terms, and the conceptual foundations that underlie them, differently but saliently, capture something of the mutually constituting nature of work, worker, and learning as an expression of negotiation.

For example, Vygotsky (1978) used the term zone of proximal development (ZPD) to identify and contextualise child cognitive development, or learning, as socially based in the relations of language use and interactions with others. This learning space, the ZPD, is defined as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance and the direction of more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky recognises the context of learning as participative activity premised on interaction and its quality as based in capacities of participants in that interaction to support and be supported by that context. From such an understanding, rationalisations of pedagogic practices and targeted learning interventions that include scaffolding, mentoring, team work, peer support, and external collaborations become more than mediated interactions between differently experienced individuals. Rather, these interactions, such as teacher and student, master and apprentice or expert and novice, or simply colleague and colleague become more fully understood as relational spaces or contexts that build and sustain learning and support capacities of participants and thereby the context that frames them in their activity.

By contrast, Lave and Wenger (1991) capture the collectivity of psycho-social learning spaces and their bases in social practice such as work through the concept of “communities of practice.” With a focus on the learning practices of apprentices and the small businesses that support them, Lave and Wenger conceptualise personal learning in and for work as the purposeful and situated construction of identity through membership.
of a community of practice. Membership is about belonging, enacted as engaging in the kinds of activities that characterise a given social practice. It is about processes of participation in the specific activities that define a community of practice, that being “a set of relations among persons, activity and the world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Participation within this set of relations “is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51) and always constitutes the “relational interdependence of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning and knowing” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 50). From this perspective, learning is not simply situated within a context of social practice but is rather an activity that constitutes that practice. It cannot be understood apart from the community by which it emerges as description of and explanation for change: change of persons, change of practice, change of community. “Learning, transformation and change are always implicated in one another” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 57).

These two examples, Vygotsky’s ZPD and Lave and Wenger’s community of practice, stand as seminal conceptualisations of learning as social practice. They each illustrate how understanding learning as practice requires that it be contextualised within the relational and interdependent properties of the psycho-social spaces that initiate the production, reproduction and transformation of sociocultural activity.

However envisaged, the actual and conceptual spaces in and by which learning occurs, progresses, or emerges, evidence a negotiation that can be said to frame the interactions that constitute participation. The following is a brief examination of the ideas of two different work-learning theorists and the different conceptualisations of context and conditions they use to illustrate work activity as learning and the psycho-social spaces that it defines. They are Fuller and Unwin (1998, 2003, 2004) who look to the apprenticeship model as a source of elaborating the negotiated relationship on which work and learning are predicated, and Billett (2001a, b, & c, 2004, 2006a & b), who looks to the person in practice as the means of elaborating the relational interdependence that characterises worker and work.

**Fuller and Unwin – Expansive and restrictive learning environments**

Apprenticeship is a long-standing model of vocational learning that enables a novice entry and developmental participation into a recognised trade practice through the structured guidance of acknowledged experts and fully qualified practitioners. Such a
model was the basis of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) examination of situated learning and the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice they proposed as means of understanding the learning trajectory from novice to expert. Fuller and Unwin (1998, 2003, 2004) take up from this and examine the nature of apprenticeship learning in workplaces using the Modern Apprenticeship scheme in the United Kingdom.

Fuller and Unwin (2003, p. 410) report that “the quality and quantity of participation (learning) under the Modern Apprenticeship varies widely” (brackets in the original). Notwithstanding the diversity of trade and skills types the apprenticeship program covers and the different learning each may be deemed to require, for example, across occupations as diverse as engineering and accountancy, Fuller and Unwin (2003, p. 410) ascribe the variety of participation qualities and quantities they report to the range of “opportunities and barriers to learning that the programme has produced.” These foci, namely quality and quantity of learning as participation in conjunction with opportunities and barriers to participation, become the evaluative parameters of a contextual conception of work learning and practice identified across a continuum of expansive and restrictive. Fuller and Unwin (2003, p. 410) “argue that the notions of expansive and restrictive provide a helpful way of analysing the learning environments being created under the Modern Apprenticeship and the expansive and restrictive forms of apprentice experience to which they give rise.” Thereby, the expansive-restrictive continuum represents an attempt to capture in a single conceptual framework, the participative parameters that identify work-learning contexts that promote high quality vocational learning (i.e., expansive) and those that can only support limited quality vocational learning (i.e., restrictive). Table 3.1 outlines the parameters of the continuum.
Table 3.1

Expansive and Restrictive Learning Environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expansive</th>
<th>Restrictive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Participation in multiple communities of practice inside and outside the workplace</td>
<td>Restricted participation in multiple communities of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Primary community of practice has shared ‘participative memory’: cultural inheritance of apprenticeship</td>
<td>Primary community of practice has little or no ‘participative memory’: no or little tradition of apprenticeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Breadth: access to learning fostered by cross-company experiences built into program</td>
<td>Narrow: access to learning restricted in terms of tasks/knowledge/location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Access to range of qualifications including knowledge-based vocational qualifications</td>
<td>Access to competence-based qualifications only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Planned time off-the-job including for college attendance and for reflection</td>
<td>Virtually all on-the-job: limited opportunities for reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Gradual transition to full participation</td>
<td>Fast – transition as quick as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Apprenticeship aim: rounded expert/full participant</td>
<td>Apprenticeship aim: partial expert/full participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Post-apprenticeship vision: progression for career</td>
<td>Post-apprenticeship vision: static for job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Explicit institutional recognition of, and support for, apprentices’ status as learners</td>
<td>Ambivalent institutional recognition of, and support for, apprentices’ status as learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Named individual acts as dedicated support to apprentices</td>
<td>No dedicated individual; ad-hoc support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Apprenticeship is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and organisational capability</td>
<td>Apprenticeship is used to tailor individual capability to organisational need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Apprenticeship design fosters opportunities to extend identity through boundary crossing</td>
<td>Apprenticeship design limits opportunity to extend identity; little boundary crossing experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Reification of apprenticeship highly developed (e.g., through documents, symbols, language, tools) and accessible to apprentices</td>
<td>Limited reification of apprenticeship, patchy access to reificatory aspects of practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At its simplest, Table 3.1 may be said to list 13 significant contextual contingencies that stand as key indicators of the work-learning environment. For example, Row 1 identifies the contingency of memberships of relevant communities of practice. So, at the expansive end of the dimension, the individual worker may enact...
multiple memberships of different work-related communities of practice. Regular job rotations and secondments, for example, are the kinds of work practices that typify this experience. At the restrictive end, the individual worker is unable to enact such multiple memberships, their participation typically marked by doing the same work with the same people. Row 12 identifies a similar contingency in relation to interactive experience that may be seen as external to immediate work. Crossing the boundary of immediate work participation may mean involvement in broader community activities that differently and yet positively affirm the identity of the individual as worker. Row 8 identifies a contingency of work as career building or job maintenance. At the expansive end of the dimension of time as future vision, the worker is seen as presently enacting a developmental progression into a career that is mapped and supported by the organisational culture in which they participate. At the restrictive end, the worker is simply seen as enacting practices that define a job they will later, but relatively quickly, enact more expertly. In these ways, each of the 13 rows of the table may be said to identify and briefly describe a set of contingencies that combine to contextualise and frame workplace learning. These contingencies can be said to capture something of the dialectic tension inherent in positions of more or less and high or low qualities and quantities of worker participation in the practices that constitute their learning environments.

Fuller and Unwin (2003) describe or consolidate these sets of contingencies in terms of three interrelated themes: (a) participation, (b) personal development, and (c) institutional arrangements. So, from Table 3.1, Rows 1 through 3 may be generally said to identify key elements of participative practice, Rows 4 through 8 elements of personal development, and Rows 9 through 13 elements of the institutional arrangements that mark the structural or organisational practices that enable worker participation. Across these themes and the contingencies they identify, Fuller and Unwin (2004, p. 129) argue that work “characterised by the features listed as expansive will create a stronger and richer learning environment than one consisting of features associated with the restrictive end of the continuum.” Such work enables and supports the numerous kinds of participation necessary to foster and nurture the healthy personal development of workers that sustains their learning trajectory to expertise and positively integrates with organisational objectives. Work in this sense constitutes a stronger and richer learning environment that may be said to value learning and learners and plan for and accommodate the broad participation opportunities effective learning requires. Importantly, this view of work and
learning conceptualises learning as emergent from the contextual tensions between the expansive and restrictive practices associated with opportunities for and barriers to worker participation.

Although it is never explicitly stated as such in their research publications, what Fuller and Unwin (1998, 2003, 2004) begin to reveal through their notion of expansive – restrictive learning environments is the negotiated nature of context. Essentially, they propose a set of participative contingencies that, in part, represent some of the dialectic tensions that comprise the learning context and conditions of work, worker, and workplace. Together, and in constant interaction or negotiation, these tensions, in part, constitute the relationship by which learning as participation in work is framed.

To illustrate, within any specific set of contingencies (single row on Table 3.1) there exists the negotiated value of the learning relative to the perspective taken and the criteria used, that is, from what perspective and by what criteria is the learning at any end of the continuum assessed as either high or low quality. There is a negotiated tension or dialectic inherent in these terms within all the contingencies of the table. For example, across Row 1 contingencies, Fuller and Unwin (2003, 2004) assert that participation in multiple communities of practice identifies an expansive learning environment that indicates more and higher quality learning opportunity. Yet, it is quite possible that such multiplicity may lead to a weakened learning position. The competing demands of numerous communities of practice and task changes may mean participants are unable to secure the necessary experience or time to develop the deep understanding and more finely-honed skills associated with expertise. The “jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none” learning outcome may prevail in contradiction of the goals of apprenticeship training. What presents as an expansive learning environment may in fact be practised and experienced as relatively limiting. Equally, the opposite may be true. Studies of vineyard workers (Bryson, Pajo, Ward, & Mallon, 2006) and fruit packers (Billett & Pavlova, 2005) have indicated that employees, in what are and would be described as restrictive learning environments, have enjoyed rich and personally rewarding learning experiences that have advanced their personal development and career trajectories in ways more closely associated with expansive learning environments. These studies reveal that restricted opportunity at work and particularly confinement to one small community of practice can lead some workers to proactively seek out the kinds of knowledge and practice experiences they require to advance their prospects and secure greater job satisfaction. Sometimes, this proactive endeavour can mean the employee’s creation of
new opportunity, beyond simply seeking what is apparent but, rather, what is seemingly inaccessible within the limits of their current community of practice (Billett & Pavlova, 2005).

These two studies of workers literally doing more with what the Fuller and Unwin (2004, 2003) continuum would describe as less, raise the issue of how the dialectic tensions between high and low quality and more or less quantity across the sets of contingencies of the continuum are evaluated – by whom and against what criteria. These tensions are clearly negotiated, and not simply as worker interests in tension with those of their employer organisations. Rather, these tensions are negotiated as the relational properties of learning whereby opportunities seemingly promoting and barriers seemingly hindering participation are variably taken up, resisted, ignored, accepted, misconstrued, altered, overcome and circumvented and so on, by the co-mediated actions of all participants, individual and organisational.

The Fuller and Unwin (2003, 2004) expansive-restrictive continuum begins to elaborate these relational properties of learning as sets of contingencies that begin to acknowledge some of the dialectic tensions by which the context and conditions of learning, the “learning environment,” is negotiated. Fundamentally,

... there are two broad categories of expansive and restrictive features: those which arise from understandings about the organisational context and culture (e.g. work organisation, job design, control and distribution of knowledge and skills) and those relating to understandings of how employees learn (through engaging in different forms of participation). (Fuller & Unwin, 2004, p. 132)

The limited illustration of these broad categories across 13 sets of contingencies is insufficient to the task of accounting for how workers interpret and enact their engagement with the opportunities and barriers to participation their work entails. Equally, it is insufficient to accounting for how organisational cultures have come to value the participative accommodations, that is, opportunities and barriers to participation, they afford their workers. However, by illustrating how these broad categories of social interaction can be viewed as contributory tensions within the context and conditions of learning in and through work, the expansive-restrictive continuum begins, firstly, to reveal how that context is negotiated and thereby frames the learning as participation that emerges, and secondly, how the participants within that context are always and variably engaged in continuous relationship.
Billett – Relational dualities and continuities
From a constructivist cultural psychology perspective, Billett (2001a, b, & c, 2004, 2006a & b, 2008) develops and advances a concept of work and learning as interdependent relational co-participation. That is, work and learning are personal and social participative practices that are identifiable only as they are interdependently co-generative and co-constitutive of those practices and thereby the context and conditions from which they emerge and co-create. Billett (2004, p. 121) advances that

... participation in social practice is synonymous with learning and that participatory practices offer a fresh way of considering workplaces as learning spaces that are reciprocally constituted. These practices are complex, contested and negotiated. More than being constituted by the contributions of the physical and social environment of the workplace and cultural practices and historical legacies, they are captive to how individuals engage according to their capacities and needs, subjectivities and identities.

Elaborating and refining this conception of learning engages Billett in detailing a number of what are referred to as “relational dualities” and “sets of continuities” that are foundational in this proposal (Billett & Smith, 2006, p. 146). By relational dualities is meant the inclusive separation of interrelated principles, that is, a specific acknowledgement that human activity is not reducible to a distinction between two different things (as in dualism) but is rather identifiable in the functions and processes that realise interactions between related things, the least of which conceptually, is two, the personal and the social. The term continuities is used to indicate the vast scope of contributions to and on-going enactment of the kinds of activities that constitute what is always in relationship, what is always interacting – minimally here, workers and their work.

In detailing this, across numerous research projects that involve a diversity of work types and workplaces, Billett establishes an understanding of the nature of work learning as based in the relational (more than simply reciprocal) interdependencies that are identified and illustrated by this range of dualities and continuities. This range encompasses the primary duality of the personal and the social and its elaboration in the relational terms of learning theory that is simultaneously “individualising the social and socialising the individual” (Billett, 2006a, p. 54). Importantly, and additional to this primary duality, stand two associated process and outcome dualities. They are: (a) personal development and cultural change (i.e., learning as self-transforming and the creation of new work practices), and (b) pedagogy as practice and curriculum as
experience (i.e., teaching and learning by doing and knowledge and knowing by use or application). As Billett indicates (Billett & Smith, 2006), these dualities are not representative of opposing and independent principles. Rather, they conceptualise interrelated and co-contributory participatory factors that constitute the context and conditions of work learning. Further, the participative practices that enact these dualities are understood as sets of continuities that evidence and illustrate the scope of activities variably contributing to this complex relationship. These sets of continuities include the specific kinds of work practices that characterise a particular workplace and the opportunities and barriers to participation they may be said to represent: what Billett (2001c) summarises as the affordances of the workplace.

Another set comprises the agency of the learner and its foundation in individual life histories characterised by the interconnections of personal intentions, capacities, and subjectivities along dimensions of focus or direction, intensity or effort, and importance or priority: what Billett (2006a) summarises as ontogeny. Additional to these two primary sets of continuities, primary here because it is the immediacy and necessity of these sets in negotiation that constitutes actual and situational practice, are those sets that capture the socio-historic geneeses of knowledge as the cultural and seeming physiological practice of person and work (Billett, 2008). The primary relational dualities and continuities are briefly examined below. What they together establish is the relational, and thereby negotiated, interdependence of person, practice, and place that constitutes worker, work, and workplace as learning relationship, the negotiated frame of enacted participation.

The first and fundamental relational duality is that of the personal and the social. For Billett, the personal and the social are not simple labels that identify reducible concepts. Rather, they are differentiated manifestations of human activity, irreducible beyond conceptions of co-participative performance. The one is the evidence of the other and this active relationship is clearly visible in cultural practices of work and learning. Drawing on a diverse range of cultural and cognitive psychologists (e.g., Baldwin, 1894, 1898; Gergen, 1994, 2000; Goodnow, 1990, 1996; Ratner, 2000; Rogoff, 1990, 1995; Valsiner, 1994, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978), Billett (2006a & b, 2008) outlines the relational interdependence between the personal and the social and illustrates this with examples of practice from extensive research.

The social is identified as the “social suggestion” or “social press,” or (borrowing from Archer, 2000) the “social gift.” It comprises the norms, practices, and values that are
historically sourced and enacted in particular cultural settings such as specific workplaces. More than a context for activity, the social (as the descriptors above indicate) is a force that drives, guides, and motivates activity – controlling as in the rules and regulations that govern conduct, compelling as in the goals of productive performance, and generative as in the development of skills, systems, and resources that include vocational identities and practices. However, and as Billett (2008, p. 46) clearly indicates, this powerful force of the social “is neither uniform, nor uniformly compelling.” That is, the social suggestion is “not capable” of securing the kinds of comprehensive and reproductive practices and understandings that perpetuate individuals’ uniform responses to its agency. This lack of reproduction is partly because its agency is divided. This agency is embedded firstly in the sociogeneses of immediate experience, that is the structural and cultural contributions of the situation (e.g., workplace systems, tools, procedures, colleagues, etc.), and secondly, in the sociogeneses of the individual, with their lifelong history of engagement in the social circumstances of their personal lives (e.g., family, schooling, previous experience, etc.). The agency of the social suggestion is thereby projected from different sources by varying degrees and intensities. So, as Billett states (2008, p. 46), “consequently, individuals find it easier or more difficult to either appropriate or rebuff them.” Learning, then, must be seen as an interpsychological process that is enacted through individuals’ socially derived participation in the situated and specific cultural practice of their work that manifests the social suggestion of their immediate experience. That enactment is relational in terms of the press of the different sources of social suggestion operant in immediate experience.

The personal is identified as “the individual” and the “self” with its particular subjectivities, identities, and intentionalities (Billett, 2006b, 2008). The personal comprises the unique development of these characteristics through a history of social engagement, the pre-mediate, and their enactment in the immediate experience of active participation. More than an actor responding to the necessity for action within the immediate, individuals are personally construing or interpreting the nature of that necessity, constructing its meaning and purpose and evaluatively managing the diversity of resources that constitute their participation as the creation or remaking of that experience (Smith, 2006). This is the ongoing manifestation of individuals’ “ontogenetic development” (Billett, 2008, p. 47), their knowing and ways of knowing that have been constructed through their life. It represents the person “being themselves” and as Billett (2006b, 2008) establishes, it evidences a range of personal activity that identifies as
individual agency. In outlining the diversity of these agentic activities, Billett references Valsiner’s (1998) and Valsiner and van der Veer’s (2000) identification of the individual as a constructor of new choices, as an adapter of knowledge for new circumstance, and as an active ignorer or neutraliser of the social suggestion to which they are subjected. Further, Billett (2006b, 2008) references, among others, Goodnow’s (1996) identification of individuals as selective of the problems they attend to and how they attend to them through their work, and Cole’s (2002) advice to his student teachers to deploy their personal agency to meet the demands of classroom management in tough high schools where the traditional practices he could instruct them in were proving unhelpful.

Learning, then, is the enactment of ontogeny, the mediation of self by and through the self in action. It is thereby an “intrapsychological” process of participation in sociocultural activity, contributing to individual development as it manifests in the making and remaking of the practices that constitute that activity: important among which is the making of self as both the locus and substance (e.g., learner) of that activity.

This relational duality, the personal and the social, describes the interdependence of contributions to sociocultural activity that can be recognised as learning. It can be seen as the fundamental frame in and by which the relationships that constitute participation are enacted or negotiated. The social suggestion is not omnipotent; its agency to construct the frame is variably weak, strong, supported, contested, and transforming through time. Likewise, the individual is never completely subjugated nor free of a history of social engagement. Rather, the individual is agentic to select, rebuff, make, and generatively remake the resources and practices that construct the frame of their relationships in the social world.

Billett (2001a, 2006a & b) illustrates the relational enactment of this primary duality through what are identified as “sets of continuities” that indicate the negotiated nature and dimensions of the co-participative practices that constitute work and learning. The first of these is the set of workplace practices that accounts for the kinds of negotiations that make up the contested nature of work and describes the activities and conditions that may be considered to hinder and enhance participation in and access to work practices. These affordances, or opportunities for greater or lesser participation that work affords workers, are categorised across the 13 work practice variables listed in Table 3.2. They include the degree by which work activities are routine or non-routine and thereby requiring more robust knowledge, demand a broader or narrower range of discretion to make decisions and thereby practice autonomously, are premised on ways of
working with others such as in teams or with clients, are collectively and individually valued, and are premised on the use and performance of tools and so on.

Table 3.2

*Work Practice Affordances and Interdependencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work practice variables: affordances and interdependencies</th>
<th>Elaborations (illustrated by -)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Routineness</td>
<td>The degree by which work practice activities are routine or non-routine, thereby requiring robust knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Discretion</td>
<td>The degree by which the scope of activities demands a broader or narrower range of decision making and more or less autonomous practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Intensity</td>
<td>The degree by which work task decision making is complicated by compounding variables and the requirements for negotiation among those variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Multiplicity</td>
<td>The range of activities expected to be undertaken as part of work practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Complexity</td>
<td>The degree by which decision making is complicated by compounding variables and resolution of tasks requiring negotiation among those variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Accessibility (opaqueness of knowledge)</td>
<td>The degree by which knowledge required for the work practice is either accessible or hidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Working with others (teams, clients)</td>
<td>The ways work activity is premised on interactions with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Engagement</td>
<td>Basis of employment; casual, full-time, contract, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Status of employment</td>
<td>The standing of the work, its perceived value and whether it attracts support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Access to participation</td>
<td>Attributes that influence participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Reciprocity of values</td>
<td>The prospects for shared values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Homogeneity of tasks</td>
<td>The degree by which tasks in the workplace are homogenous. Similarities may provide for greater support (modelling, etc.) in development of the ability to perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Artefacts/external tools</td>
<td>Physical artefacts used in work practice upon which performance is predicated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Billett’s (2001a) work practice categories or variables can be seen as a useful means of job description and analysis in terms of participative qualities. Their application demands both a specific accounting of tasks performed and a broad contextual evaluation of those tasks in consideration of where and how they are positioned in the specific cultural context in which they are enacted. By analysing work through this set of continuities, the relational complexity of work practice can be profiled or mapped to reveal the negotiated nature of its enactment. To illustrate, from research conducted in hairdressing salons, Billett (2001a) details how these workplaces are complex enactments of interactive practices that bring together people as employers and employees, as masters and apprentices, as more and less experienced or specialist colleagues, and as service provider and client: a multiplicity of relationship enactments that are often simultaneous. Further, these relationships are contested across dimensions such as personal preference, positional authority, customer standing, and spatial arrangements within the salon. In turn, these numerous contestations are variably resolved, ignored, superseded, and transformed, that is, negotiated, as mediating of such activities as access to product resources, relationships with colleagues, the exercise of power or influence, and opportunity to engage in new and more significant practices. In this way, Billett (2001a & b, 2004, 2006a & b) identifies the complex multiplicity of relational enactments of work practice as the relational premises of participation that are negotiated through the enactment of those practices. Identifying work in this way is necessary because no two salons are the same, no two customers are the same, and thereby the work practices that hinder or constrain participation, the workplace affordances that support learning, are negotiably different by their enactment.

Context and conditions: The personal locus of action and transaction
Throughout all the above, what must be highlighted from within the array of relationships that mediate and are mediated by the context and conditions that constitute them, is the locus of the person that activates and gives meaning to these relationships. Billett (2004, 2006a & b, 2008), Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), Smith (2005, 2006), and others noted, rightfully ground the social processes and legacies of work and learning in the actions of the person who is always (by definition) actively engaged in their participative practices. Through this grounding of learning in the activity of the person, they support the premise that Holland et al. (1998, p. 39) state simply as, people “are always in the flow of doing something.” That something is always mediating and being mediated by the
relationships in and by which the person is enacted as simultaneously personal, social, and symbolic being. As such, the person (whether conceptualised as subject, agent, identity, or self) is always the “who,” and the “what” that is being done is always the action underway and thereby always the locus of whatever is examined as activity. To examine work, learning, negotiation, or any form of activity that seeks to capture the socio-personal enactment of being in the world, is to examine people being themselves, in role, in situ, in interaction, as inseparable from what action is occurring.

Different discipline understandings enable a range of valuable perspectives on how all these significant aspects of personhood can be accounted in ways that do not fall into the social-personal dualisms the numerous constructivist perspectives noted above have overcome. For example, Holland et al. (1998), from a base in cultural anthropology, bring the personal and the social, the actor and their role, their actions and their legacies, the self and identity, together in the concept of the “self-in-practice.” Drawing on the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1987), Bakhtin (1981, 1986, 1993), and Bourdieu (1977, 1985, 1990), Holland et al. (1998, p. 270) advance the self-in-practice as the site and enactment of “the dense interconnections between the intimate and public venues of social practice.” Elaborating and demystifying these interconnections is the work of articulating the always embodied, always social, always historic, and always active practices that constitute this interconnection. What condenses from this articulation is a metaphor of “co-development.” Co-development is a conceptualisation of the active unity of the relational formation of the personal within and through the social. This active unity is based on two interdependent psycho-social processes: figuration and positionality.

Figuration conceptualises the subtle and yet powerful human “competence” of shifting and switching perspectives (or not), of entertaining and juggling alternatives (or not), of interpreting and reinterpreting, inscribing and reinscribing simultaneous meanings through participation in sociocultural activity. Vygotsky’s (1978) accounts of how children enter into the imaginary worlds of play through shifting their sense and practice of self to accommodate the requirements of their game forms part of the explanation and justification of this important concept. Equally, Bakhtin’s (1981) polyphony of social voices from which the author-self orchestrates a unique and yet identifiable expression of self via their capacity to encompass a diversity of perspectives, with all the tensions this entails, forms another part explanation and justification of this fundamental process.

Figuring may be seen as a personal and social prerogative to simultaneously choose how to construe and construct reality, to both give and find its purpose and
meaning. However, the choice not to engage, not to respond, is literally unavailable. Such experience, of being simultaneously reactive and proactive, is often enhanced in the newcomer as they work to understand and fit in to their new circumstances in ways that support “who” they are and “who” they are becoming (Smith, 2005). From Bakhtin (1981), Holland et al. (1998, pp. 169-170) assert the self-in-practice exists, “... in a state of being ‘addressed’ and in the process of ‘answering’ … [therefore] One is more or less condemned, in the work of expression, to choices because “heteroglossia” is the rule in social life.” Bakhtin (1981) uses the term heteroglossia to denote the diversity of both contradictory and complementary meanings coexisting in a single utterance, a single activity, a single connection. Connectedness, then, is heteroglossic, rich with simultaneous alternatives. Interconnectedness is the enactment of choices made. Figuring becomes the concert of these choices. Such a concert may be so entrenched through time and practice that it establishes the social institutions, the cultural norms and practices that seemingly define and bound everyday lives. Such figured worlds may limit and constrain competence through their strength or they may liberate and nourish competence through their complexity. Similarly, this concert may be fleeting and whimsical or so uniquely personal as to distinctly identify one from others. Figuring is, therefore, simultaneously creative and reproductive, imaginary and real. Its legacy is the figured worlds that are the source and resource of the person that is the “I” who is co-developing their identity in and through the possibilities their figuring enables.

Positionality is concomitant to figuration. Where figuration grows our worlds and enables alternatives within its recognisable sociocultural activity, positionality grounds all activity and all its possibilities in location, in status and therefore in relational power. “Positionality refers to the fact that personal activity (the identified action of a person) always occurs from a particular place in a social field of ordered and interrelated points or positions of possible activity” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 44, brackets in the original). Personhood, therefore, becomes more than simply moving in a world figured by activity: it is the occupation of value, of meaning, of connection to that world and all that inhabits it through the subject position(s) that are the spaces and places at which the self is practised. As Gherardi (2009) points out, action happens, it occurs, and is referred to as “taking place.” That place is articulable through positionality as both material and conceptual. The newcomer is new because they have just arrived and where they have arrived has significance on many levels of interpretation: the physical, emotional, psychological, political, and so on.
Positionality, like figuration, is a dense and complex concept. It unites the mediational force of context and culture with that of the self. People are positioned, placed in relations of power with all else in their circumstance, by the broad cultural forces such as gender, ethnicity, and class. With this come all the issues of access to knowledge, activities, and associations that constitute the equity relationships that accord with this social casting of the subject. Holland et al. refer to this aspect of positionality as positioning by access (1998, p. 44), a form of social subject placement that often occurs out of awareness as agents engage in the day-to-day heuristic development of their contextual participative practice. This personal practice comprises positional activities and thus positional identities that come to define the sociocultural power to which the agent is subject.

Throughout, Bourdieu’s (1977) concepts of “field” and “habitus” are used to elaborate this initial aspect of positionality. Bourdieu’s (1977) “field,” as much as it is likened to the figured worlds that generate and sustain sociocultural activity, constitutes a network of social positions, a structure-in-practice, that holds and sustains, locates and gives meaning (purpose) to personal activity. In Bourdieu’s terms, this meaningfulness is the pursuit of “social capital” or the power and resources that enable the agent to remain active in the socio-political struggle that is their particular pursuit within their field of operation. This pursuit is likened to “playing the game” in acknowledgement of social power hierarchies and the competition for social capital. The state of play may be likened to the habitus, that is, the sets of expectations and dispositions enacted and deployed by the agent that align them with the field and the subsequent social capital their activity transacts. The habitus, as cultural derivative, is position inscribed, and places people in the game of their activity relationally to other players and resources within the field. For Holland et al. (1998), such an aspect of positionality that Bourdieu elaborates might be referred to as placement.

Another important aspect of positionality that Holland et al. (1998) elaborate is that of perspective. “One looks at the world from the angle of what one is trying to do” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 44), that is, the agent holds (conscious or not) a perspective on their activity and from their activity. These perspectives connote the senses of belonging and alienation that may associate with the socio-political qualities of inclusion and exclusion that positioning in and through activity carries. Similarly, senses of opportunity and circumscription, of entitlement and disentitlement that also link to these perspectives, come to accrue and qualify over time as the indices of positional identities. In Bourdieu’s
(1977) terms, given time and the continual movement that is the socio-political struggle, the habitus develops as participative behaviours and respective perceptions attach to culturally-defined activities. However and equally, the uniquely identified agent develops and emerges. Their “history-in-person,” replete with its “untidy compilation of perspectives” established across engagement in a vast array of sociocultural activities, supports “an agenda and momentum of its own” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 46). So, multiply positioned via placement and perspective through time and activity, the person – the agent – becomes uniquely identified, in part, by their agenda and the continuity of momentum their positionality generates.

However, as Holland et al. (1998, p. 45) acknowledge, “position is not fate.” Nor is figuration the simple movement of induction into one’s sociocultural world. Personal agency to orchestrate, to develop and pursue a unique agenda, to figure the world and position oneself through perspective, is founded and sustained in the dialogic frame of engagement in sociocultural activity that is articulated in the processes of figuration and positionality. Agency is the personal and powerful enactment of these processes of engagement and personal practice the identifier of this engagement in action. In terms of negotiation, what Holland et al. (1998) are advancing may be simply stated as a sociocultural theory of how people negotiate themselves in a negotiated world they are socially co-developing.

Other researchers and theorists conceptualise individuals’ agency to enact the interconnectedness that characterises their person-in-practice very differently from Holland et al. (1998). And yet, through these differences, the centrality of the relationship that is person-in-practice remains as the locus of understanding that what is being enacted as personal and social activity (be it work, learning, negotiation, or, borrowing from Holland et al. ’s research, alcoholism or romantic love) is always and primarily based in the “who,” the individual, who is living that activity.

For example, Archer (2000), from within the critical realist perspective in sociology, advances that self-enactment, as agency, as active engagement, is the practice of who we are on bases of personally achieved concerns gained through ineluctable relations with the natural, practical, and social orders of reality. Archer (2000) suggests a caring self, a dispositional imperative, that monitors not only what is done but how much effort is or should be exerted in doing it. Archer (2000, p. 10) states,

In short, we are who we are because of what we care about: in delineating our ultimate concerns and accommodating our subordinate ones, we also define
ourselves. We give shape to our lives, which constitutes our internal personal integrity, and this pattern is recognisable by others as our concrete singularity.

The person, the self, is defined by its concerns and these are lived as life-shaping activities that are recognised by others as the specific identity of that self, their unique concrete singularity. This unique self is personally known and socially identifiable, having through its lifespan been always relationally active in reality. Equally, this unique self is and has been multiply constituted through the diversity of social roles, power positions, and collective affiliations developed and accomplished over that lifespan. Through this living experience and the continuous evaluative review that accompanies it, the individual determines what, where, and why their value will reside. That value is manifest in what is important to that individual. From Archer’s (2000) perspective therefore, agency is the measure and practice of personal and social worth that is arbitrated by individuals’ “prioritising their ultimate concerns, which will determine how much of themselves is invested in their social identities, and therefore what they will bring to living them out” (Archer, 2000, p. 12, italics in original).

In still other ways, Goffman (1959) utilised the metaphor of the theatre to account for the enactment of the individual as a personal-social performance he termed “the presentation of the self in everyday life.” In his view, the individual is both a performer and character performed. As character, the self is imputed as the product, the dramatic effect, of a scene that is staged for an audience – it is socially presented (Goffman, 1959). Such a self must be seen to have agency. Agency attributes the character self with the identifiable and normatively acceptable impression of personal and social authenticity. Without such agency and the authenticity this attributes, the character performed is hollow, baseless, fake: essentially unidentifiable as socially legitimate. In contemporary western culture, this authenticity may be seen to equate with what Hampe (as cited in Greve, Rothermund, & Wentura, 2005) identifies as the four bases of personal autonomy: the ability to (a) commit to the future, (b) take responsibility for actions, (c) justify actions, and (d) recognise others as likewise autonomous. Personal action from these bases will evidence the qualities attributed to the self as “character performed.” So the individual, the self as character performed, will exhibit some, or all, of these qualities or will be attributed with them by the social setting, that is, the audience.

Equally, the individual is the performer, the actor who enacts the socially-presented, character-performed self. As performer, the self seeks to influence the definition of its various sociocultural roles and situations by “mobilising his activity so
that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey” (Goffman, 1959, p. 16). This activity is one of management as the performer controls the various props, costumes, and character mannerisms available to them (social resources) in efforts to attain their desired outcomes, primary among which are personal and social coherence and authenticity. This is effortful activity, assisted in part by the performers’ knowing that other characters within their interactions are equally seeking to interpret the impressions being enacted.

Through the metaphor of drama, Goffman (1959) details a dialectic of self-enactment or personal practice as agentic and effortful self-management and fundamental social attribution. From Goffman’s understandings of how people interact it could be argued that agency is both the individual’s hard-won proof of self, and society’s necessary and freely given assurance of self. As such, what one does in being who one is, is simultaneously the personal and social mediation of self-enactment. Such an enactment is an indicator of multiple “selves” in action, at least two – the character or social self and the performer or personal self. The dialectic of dependence and interdependence is not only played out, that is, negotiated in terms of the individual and the social as interaction between the person and society, but is also negotiated as interaction between the different operant selves of the individual, the character performed and the performer. Negotiation becomes a constant state of personal and social performance, the act enacted and the stage on which it is performed and witnessed.

So, the person is defined here, in terms that account for Holland et al.’s (1998) self-in-practice, in terms that account for Archer’s (2000) prioritising or caring self, and in terms that account for Goffman’s (1959) performer and performed self, as the self-in-action. The self-in-action is always agentic (whether weakly or strongly), always participating (whether fully or partially), always interacting (whether more or less purposefully), always acknowledged (whether as fake or genuine), always evident in personal practice (whether innovative or routine), and thereby, always the locus of activity as the enacted integration of “who” is responsible for what is happening (whether significant as revolutionary change or less significant as merely circumstantial): all of which McCann (1998, p. 170) rightfully acknowledges as the reality of “our sense that we are responsible in a distinctive way for the changes we produce in the world.” Such a change, then, is learning: both as source of and evidence that the self-in-action is always in and of its negotiated context.
For Dewey and Bentley (1975) all action is transaction and thereby transforming of the nature of the unity that is person, place, and practice. As elements or aspects of reality, person, place, and practice cannot be separated. They each simultaneously hold and describe what Dewey and Bentley (1975, p. 109) name as “the organism-in-environment-as-a-whole”: the means of overcoming the false understanding that people can be viewed in separation from where they are (historically, culturally, and situationally) and what they are doing (always with others as things, people, and ideas). The concept of interaction is insufficient to the task of holding all this together because it immediately implies the separation of elements or phases “where thing is balanced against thing in causal interconnection” (Dewey & Bentley, 1975, p. 108). So practices such as knowing or learning or enquiry cannot be adequately understood without reference to the unity in, through, and by which they occur. Further, relationships, as postulations of the nature of the unity, or as means of describing how the unity is achieved, are naming practices, ways of designating meaning to connections observed through enquiry into the transactions that identify the transformations occurring in and through “the organism-in-environment-as-a-whole.”

Dewey and Bentley (1975) employ a range of perspectives to explain the dynamic nature of this holistic understanding of human activity and meaning making. All are illustrations of transaction as the conceptualisation of the processes by which humanity, as knowledge and meaning, as culture and activity, as person and relationship, are enacted in the changes that are observable as action. For example, from the understandings of ecology, “organisms do not live without air and water … they live, that is, as much in processes across and ‘through’ skins as in processes ‘within’ skins” (Dewey & Bentley, 1975, p. 128). So, air and water are not elements of the environment that people interact with. Rather, the air is transacted as breath. It is always both inside and outside, always simultaneously of the organism and the environment as medium in and by which the organism moves, grows, and dies, that is, transacts its living. Through being transacted as breath, the air is transformed, as is the organism and the environment. The meanings of all these transformations are observable only in the transactions that enact the transformations. The air is now a mixture of gases drawn in to sustain life; now chemically separated through cellular activity as oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen; now deployed throughout the body as necessary by the flow of the circulatory system; now expelled in yet another form by exhalation to be taken up again through plants, through
wind, through water, through yet other processes that continually transform “the organism-in-environment-as-a-whole” as the flow of transactions continues.

Similarly, from the understandings of commerce,

... a trade, or commercial transaction ... determines one participant to be a buyer and the other a seller. No one exists as buyer or seller save in and because of a transaction in which each is engaged. Nor is that all; specific things become goods or commodities because they are engaged in the transaction ... Moreover, because of the exchange or transfer, both parties (the idiomatic name for participants) undergo change; and the goods undergo at the very least a change of locus by which they gain and lose certain connective relations or “capacities” previously possessed. (Dewey & Bentley, 1975, p. 270, italics in the original)

So the meanings of people, their positionings in activity and the relationships these account for, their things, their bases of entering into subsequent and future activities, are enacted in the transactions by which they are transformed from purchaser to owner, from owner to seller to now holder of other assets that were previously more liquid, less liquid, differently valued or utilised – whatever the case may be dependent on the nature of the transaction and the commodities traded. What is certain is that transactions transform, that is, transform the nature of “the organism-in-environment-as-a-whole.”

In making the transformative nature of action explicit in transaction, Dewey and Bentley (1975) capture a key element of negotiation. Negotiation is transaction. As noted in the example of the trade above, what belonged to one, now belongs to another, what was valued by one has now been revalued by the other through the negotiations that constitute the transaction. In very similar ways, human action, in all its forms, generates and creates the transformations identifiable as new or different ideas, relationships, and resources. In the case of farming wheat, the transaction of tilling turns the ground into a cultivated field, the transaction of planting turns the cultivated field into a crop, the transaction of harvesting turns the crop into grain and the transaction of milling turns the grain into flour that will in turn become bread as the transaction of baking brings yet other actions and different resources to the making of food, to the transformation of all that is transacted. Just as transaction transforms the resources of activity, so it transforms those who enact these activities, for they are also resources, enmeshed with all resources in the dynamic flux of experience. Farmers, for example, are multiply engaged in multiple transactions through their enactment of their practice. Now engaged in machinery maintenance, now in animal husbandry, now in parental duties, now in monitoring the latest market fluctuations, the person of the farmer is continually negotiating their engagement in the multiple transactions that constitute their participation in family, in
location, in an agricultural industry sector, in a national economy, and so on. For Dewey and Bentley (1975), all action is transaction, and from this can be suggested that all transactions are negotiated as organism and environment, inseparable as existence or experience maintain and transform the connections that unify them. In the case of learning, as in the case of farming or any activity,

from birth to death every human being is a Party, so that neither he nor anything done or suffered can possibly be understood when it is separated from the fact of participation in an extensive body of transactions – to which a given human being may contribute and which he modifies, but only in virtue of being a partaker in them. (Dewey & Bentley, 1975, p. 271)

Never in isolation but always interdependently, and never solely responsible but always collaboratively supported, the individual is observable as the locus of their transformation in and by the transactions in which they participate. Participation is action. All action is transaction and (if needed to be analytically separable to identify and name the relationship in and by which action occurs) the context and conditions in and by which the person enacts and is enacted can be defined as the “extensive body of transactions” in which they participate. Transaction transforms and so identifies the influence of action to change what was into what is and what will be. Being present in activity, participating as is only possible, the individual participant influences these changes and so locates them as visible in action, and thereby visible is person as the locus of transaction: not the only, but in terms of personal learning as personal contribution to the processes, the substantive locus of transaction.

Negotiation then, becomes a conception of activity that enables a focus on the contributions that constitute transaction, not because these contributions are separated and combine or amalgamate in transaction but because these contributions are the actions enacted as transaction. Individuals’ contributions are “the talking and talking-products or effects of man (the namings, thinkings, arguings, reasonings, etc.)” (Dewey & Bentley, 1975, p. 11). From the transactional perspective, these contributions are treated “as the men themselves in action” (Dewey & Bentley, 1975, p. 11). Who one is, and the contributions to and modifications of activity by that being, are what one does as a participant in what is happening. The self-in-action, as a conception of individuals’ personal being, makes observable and thereby accessible to enquiry, the meanings and value of that participation as the enactment of their always connected, always in relationship, always in negotiation, engagement in sociocultural activity.
Negotiation: Meanings and methods of enacting the self-in-action

Negotiation must be understood in terms that capture the processes and products of engagement in activity, that is, the enactments of action, and in terms that capture the context and conditions in and by which these enactments occur. Negotiation is both, and simultaneously, the activity undertaken and the medium of the undertaking. In accounting for the first of these two understandings of negotiation, that is, as the activity undertaken, the previous Chapter 2 examined some of the forms, functions, processes, and outcomes of negotiation as an interactive process that brings people together in collective activity. In this Chapter 3, the second of these two understandings, that is, negotiation as the medium or environment of the undertaking, is examined as relationship that is always in enactment. That is, negotiation is the relationship in and by which negotiating parties enact their differences as people, as things, as ideas that are always connected, weakly or strongly, directly or indirectly, in the events and circumstances of their collective experience. In this way, relationship stands as the basis of an environmental perspective that considers the context and conditions in and by which negotiation processes are enabled. From such a perspective, interactivity is seen as a limited description of the practices, the connections, that hold parties united in collective activity. This is because interaction always implies separation. Rather than separate and connected in activity as interactants with the resources of their circumstance, workers, as learners through their participation as activity, are the locus of the unity that is person, place, and practice. That unity is always being negotiated, always in flux, as the transactions by which it is constituted are being “worked through” or collectively enacted.

In elaborating this position, the chapter considered the need of accounting for all the resources that collaborate as collective activity and the range of influences these resources bring to bear in mediating collective activity. What emerges from such a mise-en-scene approach to understanding relationship is that sociocultural activity such as work and learning is an amalgam of fluctuating connections and influences, a negotiation of mediations that, in part, is necessary to an understanding of how the concept of negotiation can illustrate and illuminate the co-participative practice of learning in and through work: a practice that is minimally mediated by structural and situational factors (Ashton, 2004, 2008; Ellstrom, 2001) and personal dispositions and agenda (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004; Smith, 2005, 2006). So negotiation practices, that is, the ways people interact with each other and the resources that comprise their activity, are enacted in a context that can be viewed as the negotiation of all the factors of influence –
mediations – that comprise that context. Accounting for all these mediations is the
beginnings of understanding negotiation as the context and conditions in and by which
activity such as work and learning are enabled.

Further, the chapter considered a range of work-learning concepts and theories
that seek to describe and explain the context and conditions in and by which work and
learning can be understood as mutually mediated or co-participative and co-contributory.
That is, the dynamism that constitutes the resources of sociocultural activity in action
demands a perspective that recognises work and learning as both relational and
interdependent processes enacted and outcomes accomplished. Learning can be seen as
conditioned by this relationship when the relationship is characterised as sets of dialectic
attributes such as with Fuller and Unwin’s (2003, 2004) expansive and restrictive
categorisation of workplaces. Equally, learning can be seen as mediating this relationship
when the agency of worker and their context meet in acts of give and take as what each
makes desirable and what each makes available is evaluated and taken up or let go (e.g.,
Billett 2004, 2006a & b, 2008). So, the context of engagement in activity is a negotiated
relationship that is in and of a set of relations (such as a psycho-social learning space) that
is in a constant state of varying kinds of interaction (e.g., contestation, opportunity,
collaboration, etc.). More than mediations, these sets of relations are yet other
negotiations that workers must negotiate.

What remains salient throughout is that it is people, workers, who enact these
negotiations as they enact themselves in the negotiation processes that are their
engagement in work. Such practices are personal and social identity practices, as much as
they are work and production practices. As Holland et al. (1998), Archer (2000), and
Goffman (1959) attest, these enactments identify the individual as the locus of the
relationships practiced.

For Dewey and Bentley (1975), this is as it should be because the individual
cannot be isolated or separated from their environment. Action is the organism, is the
context that is the relationship that is the organism in action. So, the active reality of work
as workers’ personal and social experience must be conceptualised holistically, not
simply in terms of analytical dualisms integrated through enactment but through
environmental understandings that unite all the resources of sociocultural activity in the
person as the witness and manifestation of change and difference. Dewey and Bentley
(1975) offer the concept of transaction to account for this reality. Transaction thereby
becomes the description and explanation of the environmental flux that is the unity of
person, place, and practice. All action is transaction, not interaction. For the individual, always with others in activity, the environment is the body of transactions in which they are engaged.

Transaction is a negotiation concept. Within the rich generic set of meanings negotiation carries, transaction captures much of the common understandings noted in Chapter 2. Here, in Dewey and Bentley’s (1975) terms, transaction carries the full understanding of negotiation as both practices enacted and the context and conditions in and of which such enactments are enabled, initiated, and sustained. Transaction is thereby a dynamic concept. It captures that constant state of flux that is engagement in sociocultural activity as it identifies and articulates the transformations that evidence this reality. Work and learning are both sources and evidence of these transformations. Further, the specific work and learning practices of individual workers are the points of enquiry: the means of accessing, observing, and analysing how these transformations are accomplished in activity. Investigating them in the terms of negotiation outlined in this and the previous chapter is the project of this thesis.

The following Chapter 4 outlines and justifies the specific research methodology and procedures employed to examine and elaborate the issues and concerns discussed in this and the previous chapter. Those issues and concerns addressed the capacity of the concept of negotiation to describe and explain learning in and for work, and particularly, learning in and for work as workers’ personal experience. The personal practice of work, as noted by Dewey and Bentley (1975, p. 11) above, is the enactment of workers “themselves in action.” That is, it is the self-in-action who is the evidence, the source, the meaning and value of the work and learning activities that constitute individuals’ engagement in the participative practices and relationships that can be identified and defined as negotiation. However, these identifications and definitions cannot be assumed, cannot remain implicit in generic meanings of negotiation, despite the richness of these meanings. Rather, they need to be explicated through the practices of workers in ways that fully capture, and account for, all the resources (e.g., relational, material, psychological, etc.) that mediate and are mediated by sociocultural activity. And further, this activity must be viewed in its entirety as the unification of the person, their place, and their practice in action as constituting the constant state of flux that is work and learning. To do so requires that:
• workers’ work and learning practices, acknowledged as one and the same through the sociocultural concepts of activity and participation, be investigated, interpreted, and explicitly explained as negotiation practices,
• what is meant by negotiation is fully investigated and explained in the terms of workers’ practices, not in terms of generic understandings and implied meanings commonly associated with the term negotiation,
• this be achieved through the concept of negotiation being fully explicated across understandings of its being simultaneously and always,
  o processes of interaction that not only bring separates together but, rather, hold those separates as always in connection,
  o products and outcomes of those connecting processes,
  o the activity conducted and accomplished through action that engages all the resources in these connections,
  o the context and conditions that enable, initiate, and sustain that activity as relationships,
  o the environment in and by which the relationships that constitute the context and conditions of activity are held in partnership and transaction,
  o the changes, the transformations, that emerge from and progress the state of flux on, in, and of which transaction is premised because all action is transaction.

Meeting these requirements and maintaining the primary focus (i.e., on the person of the worker) and emphasis (i.e., on negotiation practices) that guide this investigation through the research questions noted earlier, is made possible by the methodology outlined in the following chapter.
Chapter Four

Exploring negotiation through personal work practice

This chapter outlines the methodological approach undertaken in response to the central question guiding this investigation – *How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work?* The sociocultural constructivist perspective presented in the preceding chapters shapes this approach. As is clear through those chapters, the focus is on the individual worker, not as an isolated source of personal action in social practice, but as locus of the relational socio-personal properties that drive engagement in the participative practices that define work and learning and the legacies they create. So, the individual workers are persons, uniquely identified as the self-in-action, as they enact themselves in the context of always with others, always evidenced in the unity of person, place, and practice and always in transformation (Archer, 2000; Dewey & Bentley, 1975; Holland et al., 1998).

This individual focus and the sociocultural constructivist perspective go to questions of who is the individual, how are they culturally and psychologically positioned in the reality of their experience, and how do they enact themselves through these positions as interactive participants, one resource among many. Further, this focus and perspective go to questions of how to view and understand these enactments as processes and accomplishments of negotiation and learning at both personal and social levels. These conceptions stand now as assumptions or points of view, ontological premises, to be explicitly stated. These premises are the bases of the qualitative paradigm guiding this investigation. They can be summarised as follows:

- Individuals engage as active participants in the contexts of their experience.
- That engagement is always and variably discontinuous, interdependent, and relational, always transactive beyond interactive.
- Equally, that engagement is personal and intentional, that is, agentic.
- Intentional relational engagement is negotiation.
- Therefore, individuals are negotiators and thereby are transformative of self and context.
• Through these practices they are continuously enacting themselves, constructing their own meanings of that transformation.

• These transforming enactments and meanings are personal and social resources, practices, enacted as individual contributions in and of negotiated participation that is sociocultural activity.

These are the premises on which the methodology of this investigation is founded. They represent an ordered means of pursuing the investigation in the terms of social science research proposed by Schutz (1954, p. 261), who stated,

The primary goal of the social sciences is to obtain organised knowledge of social reality. By the term ‘social reality’ I wish to be understood the sum total of objects and occurrences within the social cultural world as experienced by the commonsense thinking of men living their daily lives among their fellow-men, connected with them in manifold relations of interaction.

In these terms of this primary goal, and guided by the understandings that support this methodology, this investigation seeks to develop some organised knowledge of the work-learning reality of 12 specific individuals as they go about the daily practice of their work. These objectives, centred as they are on the individual and their experience of their enactment of their social reality (note the intended emphasis on “their”), warrant ethnography as the most appropriate methodology for this investigation because its project is the explication of lived experience and the personal and cultural meanings and purposes people bring to and create through this experience.

Ethnography has been variously defined as:

• the study of people in naturally occurring settings or fields by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings (Brewer, 2000, p. 6);

• iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents within the context of their daily lives (and cultures) (O’Reilly, 2005, p. 3);

• a research process based on fieldwork using a variety of mainly (but not exclusively) qualitative research techniques but including engagement in the lives of those being studied (Davies, 2008, p. 5); and
The disciplined and deliberate witness-cum-recording of human events … the ethnographic enterprise is about presenting, explaining and analysing the culture(s) which locate(s) experience [and] recognises and records how experience is *entrained* in the flow of contemporary history. (Willis & Trondman, 2000, pp. 5-6)

What is consistent across these definitions of this widely practiced social science methodology is that the primary focus of ethnography is the day-to-day lived experience of people and the meanings this has for them. To ask questions of those meanings, to seek understanding of that experience, is to go to those who live it and engage with them in the practice of those aspects of their lives that may reasonably be expected to support such enquiry.

As a means of enquiry, ethnography supports the individual participative practice of culture. Its research origins lie in anthropology and the comprehension of other’s experience, both individual and collective: a goal Malinowski (1922, p. 25) described as “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of the world.” Further, ethnography offers a recognised research rigour through the planned and systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data sourced from those who live it and offer access to it through their engagement in the research as participants. In this sense, ethnography is genuinely participant centred and enables a validity that Hammersley (1991) defines as “subtle realism.” That is, the strength of ethnographic research is not that it captures another’s reality by bringing the researcher and the researched closer together, but that it enables the reasonable construction of a “representation of what is there” for the purposes of solving problems of better understanding personal experience.

To this end, ethnography is reliably and purposefully qualitative and interpretive. The valid representation it affords of another’s lived experience becomes what Denzin (1997) reports (from his drawing on the work of feminist filmmaker and writer Trinh, (1992)) to be a “hybrid reality” constructed from the collision of researcher and researched, of discourse, experience, and self-understandings, with the larger cultural assumptions of power and position such as gender, ethnicity, status, and so on. The interpretive power of ethnography is its capacity to give meaning and cultural substance to this collision, minimally as description and maximally as informed creative resource that enables clearer understanding of complex psycho-
social phenomena. Ethnography, thereby, both as research process and product, is relational and interactive. These qualities make it an excellent vehicle by which to pursue the investigation of this thesis.

This chapter goes on to outline the particular qualities of the ethnographic methodology and the methods and procedures utilised. In this way, it identifies and explains what is referred to as “the qualified ethnography” utilised in this investigation. It is important to be clear about the methodological differences that distinguish this qualified ethnography from the many other forms of ethnography practised in qualitative social science research because within the broad sweep of its aims, ethnography can pursue very specific purposes from very diverse foundations. These are more than procedural differences. They go to differences of research purpose and intent and differences of epistemological orientation about knowledge and its sources. For example, this investigation is not based in procedures of deep cultural immersion that anthropological ethnography requires, the kind of ethnography Malinowski (1922) pioneered. It does, however, focus on the enactment of culture as both mediated by and mediating of individuals’ interactive practices and, as noted by the Malinowski quotation above, looks to the individual to articulate this reality. Equally, the ethnography of this investigation does not seek specifically to make explicit the kinds of cultural practices that subordinate and exclude individual participation as does critical ethnography. The direct goal of critical ethnography is emancipation from cultural forms of discrimination and oppression (Carspecken, 2001; Mariampolski, 1999). The qualified ethnography utilised in this investigation is however concerned to identify and account for the contested nature of interactive participation and particularly how individuals negotiate their engagement in these interactions from which they cannot be removed.

Additionally, the qualified ethnography utilised here is not life-history or narrative oriented; it is not biographical ethnography. Biographical ethnography seeks to tell the story of personal reality (self or other) as a means of re-visioning and or reflecting on the links between the personal and the political (Denzin, 1997), the past and the present (Clough, 1994), and the authority of the witness as researcher to capture and chronicle the purpose and value of experience (Atkinson, 1990). The qualified ethnography of this investigation is however, most firmly interpretive. It acknowledges the ontogenies of the participants as central to their understandings of themselves in sociocultural activity with which they negotiate and through which they
learn. It acknowledges the research and its outcomes as the construct of the researcher. And, it positions itself as an authoritative (albeit situated and interdependent) account of the inductive processes at the heart of its interpretation of others’ experience. It is the ontological foundation of this investigation and the methodological paradigm it adopts that make it an ethnography. It is the distinguishing features of its design, implementation, and orientation that differentiate this ethnography from others and qualify it as specific to this project. The greater detail of this qualification is presented below as the chapter goes on to outline the research design adopted and the procedures implemented to collect and analyse its data and present its findings. This is followed by a consideration of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

**Qualified ethnography: A logic of research enquiry**

This thesis comprises a qualitative study of the regular working activities of four groups of three individual employees. Its focus is examining these activities as learning practices that reside in the negotiations of personally engaging in daily work. As briefly outline above, it adopts an ethnographic approach to account for and analytically interpret the culturally situated participative practices of these employees in their respective workplaces. Ethnography is a form of observational research that centralises membership and participation in culture as the source and object of its enquiry. Its aim is to create opportunities for understanding “the other” by making explicit, through documented observation, “what members need to know, do, predict and interpret in order to participate in the construction of on-going events of life within a social group through which cultural knowledge is developed” (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003, p. 205). The case made in this thesis focuses on the personal through interaction within culture. That is, because no individual can practise all the cultural knowledge of their context, ethnography is concerned with examining and describing the practices and principles of practice as they are enacted by individual members within their particular groups and contexts. In this way, ethnography makes observable the relationships, roles, and expectations that constitute membership and participation in culture (Spradley, 1980). As such, ethnography acknowledges and attempts to map the manifestation and construction of culture as a set of practices that are enacted, engaged, and transformed through the actions of its participants. Because this thesis is informed by sociocultural theory from a variety of disciplines (i.e.,
psychology, sociology, and philosophy as outlined earlier), these features of
ethnography complement this theoretical orientation, making it a very viable and
appropriate methodology to use in the pursuit of this investigation.

Further, the opportunities for understanding or theorising the cultural-actions-
in-context made explicit and therefore observable through ethnography are the
foundations of its hermeneutic capacities. Just as the object of ethnographic
observation, that is, the cultural context and the practices of its members, is
constructed through the transactivity of participation, so too is the opportunity for its
understanding constructed by the transactivity of the research. What emerge as data,
or the product of ethnography, are opportunities for understanding that need to be
interpreted as adequate for the continuing process of analysis. These opportunities are
acknowledged within this research as qualified by the ethnographic approach it
adopts. Much of this approach is accounted for in the following procedures section
that outlines the scope and tools of the research enquiry. However, it is important here
to acknowledge the theoretical qualifications adopted and applied throughout this
research enquiry. These, in conjunction with the adopted procedures and tools of
observation, make this investigation’s ethnographic approach different from the
cultural anthropology models advocated by such researchers as Agar (1996),
Fetterman (1998), and Harris and Johnson (2000), where contextual immersion as a
full participant observer over an extended period of time is deemed necessary to
generating theoretical understanding of culture and the participative practices of its
members. These theoretical qualifications are related and fourfold. Together, they
define the methodology utilised here as qualified ethnography. This term more
accurately represents the research undertaken than do such terms as “mini
ethnography” or “little ethnography” (Brewer, 2000) that simply reduce ethnography
to smaller-scale projects or specific sets of procedures. The four qualifications are
outlined below.

Firstly, this ethnographic approach is concerned to identify particular work
practices as interpretable within its sociocultural conceptions of participation and
negotiation as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. So it is more than an emic perspective,
that is, solely a cultural insider’s perspective on the meanings and methods of their
participation. Rather, through the interactive mechanisms of observation and extended
interview (the data collection techniques outlined later in the chapter), this
ethnography seeks to produce opportunities for understanding (data) that are mutually
interpreted by participant and researcher as adequate for the continuing process of analysis. Therefore, this ethnography is not seeking to construct grounded theory of the culture of its participants’ contexts. Further, it does not seek a whole of community or whole of life perspective of culture as essential to its interpretive analysis. Rather, it seeks a mutual interpretation (i.e., between the researcher and the subject participants) of the adequacy of data, to uncover or make explicit the ways individual participants understand their culture (Green et al., 2003) and, particularly, their capacities of influence through the specific practices they enact. This focus then becomes the foundation for the interpretation of that data in accordance with the sociocultural theories on which this thesis is based. The hermeneutic capacities of this thesis are, therefore, shared throughout the collection of data as mutually interpreted and then conditioned in analysis by the sociocultural theories’ mediation of researcher’s interpretation. What results from such a qualified ethnography, is the researcher’s description of their own understandings of the participants’ meanings of their cultural experience in relation to particular practices, albeit conditioned or mediated by the greater forces of the workplace culture as a whole. This qualified ethnography is, therefore, specific-practice oriented and subjectively mediated by its guiding theoretical base.

Secondly, the situated self engaged in the cultural practices of their work is not regarded here as a “native” of that particular culture. Aside from the fluidity of cultural boundaries that mark the relational interdependence of such action domains as work, home, and leisure as highly dynamic (Clark, 2000), membership of any particular work culture may be equally marked by fluid or tenuous connections. Conditions of employment that position workers as part-time, semi-contractual, or probationary, together with new, short-term and long-term differentiations along additional experienced – inexperienced continuums, make the nature of cultural membership and participation highly problematic. Given the increasingly high rates of mobility and competition within the Australian labour market (Pusey, 2003), it is very possible that the communities of practice that constitute workplaces are populated by relatively new employees who may be best characterised as “outsiders.” Additionally, the beliefs, attitudes, and ways of knowing that workers hold, that is, their dispositions (Hodkinson & Hodkinson 2004) or personal epistemologies (Smith, 2005), are ontogenetically developed over a lifetime of engagement in the social world in and through contexts that may be very different from the culture of their
current work. Therefore, ethnographic observation of their personal participative practices at work will be insufficient to the task of understanding their circumstances and reasons for working. Consequently, this investigation’s ethnography is qualified by these views of its participant subjects as simultaneously constituted “natives” of numerous cultures, past and present, that will intersect with varying propensities in their current work. Uncovering these relational qualities and influences on engagement practices at work requires enquiry outside the immediacy and conditions of the current cultural context of the participants’ employment and into their histories.

Thirdly, this ethnography views its field of enquiry as mutable, constantly transforming through the shifting relationships and circumstances that characterise contemporary work (Baumann, 2000; Beck, 2000). Single workplaces, however large or small, however seemingly secure, are not insulated from the forces of social change. This ethnography does not seek to experience these changes directly, as in the fullness of the observer or researcher as full participant (i.e., the position of reflective insider as autoethnographer “who critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (Spry, 2001, p. 710)) or as complete participant (Gold, 1958), or as complete member researchers who are or become fully affiliated members of the contexts they study (Adler & Adler, 1987). This ethnography is qualified by its observation of such changes through the impact they have on the practices of its subject participants. Change, therefore, is viewed as certain but the level of its capacity to effect practice is both personally and contextually mediated irrespective of its source. Over the 18-month data collection period, this ethnography seeks to monitor and account for the changes that are the experience of its participants through field observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The role and position of the researcher throughout this process is clearly one of outsider in observation of participants who know and willingly consent and collaborate in this scrutiny of change. This is a form of observational research referred to by Angrosino (2005, p. 732) as “reactive observation” where collaborative interaction between researcher and participants is a fundamental element in the research design, which in this ethnography, is premised on the constancy of change.

Qualified in these ways, this ethnography is a type of what Abu-Lughod (1991) referred to as “ethnography of the particular.” That is, its concern is the particular workplace participative practices of its specific subject participants who may or may not be viewed as native or “full” members of their working cultural
contexts that are constantly being shaped and reshaped by a diversity of mediated forces for change from a variety of internal and external sources. Its ethnographic base within these qualifications is the lived experience of its subject participants, those men and women who willingly opened themselves and their work practices to the prospect of their reinterpretation by an outside researcher within the parameters of this investigation.

Fourthly, this ethnography is comparative. It seeks to compare and contrast the individual and particular experience and circumstance of its 12 specific participants and their four workplaces for the purposes of illuminating, explaining, and critically considering the similarities and differences of their work and learning practices. There are three fundamental dimensions to this comparative stance. Firstly and generally, there is the comparative element of the researcher and the participants. As outlined more fully in the procedures below, the differing perspectives of the researcher and the participants are viewed as valuable resources that when collaboratively deployed in interview and reflective discussion can offer insight into the practices being examined. However, this general comparative element of ethnography cannot be removed. It is the source of researcher bias that stands as the dominant criticism of ethnography. That is, the reality any ethnography represents is that of the researcher and not that of the participants it purports to document, and therefore, its legitimation as reliable cannot be verified because of its highly subjective and situated account: what Brewer (2000, p. 38) refers to as the “double crisis of ethnography.” Rather than seek to counter these salient criticisms, the general comparative element of all ethnography is here embraced, not as a means of justifying researcher bias but as a means of securing and beneficially utilising “subjective experience and reflection on it as an intrinsic part of research” (Davies, 2008, p. 5). The general comparative qualities of this qualified ethnography thereby motivate a necessary reflexivity that seeks to acknowledge and make explicit (a) the theoretical foundations of the investigation as the subjectivity and context of the researcher (as outlined above and through Chapters 1, 2, & 3), and (b) the capacities of the participants to engage in and expand their understandings of themselves (as the primary contributions to this investigation) through the reflective opportunities afforded by the data collection methods and analysis over the 18 months of the project.

In the second comparative dimension, this qualified ethnography seeks to compare the personal practices of the 12 participants as individual workers. The
details of this are outlined in the procedures section that follows. There is, however, a sense in which examining the similarities and differences between individual workers (across such employment dimensions as seniority (e.g., time spent in the job and hierarchical position held), employment type (e.g., part-time, casual, full-time, contracted), and aspirational goals (e.g., promotion seeking, task targeting, expertise development, etc.)) can act to reduce inherent researcher bias. The base of comparison becomes broader as 12 different ways of participating in work are contrasted. The heuristic comparison this contrasting enables brings “multiple voices” to the ethnography of work and learning practice this thesis presents. The 12 participants are each and rightly successful workers and learners. It is not that they practise these activities as previously and theoretically defined but “how” they practise them as unique individuals that is of concern here. Additionally, these 12 individuals are not static beings deploying themselves in continuous re-enactment of the same circumstances and conditions of their work. Rather, they are developing and transforming through self and culture, adaptive to and creative of the constant change in which they are engaged. The comparative base of this investigation is broadened by the 18 months of its operation. The complexity of the data this multiplicity of voice over time enables is thereby accumulating through the project. Its data collection and on-going analysis is one of constant comparison by which “the ethnographer actively seeks the differences and variations whose explanation will refine, strengthen and make more profound the developing explanations that constitute valid generalisation in ethnographic research” (Davies, 2008, pp. 113-114). This is not a claim to theory generation for the investigation but an acknowledgement of the developmental qualities a comparative approach can achieve in its seeking the subtle realism that, as Hammersley (1991) notes, supports better understanding personal experience as cultural practice.

Thirdly, this qualified ethnography is comparative of the four workplaces examined. Similarly to the comparative attributes outlined above in relation to individual workers, this ethnography enables the similarities and differences of the four workplaces to be contrasted. The four workplaces are very different: details are outlined in the procedures section below. These differences are intended and substantial in efforts to further the comparative base of the investigation. To further the comparative base is, in one sense, to depend on difference as more than the reason for explanation of complex psycho-social phenomena such as learning in and through
work, but more as the source of explanation. In purposefully seeking difference, this comparative ethnography does not so much invite the “negative case” as some form of balancing device to justify its processes and outcomes. Rather, it genuinely seeks a range of instances of work-learning practices as its means of examining the “particular” sociocultural activity of learning through participation. This reliance on difference is a primary tenet of comparative ethnography. It is a reliance on what Bhaskar (2007, p. 201) refers to as “axial rationality,” the form of reasoning that is “based on the principle that there must be explanations for differences.” For Bhaskar, this rationality represents the basis of reconciliation, the means by which “the other” can be understood as “what we could have been” and thereby the grounds of greater social and political understanding and acceptance of the differences that divide us, indeed, make us enemies. For the qualified ethnography of this investigation, this rationality represents an affirmation of the source of explanation and the greater understanding this affords as residing in the differences of people and contexts that combine to make accessible the complexity of personal learning as a social practice.

In summary, the methodology of this investigation is best described as qualified ethnography. The specifics of this qualification can be outlined as follows. This ethnography is:

- Ethnography of the particular: the particular participative work practices of 12 very different individuals who work in four very different workplaces.
- Collaborative: while always the construct of the researcher, that construct is purposefully and cooperatively reliant on participant collaboration, reflection, and verification.
- Comparative: acknowledging change and difference as the source of and reasons for its explanations in its seeking to better understand complex socio-personal activity.

These methodological qualifiers are further enhanced by the complementary procedural methods outlined below. These procedures represent the means of addressing the central research question: *How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work?* through the three sub-questions. Those sub-questions are:

1. What are workers’ personal work and learning practices?
2. How can these practices be understood as negotiation practices?
3. How can negotiation practices be understood as learning?
As outlined below, the adopted procedures enable the ordered progression (Schutz, 2004) of the investigation in relation to these three sub-questions. The three sub-questions do not represent separate vehicles of enquiry, but rather acknowledge the integration of personal work practice, negotiation, and learning that sit at the conceptual heart of this investigation. The investigation design, its data collection and analysis procedures, and the findings reported in this thesis evidence this integration as informed by the three sub-questions.

**Participants and procedures**
The investigation proceeds through a qualified ethnographic study of 12 individual employees. Each of these individuals undertakes different roles and responsibilities within their respective workplaces: their job descriptions are different. However, the 12 represent groups of three employees from four very different and unrelated workplaces. This configuration of participants and workplaces enables a strong comparative dimension to the methodology.

**The workplaces**
Employee participatory practices at work are highly influenced by the institutional rules and regulative production systems that control the movement and management of product, information, and people in and through the workplace (Ashton, 2004; Grey, 1994). This investigation is concerned to explore work practices of different types of work and from workplaces with very different rules and systems, that is, cultural contexts. Further, it seeks to broaden these differences across workplaces of different scale, purpose, and organisational structure. This requirement of work and workplace diversity was supported by the selection, contact, and agreement to participate from four very distinct workplaces. For the purposes of anonymity, each workplace has been given a suitable pseudonym. The four workplaces were:

1. **HealthyTrim**: a suburban gymnasium that formed part of a large and growing chain of privately owned health and fitness centres.
2. **Platinum**: a small suburban restaurant that operated an additional external catering company from its premises.
3. ITS: an information technology support section responsible for specific staff and resources within a large metropolitan university.

4. CFS2: a large metropolitan fire station that also functioned as the district headquarters of its branch of the state government supported emergency services department.

This diversity of workplaces affords the project a high degree of contrast across a number of significant work enterprise parameters. These include not only the kinds of work conducted, but also size of the employer organisation by employee numbers (i.e., large, medium, and small employers); orientation of employer organisation by product or service provision, profit or non-profit motivations, private and public ownership, corporate or family structure; and staffing employment and deployment systems (e.g., shift work, on-call, contract labour, casual, apprentices, full-time, specialists, etc.).

For example, Platinum, the restaurant, is a small privately owned and family run business that employs only three permanent full-time staff, one of whom is a part-owner. It also employs many on-call casuals in a number of roles on varying terms. By contrast, employees of the fire station, CFS2, are full-time state government public servants who work under a strong authoritative and hierarchical regime of command and control differentiated by formal rank and team tasked responsibilities. Their work requires some of them to live at the station in shift rotations across days and nights on permanent readiness to attend emergency situations.

**The individual participants**

Worker participative practices are mediated in part by the different ways in which individual employees construe and act upon the circumstances or opportunities for engagement their work affords them (Billett, 2004). This investigation is concerned to examine a range of different engagement circumstances and practices as they are manifest by and for different workers as unique individuals in different kinds of work in their different working conditions. To further enhance the range of differences between worker participants in the investigation, differences of age, levels of experience, time in the job, employment status (i.e., full-time, casual, etc.) and levels of organisational responsibility and structural arrangement (i.e., managers, team members, operational specialisation, etc.) were sought.
Having gained written permission to undertake the investigation from the respective owners and relevant managers of the four workplaces, workers were informed of the research objectives and parameters and invited to participate as volunteers who could withdraw at any time. Three workers from each of the four workplaces agreed to participate in the project. The information package and informed consent agreement that supported the individual workers’ invitation to participate are attached in Appendix A. Each of the participants is briefly described below using a pseudonym to protect their identity and maintain anonymity.

From HealthyTrim:

1. Marilyn – is the full-time manager of the gymnasium. She is in her late thirties and has recently been appointed to the management role since the privately owned business was sold to a growing chain group. She has worked at the gym for many years and lives in the local area. Through this extensive experience she is very familiar with the clientele and the needs of a well-managed gym. She enjoys her work and welcomes the new opportunities for personal advancement the new group ownership brings.

2. Hayden – is a fully qualified personal fitness trainer who is employed part-time by the gymnasium to service its members. He is in his mid-twenties, lives locally, and has been a member of the gym for many years. He also runs a private personal training business servicing his own clients at the same gymnasium.

3. Jane – is a part-time receptionist. She is in her early twenties and is studying physiotherapy full-time at university. She lives locally and has been a member of the gym for some years. She approached the gym looking for part-time work a couple of years ago and is using the money earned to support her life as a student.

From Platinum:

1. John – is the owner-manager of the restaurant. He, along with his brother, is a senior partner in the business. He is a fully qualified chef, is in his late thirties, and typically of owner-operators of small businesses, does all that is required to ensure the successful running of the restaurant. His primary role is chef and manager.
2. Robert – is the junior partner in the business (25% ownership). His primary responsibility is the catering business that runs from the restaurant. He is in his mid-twenties, is a fully qualified chef, and attends to all the cooking and management needs of the catering business.

3. Rosie – is a casual waitress at the restaurant. She is in her early twenties and is studying psychology full time at university. She is the most senior of the group of casual wait staff employed by the restaurant and usually works the busy Friday evening and weekend shifts. She is on-call and has regularly and reliably made herself available for work in both the restaurant and the catering business. At the start of the project she had been working at the restaurant for 6 months.

From ITS:

1. Sid – is the manager of the desk-top and designated laboratory support team. He is in his very late forties and has worked in the IT industry for nearly 30 years, the last four of which have been at the university. As well as undertaking the general work tasks of a member of the support team, he is responsible for its management (e.g., work load allocations, schedules, projects, budgets, etc.) and reports to the university’s information services manager.

2. Dick – is a senior member of the support team. He is in his mid-fifties and has worked for the university in various technical support services roles for over 26 years. These have included radio, television, studio music recording, and computing. His wealth of diverse electronics experience (starting as an apprentice electronics technician in the 1960s) has enabled his working across all the university’s five metropolitan campuses. He has been in his current role with the support team for 2½ years.

3. Bob – is a senior member of the support team. He is in his mid-thirties and has been working in IT support at the university for nearly 8 years. Following injuries sustained in the building industry, he secured part-time work in the IT sector and has since undertaken formal training for qualifications in computing.
From CFS2:

1. Bruce – is a fire officer and station manager at CFS2. He is in his late forties and has worked his way through the fireman ranks to officer during his 16 years in the service. As Station Manager he is responsible for the operation of the station, its equipment, and the two crews on shift. In the event of an emergency response he becomes the incident controller tasked with the deployment and management of all resources necessary to the situation.

2. Ian – is a senior specialist fireman. He is in his mid-thirties and has been in the fire service for 7 years. During those years he has undertaken training to qualify as a senior fireman and a specialist aerial operator. He has recently begun officer training.

3. Hugh – is a junior fireman. He is in his early thirties and has been with the fire service for 18 months. However, despite his junior ranking, he is an experienced fireman, having spent 8 years in the fire service in Britain before migrating to Australia. He is one of only two junior firemen at the CFS2 station and as such is about halfway through the Certificate 3 vocational program that will qualify him as a fireman.

As can be seen from the brief profiles offered above, the 12 participants represent a diverse set of workers. These differences, in conjunction with the workplace differences, enable a broad set of diversity dimensions that support the comparative aspects of the investigation. Important among these are opportunities to examine how different workers engage with the same kinds of participation affordances within the same workplace and contrastingly, how the same workplace differently affords its workers opportunities to engage in work participative practices. Equally important are opportunities to examine the structural relations of team-based work that mediates participation.

These comparative qualities do not, however, override the primary focus of the investigation. That focus is the individual workers’ personal engagement in the participative practices of their work and how this can be understood in the relational terms of negotiation and learning. The diversity dimensions of the participants and their work represent efforts to examine and confirm complexity and difference as fundamental properties of socio-personal activity. In examining these properties, this qualified ethnography seeks to balance its capture of the “diversity, variability,
creativity, individuality, uniqueness and spontaneity” of social interaction with its task
of seeking the “regularities, order and patterns within such diversity” (Dobbert &

Data collection
As a sample data source, the 12 participants may be referred to as a “typical” sample
(Patton, 1980). They are viewed as not representing anything other than what is
typical of the kind of work undertaken in their respective workplaces. To examine
these workers and their typical practices, two data collection procedure were adopted:
observation and interview. Both were conducted extensively over the 18-month data
collection period of the project. Together, these collection methods accounted for a
data set comprising field notes and transcriptions of interviews of between 16-20
hours for each of the 12 participants. Throughout the findings and deductions
Chapters 5, 6, & 7, these data are used to both illustrate the person of the participant
and support the claims and ideas advanced. To help position the data excerpts used for
these purposes within the scope of the collection period, each excerpt is identified
with the interview or observation schedule from which it was generated. Interview
excerpts are tagged with (Int#x) where x is the number of the respective interview
schedule, and observations are similarly tagged with (Obs#x).

Observation
Watching and listening to subject participants and making notes of these activities are
520) state that “observation should be a component of all research” and regard “what
people actually do and are recorded as doing as harder data than what they say they
do.” Similar sentiments are expressed by Tope et al. (2005) who argue that
observation, and particularly participant observation, yields greater information and
thereby affords stronger insight in workplace ethnography. In terms of observation
classifications, this investigation adopts a form of researcher observation referred to
by Gold (1958) as observer as participant. By this is meant that the researcher, when
attending participants’ workplaces, did so in the agreed and overt role of observer
only, and not as a participant in the activities of the work. Tope, Chamberlain,
Crowley, & Hodson (2005, p. 474) refer to this form of observation as,
... nonparticipant observation (or simply observation) as field observation that does not involve active participation by the researcher. Rather, the researcher is present in the setting while the activity takes place, observing what transpires and potentially talking to workers about their experiences on or off the job. (italics in the original)

The reasons for adopting this nonparticipant observer role are twofold. Firstly, is the need to build some contextual and procedural familiarity with the kinds of work undertaken by each of the participants. Given the diversity of the vocational practices enacted across the four different workplaces, full participatory observation is impossible as it would require the researcher learning at least four sets of highly specialised occupational skills. So, seeking to understand how the participants engaged in their work was necessarily predicated on understanding what their work entails and how the interactions that generate it were constructed from a non-participant observation perspective. However, such observation “enables the researcher to be involved in the construction of the social world and thereby to begin to understand the actions of others as the actors themselves understand them – through interaction and interpretation” (O’Reilly, 2005, p. 103). This involvement, however incomplete, is significant, especially when the observations made can be corroborated in situ by the participants as they are aware and supportive of the researchers’ role and efforts.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993, pp. 199-200) outline a set of questions that served as a guide to the kinds of descriptive, relational, and analytical qualities the observation field notes developed. They represent a basic set of who, what, when, where, and why type questions that address the fundamentals of beginning to become familiar with an observed event or activity and the kinds of considerations that could reasonably be discussed with participants while they are engaged in their work. The following list of questions, adapted from LeCompte and Preissle, is indicative of the kinds of considerations made through the observations.

- Who is involved (how many, their identities, characteristics, affiliations, reasons for being involved, etc.)?
- What are the statuses and roles of those involved?
- Who is making decisions (for whom)?
- Who is talking, who is listening?
- What is being said, by whom, for whom?
• What non-verbal communication is evident?
• Who appears active, who inactive?
• How do the participants behave towards each other?
• How do they describe and explain what they are doing?
• What is taking place?
• What resources are being used?
• How routine and regular are the activities and behaviours?
• What is important, prioritised, significant?
• Where and when does it take place?
• How long does it take?
• What changes occur?
• How are these handled, managed, accepted?
• Why is this happening?
• What are the goals, objectives?
• What rules and regulations are being enacted?

These kinds of questions form the basis of the observations undertaken. They do not represent a structured schedule. Rather, they are guides only, applied when and as they were appropriate to the work activity being observed and the degree to which the participants were able to respond at the time.

All 12 of the worker participants involved in the research were observed in the practice of their work on at least two occasions. Seven were observed on three occasions. These semi-structured observations were usually conducted before and or after the semi-structured interviews, when and if circumstances allowed, and lasted anywhere from 20 to 90 minutes. The first observations focussed on description and researcher familiarisation with the physical and interactional qualities of the four workplaces. That is, how the working space was organised and who and what comprised the encounters the 12 workers enacted through their practice. Second and subsequent observations focussed on individual participants’ routine encounters with colleagues and clients and any significant pieces of equipment or aspects of work systems that were central to their usual personal work practices. In all, 15 observations were conducted. On five occasions, circumstances enabled all 3 worker participants from each of the four workplaces to be observed in a single observation
session. In all but two observation sessions the researcher was able to talk briefly with the participants involved and so direct specific questions to clarify who and why other parties were engaged in the particular encounter observed.

As noted above through the list of questions guiding the observations, the rationale for selecting what to observe centred on the interactional qualities of the workplace and the individual participants’ personal practices as enactments of these interactions. Of the 15 observations conducted, only 4 involved single worker participants engaged in work practices that did not directly involve interactions with others. However, on these four occasions, each of the participants was engaged in interactions with equipment and systems that were integral to the conduct of their work.

The second reason for adopting nonparticipant observation relates to the need of establishing a trustful rapport with the subject participants in support of the extensive interviews that formed the primary data sets for the investigation. According to Neuman (1991), the basis of such a trustful rapport is sharing and respect. When these qualities are evident and purposefully practised in the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the quality of data generated is enhanced in terms of offering opportunity to “get below the surface” of descriptive accounts of social realities and into the perceptive bases of these accounts (Davies, 2008). Being present as a welcomed and supported observer assists in developing the shared experience of researcher and researched. The engagement of the participants in the research through conversation helps establish respect and trust as the actions and responses of the subject participants are acknowledged as contributions: important contributions that require clarification and explanation in order to overcome the potential ambiguities of social interaction and the twin biases of participant reactive effects and researcher predisposition. Both are highly problematic qualities of interpretivist research.

Participant reactivity, the effects of the researcher on the researched, must be minimised if reliable data that can be said to represent the authentic world-view of the participants is to be collected. Given the 18-month data collection period, it is important to balance the benefits to be gained from high levels of participants’ acceptance of the researcher as an observer in their context against the propensity for familiarity to induce participant responses for the researcher or because of the researcher rather than the genuine interactive responses that would otherwise occur.
Engaging the participants in the verification and interpretation of the observations data, through the questioning noted above and within an establishing climate of respect for contributions and their accuracy as reliable field notes data, is a significant measure in the reduction of participant reactivity. That said, this nonparticipant observer role does not seek to objectify its data as reaction free, but to acknowledge what Steier (1991) observes as the activity of the researcher and the researched engaged in the co-construction of data and its meanings. Making this co-construction as collaborative as is possible within the limitations of the nonparticipant observer role is an aim of the investigation.

High levels of collaboration between researcher and researched are also a strong means of reducing researcher predisposition to misinterpretation due to their unfamiliarity with participants’ contextual culture. Further, such collaboration can reduce researcher predisposition to subjectifying participant responses in terms of the theoretical perspectives of the investigation and the world-view of the researcher. So researcher desire to see foundational theory supported can render data as the sole construct of the researcher and so defeat the ethnographic aims of the investigation. To guard against these potential researcher biases, the aims of the investigation and its reliance on collaborative methods are constantly being reinforced through the data collection process. The observation field notes, generated by the sole researcher, are shared, openly discussed, scrutinised, and verified by the subject participants as records of their engagement in their work. The position of the researcher is known and accepted as an outsider with no previous experience who has been welcomed and supported in their conduct of research. Whilst not explicitly understood by the subject participants, the sociocultural constructivist perspective is documented in the thesis and generally discussed in situ when appropriate to the conversational style of the observations and interviews. The reflexive practices of the researcher are based in this openness and collaboration and an awareness of the need to build a balanced rapport that is based on trust and respect. Yes, this thesis is the product of the researcher but the data that support it are collaboratively co-constructed in efforts to reduce researcher predisposition that can fail to appreciate and capture the nuances of others’ experience and the complexity of its enactment. What eventuates from these efforts is an ethnography that “is not a matter of what one person does in a situation but how two sides of an encounter arrive at a delicate workable definition of their meeting”
(Crick, 1982, p. 25): a meeting of shared and respected efforts established on at least eight occasions over 18 months of the investigation.

Overall, the observation data, textualised as field notes constructed through 15 observation sessions conducted over the 18-month data collection period, support the rich contextualised description of the 12 workers’ personal practices and the interactions with others through which these practices are enacted. These data are seen as significant in their own right, contributing strongly to the emic analyses, the qualitative ethnography adopted, that views the interactions observed in the terms of those observed. Additionally, the observation data are utilised as complementary and predominantly supplementary to the extensive interview data that are positioned as the primary data of the research. The value of this supplementation is the in situ witness it enables the researcher and the reflective stimulus this witness enables through the subsequent interviews (O’Reilly, 2005). In short, the research could not have been conducted through interviews alone despite the seeming dominance of interview data throughout the thesis. Observing the 12 workers’ interactions with others and the materials of their practice at acknowledged and accepted as welcomed low levels of intervention or intrusion, enables the researcher invitational entry into the field of their ethnographic enquiry and access to the means of understanding that field from the perspectives of those within it, and supports both interpretation and verification of the self-accounts that articulate these perspectives (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Although very infrequently referred to directly within the text of the thesis, observation data, for the reasons noted above, heavily inform and strengthen the findings and analyses that are presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

**Interviews**

The fundamental premise underlying data collection in this investigation is simply that the best way to seek understanding of others’ constructions of their reality is to ask them: to talk with them. This simple premise is immediately complicated by the range of considerations necessary to securing a good question and a useful answer but the foundation of the exchange remains. That is, interviews, and in this case, qualitative ethnographic interviews, are generally an interchange of views between people on a matter of mutual interest that places socially situated interaction at the centre of knowledge production and hence research data (Kvale, 1996). However, this interchange of views is not a naturally occurring exchange. Rather, it is purposefully
facilitated by the researcher to elicit responses from the participants that illuminate and make more open to examination “the complex personal framework of beliefs and values, which they have developed over their lives to categorise, characterise, explain and predict the events in their worlds” (Jones, 2004). So, interview stands as a researcher construct designed to get participants talking about themselves and their understandings of their work and learning practices in relation to the research topic. The resultant conversation is recorded and this record becomes the basis of the interview data. Those data, once finalised as such through the collection process, are the primary data of this ethnography.

Unlike the field notes generated through observation and the conversations that sometimes attended these sessions, the conversations that constituted the interview sessions were planned and audio taped. In all, each of the 12 participants was individually interviewed five times over the 18-month data collection period by the same researcher. Interviews were 60-100 minutes long and arranged well in advance to take place at times and locations selected as most convenient by the participants. All the interviews were audio taped and transcribed. These transcriptions became elements of the conversation at subsequent interviews where they were discussed to clarify and elaborate understandings previously derived and thereby verified as data suitable for further analysis. In this way, interviews acted as opportunities for the participants to generate and qualify their contributions to the conversation as data. Through these opportunities, the investigation came to be seen and acknowledged as a collaborative effort focussed on a matter of mutual interest as Kvale (1996) suggests. That collaborative effort, albeit guided by the researcher, was the active co-construction of the psycho-social meaning of the participants’ work and learning practices. Through such interviewing, “meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported by respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 4). Ensuring that this assemblage of meaning is useful requires careful planning.

The five interviews undertaken by each participant were planned as semi-structured interviews focussed on three guiding themes. By semi-structured is meant, that additional to the planning of time and place, each interview was guided by a schedule of questions that sought participant responses to the three themes but could be altered through the conduct of the conversation to support participant directive or interest. Additionally, questions were open ended and the researcher encouraging of
expansion, digression, and counter questioning to support deeper and finer participant interpretation of the topics discussed. Further, the interviews progressed as natural extensions of the relationship developed between the researcher and the subject participants. That relationship developed through the observation sessions and the length of the data collection period to be one of trust and respect based on shared effort in getting to the theories and values of the participants relative to the topics discussed (Jones, 2004). And so, the degree by which the participants engaged in these processes differed across the 12 individual workers and on different occasions and in different ways.

The three guiding themes that focus the kinds of questions discussed through the interviews were (a) work, (b) learning, and (c) change. All themes were active within each of the five interviews but there was a particular emphasis on participants’ understandings of their work in the first two interviews, understandings of their learning in the second and fourth, and understandings of the sources and impacts of change to their circumstances in interviews three, four, and five. Of the five schedules, only the first two were planned in advance of the data collection process. Schedules three, four, and five (together with the follow-up and verification questions of interview two) were generated through the research process in response to participant responses and the analytical themes that emerged. All five interview schedules are attached in the Appendix B. They are briefly outlined below.

**Interview 1 – Schedule A**

Extensive and detailed, this first interview seeks to establish and record the participants’ understandings of their work: (a) as a set of personal and contextual practices that can be described, and (b) as a set of mediating influences that can begin to identify the relational properties of these practices. In essence, this interview and the work description it begins to construct are the base from which the investigation advances. The first interview was the most structured of all the interviews. It utilised Billett’s (2001c) system of work analysis as a set of workplace or contextual opportunities for practice (i.e., affordances) that are variably engaged by workers on the basis of their desires and capacities to do so. Billett’s system enables the relational interdependence between what work affords workers and what workers do with these affordances to be mapped against the individual workers’ understandings of these factors within the system that describes their work and its conditions. That description
is built up through typically direct questions that ask such things as, what is your work and how do you do it? These questions are complemented by equally direct requests for information about contextual and cultural factors and the degree of influence these have on the nature of work undertaken. These questions go to the mediation of work by such factors as colleagues, tools, cultural values, and priorities. The primary purpose of this first interview is to begin to account for the personal and cultural understandings that are the foundation of the personal participative practices of each of the 12 workers.

This first interview is the first time the participants genuinely engage with the researcher in a prolonged one-to-one encounter. The participants, having considered the investigation from the initial materials provided and having willingly volunteered to participate with some understanding of its aims, brought a sense of enquiry and apprehension to this first session. They were concerned to co-operate and to discover how they could do so. Of importance here was the need to establish the confidence and collaboration of the participants in the research process as the foundation of their relationship with the researcher. Throughout, the conversational manner of the relatively structured schedule was carried by numerous follow-up and probing questions aimed at securing as much detail as possible through the responses but also to encourage participants’ freedom to talk and assure them of the value of all they had to say on these matters.

**Interview 2 – Schedule B**

The second interview progresses from the first interview descriptions of work and its mediating conditions. The focus is now on individuals’ participation in work, how this occurs, and how it came to be this way. This interview seeks to engage the participants in discussing how they personally enact their work and begins to explore the bases by which they construe and interpret their participative practices. It begins with a focus on personal history and asks the participants to discuss the work and learning pathways that brought them to their current work. Through the reporting of this brief personal history, the interview begins to explore the personal motivations and aspirations that underlie their participation as well as the levels and degrees of personal agency each of the participants enacts through their participation. This second interview begins to explore the connections between personal history and disposition (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004), personal priorities (Frankfurt, 1988),
and subjectivity as the enactment of contextual self through work (e.g., Billett, 2006b; Casey, 2006; Fenwick, 2006). Its primary purpose is to examine the more personal and individual nature of work participative practices as purposeful agentic engagement in social activity that has consequences and continuity at both personal and cultural levels.

This interview took place some six to eight weeks after the first and approximately two weeks after an onsite observation session. These previous encounters with the researcher had established a growing sense of respectful familiarity with the researcher and the data collection processes. This interview was again lengthy and detailed at 60-100 minutes. It was far more relaxed and conversational than the first interview and commenced with an examination of the first interview transcripts for the purpose of verifying them as data for analysis. It was through this verification that the participants began to realise their ideas and understandings of themselves and their work as valued contributions of their making through the process.

**Interview 3 – Schedule C**
The third interview was the first of the interviews to focus on changing circumstances and any influences these had on work. It explored change as the passing of time that became a source of the new and different and also as a source of continuity and reinforcement. Its focus was on what has changed, why these changes occurred, and how these changes have impacted learning and work. It occurred at around six months into the investigation.

Again this interview was used to verify previous interview transcripts and to discuss some of the themes that were beginning to emerge from the analysis to date. Some of this discussion was of a general nature concerning work culture and common practices. Much of the discussion was person specific and sought to elaborate and clarify issues around personal motivations, values, and participative practices. Questions pertaining to these directions are included in the schedule. They were used to generate conversation aimed at clarifying and elaborating topics that had already been discussed and to further participants’ engagement as considerate of data quality and its analysis in their co-construction of the research outcomes. The focus on change and understandings of being creative and reactive in and through change in ways that represent personal management of time and other work resources (e.g.,
Smith, 2006) and understandings of self-directed learning and development (e.g., Billett, 2001c; Greve, Rothermund, & Wentura, 2005) allowed this interview a particularly reflective quality. Because the investigation had been running for more than six months and a strong relationship had been established with the researcher over the previous two lengthy interviews and observation sessions, participants were relaxed and at ease in the process, more aware of themselves as sources of information about themselves, and seemingly very appreciative of the opportunity to reflect on themselves and thereby discover the theories they constructed of themselves as possible explanations for their participative practices in work.

**Interview 4 – Schedule D**

The fourth interview occurred at approximately 12 months into the investigation. Like all the earlier interviews it was extensive and conversational, guided but not directed by a question schedule, and it varied with each participant from 60-100 minutes. Its focus was a return to specific topics related closely to learning experience (both past and current) and the ways in and by which this learning supported participation and engagement in work. Questions about learning preferences, opportunities to engage in learning, capacities to influence learning, and consequences of learning were foundational to the interview. This focus highlights the synonymity of work and learning as illustrated in the literature (e.g., Billett, 2008; Fuller & Unwin, 2004; Harris, Willis, Simons, & Underwood, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and is supported by the participants who, in coming to understandings of the inseparability of work and learning through the investigation and their contributions within it, are interested in exploring this connection more fully. Of particular interest through this interview was examining the ways in which the participants had come to be influential or agentic in purposefully mediating their own learning and legacies this created.

As in previous interviews, changes were noted and discussed, as were previous interview transcripts and emerging analytical themes, such as connections between work-related dialogue with colleagues and opportunities for personal reflection, connections between the kinds of work role enactments required to complete work satisfactorily, and perceptions and feelings about these roles as personal identities and understandings of self in work. Participants did not articulate these themes in this kind of language, but from conversations during observations and the opportunities to reflect on work and learning practices afforded by the interviews,
participants talked openly about how their learning and work was dependent on relationships with colleagues and their willingness to take on unfamiliar roles or give up familiar roles for the work opportunities this enabled.

**Interview 5 – Schedule E**

This was the last interview of the investigation and took place in the last months of the 18-month data collection period. It was conducted in ways similar to Interview 3 with an initial focus on change and consequences then moving to verify and elaborate previous transcripts and emerging themes. Themes from the fourth interview were further explored, as were others such as perceptions of work and learning rewards that followed from work participation, and the kinds of triggers and preparations that enabled learning preparedness and the promotion of learning in and through work. The interview concluded with some discussion of the participants’ understandings of the research process and their contributions, with a particular emphasis on the nature of their responses through the interviews as a reaction to the researcher and the relationship established over the relatively long period (18 months) of the investigation. There was a concern here to account for participant reactivity and to afford some participant perspective on the research in itself as a learning practice emergent through work and their willingness to engage in the investigation. Again this interview was extensive as participants seemingly relaxed with the close of the investigation and the opportunity this granted to discuss the research per se as opposed to its topics and themes.

Throughout all five interviews, there was no purposefully planned style of questioning beyond the requirement of enabling participants to speak as freely as possible. There was, however, an intentional focus on achieving interpretive verification, that is, a clarity of shared meaning between the researcher and the participants that is voiced in the words of the participants themselves (Kvale, 1996). Apart from being desirable in terms of reducing ambiguity and supporting the active co-construction of data, this aim supported the need of less time being spent on going over previous responses in subsequent interviews and enabled participants’ talk about themselves relative to other aspects of the topics previously discussed as well as those that had already been addressed. So verification processes became expansive as well as topic specific.
The researcher sought to promote conversation around the schedule topics and adhered to a sense of achieving this in O’Reilly’s (2005) terms that focus less on the types of questions used and more on the ways they are deployed to ensure and promote relaxed conversation. That is, “it is not so much what questions are asked as how they are asked and the range of responses permitted that matters” (O’Reilly, 2005, p. 120). It is on the basis of building rapport through trust and respect that the interviews proceeded. The schedules themselves read as what Kvale (1996) would describe as “direct questions,” that is, questions that relate directly to specific topics and their conceptual dimensions. This presentation of the questions in the schedules should not be understood as entirely the way they were put to participants. Rather, using Kvale’s categories of questions, the interviews proceeded mostly on the basis of “introducing questions” that invited responses relative to introduced topics and “follow-up questions” that requested elaboration and clarification. On numerous occasions these requests took the form of direct questions; on others, “interpreting questions” that invited agreement and clarification about what was being discussed.

Overall, the interviews were conducted as a collaborative exercise that accorded the subject participants as much control through the process as was possible. Not all topics on the schedules were covered at the allocated interview time. Some topics were omitted in agreement that they had been addressed in observation sessions and the conversations that often accompanied them. The guiding principles were essentially twofold, and each represents an aspect of what Kvale (1996) describes as the criteria of high quality research interview. They were, firstly, “the shorter the interviewer’s questions and the longer the subject’s answers, the better” (Kvale, 1996, p. 145). The role of the interviewer was to introduce topics and facilitate the conversation by which participants explored their understandings of themselves and their contexts relative to the topic. Secondly, “the ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout the interview” (Kvale, 1996, p. 145). The role of the interviewer was to seek clarification and reduce ambiguity of participants’ accounts of themselves through ensuring the conversation was enacted as the valuable identification of important personal perspectives that could better inform understandings of work and learning practices. The success of the interview data-collection processes can be seen in the nearly 100 hours of audio tape that support the very rich and relevant data generated through the investigation.
Data analysis
Ethnographic data analysis is simply described by O’Reilly (2005, p. 184) as “making sense of it all,” that is, “summarising, sorting, translating and organising” all the material generated, together with the thinking behind it, in such a way “that others can understand.” It begins with the research design and particularly the formulation of guiding questions and continues through all the phases of the conduct of the investigation to close in a presentation of what the researcher has garnered. Singleton and Straits (2005) describe this analysis process as the three interrelated tasks of (a) organising information and identifying patterns, (b) developing explanatory ideas, and (c) drawing and verifying conclusions.

In following this analysis process, the text-based interview transcripts and observation notes were coded through a form of content analysis advanced by Strauss (1987). Unlike Strauss’s, the qualified ethnography methodology outlined here is not specifically aimed at generating grounded theory. This is because the investigation reported here is clearly based in elaborating existing theoretical perspectives as opposed to seeking to generate new ones. However, like Strauss’s, this methodology and the analysis procedures adopted here are seeking “the specification of concepts and their relationships” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102) as they emerge from the data. Particularly, this ethnography is investigating the conceptualisation of negotiation and its application to considerations of sociocultural understandings of learning in and for work as they emerge from the lived experience of the 12 participants.

The data coding used throughout represents the researchers’ (in collaboration with participants) naming or labelling of identified ideas, actions, and events from within the data and their grouping into categories of personal practice that enable a rich description of each of the 12 participants and their cultural contexts. This is referred to as “open coding.” Further, the categories generated are significant aspects of the participants’ personal practices and so represent sources of purpose and explanation that embed them in the consequences and changes that mark their actions in context. Identifying and naming these qualities of the self-in-action is referred to as “axial coding.” Integrating these coding systems to develop and draw conclusions about a conceptualisation of negotiation and learning is a form of “selective coding,” that is, a researcher construction of explanation of these phenomena. However, the primary categories of negotiation and learning are given, if incomprehensively, as
outlined through the literature review chapters 2 and 3. Selective coding here is the limited ascription of a conceptual framework (i.e., the three dimensions of negotiation) as the means of integrating the data analysis coding process “through which data are fractured, conceptualised and integrated” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3) to form stronger understandings of the 12 participants in practice. As such, the analysis coding deployed in this methodology is not building theory (although it is constructing explanation) and is not testing theory (although it is solidly based in sociocultural perspectives). Rather, this methodology is seeking to construct the kinds of concepts on which theory, negotiated learning theory, might be established.

In this way, the data analysis of this project can be considered across three interrelated qualities. First, it is iterative. By this is meant the analysis is ongoing and thereby informed and guided by what has gone before. As outlined above, the interview and observation was divided by the different schedules, with each supporting opportunity to review, clarify, and advance from data previously constructed. Question schedules pursued the central topics of the investigation but did not do so in rigid pre-designed fashion. Rather, they accommodated the understandings emerging from the data, which in turn helped shape subsequent schedules. It is this movement among design, data collection, and data analysis, all under review, each informing the other across the extended time of the investigation and the personal diversity of the participants that makes the analysis iterative (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Second, it is inductive. That is, the process of making sense of the participants’ experience of work and learning relative to the aims and themes of the investigation is based in the diversity and complexity of all the data constructed. However, this ethnography does not seek to test hypotheses formulated from data or to generate grounded theory – aspects and outcomes of analysis closely associated with inductive processes (Brewer, 2000). Rather, this ethnographic analysis describes itself as inductive to confirm the origins of its understandings as emergent from the data and particularly from the data as realised by the participants who are conscious of themselves in the role of verifying and validating their contributions.

Third, it is interpretivist. This analysis seeks to understand the individual actions of its participants as personal interactions, situated in and mediating of their cultural contexts and the relationships in which they engage. Its focus is the participants’ subjectivities and their accounts of their perceptions of the interactions
they enact. In taking care to ensure this quality of the analysis (as outlined in earlier sections), the investigation acknowledges the primacy of the researcher in the construction of “the interpretation” that stands as the ethnography presented. Its conceptual foundations, subsequent guiding questions of enquiry, and adopted methodology define an analytical perspective (Silverman, 2003) that will result in a similarly configured construction because “researchers cannot step outside their own social and historical standpoints [and] because there is no possibility of theory-free observation and knowledge” (Smith & Hodkinson, 2005, p. 915). This constructed representation of others’ enacted reality of workplace participative practices, as collaboratively formed and validated as it may be, is the interpretive response of the researcher within the parameters of the task. The task is straightforward – to comprehend and articulate the process by which workers negotiate their learning at work (in ways that advance from current sociocultural understandings). Within the assumptions of the task, that such a process is enacted, lies the requirement of making the actions that constitute this process explicit and accessible to the scrutiny of the researcher, the participants, and others outside the investigation.

**Ethical issues and considerations**

This investigation was situated within the broader program of an Australian Research Council Discovery Project entitled Workplace Participatory Practices: Learning through and for Work (Project ID: DP0453103) under the management of Chief Investigators Associate Professor Stephen Billett and Professor Michelle Barker of Griffith University. Ethical clearance to conduct the investigation was granted under Griffith University Protocol Number VTA 02 04 HREC.

Following contacts and discussions with the four employing organisations invitations were made to employees within those organisations. All were fully informed of the investigation purposes and procedures and assured of their anonymity and rights of withdrawal at any time through the confidentiality and participation protocols outlined in the information sheet (see Appendix A). The 12 workers who agreed to participate in the investigation signed consent forms (see Appendix A) confirming their understanding of the investigation, the procedures adopted, and their willingness to engage. Throughout the 18 months of the investigation, during interviews, observations and the contacts necessary to scheduling such arrangements, these procedures and assurances were reiterated. All 12 participants, with the
confidence of their employer organisations, were highly supportive of the investigation and enthusiastic about their contribution to the data generation, verification, and analysis aspects of the research.

Strengths and limitations of the investigation
The primary focus on the individual worker and the depth and rigour of the qualified ethnography that supported this focus across the extended period of the investigation represent the key strengths of the investigation. These strengths enabled a comprehensive enquiry that moved from the detail of descriptive and developing considerations of the participants and their experiences, through a collaborative search for relational explanation of person and practice in flux, to the construction of highly representative conceptualisations of the personal and collective partnership practices that identified each of the 12 participants in action in work. Additionally, this trajectory into stronger understandings of personal contribution in partnership in work was not a linear process but rather a momentum gathering enterprise as the relationship of trust and collaboration between the researcher and the participants developed. This meant ideas about “how” and “why” the 12 participants were enacting themselves in work were not growing so much as rising and falling, emerging from and then fading into the possibilities and potentials of beings useful, then insufficient, then acceptable, then superseded, then conditional, as the process of data construction and analysis continued to unfold. This tentative quality was a strength, reflecting what Strauss and Corbin (1998) acknowledge as the journey into relational complexity that underpins qualitative research. That is, data and their analysis were never closed, but always open to consideration and reconsideration. What eventuated as the findings presented in the following chapters remain as participant-validated researcher-constructed conceptualisations of how best, given the parameters of the investigation, to represent the 12 participants’ understandings of themselves in action and still hold the sense that with more complexity will come better (i.e., more relationally integrated) understandings. In this way the investigation, its conduct, and outcomes, remain situated in the experiences of the 12 participants, what Miles and Huberman (1994) accredit as “within site” and “within case,” conditions that could be presented in this thesis as “within person” across the interpretivist paradigm of qualitative research and the qualified ethnography employed. In this sense, another strength of this investigation, and again following
from Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 4), is that it makes its “preferences clear” within the stated sociocultural perspective taken and learning theory foundation from which it progresses.

These strengths, thereby, become indicative of the limitations of the investigation. Within the domain of ethnography, this investigation is limited in scope. It only deals with 12 individual workers and only for limited times within what must be considered a very brief period of a working life. This limitation makes the investigation relatively static, a glimpse only into the dynamic realities lived by the 12 worker participants as members of equally dynamic workplaces. Yes, change occurred and was acknowledged and investigated. However, the depth and density of personal practice in work and its enactment in and through the changes reported was limited to the periods of interview and observation. Five 60-100 minute interviews and equal numbers of observations represent very brief moments of 18 months of living and working. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 6), like many qualitative researchers and like this thesis, seek explanation of complex sociopersonal phenomena, “through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a ‘field’ or life situation. These situations are typically ‘banal’ or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals…” It can be asserted that this investigation lacks the intensity and prolonged immersion necessary to the strength of contact noted as necessary for ethnographic investigation. However, it fulfils the requirements of the qualified ethnography as outlined in this chapter.

**In summary**

This investigation is situated within a sociocultural constructivist paradigm, albeit informed by an eclectic diversity of disciplinary perspectives (e.g., psychology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology) that offer informative vantage points from which to view its enquiry. Doing so is the on-going process of collaboratively identifying and articulating fundamental aspects and bases of 12 individual workers’ personal work practices, their enactments of themselves in work. Minimally, these bases are what participants know, use, produce, and predict (Green et al., 2003) to conduct their participation in and through the interactions that constitute their work. From such a foundation the analysis continues under the guidance of the primary research question and its three key sub-questions.
Further, the qualified ethnography used is based on transcribed interview and observation field notes – text – as its primary source of data. Textual thematic coding and translation as interpretation that generates interview questions designed to illuminate and progress emerging understandings that are captured in further text mediate the on-going analysis of this material. The resultant document, this thesis, presents a set of analytic findings as conceptualisation in text. All this textual rendering is viewed here as essential to analysis yet is acknowledged as only one account of a particular aspect of a highly complex social activity: negotiated participation in work. Additionally, it acknowledges the fallibility and personal political nature of participants’ accounts of their actions and experience in and through work. This nature of the primary interview data source, 60 transcribed interviews comprising nearly 100 hours of participants’ self disclosure, warns of extrapolating analyses beyond its situated context or ethnographic qualifications. Goffman’s (1959) presentation of social participation as the personal “management of impressions” and Silverman’s (2003) call to view research participants’ accounts more realistically as purposefully constructed narrative, re-emphasise this and the hermeneutic foundations of this qualitative research and its analysis. That is, it is interpretive, never definitive, because like the personal phenomena it attempts to capture, it is always “a transformation into community, in which we do not remain what we were” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 341).

Saliently, this investigation is an investigation of 12 people. Its focus is personal, based in the fact that people learn, for themselves and as themselves. So, each of the 12 is viewed as a unique self-in-action who is identified, observed, and interpreted in personal practice that is always enacted with others, collectively, in relationships that are numerous and variable and always in a constant state of flux. The nature of these relationships, as between and with all the resources that are brought together in and for work, and how they are attained and sustained as learning practices, is investigated from the perspectives of negotiation that have been outlined in earlier chapters 2 and 3. The following chapters 5, 6, and 7 present the findings, generated by the methods and procedures presented above, as a conceptualisation of negotiation across three dimensions of form, frame, and flow. Conceptualised in this way, negotiation can support the description and explanation of personal learning as negotiated practice.
Prelude

The three dimensions of negotiation – Form, frame, and flow

The concept of negotiation cannot be simply accepted as some universal description and explanation of the nature of participation in work and learning. As was outlined through Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the meanings negotiation carries are too ambiguous and often too narrowly focused on notions of bargaining and securing advantage to simply translate as a kind of interactive joint activity that captures the complexity of work and learning as both individual and social processes and accomplishments. The findings presented here, in the following three chapters, address these insufficiencies and ambiguities, and so offer some clarification and qualification of the concept of negotiation suitable to its becoming a more useful metaphor for analysing and understanding the nature of work and learning as socio-personal practice.

The findings presented through Chapters 5, 6, and 7 elaborate a conceptualisation of negotiation as comprising three dimensions (see Figure P.1):

1. Negotiation as Form,
2. Negotiation as Frame, and

Figure P.1. The three dimensions of negotiation.
Negotiation, then, can be observed and analysed in the personal work practices of the 12 participants in this investigation from the three distinguishable but holistically integrated dimensions of form, frame, and flow. Together, the three dimensions of negotiation enable a comprehensive response to the primary research question that directed this investigation: How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work? The three dimensions are not sequenced or phased; they do not follow or constitute a cycle. Rather, they are analytically separable aspects of a single concept. When explicitly elaborated, they enable “negotiation” to conceptualise fully the many concomitant activities and relational properties of the person, the worker, that is, the self-in-action, as both the individual and collective practice of engagement in the participative partnership practices that constitute work and learning.

**Negotiation as form**

Negotiation as form is elaborated in Chapter 5. This dimension of negotiation examines and discusses the different kinds of negotiation that individual workers engage in through the personal practices they enact as work. Its focus is to offer a set of parameters by which kinds of negotiations can be distinguished and categorised. That said, the parameters and categories presented are not offered as a complete classification system of negotiation types. Rather, they enable workers’ personal practices to be understood as purposeful and contributory at both personal and socially situated levels of, and perspectives on, collective activity. Personal practice is always socially enacted as joint activity with others and with tools (Vygotsky, 1978) and always personally enacted as joint activity with self and the legacies of premediate and historical engagement in previous activities (Billett, Fenwick, & Somerville, 2006). Distinguishing the negotiation forms that the self-in-action enacts is the beginning of understanding individuals’ contributions, as purpose and accomplishment, to the joint activities in which they are always engaged. Further, distinguishing negotiation forms is the beginning of understanding the kinds of interactions that bring analytically separate elements of joint activity together as interactants, as negotiating parties, who are inseparable in activity but distinguishable through their contributions to the negotiations that constitute such activity. Concepts of telic and atelic negotiation forms are introduced and elaborated. Further, a conceptual construct or framework, referred to as the “personal work negotiation matrix,” is elaborated as a means of more finely categorising and analysing the telic
and atelic aspects of individuals’ work practices. Additionally, and through further levels of analytic refinement, the contingent negotiation forms identified by the matrix are elaborated as comprising compounded negotiation forms. In these ways, negotiation as form enables a focus on the processes and products, the purposes and the outcomes, that individual workers enact through the negotiations that identify their personal practice, their personal ways of engaging in the interactions that constitute their participation in work.

**Negotiation as frame**

Negotiation as frame is elaborated in Chapter 6. This dimension of negotiation advances understandings of individual workers’ personal practices as relational contributions to the processes and outcomes that identify negotiation forms. Negotiations are both processes of interaction that establish means of co-participation in joint activity and contexts through which the many factors and resources that mediate activity are managed and negotiated. Individuals engage in and with these mediations as contextual relationships that, in turn, mediate the negotiations through which these relationships are enacted. The concepts of composite and contiguous negotiations are introduced and elaborated as ways of understanding how individual workers’ personal practices are temporally negotiated. This temporality occurs in two ways: first, through earlier or composite negotiations that are foundational to current activity, and second, through simultaneously enacted or contiguous negotiations that represent the range of negotiations currently underway. Together, these aspects of current personal practice are elaborated as the personal negotiation frame in and by which individual workers are relationally and interdependently bound with the context in which they are situated, the parties with whom they are negotiating, and all the resources that enable their participation in these negotiations that define their sociocultural activity as work.

**Negotiation as flow**

Negotiation as flow is elaborated in Chapter 7. This third dimension of negotiation elaborates the transactional nature of always being, through engagement in the co-participative activity of work, in a state of transformation through the negotiations that constitute such engagement. Individual workers are always changing, as are all the resources that enable activity, through the always-in-negotiation nature of
enacting personal practice. Negotiation as flow conceptualises the enactment of personal practice as a state of flux, one of many, that characterises how people, practice, and contexts change or transform through the activities that define them. As individuals change through the enactment of themselves in practice, so also do the ways they value their contributions to the negotiations in which they are always engaged and so also do the resources that enable and support their enactment of themselves. The self-in-action is the locus of this change, this transformation, and negotiation as flow begins to account for these changes as personal and cultural practices and as processes and legacies that identify learning.

Elaborating these three dimensions of negotiation establishes a conceptual framework of how individual workers’ personal work practices can be viewed as negotiated participation and, thereby, understood as learning within the sociocultural constructivist paradigm. The parallels between this conception of negotiation and constructivist conceptions of learning are elaborated throughout the three chapters. For example, parallels between negotiation models and experiential learning models are outlined in Chapter 5 that elaborates negotiation as form. Parallels between situated learning and learning as co-participation and shared meaning making are outlined in Chapter 6 that elaborates negotiation as frame. And parallels between learning as the socio-personal development and construction of self and vocational identity are outlined in Chapter 7 that elaborates negotiation as flow. These parallels are not exclusive to the specific negotiation concepts to which they are rhetorically linked through the three chapters. Nor are they complete or exhaustive. Rather, the parallels made are illustrative of the strength of the concept of negotiation, when fully elaborated across all three dimensions, to capture the complexity of individuals’ learning as engagement in activity across a range of related learning theories. This is because engagement in sociocultural activity is the basis of learning and such engagement is negotiated. So participation is more than interaction between separable parties and learning is more than the process in and by which interaction occurs. Rather, participation is on-going negotiation that acknowledges parties as always in relationship and always transacting the nature of that relationship through the activities that define their negotiation. As such, negotiation becomes a means of accounting for learning as individuals’ contributions to their relationships, in this case, the relationship constituted as work, worker, and learning as the specificity of person, place, and practice. Elaborating this more fully becomes the focus of Chapter
8 that follows the elaboration of the three dimensions of negotiation in the following three chapters.

**Twelve learner selves in action**

To work, is to learn, is to effort-fully participate in the collective activity that is the production of goods and services. For the individual worker, that participation represents a personal investment of self in the activities and relationships that constitute work. In this thesis, understanding the nature of that personal investment of self is based in examining and elaborating the ways in which workers enact themselves, the ways in which workers purposefully engage in and with the complexity of resources that identify their particular vocational practice and context. These enactments comprise the personal practices of the worker, as learner, as self-in-action. These enactments are examined and elaborated as the bases on and by which individual workers’ learn as personal and social practice. Further, these enactments of personal practice stand as identifiers of the person of the worker, the individual who is the subject of learning. Additionally, these enactments of personal practice stand as evidence of the relational interdependencies on which engagement in participation is based. Billett (2006a & b, 2008) argues the importance of the relational interdependence between worker and work, between the invitational affordances and hindering constraints of the workplace, and between learning as personal development and learning as transformed cultural practice. To this set of relational interdependencies can be added those between who a worker was, is, and is becoming and between personal possibilities taken up and personal possibilities let go. These aspects of the negotiations between the individual and their sociocultural context are salient parameters of the complex simultaneity that constitutes learning and work. As discussed earlier, the concept of negotiation represents a way of conceptualising the nature of interaction and the dialectics of participation within this simultaneity.

Thereby, the personal practices of individual workers stand as significant foundations from which to explore the relationships between worker and work that sit at the heart of learning.

So, the foundation of the three dimensions of negotiation framework outlined in the following three chapters is the personal work practices of the 12 worker-participants who enabled the investigation reported here. The researcher privilege of witnessing and analytically examining something of the working lives of 12 very
different people over a period of 18 months, and doing so with their full co-operation and collaborative enthusiasm for the understandings of self and work the investigation has generated, has enabled a wealth of data construction and analysis. The findings presented in the following three chapters are the culmination of that privilege and the efforts of the participants and the researcher to make sense of learning as individuals’ engagement in the social practice of actively participating in work. More specifically, these findings culminate as the making sense of individuals’ personal work and thereby learning practices as negotiation when negotiation is understood as a conceptualisation of purposeful participation in sociocultural activity.

Clearly, not all of what the 12 participants can be said to have personally (and thereby uniquely) done in their work activities can be captured in these chapters. Equally, not all of what any single participant can be said to have personally done in their work can be captured. Because of this, the data and analysis presented in these findings are not a comprehensive illustration of how each of the 12 participants uniquely and personally enacted themselves through their work. Rather, the collection of their personal practices and their reflections on the purposes and meanings of these self-enactments are used to illustrate and illuminate an understanding of how the person of the individual worker, when viewed as the self-in-action, can be said to negotiate their participation, and thereby their learning, in and through work.

The data used throughout to illustrate and support the concepts presented are rich with the people who live their engagement in work not as some abstract form of activity, but as life-affirming experience of who they are and what that means for them. It is important to privilege the person of the learner over the abstraction of their actions to analytic themes and concepts. Certainly, such analytic themes enable what Hammersley (1991) identified as the purposes of research for solving problems of better understanding experience. However, analytic themes can inadvertently skip over the realism of the people who live them. In doing so, they can reduce the significance of personal experience to data for research purposes rather than illuminate that experience as the vitality and significance of personal choices made and purposes achieved to keep food on the table, a roof over the family, and the integrity of self intact through the heavy demands of work in contemporary society. In elaborating its themes and concepts as elements of the three dimensions of negotiation, this thesis purposefully seeks to energise its findings with the lives of those who live them. Through each of the chapters, not all 12 participants are
described and drawn upon in the analysis. Rather, some participants feature more prominently than others in some parts and others more prominently in other parts. Importantly, across the whole of the findings presented through the three dimensions of negotiation, all 12 worker participants’ personal work experiences are strong contributors to the explanation and illustration of the conceptualisation of negotiation presented. As a rhetorical device to support a continuity and cohesion of the findings presented, one or two participants feature more prominently than others in each of the three chapters. So, for example, in Chapter 5, Hayden from the gym and Robert from Platinum restaurant predominantly feature, and in Chapter 7, Hugh from the Fire Service and Rosie from the restaurant feature more prominently than others. Essentially, any and all of the 12 participants could be used to illustrate and illuminate the three dimensions of negotiation. However, such extensive illustration is not required. What is important, and what is assured throughout, is that all 12 participants contribute as fully as is required to the clear and thorough elaboration of the conceptualisation of the three dimensions of negotiation presented.

Finally, also important throughout is the degree of conceptual overlap among the three dimensions of negotiation elaborated. Worker praxis, as elaborated through this thesis, cannot be reduced to sets of practice principles or negotiation themes that homogenise either persons or concepts deployed to assist understanding workers’ activities. Rather, here, praxis is energised by individual difference because that difference is an essential resource within what negotiators (e.g., Lewicki et al., 2006, 2010) refer to as the “bargaining mix,” that is, the range of stakes and issues at play in negotiation. Equally, concepts that seek to capture and account for difference must ensure that what a person does cannot be separated from who they are (Archer, 2000). To this end, the following three chapters and the three dimensions of negotiation presented as the findings of this thesis rest on the two pillars of (a) the people whose working lives enabled the research, and (b) the conceptualisation of negotiation generated. Both enable and support insight into how the working lives of the 12 participants are enacted as personal vocational practice that is interpretable as negotiated learning.
Chapter 5

Negotiation as Form

Negotiation and personal practice: Twelve worker selves in action

This chapter elaborates negotiation as form, the first of the three dimensions of negotiation advanced in this thesis as a comprehensive means of describing and explaining workers’ learning in work as negotiated practice. The chapter progresses from the case outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 in that workers’ participative practice is observable (and thereby interpretable) as their personal enactment of the tasks and conditions that comprise their particular vocational practice. This enactment is their personal practice, evidenced as the self-in-action who is active in their engagement in and with all the resources brought together in their work. And, further, that engagement is a socio-personal collective practice that can be, in part, conceptualised as negotiation when the co-interactive processes and outcomes that identify how the resources of work are brought together in personal practice are specifically defined and explicated as negotiation processes and outcomes. So the focus in this chapter is the praxis of the worker self-in-action, “what” the 12 workers do, what personal practices they enact as work, and how those practices, unique to the individual, can be understood as negotiation practice.

Negotiation as form presents a means of categorising workers’ personal practice as negotiation. As was indicated through Chapters 2 and 3, negotiation processes and outcomes can be categorised in many different ways. These include by process type (e.g., as integrative, distributive, bargaining, etc.: see Lewicki et al., 2006), by outcome type (e.g., creative, exchange, etc.: see Zartman, 1988), by the nature and number of the parties involved (e.g., single, group, multiple, etc.: see Menkel-Meadow, 2009), and by the relationships that hold between those parties and all the resources that contribute to and construct those relationships (e.g., Kolb & Williams, 2003). Against such categorisations, different perspectives make further distinctions that, for example, distinguish negotiation as planned or incidental (e.g., Rousseau, 2005) and as material or ideational (e.g., Wenger, 1998). Each and all of these categories and distinctions represent a kind of diverse and disorganised catalogue of types or forms of negotiation. What accrues from such diversity of forms
is the need to be explicit and accurate when using the term to describe or categorise interactions that characterise individual workers’ personal participative practices at work. A way of doing this, and achieving the kind of specificity that overcomes the inaccuracy of ambiguity, that is, the tendency to use negotiation as a generic term, is to move from the general to the particular through increasingly finer levels of clearly defined distinction. At its most complete, this approach represents a classification system, a typology of defined categories. As elaborated through this chapter, negotiation as form does not construct and present such a set of classifications, but it does move from the general to the more specific in its examination of the kinds of negotiation forms observable through the personal practices of the 12 participants. In doing so, negotiation as form presents a deepening examination of negotiation types or forms as a means of categorising what workers do when they enact themselves as negotiators. In this way, that is, through seeking finer and finer explication of personal practice as negotiation, the worker self-in-action comes to be seen as enacting increasingly complex interactions with all the resources that identify them as workers-at-work-in-work, inseparable as person, place, and practice and, thereby, always interacting with all that constitutes their work experience.

So, this chapter presents negotiation as form as the first of three essential ways to comprehensively address the central question that guided this investigation: How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work? It does this by drawing on the personal practices of the 12 worker participants to address simultaneously the three sub-questions that analytically divide the central question. Those sub-questions are:

1. What are workers’ personal work and learning practices?
2. How can these practices be understood as negotiation practices?
3. How can negotiation practices be understood as learning?

Following this introduction, the chapter progresses through three sections. Each of the sections represents finer level of analytic distinction by which to categorise the forms of negotiation the 12 workers enacted as their personal practice in work. With each finer level of distinction comes greater complexity, greater degrees of interrelatedness among the variables of personal purpose and outcome accomplishment that are the bases on which the forms are constructed as a means of describing and explaining work-learning practice as negotiation.

The first section categorises workers’ personal practices across a very general and broad continuum of telic and atelic negotiations. Such a categorisation of
null
negotiation process. By contrast, atelic negotiations are those that do not or cannot define specific aims and objectives and, therefore, lack end points of identifiable realisation. As such, atelic negotiations are ongoing, never achieving outcomes of agreement, acquiescence, or even cessation that typify telic negotiation. Further, these two general analytic forms can be considered along a continuum of purpose and resolution that identifies processes and products of joint activity as negotiation. So, at the telic end of the continuum are positioned the very deliberate, planned and outcome-defined negotiations that typically mark deals, settlements, and agreed understandings. At the atelic end of the continuum are positioned the unintended, incidental, and obligation-free negotiations that typically mark fluid and often ill or loosely defined relationships and interactions. Both telic (i.e., targeted and resolved) and atelic (i.e., vague and unresolved) negotiations can be strong and weak, complex and simple, and significant or less so. Both are evident in the 12 participants’ personal work practices. Both characterise the nature of regular daily work that is at times highly focussed and energised by deliberate personal activity and at other times seemingly aimless and apathetic, lacking the purposefulness of personally directed activity. Figure 5.1 illustrates this continuum.

**Figure 5.1.** The telic-atelic continuum of negotiation practice.

**Telic negotiation – Hayden’s deliberate and realised practices**

To illustrate telic negotiation as personal work practice, consider Hayden who is a full-time personal trainer at HealthyTrim. Now in his mid-twenties, Hayden has been associated with the gym in various ways since he was in senior secondary school. At that time, he was undertaking a Certificate II course in fitness as part of his schooling and working part-time at a local sandwich shop. A chance meeting with the gym manager (who knew his mother as a member) offered him opportunity to discuss his
interest and certificate qualifications in fitness. This led to him securing part-time work on the reception counter at the gym. This work required his attending to the many users of the squash courts that were then a large part of the gym’s business. He also conducted the occasional training session with gym members on the gym floor. Hayden was highly appreciative of this work as it accorded with his personal interest in health and fitness and became a valued source of income that supported him through his later studies at university.

Within a year of Hayden’s starting at the gym, it was sold to the HealthyTrim company that was successfully establishing a chain of gyms under the HealthyTrim brand. With that sale came the more aggressive marketing and business methods of the new company. For Hayden, this meant both opportunity and requirement to pursue further fitness qualifications if he wanted to continue in his work with the gym. As part of the gym refurbishment, the squash courts were removed and greater emphasis was placed on more group fitness classes, more and newer exercise equipment, and more experienced personal trainers: all aimed at increasing membership and adopting the more modern and professional business approach this required. Encouraged by this change and supported by the company, Hayden undertook a part-time Certificate III course in fitness through the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system and followed this with a Certificate IV course in personal training through the Queensland Academy of Fitness. With these qualifications and associated first-aid and paramedic qualifications, Hayden was able to work as a personal trainer for the HealthyTrim company, servicing the needs of its growing membership.

The work of a personal trainer is predominantly conducted in the early hours of the morning and the later hours of the evening. So 5:00 a.m. starts and 10:00 p.m. finishes are very normal. Conducting training sessions requires consultations with clients to produce schedules and programs that fit their unique circumstances and requirements. These need to fit with the gym’s equipment, capacities, and procedures, meet legislated regulatory guidelines, and support the many kinds of client satisfaction that will sustain the business of selling training to motivated clients. Throughout the five interviews conducted through the investigation, Hayden consistently describes his work as highly complex and at times very intense. He captures something of this complexity and its structure via the metaphor of the tree – *there are different branches of the tree that you have to always be keeping an eye on and making sure you’re doing a bit of everything there – not losing sight of any*
particular one (Int#1). This simple statement offers a sense of some of the many negotiation forms in which Hayden engages through his vocational practice.

Hayden elaborates that there are three major branches to his “tree” of personal practice: (a) clients, (b) the gym, and (c) business. For each, Hayden lists a variety of tasks and responsibilities that constitute his work. Clients are those members of the gym who are exercising under the guidance of a structured program prepared for them by a personal trainer. Clients are recruited through personal approach by gym staff (e.g., receptionists, sales staff, and trainers) who are tasked with ensuring all gym members avail themselves of the free personalised program service. Other clients are self-recruited, as those what are already on programs seek alteration and updates to their existing programs. Hayden states both his fundamental motivation for work and, saliently, the overarching objective of his negotiations with clients, is to get the best results out of people, make them healthier and give them a better sense of wellbeing in their life … this is my job, getting them the results they want (Int#1). This requires approaching people, being available and open to being approached, conversation, consultation, establishing goals, planning, scheduling, monitoring, evaluating, follow up, further consultation, and so on, all the standard joint activities that negotiation process models typically identify.

For example, Greenhalgh’s (2001) 7-stage model usefully maps Hayden’s trainer-client negotiations with Matthew, a 32-year-old who has decided to join the gym following the slowly emerging realisation of himself as not getting enough exercise due to the sedentary nature of his work and a desire to rejoin a touch football team he has not played with for over two years. Table 5.1 summarises observation of Matthew’s initial consultation with Hayden using Greenhalgh’s model of negotiation.
Table 5.1
Using Greenhalgh’s 7-Stage Model to Map Negotiation of a Personal Training Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negotiation stage</th>
<th>Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Preparation</td>
<td>Following Matthew’s request for a personalised program, arrangements are made through the reception desk staff for a consultation with Hayden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Relationship building</td>
<td>Cordial introductions initiate the consultation – these are marked by sharing some personal information about enjoying the football season and how each has access to cheap seasons tickets through their respective workplaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Information gathering</td>
<td>Through a predominantly self-disclosure and response conversation. Matthew explains his work-related personal lifestyle reasons for joining the gym and Hayden outlines his years of experience and his focus on aerobic fitness as the basis of good health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Information using</td>
<td>The conversation turns to a more alternating question-response interaction. Hayden asks questions such as – do you like running, cycling, have you ever done any boxing? Matthew asks questions about such things as sprint training and weight training. Throughout are questions about time availability and exercise frequencies. Hayden and Matthew are getting specific about what they want from the eventual program. Aims and objectives are starting to be articulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Information bidding</td>
<td>This stage is marked by moving away from the meeting table and Hayden showing Matthew around the gym and explaining and demonstrating some of the equipment. Conversation is marked by Hayden outlining some suggestions about the details of the kind of aerobic and agility program he is formulating. Matthew is making specific comments about what he likes doing and would like to achieve. A clear mutual goal (one among others) of 30 minutes at 9km/hr on the treadmill is discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Closing the deal</td>
<td>Hayden and Matthew return to the table to draw up 2 x 1-hour training sessions that incorporate a variety of running and stationary bike aerobic exercises, followed by stretching, weights, and more stretching. Matthew intends attending the gym at least two evenings per week after work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Implementing the agreement</td>
<td>Hayden and Matthew return to the various pieces of equipment to be used in the program, checking levels and settings and discussing minimum and maximum frequency rates. All this is noted on a program schedule form that Hayden has been filling out. This form is received by Matthew who is shown how to record his sessions. He is also shown to a filing cabinet where he can file the form between visits to the gym.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greenhalgh’s (2001) 7-stage model usefully captures discernibly different aspects of the initial program consultation as negotiation stages. Hayden and Matthew are negotiating the construction of a personal training program, each contributing through their enactment of the 7 stages. Notable throughout the process are the inaccurate divisions of activity the model imposes on the process of mutually constructing, that is, negotiating a training program. This inaccuracy is particularly evident with the relationship-building and information-sharing activities that are constant throughout the negotiation as the conversation moves back and forth from being specifically about the program and being more about personal interests and concerns across a range of subjects that include sport, urban changes in the local area, and the spiralling costs of fuel. In seeking to describe the process at the time, Hayden descriptively reduces it to a lot of talking. He states later in interview,

*It’s a lot of communication between you and the client to see what they can and can’t do and what’s likely to cause pain and what they think is beneficial. That’s true of all clients, all of the time – yeah, most of the time that’s true – a lot of communication is required between you and your clients to see what they want, what’s going to be working for them and what’s not.* (Int #4)

Greenhalgh’s (2001) model identifies, although inaccurately, the stages and processes of Hayden’s form of integrative negotiation with Matthew. Through progressing to complete all the stages, the purposes and outcomes of this telic negotiation form are identified, pursued, and realised. Hayden and Matthew want and secure a personal training program that meets their personal circumstance and expectations. Hayden notes,

*... for Matt it’s about getting something of his old fitter self back again.* (Obs #4) *... most people want to lose weight, some blokes want to build muscle ... some come for the social atmosphere, to meet friends ... and all of them want to see and feel the signs of better health. It’s my job to make that happen.* (Int #1)

Similar telic negotiations are identified in Hayden’s interactions with the gym, the second primary branch of his tree. As an employee, he attends and contributes to monthly staff meetings, liaises with other staff in the preparation of client programs and trainer shift and session rotations, assists with equipment cleaning and checking and reception duties, and maintains systematic contact with training clients and gym members generally. These are some of his duties. All these interactive tasks constitute a lot of work. Hayden can make up to 180 telephone calls a week through the allocated times as he monitors and checks in with clients. He can be seeing three or
four new gym members per day, spending many hours in program preparation, and
showing members how to operate and use effectively the many pieces of exercise
equipment that will support their program. His work performance is reviewed and
rated every two to three months in consultation with the head of the fitness
department and the gym manager. These consultations are welcomed as opportunities
to reflect on progress and work personally with management. Additionally, there are
numerous company conducted training sessions to attend and regulatory professional
development requirements to be met in order to maintain credentials. All these
interactions constitute Hayden’s negotiations with his employer and, as much as they
represent conditions of employment, they equally represent telic negotiations marked
by the kinds of processes and products Rousseau (2005) identifies as I-deals, the
unique working arrangements that employees negotiate with their employers. These
are the when, the how, under what conditions, with what expected outcomes, and so
on, that define Hayden’s situated vocational practice. He offers an example of these
kinds of arrangements:

*I used to start later on Tuesdays and missed some Wednesday mornings all
together when I was at Uni – and that was fine, as long as everyone knew.* (Int
#2)

The third branch, that is, the business branch of Hayden’s personal practice
tree, is a more recent development of his work as a personal trainer. With the changes
to work brought by HealthyTrim, Hayden was able to take on gym members as
private clients who paid him directly for his personal service. These arrangements
grew out of the relationship he established with gym members who were seeking
more than a structured program and some follow-up monitoring of progress. Personal
clients book and pay for private sessions with their personal trainer and enjoy the
exclusive one-on-one guidance and instruction this enables. Personal trainers can
grow their private client list and effectively end up conducting an owner-operated
small business within the gym. When first embarking on this small business pathway,
personal trainers pay a share of the fee they charge to the gym. As the business grows
and personal trainers are no longer able to meet their gym employee obligations due
to insufficient time, they move to paying the gym a fixed rental. In the 12 months
prior to this research project and the subsequent 18 months of the project, Hayden
grew his private client business to the point of being a wholly functioning small
business personal trainer working from HealthyTrim as opposed to working for
HealthyTrim. This change saw him move from full-time employee doing five shifts a week to doing four, then two, then one, to none, each successive move following an increase in the number of regular private clients and new arrangements to be negotiated with the gym. At the close of the investigation he was conducting over 40 private training sessions per week and expressing aspirations of 50, together with getting into group training sessions with his clients, shared group training sessions with other personal trainers, and specifically targeted sessions with sports teams.

The growth of his private business required differently focused negotiations with clients and the gym and a more future-directed personal approach to work. These involved greater emphasis on client service and satisfaction, more awareness and understanding of HealthyTrim policy, a developing sense of self in business, and the skills and attitudes this requires. Hayden is seeing some clients two and three times a week; these are highly motivated people with clear goals and expectations.

Negotiating goals, programs, and schedules with these clients is more demanding, exacting, and complex. Some are preparing for competition (e.g., triathlons, aerobics, rowing); some are preparing for adventure challenges (e.g., high altitude trekking, canoeing); some are in rehabilitation, recovering from injury and accident; and some are very driven people, very demanding of themselves and their trainer in pursuit of personal health and performance goals. Other clients are slow to pay, regularly unable to meet scheduled times, always seeking alterations to programs, and seeking nutrition advice, and are unresponsive or uncommunicative within the negotiations that mark an effective client-trainer relationship. Hayden notes throughout the interviews conducted that being a business-man requires attending successfully to all this client diversity.

Equally, being in business full-time has meant a different relationship with the gym. The interdependencies are clear: More new gym members means more potential personal clients; more satisfied personal clients means longer gym memberships. This is an on-going business reality that Hayden appreciates as a source of both self-motivation and obligation. He states clearly,

*I’m now more responsible and accountable for myself – I’ve got no excuses now for not trying to pick up new clients, not treating them properly and I don’t mind that. I’ve got no-one else to blame. I don’t have as many obligations to the Gym because I’m running my own business – like attendance at meetings – but then, I usually go to them anyway because I feel they are going to be beneficial to me, make me a better trainer, know the systems better, help other staff members because of my knowledge and just...*
being a part of the company. I’m probably now looked on as a more senior person in the company having been here for so long and now doing 40-plus sessions a week – so I’m there a lot and that’s good for them – the company does well out of my growing business. Getting results, keeping members, really keeps them happy. First and foremost my clients are HealthyTrim members and I’m working with HealthyTrim and I’ve got to do all they expect for their members and more. (Int #3)

Through all these aspects of Hayden’s work a number of clearly telic negotiations are identifiable. The purposeful and yet conversational to and fro between trainer and client that creates a personal training program, the meetings with gym management that establish and formalise business arrangements, and the scheduling and rescheduling of training sessions that accommodate personal client circumstances are all examples of the purposeful and resolved, that is, telic negotiations that constitute Hayden’s vocational practice.

Atelic negotiation – Hayden’s accidental and unrealised practices

Equally, there are aspects of Hayden’s personal work practices that identify atelic negotiations. The client-trainer relationship, so fundamental to his work, is a clear example of the kind of ongoing negotiation that is always being mediated by the next interaction, always in development, as the newest circumstance and latest information influences the way Hayden conducts personal training sessions and understands his clients. Hayden notes,

I see some people two and three times a week – and some for years now. It’s my job to try and see how they are feeling on any given day – if they come in I can tell if they are a bit flat, it is my job to not push them too much that day, just understand what they are feeling. It also can become, you build up a rapport with these people, become a bit of a counsellor sometimes, they tell you their problems, so that’s another little tangent of my job. So, you get to know them, know a lot about them – but you never really know them, even when you think you know them, each time is different. (Int #1)

The client-trainer relationship is not fixed by the negotiated agreement identified in the personal training program that is committed to paper and on file under the gym member’s name. Nor is it secured in the smiles and handshakes that accompany the exchange of payments and receipts or the follow-up phone calls, or the alterations to schedules because preferences have changed or specific equipment is unavailable at the designated point in the program. These circumstances are but process factors of the continuous and tenuous negotiations that characterise the client-
trainer relationship. Personal clients are not contractually obligated. Throughout the interviews conducted, Hayden explains how clients can and do pull out of personal training agreements for all sorts of reasons. On some occasions he is informed, on others, not. So, client relationships can be seen as intentionally cultivated through work practice and yet never fully resolved in terms of Hayden’s confidence and capacity to act without further negotiation, without seeking more information. The client relationship is thereby atelic in nature, purposeful in some respects but more fully understood as tenuous, always in negotiation, never fully realised.

Equally, but in different ways, the relationships Hayden enacts with work colleagues are atelic in nature. Work colleague relationships are not purposively cultivated; rather, they are emergent through circumstances that lack the intentional efforts required for clients. Hayden has become close friends with some of the other trainers at the gym, not by intentional effort, but by the incidental unfolding of common interests and shared understandings that occasion the interactions of work. Hayden explains,

*I interact a lot with the other trainers for advice, we bounce a lot of ideas off, off each other – just about different training issues, nutritional issues, things like that ... we constantly have meetings, we share ideas all the time about what works, what doesn’t* (Int#1)... *we go on different courses when they come up, the 12-week challenge ... we go out together, tickets to the football, stuff like that, parties ... it’s not planned, it just happens.* (Int#3)

For Hayden, the resolutions of client-trainer relationships are not sealed in the purposeful practice of negotiating training programs. They remain elusive, always doubtful as circumstances change and re-mediate what remain tentative arrangements between people who are always getting to know each other, always getting to know what works and what doesn’t. Similarly, friendships are not the assured outcomes of interactions with colleagues, however often and congenially they may be enacted. They emerge incidentally within the necessities of work communications. As such, the processes and products that identify these co-participative interactions as forms of negotiation are best described as atelic. That is, they do not or cannot, relative to the telic forms of negotiation noted earlier, bring into conjunction deliberate personal practices and the unequivocal resolution of conflict or difference that initiated interaction. Figure 5.2 illustrates how some of Hayden’s personal practices, as noted above, can be plotted or positioned on the telic-atelic negotiation continuum.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GR</th>
<th>TP</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>CF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TELIC</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATELIC</td>
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**Figure 5.2.** Plotting Hayden’s work practice negotiations on the telic-atelic continuum.

**Telic and atelic negotiation forms and personal practice**

In ways similar to Hayden, all 12 worker participants in this investigation demonstrate personal participative practices that can be positioned along the telic-atelic continuum of purpose and resolution. For example, Sid is the manager of the academic desk-top and laboratory support team at a university’s Information Technology Services (ITS). He is about to turn 50 and, following from his near 30 years in the computing and information technology field, considers himself “a very good problem solver” in everything from the large institutional-wide installation and implementation of computing systems to the personal desk-top requirements of the individual user. He was recruited approximately four years earlier to bring his wealth of expertise to addressing the computing needs of an increasingly diverse range of research and academic staff across the university. This increased diversity was leading to more computing requirements that were increasingly less integrated into the university’s institutional-wide service provision. For example, environmental science laboratories have very different computing needs from social science criminologists, and yet all are required to work within the systems and budgetary parameters of a single, if bureaucratic, institution. Sid speaks of narrowing hardware range (i.e., keeping the different kinds of computing equipment used to a minimum), maintaining 90-99% services availability (i.e., ensuring all computing services are always operational given the needs of constant maintenance, repair, and replacement) and consistent images (i.e., the system-wide deployment of the same software). Such concerns for institutional uniformity and the efficiencies this achieves represent the aims and
objectives of Sid’s work in building and implementing what is referred to as the SOE, the standard operating environment, the common user interface platform on which the university delivers its ITS.

The day-to-day telic negotiations that characterise Sid’s work are clearly exemplified in the management and operation of the desk-top support system, known as the DMS. That system enables client academics to secure immediate emergency computing assistance via the phone when problems arise. Two staff are always manning the phones and logging and prioritising the calls as they come in. Through consultation with all staff of the team (and this can vary from 5 to 10 members depending on who is on leave, on secondment to other sections, or working on projects) Sid negotiates the roster that ensures all staff, including himself, undertake no more than one 2-week shift on the phones every 2 months. Manning the phones is considered boring work, essential and at times challenging, but it ties staff to a chair and a screen and a relentless cue of calls requiring mostly simple quick fix solutions to problems encountered by turnkey operators, that is, PC users whose knowledge only extends to turning on their computer and doing their work. Sid explains, 

The DMS work is very mundane and not all that liked by staff despite the fact that it is the work that essentially controls what gets done in the place – it sets an agenda as it were of problems that need to be addressed, solved – what can’t be immediately solved over the phone becomes the workload of the rest of the team ... so the roster gets worked out to keep it fair for everyone – it’s not that hard, we talk, who’s where, when – the team meets every day for morning tea – a ritual in a common room space away from this office – given commitments you always get at least 80% of the team at this casual meeting – which is great because the formal fortnightly team meeting can and does get cancelled from time to time due to other work commitments. (Int #3)

It is the regular consultation and open communication that Sid initiates with staff through the normal working day that secures the DMS roster as a negotiated work practice. Similarly, it is consultation with client academics in conjunction with their equipment, either face-to-face in their offices and laboratories, or remotely and over the phone, that gets the work of restoring failed computing services completed. These are two very clear examples of the telic negotiations that characterise Sid’s work practices, and negotiation models such as Greenhalgh’s (2001) enable the differentiation of information exchange and claim processes that contribute to the identifiable outcomes of agreed work arrangements (however welcomed) and problems solved (however conveniently).
Sid’s work is also characterised by atelic negotiations. Perhaps surprisingly, given the scope and significance of the ITS team’s responsibilities, Sid is not authorised to spend money. His team does not work within a designated budget that allocates funding for its operating costs. Rather, the team works within negotiated Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with its clients. These SLAs are integrative telic negotiations that Sid, together with his managers and directors, negotiate with client groups (e.g., faculties, schools, etc.) to set the parameters of ITS work. SLAs consist of such guidelines and objectives as 2-hour maximum response rates to logged computing problems, 2-hour maximum restored operations time, and fee for service charges to equipment out of manufacturers’ warranty and software outside SOE specifications. Within such parameters, Sid works to generate efficiencies through projects and proposals that are sometimes (and sometimes not) put to senior management as suggestions and solutions to current problems and anticipated future requirements. The experimentation, preparation, and presentation of these projects and proposals represent atelic negotiations. Sid explains,

*We’re constantly testing things, setting up problems, suggesting solutions, it’s – to a lot of degree, especially, a collaboration thing – and talking to the other guys, knowing where our expertise sits within our group – you just sort of throw up questions and at least get, if not the answer, leads to where you could go – it’s a share and trade kind of thing and this group has got a reasonably good relationship, everyone chips in and with a couple of other areas that we need to deal with – the audio and video fellows. Some get up, move forward, don’t get looked at, most don’t, not finished – other stuff comes up, there’s always a lot to do.* (Int #4)

Much of this testing, experimenting, and solution hunting collapses under the weight of immediate work requirements. It is mostly never concluded and thereby never fully documented. When time permits, some of this work is sufficiently articulated as a proposal that goes forward to ITS management. The majority of these proposals are shelved. Such work processes and outcomes represent clear examples of the atelic negotiations that characterise the continuing and unresolved aspects of Sid’s and the ITS team’s work. Sid and the ITS team do not consider this work and effort as wasted, but more as Sid states, *not finished*. Some of this effort also assists immediate work but, as Sid explains throughout the interviews, the levels of this *useful playing*, however much it is motivated and supported by the strong sense of meeting needs and creating efficiencies, are declining. This decline continues as greater efficiencies in computing systems enable more and different work to be taken up and the capacity to
pre-empt and influence management decisions is lost to increasing standardisation across the institutional systems. Sid summarises,

*We don’t do as much test bench stuff as we used to, well some, we don’t need to, but a lot of that didn’t amount to much anyway – not wasteful, just not readily useful.* (Int #4)

Another of the 12 participants in the investigation, Robert, junior partner at Platinum restaurant, reports similar practices in his dealings with catering customers and restaurant staff. When contacted by potential catering customers, Robert enacts a familiar routine that closely resembles the Lewicki et al. (2006, p. 115) model of negotiation preparation that was outlined in Chapter 2. Through, typically, one or two phone conversations, a face-to-face meeting at the restaurant or the function site, some kitchen trials (with or without other staff), and a firmly costed and detailed proposal committed to paper, Robert negotiates the business deals of catering private functions away from the restaurant. This is his work: running the outside catering arm of the restaurant business. Table 5.2 summarises what Robert describes as the *standard procedures* that identify such telic negotiations against the nine phases of the Lewicki et al. model.
### Table 5.2

**Robert’s negotiation of outside catering functions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negotiation Phase</th>
<th>Negotiation Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Defining the issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assembling the issues and defining the bargaining mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Defining interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Knowing limits and alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Setting targets and openings</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Assessing constituents and the social context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Analysing the other party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Presenting and defending issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Deciding what protocols to follow</td>
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</table>
The communication and information sharing that establish the bargaining mix, weighing and prioritising business interests against customer expectation, setting price points and alternatives, justifying proposals and accommodating compromise and finally detailing an agreed function schedule are all essential processes that lead to the execution of a transacted catering function. Such business is a clear example of the telic negotiations that constitute Robert’s vocational practice. Other telic negotiations will contribute to the successful operation of a catering function. Deals with equipment hire companies, purchases with a range of food suppliers, and arrangements with additional casual staff are but some of the important telic negotiations that combine to complete the function.

At 26 years of age, Robert demonstrates a high level of expertise in his work. However, that work is not restricted to catering. As a part-owner of the restaurant, he enacts numerous roles that require him to do whatever is needed at the time: dishwashing, waiting, cooking, food preparation, staff hiring and firing, training, purchasing, book keeping, and menu costing are but some of the many tasks and responsibilities Robert lists as his work.

Within all of this, the kinds of atelic negotiations that characterise Robert’s vocational practice are illustrated in his role as business partner and as a staff manager, responsible for the hiring and training of restaurant and catering staff. In terms of his overall role as junior partner, Robert is never assured of what he will be required to do on any given day, never confident that what has been planned will actually happen. In essence, his work as part-owner of the restaurant, because of the breadth and depth of activities undertaken and the unpredictable nature of these activities, is most reasonably described as the atelic negotiation of his practice. Robert explains,

> Well, my role changes, I’m a very transient sort of a person in my, I don’t really have a set position where – I don’t just cook, or I don’t just work on the floor, or all the corporate catering, or make sure all the staff are organised …yeah, I would just say diverse and also very flexible, that there’s no real end to the role that you play obviously being a part-owner of a business, so you have to be everywhere but obviously you can’t be everywhere at once, so, it’s very hard to put a thumb print on what I actually do, or to actually put it all under a category or anything like that, it really depends on what’s going on … It’s well, working hands on, you, when you’re actually here all the time, obviously you can foresee a lot of, I suppose, incidents which may arise, so you obviously get in before that happens and obviously if it does happen, if you don’t see it, then you just get in and try and bail it out. (Int #1)
The bail out in a role that has no real end summarises Robert’s personal practice as small business owner. In the short term bail it out implies successfully solving immediate problems. But, these problems seem never ending and, most often, short-term solutions are insufficient to the needs of the business. Robert states in interview, sure I can jump in and wash dishes but it doesn’t change the fact we need a dish washer we haven’t got. As much as Robert lists many activities that characterise his work, he lists many incidents of having to do and be everything that is needed. These bail outs are as diverse as consoling and counselling staff, settling fights between aggressive customers, mechanical repairs on broken-down delivery vans, and cleaning toilets during service. It is this diversity of necessity, ill defined and always unexpected, evolving over the three plus years of Robert’s partnership in the restaurant, that identifies the atelic nature of the negotiations that constitute his practice and importantly, his identity as such a practitioner. Robert summarises, I used to be a chef and I still am a chef, but now I’m a business man and I’m still not sure what that’s about – I guess you just have to improvise, I do – there’s always things that pop up at the 11th hour that you don’t expect and, and it’s quite exciting sort of being on edge like that, that you actually have to perform under, quite a high level of stress and you still have to perform, you can’t just go, oh, this is too stressful and walk off, so you have to make things work, there’s no out. (Int #2)

In as much as Robert is discussing the unpredictable demands of his work, he is also discussing the atelic negotiation of his vocational identity as a businessman. This vocational identity negotiation, premised on the necessities of work, is ongoing (Etelapelto & Saarinen, 2006) and is founded in the interactions (e.g., with people, tasks, events, etc.) that constitute work (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These multiple tasks, roles, and responsibilities of running a business, often accidental, often unresolved in any terms beyond being immediate and superficial, together constitute the atelic negotiations of Robert’s vocational identity, that is, his coming to understand and define himself and his practice in work. Holistically, they are atelic because they lack the personal purpose and realised intentionality of Robert’s personally identifiable goals. He has to perform, has to do what he has to do, not because he wants to, but because the business will fail if he does not.

Other atelic negotiations characterise Robert’s coming to understand his staff and how best to support their training needs. The restaurant is constantly looking for staff, particularly reliable wait staff, who can respond quickly to the on-call demands.
of the restaurant’s fluctuating levels of activity. Developing a pool of such staff requires careful management. This means accepting nearly all applications (within reason) from the numerous university students living in the area who contact the restaurant looking for casual work. Training them needs to be efficient and ensuring they receive enough work to remain on call (i.e., available to work in response to a phone call that may come only hours before work commences) demands careful staff rostering. Training casual staff is one of Robert’s roles and in answer to questions about the difficulties of this work, he explains something of his efforts to establish some common ground on which he can base training these staff:

> Probably the hardest thing that I would find at the moment is actually how people think – that’s the biggest thing that I am going through now, is trying to work out people, is when we get new staff, you’ve got to try and analyse how they think, how they work, and you need to try and find a way in, you need to be able to find a common interest with them, or a way to stimulate them to a certain degree or you can actually work along beside them and actually work out why they would do it this way or why they would not do it that way or the way to try and sort of find a common interest with them, it’s, I can’t really put that in words because it’s obviously very different for each person, sort of probably along the lines of trial and error of what we are trying to achieve here, getting them trained. (Int #1)

It is this trial and error practice, this *trying to work people out*, that evidences the atelic negotiations of Robert’s seeking to better understand how his staff should be best trained. With some, he is direct and instructional (e.g., do it like this), with others more friendly and supportive (e.g., how have you done this in the past), and with others more expectant of initiative (e.g., do it anyway you can). Through the numerous investigation interviews, Robert notes the more miss than hit of his training efforts and how there are many occasions when his efforts prove futile, never achieving the outcomes he works towards. Robert summarises,

> When you’re trying to train somebody – there’s a lot of how you’re teaching them and a lot of how they’re picking it up – so there’s a massive shortfall there – a mixture of theirs and yours. That’s a big up and down. You can be telling someone how to do something until you’re black and blue in the face but if you’re not teaching them the right way or you’re not showing them all the easy procedures to get the job done, all that effort, that strong determination, is useless. You never know what they’re going to ask you and if you’re trying to teach someone something, you need to come up with an answer to whatever question they ask – there’s the shortfall where you lose their attention and they won’t pick up what you’re trying to show them if they lose their respect of you or lose the actual point of what you’re trying to do. (Int#4)
From Robert’s perspective, not all his training efforts are without positive results. Not all these negotiations are atelic. Some are clearly resolved as successful and suitable staff are both secured and retained. Some are resolved as unsuccessful and applicants told their services will not be required, or newly appointed staff find themselves with fewer and eventually no phone calls for work. By contrast, sufficient of these training sessions result in some relatively reasonable and reliable staff persisting in practices that Robert feels he has repeatedly tried to alter to bring them more into line with what he instructs and expects. In this way, through repeated effort over time spent in training that does not result in what Robert aims for, these negotiations remain atelic. For him, such training negotiations remain unresolved, remain on-going, characterised by no realisation of the goals being pursued.

These few brief accounts of some of the personal work practices of Robert, Sid, and Hayden, together with their personal reflections on the purposes, motivations, and outcomes of these practices, offer opportunity to examine their activities within the interactions that constitute work practices as forms of negotiation. These forms are identifiable through negotiation processes and products that characterise degrees of purposeful, goal-oriented activity. Telic negotiations typify those interactions that progress from directed effort and result in perceptibly identifiable outcomes, positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable. Contrastingly, atelic negotiations are those interactions that do not accomplish such identifiable outcomes and/or follow from incidental or occurrent engagement in work activity. Illustrations of each have been outlined as the personal work practices and understandings of the three workers, Robert, Sid, and Hayden. They included the telic negotiated production of schedules, agreements, and solutions to problems encountered through the regular practices of work. Equally, they include the ongoing and unresolved atelic negotiations of relationships, future work projects, and vocational identities that also characterise the regular practices of work. As outlined, such telic and atelic negotiations can be identified along a continuum of personal purpose and resolution as more or less telic, and more or less atelic, where personal purpose and resolution are perceptible understandings, intentions, and outcomes of personal practice. Doing so is to identify workers’ personal practice as negotiation form at a first and general level of distinction or analytic refinement.
Four contingent negotiations – A second-level distinction of negotiation forms

The general or first-level categorisation of negotiation as form identifies a simple dichotomy or continuum of telic and atelic negotiations as elaborated above. A second and finer level of analytic distinction identifies what are referred to here as the four contingent negotiation forms: contingent because the enactment of these forms and, therefore, the categorisation of this enactment as one type of negotiation or another, is dependent on the range and fluctuating nature of circumstances (e.g., personal, situational, social, etc.) that influence personal practice in work.

So, following from the first level of negotiation categorisation, negotiation forms can be conceptualised and mapped through separating the single continuum of purpose and resolution into two continuums – one of purpose and the other of resolution. As Billett (2001a, b, & c, 2006a & b) and Fuller and Unwin (2004) describe, all work is purposeful and goal directed. The degree to which this is consciously and effort-fully enacted as personal work practice can be captured along a continuum of purpose that positions workers’ deliberate and highly intentional engagement at one end and workers’ accidental and unplanned engagement at the other. This particular end of the continuum is not characterised by activity that is purposeless but rather by activity that is less specifically purposeful, less directed to securing cognisant aims and objectives.

Similarly, the degree to which the goals of work activity can be understood as achieved or as yet unachieved can be captured along a continuum of resolution that positions workers’ perception of their continuing or concluded engagement in securing their goals. At one end of the continuum, engagement is resolved; goals are either knowingly secured or not secured; agreements, favourable or otherwise, are reached; understandings, conclusive and binding or vague and temporary are accepted; as closure marks the cessation of engagement and the conclusion of negotiations. At the other end, negotiation is unresolved and personal activity and engagement continues in pursuit of overcoming and resolving the conflict or problem that initiated negotiations. These two continuums of purpose and resolution can be understood as dimensions of co-participative practice and utilised as the horizontal and vertical axis of a matrix that can map workers’ personal work negotiations. This matrix is referred to here as the Personal Work Negotiation Matrix. This matrix represents the foundation for identifying and categorising the second-level negotiation forms referred to as contingent negotiation forms. Figure 5.3 illustrates the
foundational Personal Work Negotiation Matrix formed using the two intersecting continuums of purpose and resolution.

Figure 5.3. The Personal Work Negotiation Matrix.

Such a matrix enables the mapping and analysis of individuals’ work as the amalgamation of all the perceptibly significant negotiations by which that work is personally constructed, and not exclusively as a static snapshot of a particular activity time or event, but as the personally perceived dynamic flux of prioritised joint activities that identify individuals’ work as personally negotiated social practice. Figure 5.4 illustrates the personal work negotiation matrix and how the telic and atelic negotiations of Robert (R), Sid (S) and Hayden (H), as they were outlined earlier, can be positioned within it.
Figure 5.4. Mapping Hayden (H), Sid (S), and Robert’s (R) telic and atelic negotiations using The Personal Work Negotiation Matrix.

**The four quadrants of the Personal Work Negotiation Matrix**

As can be seen in Figure 5.3, the personal work negotiation matrix identifies four primary quadrants.

**Quadrant 1 – Realised negotiations**

This quadrant identifies those telic negotiations that can be described as deliberately enacted and resolved, that is, as intentionally undertaken and concluded as settled. For example, Robert’s negotiated catering schedule/proposals are purposefully and collaboratively prepared and either accepted or declined by the customer with the result that the function either does or does not go ahead. Similarly, Hayden’s personal training programs are trainer-client negotiated agreements that are settled and enacted through consultations that conclude with the completed program. This form of negotiation is referred to here as realised because the actions of its enactment are deliberate and the outcomes accomplished (whether they be perceived favourably or
not) align directly with the purposes pursued. Such negotiations are typically characterised by the kinds of processes and products outlined in the various negotiation models and theories noted earlier (e.g., Greenhalgh 2001, Lewicki et al., 2006). They are the deals, the settlements, the agreements that are reached through purposefully directed collaborative processes. They are clearly telic negotiations.

**Quadrant 2 – Discovered negotiations**

This quadrant identifies those negotiations that can be described as accidentally occurring and yet leading to some recognisable and mutually agreed outcome, that is, as unintentionally enacted and yet accepted as settled or concluded when the realisation of an outcome is unexpectedly discovered. These negotiations cannot be so easily described as either telic or atelic. Through their enactment in work practices they indicate aspects of both telic and atelic negotiation forms and present as a kind of hybrid that is not easily defined by the individual concerned. For example, Hayden considers his emerging friendships with particular work colleagues as unplanned (and, therefore, atelic) and yet very welcome and accepted outcomes (and, therefore, telic) of his necessary work-based interactions with other trainers. This form of negotiation is referred to here as discovered because it is the outcome (positive or negative), when revealed as incidental to undirected effort and activity, that characterises this negotiation form.

**Quadrant 3 – Concealed negotiations**

This quadrant identifies those negotiations that are unanticipated and on-going and so capture the work practice necessity of dealing with the unexpected, the non-routine, the genuinely new, perhaps the incomprehensible, for which there can be at best only superficial or temporary easing of initiating conflict. These atelic negotiations are both unintentional and incomplete, accidental and inconclusive. Robert illustrates this form of negotiation through his accounts of the unexpected work that attends his role as business owner and the *quick fix* solutions that do not successfully resolve the problems they identify and address. Robert’s developing understanding of himself as businessman-restaurateur is positioned within this quadrant. Despite the fact of his proven capacities to solve the unexpected problems he encounters in work he is less aware of his emerging vocational identity as successful small business owner. This form of negotiation is referred to here as concealed because such negotiations are
hidden from awareness, disguised in a sense, as co-participative practice that in
directly addressing its immediate conflict is inadvertently addressing other less
conspicuous issues and concerns. Such issues and concerns are effectively concealed
by the demands of immediacy and so the negotiations with self and other resources
brought into this activity are similarly concealed and yet enacted.

**Quadrant 4 – Protracted negotiation**

This quadrant identifies those atelic negotiations that can be described as deliberately
enacted and yet never resolving in ways that complement the effort and desire
invested, that is, outcomes are pursued as intended and yet remain unachieved. For
example, Sid’s seeking to find solutions to computing problems as yet experienced
and looking for efficiencies that could possibly generate new work opportunities for
the ITS team are work practices that may or may not find resolution in decisions to
continue or abandon efforts, or outcomes that mark closure as failure or success.
When they do not achieve such resolution, that is, when they simply cease due to
neglect, they characterise work continuities that seemingly amount to nothing despite
the personal purpose that initiated them. This form of negotiation is referred to here as
protracted because such negotiation activities are deliberate and continuing, on-going
in that they do not or have not achieved any identifiable realisation of goals. To
achieve such goals is to become realised, resolved in identifiable outcome and
accomplishment. Continuing to act, to interact, to persist without such
accomplishment, is in a sense, hopeful, desirous of imagined and anticipated
outcomes. Doing so is to engage more or less deliberately in protracted negotiation.

The four negotiation forms identified, that is (a) realised, (b) discovered, (c)
concealed, and (d) protracted, are best understood as personally contingent
negotiation forms, more than simply contextually or situationally contingent. This is
because these negotiation forms are contingent on the personal perception of purpose
and outcome as felt and enacted by the individuals concerned within the perspective
they are taking on their own effort and activity. And this is because personal
participative practice is first and foremost personal. When Hayden first comprehends
that his relationships with particular colleagues are best described as friendships and
not collegiate acquaintance, the realisation is his and his subsequent actions and
understandings of these actions are altered by this personal discovery. Similarly,
Robert and Sid personally evaluate and categorise their work practices in non-routine
activities as not leading to clearly identifiable and desired outcomes and so remain as unresolved, despite what others may see as concluded (even if negatively so) negotiations. It is this contingency on personal understanding of practice that makes these negotiation forms useful in identifying personal contributions within the co-participative practices that constitute work.

As illustrated, the four quadrants of the personal work negotiation matrix offer uniquely separable conceptual spaces that map the worker participants’ understandings of different negotiation forms they enact through their work. For the 12 workers in this investigation their negotiations are not primarily considered in terms of process, stage, and outcome practices that mark common understandings of negotiation (see e.g., Lewicki et al., 2006; Rousseau, 2005; Saner, 2005; Zartman, 1988). This is illustrated by participants’ understanding of their negotiation activities as practices of conversation, instruction, experimentation, and self-discovery, rather than bargaining and claiming value. These practices are work practices considered by the workers concerned, more fully, in the terms of collaborative negotiation activities noted by Solomon (1999) and Wenger (1998); that is, in terms of work practices that are about connecting disparate features such as catering functions and broken down vehicles, clients’ fitness aspirations and capacities and their expectations of what trainers can achieve for them, and immediate computing solutions to problems that have not yet arisen. Similarly, it is about considering personal work practices and meanings of work as shared collective experience. This occurs when, for example, Hayden accommodates his client’s less effective ways of doing things when he is instructing them and when Sid accepts his client academics’ personal needs when developing computing solutions that best suit them even when Sid privately considers these preferred solutions inferior to what his expertise could develop for them. Such accommodations are about what Hayden describes as pleasing clients and so supporting and respecting their satisfaction as contributors to the negotiations that constitute working with and for others. However, and importantly, the 12 worker-participants predominantly considered their negotiations in terms of personal perceptions of purpose and agency invested in what may or may not emerge as acknowledged outcomes that directly result from their personal activities.

To illustrate, Robert particularly, but by no means exclusively within the group of 12 participants, views some of his successes in dealing with the numerous unexpected problems his work generates as both unintentional and unresolved, that is,
as concealed negotiations (Quadrant 3). Dealing with vehicle breakdowns through the
time pressures of meeting catering function deadlines are aspects of work that identify
drivers and delivery activities, not chefs, and not businessmen. Similarly, dealing with
power failures and household electricity circuits during catering functions is the
domain of electricians and homeowners, not chefs and caterers. These work situations
engage Robert in telic negotiations (i.e., deliberate actions that successfully overcome
the immediate problem or conflict encountered) with equipment and systems with
which he is becoming increasingly familiar. However, his perception and
understanding of these negotiations is as atelic negotiations that characterise an
incongruity between what he needs to do and what he should be doing. What he needs
to do is deal with issues (e.g., delivery vans and electricity circuits) that are well
outside what he accepts as his vocational practice that identifies what he should be
doing, that is, cooking and serving guests. What Robert does and who he sees himself
to be are personally incongruous.

To accommodate these seeming anomalies, the contradictory categorisation of
negotiation forms as both telic and atelic and the possibilities of understanding
realised negotiations as concealed negotiations, is to understand negotiation forms as
compounds of negotiations. That is, the contingent negotiation forms are personally
constructed of other forms of negotiation that combine or compound to categorise
workers’ personal practice as one contingent form or another. To examine these
compound negotiation forms is to make analytic distinctions at yet finer levels of
categorisation, that is, at a third level of distinction.

**Compound and nested negotiations – A third-level distinction of negotiation
forms**

As the 12 workers in this investigation illustrate through their personal participative
practices, the four contingent negotiation forms, as outlined above, are not discrete
categories. Each category is not fully and distinctly separable from the others and so
defining a unique set of enacted meanings and circumstances. Rather, the four
contingent negotiation forms are analytic categories that capture the nature of the
primary purposes and resolutions enacted and accomplished through workers’
personal practices as they engage in their work. There is a need to account for what
might be called secondary and tertiary purposes and resolutions that underlie workers’
engagement in work. For example, throughout the interviews conducted, Hayden
indicates numerous reasons for doing what he does in terms of the immediate needs of the situation at hand, his personal aspirations for a future in the fitness industry, the considerations necessary to meet the demands of his business, the gym’s business, his clients’ expectations, and so on. All these reasons and the negotiations on and from which they emerge as purposes and resolutions of personal practice, identify a range of contingent negotiation forms that can be seen as compounded within what could appear as a single contingent negotiation form. Equally, the complexity and intensity of workers’ engagement in the negotiations that constitute their participative practice, as Billett (2001a, b, & c, 2004, 2006a & b) and Fuller and Unwin (2004) indicate, is dependent on the kind of work undertaken and the context in which this work is conducted. The four contingent forms of negotiation offer means of examining and describing this intensity and complexity in conjunction with the fluctuating situational demands and personal perceptions that characterise work. So, work is always more than it seems, that is, always enacted or negotiated on numerous levels of personal and situational significance that identify and acknowledge numerous integrated purposes and resolutions in the conduct of a seemingly single activity.

To illustrate, Robert describes how all of what he does and achieves in work can amount to getting nothing done, a seeming contradiction where accomplishments of one type or other are viewed as failures of another kind. As noted earlier, Robert mentioned how getting the dishes done through service did not solve the problem of needing a dishwasher. In the terms of negotiation categories, Robert explains how many of the telic negotiations that constitute his work practice can compound or integrate as atelic negotiation, that is, how accomplishing something can seem like accomplishing nothing. Robert states,

>You’re always trying to get the little bits and pieces done as you go and it takes a long time to do anything – that’s the sheer frustration of it – that you don’t just have one task to do – you have to think about or help so many other people ... There’s no real time or opportunity to stop, have a seat and think, what have I been doing for the last half hour ... I give it everything I’ve got but I always feel I’m behind with something – whether its quoting, invoicing, staff rosters, food orders, talking to staff who have been wanting to talk to you for the last week, the book-keeper and the signatures required for BAS statements, or whatever – you always have something to do, you’re always finishing something that’s never really finished, so everything gets done but it’s never really done. (Int #4)

This perception of work accomplishments as ceaseless and yet unresolved activity is common across all 12 participants. For Robert, mapping this contradiction
across the personal work negotiation matrix requires the nesting of his acknowledged and accepted telic negotiations as compounding elements of a more broadly perceived atelic negotiation. For example, and in terms of Robert’s seeing himself as a businessman in the making (i.e., his moving from personally identifying as a chef to identifying more fully as a restaurateur), Robert categorises his resolution of work tasks such as attending to vehicle breakdowns that threaten the success of catering functions as unresolved aspects of his becoming a successful businessman. More than seeing these kinds of work activities as protracted negotiations (i.e., as always requiring effort and yet never being resolved – Quadrant 4), Robert sees these kinds of work activities as concealed negotiations, that is, as enactments of a businessman who does not yet see himself and the problems he addresses through work as those of a businessman engaged in business. Capturing this work activity as perception of the self-in-action engaged in negotiating work as collective task with colleagues, equipment, business concerns, and personal capacities and understandings, is made possible by seeing these negotiations as compounding or nested. That is, a realised negotiation may be better understood as being part of and contributory to a more personally perceptible concealed negotiation. In this sense, the realised negotiation can be said to be nested within the concealed negotiation form and so be a compounding element of that concealed negotiation form. The compounding nature of work activities as forms of negotiation practice is illustrated in Figure 5.4 that depicts the personal work negotiation matrix of Robert’s understanding of his vocational practice as businessman/restaurateur.

In Figure 5.5, Robert’s understanding of himself as businessman is constructed, in part, of two embedded or nested sets of contingent negotiations presented as negotiation matrices of (a) Robert the catering manager (RCM), and (b) Robert the small-business owner problem solver (RPS). The RCM matrix identifies some of the negotiations that constitute Robert’s personal practices in his role as catering manager. As illustrated, this work engages him in the realised negotiations of generating schedules, conducting food service at functions, and the protracted negotiations of training staff. The RPS negotiation matrix identifies some of the realised negotiations that constitute what Robert identifies as the incidental (as opposed to planned and pursued) and incomplete (as opposed to resolved and concluded) concealed negotiations of the yet to be realised businessman. So, for Robert, the self-in-action is multiply constituted in a range of nested negotiations that
are enacted as personal participative practice across varying levels of meaning and significance.

Figure 5.5. Robert’s personal work negotiation matrix as a businessman/restaurateur.

This limited illustration of some of the kinds of negotiation forms that constitute Robert’s developing personal vocational practice as businessman indicates how the negotiation matrix enables individuals’ work to be viewed as the compounded accumulation of the range of perceptibly significant negotiations by which it is personally constructed. Robert’s personal practices are nested sets of different contingent negotiation forms. As illustrated, the protracted negotiations of staff training (so defined because too often, and despite Robert’s repeated efforts to correct, some staff continue to perform certain tasks incorrectly) are accepted as realised negotiations because a negative or undesirable resolution is acknowledged as a resolution, as an outcome or accomplishment of the effort invested in the activity.
Similarly, the realised negotiation of attending to restaurant purchase invoices (so defined because they are concluded when the cheque is posted, the invoice filed as paid, and the necessary entries in the book keeping system are completed) is considered as a concealed negotiation because such activities contribute to as yet unresolved and incidental practices of a businessman.

Similar nestings or compounding negotiations pertain to all 12 participants who variously discuss their work in ways that identify their negotiations with others, with the materials of their practice and with the ideas and meanings that underpin their understandings of their practice, as negotiation forms that are generally telic or atelic and more specifically as realised, discovered, concealed, or protracted. Some of these many compounded negotiations are presented in Table 5.3.
Table 5.3

*Examples of Nested Negotiation Forms Compounded within Contingent Negotiation Forms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Contingent negotiation form</th>
<th>Nested negotiation form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hayden – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>Discovered negotiation – friendships</td>
<td>Realised negotiation – staff group ticket purchase to attend sporting match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid – University ITS</td>
<td>Protracted negotiation – discontinued project</td>
<td>Realised negotiation – work on project ceases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert – Platinum</td>
<td>Realised negotiation – staff training outcomes</td>
<td>Protracted negotiation – increased training that does not improve staff performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh – Fire Service</td>
<td>Concealed negotiation – respected and highly experienced fire fighter</td>
<td>Discovered negotiation – feedback from colleagues of the respect they hold for his proven capacities despite junior rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>Realised negotiation – legitimate authority of manager’s position</td>
<td>Discovered negotiation – growing awareness of staff willingness to accept her decisions without question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie – Platinum</td>
<td>Discovered negotiation – staff training competence</td>
<td>Protracted negotiation – continually reminding staff of the correct procedures necessary to good performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce – Fire Service</td>
<td>Realised negotiation – staff personal and career counselling</td>
<td>Discovered negotiation – through years of simply talking with colleagues and offering valued support in times of need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob – University ITS</td>
<td>Discovered negotiation – strong rapport with academic researchers</td>
<td>Realised negotiation – developing efficient solutions to client computing problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The few illustrative examples offered in Table 5.2 indicate the common experience of the 12 participants’ contingent negotiation forms comprising compounds of nested negotiation forms. For example, Bob (listed last in the table above), one of the senior staff working within the University ITS group, acknowledges that the strong rapport with academic clients that supports his work of solving their computing problems is a negotiation process and outcome discovered through the many realised negotiations that constitute his creating solutions to the
problems he is notified of through his work. Essentially, he has discovered through his negotiations with clients, that his ways of approaching client problems and his awareness of their needs at the time (e.g., sometimes immediate in that a quick fix will do for now and at other times more demanding of lasting solutions that ensure the problem is fully rectified) evidence a client appreciated respect for the varying nature of academics’ work. This client appreciation and respect, negotiated through numerous encounters, has generated a rapport that enables him a personal autonomy, enacted as decision-making on clients’ behalf, that supports the conduct of his work. His clients trust him and this negotiated trust now supports and enables his personal practice. He states,

*I’ve learned that those who know me and my abilities to fix their IT problems, trust me enough to let me get on with it. I don’t have to keep telling them what I’m doing and asking them if it’s OK. I mean, I do that mostly anyway – but they know I’ll get the job done quickly and with as little fuss as possible. That’s a big deal for some of these science wet-labs where their experiments can be ruined by faulty computing equipment.* (Int#5)

For Bob, as for Hayden, Robert, Sid and the other participants, the personal negotiation matrix of work enables the contingent negotiations and the nested negotiation forms that comprise their personal work practice to be mapped and categorised in terms of the degrees of purpose and resolution enacted. So, these contingent negotiation forms are categories of negotiation that capture the degrees of purpose and resolution that the 12 participants evidence in their personal work practices. Further, these forms are meaningful in different ways for each of the participants. The illustration of Robert’s perceptions of himself as businessman outlined above begins to reveal the extent to which purpose and resolution are relative parameters of personal practice, personal understandings of self-in-action. In this way, these negotiation forms stand as compounding activity elements of personal practice.

**Negotiation forms and personal learning in work**

In elaborating negotiation as form, above, three levels of analytic refinement or distinction have been used to categorise workers’ personal practice as forms of negotiated participation or engagement in the collective activity that is work. These three levels of distinction generate three levels of negotiation categorisation that identify increasingly complex negotiation forms as description and explanation of how workers’ personal practices can be differentiated across understandings of
purpose enacted, and outcomes accomplished, in work. The three levels of categorisation represent (a) telic and atelic negotiations, (b) the four contingent negotiations, and (c) compounded and nested negotiations.

**Telic and atelic negotiation forms**
The first and most general of these levels distinguishes those negotiations that can be categorised as tending towards realisable outcomes accomplished through purposeful activity and those that can be categorised by the opposite tendency, that is, negotiations that do not seem to realise outcomes and are not intentionally pursued by the engagement of those who enact them. These, respectively, telic and atelic negotiations enable learning viewed as participation in goal-directed activity (Billett, 2001a, b, & c, 2004, 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to be described and explained as negotiation in ways that draw on the familiar processes and outcomes associated with negotiation in the standard or common sense. That is, processes of enquiry, information gathering, proposing, and testing explanatory understandings and evaluations, and so on, that sit at the heart of negotiation models as outlined by those such as Lewicki et al. (2006) and Greenhalgh (2001), are also seen as participatory learning processes outlined by learning theorists such as Kolb (1984), Mezirow (2000), Illeris (2002), and Jarvis (2004, 2009). However, and beyond the common sense understandings of negotiation that generically insist on distributive and integrative outcomes, the telic-atelic continuum enables learning to be understood as negotiation that is on-going and discontinuous, marked by familiar common processes and yet unmarked by familiar outcomes because they remain unresolved and tending more so to remain unresolved as part of normal work activity. If all participation is negotiation (as Lave & Wenger (1991), Billett (2004), and Jarvis (2006) advance), then there needs be forms of negotiation that do not resolve, positively or negatively. Atelic negotiations, as evidenced by the 12 participants in this investigation, conceptualise such negotiations.

**The four contingent negotiation forms**

The second level of refinement utilised to distinguish forms of negotiation enacted as personal practice in work, identifies four different contingent forms of negotiation. They are (a) realised, (b) discovered, (c) concealed, and (d) protracted. These four forms of negotiation enable the personal practice of participation in work, and
subsequently learning in work, to be mapped across dimensions of more or less purpose and more or less resolution. Doing so enables learning to be viewed as negotiation in the common sense or generic understanding of the term, as realised negotiation. Realised negotiation, as indicated by the personal practices of the 12 worker-participants in this investigation, is an everyday occurrence of work. Realised negotiation is the encountering of a problem, bringing skills and resources to that problem in personal engagement with it, and resolving that problem with solution. This is the personal practice of work, the negotiation that is familiar participation evidenced by the self-in-action and the outcomes of this activity. However, other forms of negotiation are necessary to describe and explain the kinds of personal practices and outcomes that do not neatly fit this common form of engagement. Not all work activity results in identifiable consequence, not all activity is directed by clear intent, not all activity is premised on the levels of awareness the common sense understanding of negotiation implies. Work is more complex, more subtle and personally nuanced, than realised negotiations can account for. To account for this subtlety and complexity other forms of negotiation are enacted. Learning through co-participation in collective activity, like negotiation with self, others, and contextual resources, can be accidental and discovered, beyond immediate awareness and concealed, repetitive and seemingly leading nowhere or even away from anticipated results despite best efforts. Learning, as such and in terms of negotiation that is beyond the limitations of generic meanings, can be the process and product of discovered negotiation, concealed negotiation, and protracted negotiation. Taken together, as participation that is more or less purposeful and more or less resolved, these four contingent forms of negotiation comprise the personal work negotiation matrix that enables workers’ negotiations to be holistically categorised, mapped, and accounted for as forms of negotiation.

**Compounded and nested negotiation forms**
The third level of refinement used introduces temporal and personal perception issues that bring concepts of personal priority (Archer, 2000), significance, and value to accounts of personal practice as forms of negotiation. Workers enact themselves-in-action and account for this in ways that seem to contradict the logic of the personal work negotiation matrix and the four contingent negotiation forms. In figuring their worlds of activity (Holland et al., 1998), making sense of their actions and what
accrues from this engagement, the 12 participants in this investigation account their experiences, their learning, their participation, as compounded of numerous forms of negotiation dependent on the perspective taken. For example, seemingly realised negotiations, as processes deliberately enacted and resolutions realised, may be contributory to other meanings of engagement that hold stronger or weaker, that is, different, connotations for the individual involved. These kinds of anomalies can be accounted for using nested forms of negotiation as compounds of participatory meaning. So, as illustrated through the personal practices of Robert and Bob briefly outlined above, solving immediate problems may be of more or less significance in other considerations of personal participation and the meaning this holds. Individual workers figure their worlds and position themselves within those contexts, in part, through the ways they make meaning, that is, compound the negotiation forms in which they engage. Learning, therefore, as meaningful engagement in participative practice, as figuring personal worlds through negotiating meaning (Holland et al., 1998, Wenger, 1998) is, in part, the-self-in-action personally compounding their negotiations, nesting meanings, that make sense of the negotiations enacted.

So, learning can be seen as negotiation when workers’ personal practices are described and explained as forms of negotiation that can account for the complexity of participation in collective activity and personal perception of that participation as individually meaningful. Reliance on generic or common sense understandings of negotiation is insufficient to this task because they focus primarily on processes of interaction directed solely towards outcomes of realised resolution. Such generic meanings have their uses is describing and explaining learning as participation and personal learning as engagement in such participation, however, these uses are limited and restrictive of the broader use to which negotiation as form can be utilised in illuminating the nature of learning in and for work as negotiation.

Negotiation as form is but one dimension of the three necessary to fully conceptualising learning as negotiation. As advanced above, negotiation forms can compound as the bases of individuals’ meaning making and engagement in participation. Together, the four contingent negotiation forms and their nestings as activity within participation in work may be considered to constitute a personal context or frame of work as personally negotiated practice. The following Chapter 6 elaborates this understanding as the second of the three dimensions of negotiation advanced in this thesis. That dimension is negotiation as frame.
Chapter 6

Negotiation as Frame

This chapter elaborates the second of the three dimensions of negotiation, that is, negotiation as frame, as a means of describing and explaining personal learning in and for work. As advanced in Chapter 3, the concept of negotiation needs to be understood in terms of relational sets of conditions and mediations that constitute the sociocultural context of activity. Such understanding goes beyond viewing negotiation as phased processes of interaction that lead to recognisable accomplishments such as agreements and contracts. Instead, negotiation needs to be understood in terms of contextual conditions that mediate activity and its enactment. In this way, negotiation stands as a kind of meta-activity: an action set of relational properties. As such, it is conceptually more than a range of different kinds of interactions between people and the many resources of their particular context. It is in and of itself an activity context that both mediates participative practice enacted in work and is mediated by the broader range of personal and situational factors that contextualise work. In this chapter, negotiation as frame is elaborated as comprising two primary sets of relational properties or sets of interdependent mediating factors: (a) composite negotiations, and (b) contiguous negotiations. Composite negotiations are those negotiations on which current personal practices, that is, negotiations, are premised. They are prerequisite and foundational of immediate participative activity. Contiguous negotiations are those negotiations that are concurrently enacted in personal practice. They are simultaneous and inseparable in immediate participative practice. Together, composite and contiguous negotiations are contributory to the enactment of personal practice that is individuals’ engagement in the participative practices that constitute the here and now activity of work.

As discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), that elaborated the dimension of negotiation as form, realised negotiations are differently enacted than discovered negotiations, and these are differently enacted than protracted and concealed negotiations. These different enactments are individuals’ personal participative practices and are made distinguishable through degrees of purpose and resolution that can be mapped on the personal work negotiation matrix. Equally, these
enactments and the negotiations they constitute are mediated by the work context in which they are situated.

The work context can be understood in terms of the mise-en-scène of mediating factors by which it is comprised and the kinds of relationships these mediating factors enable and support as they influence how workers engage in and with their work. For example, Ellstrom (2001), as indicated in Chapter 3, outlines a range of contextual factors that constrain or facilitate workers’ engagement in problem-solving activities and the kinds of performance evaluation systems that support workers’ understandings of their skills practice. Similarly, Ashton (2004) outlines a range of structural aspects of work organisation to explain how performance, reward for improvement, and access to promotion opportunity are integrated and influential of workers’ practice. Further, and expanding on the ways in which contextual factors are inter-related as mediators of work activity, Billett (2006a & b, 2008) explains the relational interdependencies between the personal and the social, that is, between and within the enacted co-participation that is individuals’ construal of what they do and their organisation’s support or hindrance of that personal construal. In other ways, Fuller and Unwin (2004) examine work context in terms of differences between expansive and restrictive work environments as they define them. All these elaborations of work context support differing relational understandings of how the range of mediating factors that constitute work can be viewed as inter-relational. Importantly, and as was indicated in the previous chapter, the range of negotiation forms (e.g., telic, contingent, and nested) workers have and are engaged in are significant elements of the set of mediating factors that constitute their personal practice. As such, they are elements of negotiation as frame.

So, the range of mediating factors that can be said to constitute the context of personal work negotiations includes all the other negotiations that individuals are concurrently enacting and have previously enacted. These concurrent and previous negotiations can be seen as sets of self-referent relationships, that is, relationships defined by and from the perspective of the individual concerned. So, for example, the relationship defined by Platinum restaurant manager and owner John, when he states I have a business partner or by Hayden from the gym, when he states, I enjoy the company of my colleagues is uniquely referential of the self-in-action, the “I” who speaks. This self-referencing becomes more specifically identifying when that business partner is a brother and a current work colleague is girlfriend. Self-referent
relationships are person specific and thereby identify a person in context, a unique self-in-interaction with all the elements of their activity.

Together, these relationships and the negotiations they both represent and by which they are constituted can be said to construct a personal context or personal frame of participative practice. This context, this frame, is personally constructed (albeit through socially interactive processes) and is referred to here as negotiation as frame. Here, negotiation as frame designates all the person-specific negotiations that identify the person and practice of the individual worker. Where Smith (2006) identified the person of the worker as managing all the mediations that constitute their work, this thesis identifies the worker as a self-in-action who is negotiating all the negotiations in which they are engaged.

Understanding negotiation in this way, as a personally constructed frame of engagement in participative practice, is based in the ways compounded and nested negotiations identify workers’ priorities as their perceptions of what they “do” in work: the personal meanings of what personal practices enact and accomplish. So, learning as participation (e.g., Lave & Wenger 1991), that is, learning as making sense of what is done, what is enacted in personal practice, can be seen as making sense of the negotiations in which one is engaged, both as process of involvement and outcome of what is and what is not accomplished. Negotiation is, from this perspective of negotiation as frame, a threefold experience: (a) the enactment of personal practice, (b) the context in which personal practice is enacted, and (c) the relationship of which action in context is a personally meaningful experience of work.

As evidenced through the personal practices of the 12 workers who participated in this investigation, there are two primary aspects or sets of relational properties that constitute negotiation as frame. They are, first, composite negotiations: those negotiations that are personally composite of individuals’ participative practice. As discussed and illustrated in the previous chapter, Robert’s emerging understanding of himself as a businessman can be described, in part, as concealed negotiation that is constituted by a range of nested realised negotiations (see Figure 5.4). These nested negotiations are referred to here as composite negotiations because they compound over time and experience to “compose” the negotiation forms that identify personal work practice. The second aspect of negotiation as frame comprises those negotiations that are personally contiguous with individuals’ participative practice. Such negotiations run parallel with the immediacy of participative practice and both
mediate and are mediated by that practice. For example, when Hayden is negotiating the construction of a personal training program with a new gym member, he is also and simultaneously negotiating his current business relationship with the gym and with that specific member who may or may not later become a personal client. This simultaneity is, in part, due to the concurrent enactment of different vocational and personal roles that include gym employee and self-employed personal trainer. So, the conception of negotiation as frame, as the personal relational context of participative practice, is identifiable in the composite and contiguous negotiations of personal work practice. Some of the elements of the two primary aspects of negotiation as frame, composite and contiguous negotiation, are outlined in Table 6.1. The figure illustrates how negotiation as frame comprises two sets of relational properties: composite negotiations (on the left) that compound over time as contributions to current activity, and contiguous negotiations (on the right) that are simultaneously enacted as contributions to current activity.

Table 6.1

*Negotiation as Frame (A Structural Perspective)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negotiation as Frame</th>
<th>The set of negotiations that mediate and are mediated by current activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Composite negotiations</strong> –</td>
<td>Those negotiations on which current activity is premised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate prerequisites</td>
<td>Divisible as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time – all that has previously occurred, in more or less significant ways, contributes to current action</td>
<td>Social enactment – political, economic, vocational, institutional, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior learning</td>
<td>Situational enactment – work tasks, rules, regulations, collegiate relationships, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal enactment – personal practice, dispositional priorities, roles, self presentation, etc., that is divisible as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material – personal equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic – knowledge deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relational – personal priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Contiguous negotiations** - | Those negotiations concurrently enacted in current activity |
| | |
Following from this introduction, the chapter goes on to elaborate this conception of negotiation as frame as the second of the three dimensions of negotiation. It does so through an examination and discussion of the work practices of the 12 research participants across three sections. The first elaborates composite negotiation to illustrate how the negotiations that workers have previously enacted are contributory to their current activity. The second elaborates contiguous negotiation to illustrate how the range of concurrently enacted negotiations constitutes and mediates current activity. The third section summarises these aspects of negotiation with an emphasis on learning and its description and explanation through the concept of negotiation as frame. As in Chapter 5, Hayden and some of the 12 workers are used to illustrate how negotiation as frame enables an understanding of personal participative work practice as the negotiated construction of a personal work context that comprises all the negotiations that constitute individuals’ vocational practice.

**Composite negotiation**

Much of what individual workers enact as current work practice is dependent on a range of previously enacted negotiations that facilitate the conditions and relationships necessary for successful performance in current activity. Broadly this negotiation may be viewed as learning, that is, what is done now is possible because of what has been learned through earlier experience. Equally, however, and from a narrower and much tighter premediate perspective, what is done now may be viewed as simply enabled by prerequisite activity. For example, you cannot cut timber without first taking up the saw. Additional to knowing what a saw is and how it is used (that is, prior learning), cutting simply requires having a saw and correctly sequencing the necessary activities to complete the cut. To this extent, successfully cutting timber with a saw is a compound action comprising the composite actions of securing tools, knowledge, materials, and so on. Similarly, and in terms of negotiation, cutting timber is the realised negotiation of tools, opportunity, materials, and need premised on such composite negotiations as procurement, task allocation, and goal definition. Such negotiations comprise other negotiation forms but they will always be necessary prerequisites.

To illustrate this concept of composite negotiations, Hayden’s work context may be viewed as a maze of different machines and spaces housed within a set of grounds and buildings that take up a large block of land adjacent to a shopping
complex in an inner-city suburb. Further, this work context is populated by a range of people differently enacting work roles, responsibilities, and relationships that facilitate the successful operation of a management system imposed by the owners of the business for the primary purpose of making profit from the provision of gymnasium services to its clients. Within this HealthyTrim work context, Hayden enacts his vocational practice as a personal trainer in ways that uniquely identify him. By doing so, he defines a personal work context that can be understood as a personal negotiation frame, in part constituted by prerequisite or composite negotiations. For example, Hayden knows that the busiest times for the gym are weekday mornings between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. and weekday evenings between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. At these times, accessing cardio equipment (i.e., exercise machines that enable clients to attain and maintain very high heart and breathing rates, such as running treadmills and stationary cycles) is difficult due to the high demand. Additionally, it is considered essential that the first elements of any personal training session are devoted to warm-up exercises that get the heart and breathing rate up and the muscles prepared for the rigours of the program to be followed. Consequently, 10-15 minutes on the cardio equipment represents the most common kind of start to nearly all personal training sessions. However, there are times when such a usual start to a session cannot be conducted and so alternatives must be undertaken. For Hayden, this can require getting clients to run with him outside the gym, skipping rope, or doing a sequenced set of more traditional callisthenic exercises. Such alternatives present problems that are not encountered when, for example, an electrically controlled variable speed and resistance treadmill is available. On such machines, client weight, mobility, coordination, impact capacities, preparedness and willingness are all accommodated within the operating parameters of the treadmill. Sometimes, alternative warm-up sessions are simply accepted by the client as necessitated by the circumstances and the session goes ahead, albeit in ways unexpected by the client. However, at other times alternatives are directly negotiated before the session can begin. Hayden states,

*It’s not as easy as you might think, getting someone to skip with a rope or go for a run, instead of getting on the treadmill. They’re not used to it and some don’t like the idea of being seen outside the gym because of their weight and stuff like that. You’ve got to be careful and get things organised beforehand if you can.* (Int #2)
For Hayden, knowing of and being prepared for alternative session starters, being careful and considerate of client expectations and concerns, and getting organised in advance, represent the kinds of composite negotiations that characterise his practice. In terms of such negotiations defining Hayden’s work context, these personal practices could be viewed as his agentic responses to what Billett (2004, 2006a, 2008) describes as the affordances and constraints of his work. So, for example, the high demand for and subsequent non-availability of cardio equipment at peak times represents a constraint to practice that denies Hayden opportunity to conduct his work the way he desires. Similarly, Billett (2006a, 2008) would describe Hayden’s role as personal trainer and the freedoms his expertise supports as an affordance of work that enables him to make choices and enact decisions about how best to overcome the difficulties of limited access to essential work tools. In yet other ways, Fuller and Unwin (2004) may describe Hayden’s work context as expansive in that it supports opportunity for him to seek assistance when necessary and exercise decisions about how he participates in his practice. Equally however, Fuller and Unwin may describe his work context as restrictive in that only a narrow band of cardio session options are company supported. From both perspectives (i.e., Billett 2006a, 2008, and Fuller & Unwin 2004) the work context includes the mediating factor of insufficient cardio machines in peak times. In negotiating this mediation as he does, Hayden establishes a personal context or negotiation frame that consists, in part, of the repertoire of composite negotiations by which his practice is constructed. Materially, for example, this is evidenced by a number of different weight and length skipping ropes he carries in his kit bag. Strategically, this personal context consists of a number of different warm-up techniques and a developing array of considerations that underpin his own expectations of his clients – are they overweight, relaxed about changes to routine, capable and prepared for running, skipping, jumping, and so on? Relationally, this repertoire of composite negotiations represents a personal set of priorities, relationships of greater and lesser importance, that Hayden enacts as his negotiation of the mediations operant in his work. These relationships include those with the gym, with the client, and with his own capacities to achieve the goals of his practice.

Hayden’s work is dominantly focussed on the one-on-one and face-to-face negotiations he has with personal clients as he guides them through their structured exercise program. As such, his personal practice is highly autonomous and secured by
his specific role as expert. In this regard, Hayden’s work is similar to that of the ITS staff who, through the desktop support system, work with single academic clients and their single computer. By contrast, much of the work of the others of the 12 worker participants is enacted with groups of people. For example, Rosie from Platinum restaurant waits on groups of restaurant patrons; Robert, in his role as restaurant manager, co-ordinates numerous staff, clients, and guests at catering functions; Bruce, senior station officer in the fire service, manages fire fighter teams in response to emergency call outs. As a senior fire fighter and one of the men under Bruce’s management when on shift, Ian’s expertise is enacted as a member of a team of fire fighters tasked with the role of protecting property and rescuing people from fires, accidents, and other dangerous situations. For Ian, working one-on-one is a remote prospect that could possibly occur with a colleague in training exercises. He would always be part of a team effort in emergency response operations. Despite this strong contrast with Hayden’s vocational practice, Ian’s personal practice is equally premised on a range of necessary composite negotiations.

Ian is a senior fire fighter who is currently undertaking officer training. He defines his role as threefold. First, as a senior fire fighter and, particularly, because of his officer-training program, he assists station officers in the operational, administrative, and staff training requirements of the station. Second, as an aerial appliance specialist, he drives the high ladder vehicle and supervises its use in getting equipment and personnel to appropriate high vantage points in rescue and emergency responses. Third, when not specifically operating the aerial appliance, he takes his position and responsibilities in the four-man team that operates the standard pump appliance or fire truck. Importantly, Ian notes the increasing significance of his role as an educator within the responsibilities that attend his movement to station officer. This role extends beyond the internal training of fire fighters to being a part of the public education activity that sees the fire and rescue service attending to its duties through facilitating increased public awareness of fire and emergency protection and procedures. Across these three primary roles, Ian lists a long and diverse set of tasks and responsibilities that constitute his vocational practice. In response to interview questions about the common and routine day-to-day aspects of his work, his unhesitating reply is “training.”

*I guess routinely, we’re always in training – would be ensuring my skills are up kept because we have a variety of skills – that is one of the problems in this*
job because there are such a variety of skills it’s very, very difficult to maintain competencies as such ...So I guess the most frequent work activity I would have is maintaining skills – Everyday there is some form of training. Tonight we’re dressing in gas suits – fully encapsulated suits – or it could be as simple as pulling a small piece of equipment off the truck and doing a talk on it. Last night we did aerial training, okay, and all this is signed off and recorded – there’s always some form of training. (Int #1)

For Ian, as for all the fire fighters he works with, there is a scheduled regularity within the routine of training. For example, full breathing apparatus training takes place every three to four months. This training is done off-station at specially designed training premises that enable heat, light, access, and smoke simulations of various real-world scenarios. This is additional to breathing apparatus equipment checks and drills that could be conducted at any time at the station. Vertical rescues with ropes from cliffs and bridges and full assessment of pump-appliance operations represent the kinds of training undertaken on an annual basis and this is additional to the more regular hose and equipment checks and drills that commonly occur. Organising, implementing, and recording all this necessary training is a very difficult and demanding task given the regular workload of the senior fire fighter aspiring to and training for officer promotion and the unpredictable nature of the immediate request for emergency response. Ian comments,

The call out bells could go at any time and you could find yourself having to get a guy hanging from a rope on the City Bridge or having to put on full chemical gear at a tanker leak and although you’re trained in it, you’re not really, you know, tuned into it, as say if the bells went now for a house fire – then you’d know exactly what you’re doing. (Int #1)

Clearly, all the training, the daily and routine and the less common and infrequent, represent composite negotiations that underpin Ian’s personal practice in any and all of the roles he undertakes. Equally, the more regular and familiar aspects of his work heighten the levels of preparedness this training represents. As indicated through this statement, the more frequent and common house fires are more confidently dealt with than the far less frequent vertical rescues. Importantly, indicated here is the preparedness that comes from being “tuned in,” not just to the familiar but to whatever the task at hand may be.

For Ian, being tuned in is a state of work readiness that is purposefully negotiated through preparatory tasks. Throughout the interviews, Ian outlines a range of work tasks he undertakes as his own personal preparations for securing the tuned-in
state his emergency response work requires. Such tasks include attending to any administrative paper work at the start of the shift (e.g., permit applications, building inspection reports, etc.), checking and amending training schedules as early as possible, noting staff rosters and team personnel and, from this, ensuring that all staff are personally greeted and acknowledged as members of the rostered team. Sometimes this is as simple as a quick chat while passing through the kitchen. At other times, personally greeting all on-shift staff may require looking through the different areas of the large city station (e.g., the TV room, the gym, the study, the yard, the garage, etc.) with the specific purpose of discussing important matters before a team member heads off on a personally designated task. Ian states,

*There are things I’ve got to do and then there are things I have to do and catching up with all the guys on shift is one of them. It’s what I do. I like to know who I’m working with and to let the guys know I’m with them. When I know they know, then we all know and then there’s no surprises when the bells ring. I’m ready then, tuned in to whatever is on.* (Int#1)

In these simple ways, Ian practices a personal routine that readies and gets him tuned in, for the work at hand. This routine comprises a set of composite negotiations and through them, with paper work, schedules and rosters, and acknowledging fellow fire fighters, he enacts a personal negotiation frame that constitutes, in part, “his” personal work context.

Others of the 12 participant-workers also enact sets of preparatory practices as composite negotiations that compound to both constitute and enable the immediate task at hand. For example, junior fire fighter Hugh carries a few different sized pieces of plastic in his personal kit. These are used for opening certain doors without the destructive use of sledge-hammer force. This very personal vocational practice requires the composite negotiations of procuring and cutting specific types of milk cartons that because of the particular density and flexibility of the plastic from which they are made, are highly suitable for slipping the kinds of locks common in residential doors. Similarly, Marilyn, the HealthyTrim gym manager, has taken to conducting some staff meetings away from her office in the more relaxed surrounds of the member reception area where soft chairs and low tables promote a more conversational encounter. In this way she assists new staff to be more at ease than they otherwise might be if they had to meet with her in her office and thereby confront the legitimate authority of their boss. Such meetings also mean extra negotiations with other staff (e.g., reception and sales staff) to ensure the new-staff
meetings go as planned. John, senior partner at Platinum, makes similar preparations for the weekly partners’ meeting by ensuring he speaks with all the restaurant staff during the week. He considers his daily discussions with staff, customers, and suppliers as part of his personal and general business practice. However, he mentions that these encounters are purposeful negotiations about securing a broad staff-wide understanding of the restaurant’s operations in relation to staff, customer, and supplier matters. He brings this information to the partners’ meeting and in this way seeks to ensure all three partners are fully aware of the standing of their business from staff and other stakeholder perspectives. These examples of premediate work practices, that is, personal practices that precede current activity, can be seen as composite negotiations that represent past learnings, past dealings with the social world that now constitute a personal legacy, a personal ontogeny enacted as routine vocational practice (Billett 2006b). Equally, however, these work practices can be seen as new practice, as non-routine, when familiar actions meet unfamiliar circumstance and when new actions are constructed to meet new urgencies and conditions. For example, Ian’s work readiness routines, very personal and now very familiar for him, are always enacted with different shift and staff mediations. He must negotiate the mediations of his routine practice anew as team members and their locations within the building at the start of shift are constantly varied by the changing circumstances of work and the changing patterns of others’ responses to these changes.

In yet other ways, Rosie, part-time waitress at Platinum restaurant, has accidentally constructed some unique personal practices as composite negotiations of her work. Where the composite negotiations identified as Ian’s personal work readiness practice above maybe be viewed as dominantly realised contingent negotiations (i.e., he purposefully seeks out his shift rostered team members and most usually realises this purpose in finding and acknowledging them), Rosie also identifies contingent negotiations as composite of some aspects of her work. To illustrate, two of the many tasks Rosie undertakes are polishing cutlery and folding napkins. These tasks can be completed during service when customer numbers are low or outside service hours when the demands of customers have ceased. Most often, these tasks are completed after service. Cutlery is polished immediately after it has been through the dishwasher and laundered napkins are folded and stacked in preparation for use the following day. At the end of a busy service, when it is late and staff are tired, it is easy to put off these tasks, proposing they can be undertaken the
next morning when the restaurant sets up for the new day. However, such practices place a burden on the day wait staff who do not arrive with sufficient time before the lunch service to do more than set tables before customers arrive. Platinum front-of-house practice and, therefore, wait staff responsibility, is to complete as much cleaning and service preparation as is reasonably possible before concluding the evening shift. So, glasses, cutlery, candles, flowers, windows, chairs, cabinets, counters, mirrors, potted plants, coffee machines, drinks fridges, and so on, represent an extensive range of cleaning, polishing, folding, dusting, replenishing, and repositioning tasks to be completed.

In efforts not to overlook any of these important tasks, Rosie has discovered that she can use the equipment that corresponds with these tasks as reminders, prompts to the need of their being completed. So a fork, purposefully positioned out of place, alone and askew on a table or counter, acts as a signal, a personal message-to-self, to attend to the cutlery polishing. Similarly, a scrunched napkin placed on the linen cabinet acts to prompt the need of folding napkins and getting the used linen prepared for laundry. Positioning these items, in these ways, for these purposes, assists Rosie to complete her work, particularly when busyness and fatigue threaten this completion. These practices represent composite negotiations that compound to constitute and enable the immediate practice of attending to these important aspects of her work. Rosie explains,

*I’m very bad at remembering to do things unless I do them immediately, so will often leave parts that are obvious. There’s always priorities, but if everything seems a priority, I’ll do the things that are a little more subtle first because they’re in my mind and then I’ll do the obvious things I’m going to see and run into and go, “Oh, that’s right. I’ll do that again.” So if I leave a job halfway undone somewhere, that’s obviously not in the way, but suddenly it’s enough in the way that I’ll run into it again. At first I didn’t do it on purpose. It’s not like I’ve sat down and thought, “Mmm, that’s what I should do and I’ll train myself to do that.” I’ve left the fork out because I was halfway though doing it – I’ve just got to race off and do this other job. But now it’s a strategy, like, I could easily put things away and it’s not a malicious thing to leave things out to be messy – but I see it, the fork, the napkin, the order pad, and I remember so I must do it, so I remember.* (Int #1)

Some write lists. Marilyn the gym manager and Dick from ITS are experienced list makers and rely on this skill in the management of their work. Others (particularly Hayden from the gym, Sid from ITS, Robert from the restaurant, and fire fighters Bruce and Ian) diarise schedules and rosters of their many tasks and
appointments. Yet others of the 12 workers (e.g., John from the restaurant, Dick from ITS, and Jane from the gym) rely on experience and memory to ensure their many tasks are prioritised and completed in ways that support the successful performance of their work. Rosie, as noted, uses forks, napkins, and other pieces of equipment as practice props to remind her of what needs to be done. The positioning of these props, in ways that do not impact the work of other wait staff and do not make the restaurant look overly messy (and thereby negatively influence customer perception) are composite negotiations with these other aspects of her work context (i.e., colleagues, customers, business practices, etc.) and aspects of herself as personal preferences (i.e., task priority, message systems, memory capacities, etc.). Rosie’s initial negotiations of these reminder practices can be described as discovered forms of negotiation, that is, the utility they secure for her vocational practice was accidentally realised through unintentional activity. Now, these reminder practices represent purposefully enacted realised negotiation forms that as composite negotiations compound to construct her personal practice of work and so become aspects of her personal work context, her personal negotiation frame.

As has been illustrated above, the different preparatory and work readiness practices that Hayden, Ian, and Rosie have negotiated in and through their engagement in work can be understood as composite negotiations. These composite negotiations compound to constitute and enable current and immediate practice and thereby identify person-specific ways of participating in and contributing to the context of work. Together and over time (be it routine and historically well established or new and innovative and so recent as to immediately precede current activity), these composite negotiations define, in part, a personal context, a personal negotiation frame. Table 6.2 outlines some of the many composite negotiations the 12 worker-participants in this investigation describe and discuss as previous negotiations that are foundational to their current enactments of the negotiations that constitute their current personal practice. The left-hand column lists some of the 12 workers; the middle column identifies a very specific current work practice that is common to their respective daily routines; the right-hand column lists some of the composite negotiations that are foundational to the enactment of these current practices.
### Table 6.2

**Examples of Composite Negotiations Foundational to Current Negotiated Practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker-participant</th>
<th>Current negotiation</th>
<th>Contributing composite negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosie – Platinum</td>
<td>Preparations for following day’s service during current service</td>
<td>• Strategic positioning of signals to future tasks in ways that do not inconvenience other staff or negatively influence patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayden – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>Generate alternative warm-up exercises when cardio equipment is unavailable</td>
<td>• Carry range of skipping ropes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian – CFS2</td>
<td>Emergency call-out readiness preparations</td>
<td>• Talk with those currently using cardio equipment to ascertain finish time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert – Platinum</td>
<td>Follow-up call with catering client</td>
<td>• Discuss and assess client capacity to undertake warm-up options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>New staff induction meeting away from office</td>
<td>• Personally greet all team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick – University ITS</td>
<td>Respond to academic desk-top support request</td>
<td>• Attend to administrative paper work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh – CFS2</td>
<td>Personal tool-kit preparations</td>
<td>• Amend training roster as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>Reception counter preparations prior to opening</td>
<td>• Test menu selections and secure additional produce requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John – Platinum</td>
<td>Weekly partners’ meeting</td>
<td>• Check with sales staff to ensure meeting time does not conflict with new client interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure minimal interruptions from reception staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Consider previous experiences with this specific client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluate priority standing of request in relation to all current logged jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss with other available staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Call (phone) specific client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Secure appropriate plastic milk carton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cut plastic to size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Prepare till with daily float</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss, evaluate and respond (with other reception staff) to entries in reception staff hand over log book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure sales items stocked and priced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Information gathering discussions with staff, suppliers and customers in the week prior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For each of the 12 worker-participants in this investigation, personal practice is the negotiated enactment of all that contributes to their current activity and the very person-specific ways this contribution has been co-participatively constructed. Founded in these legacies of previous experience and prior learning, immediate negotiations are premised on closely premediate negotiations that represent the planning and requisite activities of current activity. This current activity, visible as personal practice, identifies a personal negotiation frame or context that is the negotiations being negotiated as the enactment of personal practice. The personal negotiation frame is constituted in the many sets of relationships (i.e., negotiations), with colleagues, with work tools and systems, with personal priorities and preferences that are negotiated through the co-participative engagement that Billett (2004, 2006a, 2008), Fuller and Unwin (2004), and Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as the relational interdependence between the individual and their work context. The concept of composite negotiations offers some insight into the ways this relational interdependence is enacted as personal engagement in co-participative activity and how negotiation can be conceptualised to account for learning as being a legacy of previous practice enactments.

Additional to this temporal dimension of negotiation, the premediate being foundational of the immediate, that is, composite negotiations facilitating and supporting current negotiated joint activity, is the enactment of contiguous negotiations. Contiguous negotiations are those negotiations that coincide in immediate work activity and are enacted simultaneously as personal practice in context, as personal negotiation frame. This aspect of negotiation as frame is discussed in the following section.

**Contiguous negotiation**

As illustrated above, the sets of negotiated relations that mediate and are, in turn, mediated by co-participative activity culminate in enacted personal practice. In as much as personal practice has a depth of enactment and emerges as an outcome of previous or composite negotiations, personal practice also identifies a range of concurrent or contiguous negotiations. Contiguous negotiations are those negotiations that are concurrently enacted in personal practice. They are being enacted simultaneously through the multiplicity of the self-in-action in immediate activity. This multiplicity may be minimally conceptualised in terms of two operant aspects of
personhood, for example, in terms of Goffman’s (1959) self as performer and character performed. Equally, this multiplicity of self may be conceptualised in more complex terms of social positions or roles enacted in that the individual worker may be simultaneously worker, colleague, wife, brother, inexperienced, happy, ill, ambitious, and more or less of whatever sets of mediations they are negotiating as identity parameters in the performance of their work. Because of this multiplicity, the individual’s negotiation frame or personal work context accounts for a breadth of simultaneous and yet different self-enactments that emerge as contiguous negotiations.

To illustrate, Hayden describes some of what his work requires:

*When you see new members – I spend a one hour session with each of them, writing them a program and taking them through a weights program, showing them the cardio equipment. That is when I sit down with them for that one-hour session and then try to promote myself and personal training to them and get them on board.*

*When they come and see a trainer it can be intimidating for them, particularly as some people are stepping into a gym for the first time – so it is my job to make them feel comfortable. Some people have a bit of a negative stereotype about what gyms are, so it is my job to make them feel comfortable, empower them to know what they are doing on each machine that they are allocated to. It is my job to follow them up, follow the client up to make sure they’re still on track, still enjoying what they are doing. If they are not then it is my job to try and fix that, to see how they would like it better and make it happen for them. It is my job to try and see how they are feeling on any given day. If they come in I can tell if they are a bit flat, it is my job to not push them too much that day, just understand what they are feeling and only push them as far as they can go. It also can become, you build up a rapport with these people, you become a bit of a counsellor sometimes, they tell you their problems, so that’s another little tangent of my job.* (Int #1)

In these brief statements, Hayden acknowledges an awareness and conduct of himself-in-action through a range of different and concurrent roles that are central to his vocational practice. He is a fitness trainer, a personal business promoter, an instructor, a comforter, a therapist, a confidant and more as he negotiates his practice at the intersection of gym, client, and personal contexts.

The tensions negotiated through these simultaneously enacted roles are often both contesting and complementary. For example, the fitness trainer must get results for his clients and this can require driving them to feats of physical exertion that are painful and difficult to maintain for the length of time considered necessary for effective exercise. Such practice can on occasions defy the role of comforter who
seeks to reduce stress and anxiety that may come from getting clients outside their comfort zone, even if only temporarily. As indicated in Hayden’s comments, physical stress and emotional anxiety are important aspects of clients’ gym and exercise experience. On other occasions, the fitness trainer is supported by the role of comforter who, guided by the role of therapist, must consult and choose carefully those times when clients can be pushed and those times when they cannot. Hayden notes on other occasions throughout the interviews conducted that pushing too hard can be interpreted by clients as his being insensitive to their physical capacities and expectations of fitness training. Equally, Hayden explains how not pushing hard enough can be interpreted as his not caring, not being attentive or inaccurately assessing and balancing clients’ needs and capacities. And all clients are different in these respects.

By contrast, pushing the client’s body and mind through demanding exercise is very different from the pushing that is business promotion. Hayden promotes both the gym and himself as businesses that offer service for fee. The gym is a business that is promoted through Hayden’s personal practice as supporting its clients’ health and fitness goals and so worthy of clients’ membership fees. A personal fitness program, prepared through consultation with a fitness expert such as Hayden, is part of the product the gym is selling its clients. Hayden is very aware that his vocational practice is about retaining gym memberships through the quality of his work. Clients who get results and enjoy their gym experience will remain gym members and willingly pay the associated costs. Hayden comments,

Basically the members that you are going to have happy are going to come back and they are going to pay their money. I’m a big part of that in helping retain those members, making sure that they’re serviced well, hopefully getting them fantastic results and once that happens they are going to want to come back. (Int. #1)

Equally, Hayden is in business for himself. He is his own business: a business promoted beyond the standard gym product. He offers a more personalised service: a personal trainer that is, and is in the business of, the exclusive provision of a focused one-on-one training experience. Securing his personal services is a cost that is additional to gym membership. Potential clients are usually satisfied gym members who have previously enjoyed Hayden’s programs and the support he offers as part of the standard membership. They occasionally seek him out to extend their training. Most often Hayden sells himself as he actively promotes his services as a more
personally tailored and, therefore, more efficient means of securing the results clients are working towards. This promotion is not isolated to the initial client meeting, but is part of Hayden’s vocational practice. He is conscious of this aspect of his practice and his role as a salesman in all his activities. He comments,

_The sales aspects are all a part of being a personal trainer. Being a better personal trainer is about getting results and having more clients. It’s not all that, but sales is definitely part of it. I want to earn more money. The gym wants to earn more money. So it works, it’s a two-way street. You get more results, they tell their friends, so the business grows and the gym gets more clients ... I’m running my own business and I’m always thinking of that, how I can promote myself better ... When I’m on the floor with a client, others are watching ... When I’m with a client I’m talking about what’s possible for them, what they have achieved so far. That’s me pushing for business, that’s business promotion._ (Int. #4)

Hayden clearly acknowledges the diversity of simultaneously enacted roles that constitute his personal practice. Each of these roles identifies a range of negotiations that are concurrent in that personal practice. These negotiations are referred to here as contiguous, parallel enactments of self in the co-participative joint activity that constitutes work. Each contiguous negotiation can be examined in the isolation of the enacted social role with which it corresponds but cannot be examined as separate from the specific and personal vocational practice that constitutes Hayden’s personal work context. Hayden is always a personal trainer, always a business promoter, always a therapist in work. But more than aspects of his work, these roles identify particular self-referent relationships that he is negotiating. These relationships and the contiguous negotiations they represent mediate his engagement in current work activity. Hayden is effectively negotiating this personal set of contiguous negotiations through his personal practice and so constructing in a person dependent, yet very socially interdependent way (i.e., with clients, with employer, with self as social person, etc.) his personal work context. This context is his negotiation frame.

All 12 worker-participants are similarly actively engaged in a range of contiguous negotiations that characterise their personal work context. Marilyn, the gym manager, lives locally and has been associated with the gymnasium for many years prior to her recent appointment as manager by the new owners, HealthyTrim. Many gym members are both personal friends and neighbours of long standing as well as clients. She makes clear throughout the interviews her constant need of
respecting the differences these simultaneous relationships represent. Friends, she says, *you do anything for*; clients have obligations and so work is the negotiation of these tensions, these differences, through the enactments of her personal practice.

Similarly, John, owner-manager, head chef, and senior partner of Platinum restaurant, is the senior person responsible for the day-to-day operations of the business. His experience and expertise is the cornerstone of the restaurant’s success. However, this wealth of experience does not override the fact of his being a brother to the other senior partner and a previous employer/supervisor to Robert, the junior partner. Family, friendship, and business relationships coalesce in his enactment of work. Throughout the interviews he acknowledges the benefits this convergence of personal interests and priorities brings to him personally and the business more generally. Equally, he acknowledges the *care and patience* he must practise to ensure these benefits remain and his occasionally competing relationships, particularly with his brother, *hold steady* and thereby not threaten the business success they enjoy.

Senior fire fighter Ian, when discussing the demands of his officer-training program, notes the differences in the ways he relates to his fellow fire fighters when he is acting up in the role of station officer. He comments that it is not always easy to *direct men I will later be side by side with*. These differences represent temporary inequalities that need negotiating in the performance of his work. In all these cases, Marilyn, John, and Ian enact, through their co-participative engagement in work, a range of contiguous negotiations that constitute their personal practice of work. These negotiations represent the work activities of the various and simultaneously enacted roles required in their respective and personally unique vocational practices.

Additional to the contiguous negotiations of simultaneously enacted role diversity illustrated above are those contiguous negotiations that identify what Goffman (1959) describes as the duality of the social self as performer and character performed. In these terms, individual workers, as performers, seek to present themselves in ways that convey to those around them (e.g., colleagues, bosses, clients, etc.) an impression of self that best suits their personal interests. This presentation is the character performed. The tensions between these aspects of self-in-action may be considered as contiguously negotiated through the personal practice of work that is both the process and product of self presentation.

To illustrate, fire fighter Hugh has recently come to his work as a junior fire fighter at CFS2 following many years experience as a fire fighter in his country of
birth. Part of that experience was his participation in an international exchange program that enabled him to come to this country and work at CFS2 as a front line fire fighter and take a senior position in the four-man pump appliance vehicle (i.e., fire truck) that attends emergency call outs. His migration here and eventual application to the fire service was partly prompted by his experience in this exchange program. Hugh’s many years of previous experience belie his current junior status in his current work situation, marked in part by his as yet unattained Diploma qualification. Hugh feels and knows himself to be a highly experienced fire fighter. He knows he will complete his training and studies and looks forward to being officially recognised and acknowledged as a fully qualified fire fighter in his adopted country. Throughout the interviews conducted in the investigation he discussed his efforts to secure officially sanctioned recognition of prior learning (RPL) whereby he had begun the process of documenting and arguing equivalence between his earlier training and his current training in the vocational Diploma course. This process proved to be far more difficult than initially envisaged. So he resigned himself to its futility and, therefore, his need to complete fully the mandatory CSFC required Diploma. This discrepancy between his previous experience and his current level of vocational qualification is but one of many discrepancies that mark the differences between Hugh’s understanding and practice of himself as a fire fighter and his perception by others as a fire fighter. That is, in relation to his personal practice as a fire fighter, there are varying levels of tension between who Hugh knows himself to be (i.e., self as performer in Goffman’s (1959) terms) and who he is seen as being by those with whom he works (i.e., self as character performed). Hugh negotiates these tensions as contiguous negotiations that mark his personal practice as a fire fighter and so constitute, in part, his personal work context.

For instance, in response to questions about the need of proving himself as an experienced fire fighter, a theme that emerges from his numerous comments on the self motivations and priorities that mediate his personal practice, Hugh states:

No basically, very few people treat me as new on the job. I’ve been treated on the whole as a fully-fledged fire fighter. E.g., through my UK experience I’ve been to more fires than some of the station officers on duty tonight. For me personally, I always try to do something better than I need to so that people will know I know what I’m doing – even though I haven’t had to prove myself. I know that they know who I am and what I can do and they know too. My knowledge is good, these boys knew I was a fire fighter the first time they spoke to me. (Int #3)
For Hugh, always trying to do something better than I need to is more than simply putting into practice what he has been trained to do. Despite his claim to the contrary, it seems to be about proving himself as a fully experienced fire fighter, to himself and his colleagues: not because he has to, but because he wants to. He wants to present himself in ways that validate others’ knowledge of him as an experienced fire fighter who, by virtue of having migrated from another country, has to start over as a junior. So, it is about fully being, for himself and others, what he knows himself to be. The vehicle for this is his personal practice enacted, in part, as always checking his breathing apparatus (BA) at the beginning of every shift, always making sure his personal kit is complete and fully functional, being fully conversant with the many pieces of equipment that support his practice, tackling every training opportunity that arises, contributing whenever possible, and being proactive about his position at the station.

Throughout the interviews Hugh discusses these and many other instances of his personal work practice and how this varies from what would be considered normal or usual vocational practice. Additional to his unique use of milk carton plastic to slip residential door locks (noted earlier) are his use of hydraulic spreaders to separate compressed sections of motor vehicles that can trap drivers in accident situations, his use of wire guidelines for navigating smoke-filled buildings where visibility is zero, his knowledge of concrete and brick building construction in a city where the dominant domestic building material is timber, and his knowledge of European vehicles, their various locking and metal frame structures. Through all these skills and perceptions of self by self and others, Hugh’s self-in-action is vigilantly considering and accommodating, through his personal practice, the tensions between who he is and what he does in and through work (i.e., how he presents himself through work) and who he is seen to be through what he is seen to do in work (i.e., how his self presentation is perceived by others at work). In so doing, Hugh enacts, as co-participative activity with his colleagues and circumstance, the contiguous negotiations that unify in personal action what Goffman (1959) would observe as his distinct but ever interactive self as performer and self as character performed.

Hugh’s personal practice is clearly marked by contiguous negotiations of self-in-action. However, the self-in-action is not just the presentation of self in work activity through personal practice but is the negotiator of the simultaneous negotiations between self and others’ perceptions of personal practice. In this way,
contiguous negotiations are, in part, self-referent relationships, negotiated by the self-in-action for the purposes of maintaining self in relation to others’ perceptions, in terms of how the individual engages with or negotiates others’ perceptions. As such, contiguous negotiations of self are aspects of the personal context in, through, and by which personal practice is enacted. As Hugh demonstrates, personal practice is self-mediated and that mediation is contiguously negotiated and thereby forms a part of the negotiation frame within which personal practice is enacted as work. Self-mediation of work activity is negotiated.

All 12 worker-participants discuss and illustrate their engagement in contiguous negotiation of the self-referent relationships that characterise their personal practice. For example, Dick from ITS is very aware of his expertise with electro-technology and the versatility this allows him to work in many different departments of the university. This expertise is a source of personal pride and throughout the interviews he often comments on the high levels of work satisfaction he enjoys because of the employment versatility this expertise affords him. Equally, however, he is very aware of how this expertise and versatility is understood by his employer, who does not hesitate to transfer him when skills shortages emerge in other areas of the university. Dick comments, I like that they value my work but I won’t be taken for granted, and by so doing acknowledges his consideration and accommodation, his contiguous negotiation, of his understanding of the university’s perception of his work. This is an important aspect of Dick’s personal practice, his personal work context, his personal negotiation frame.

Similarly, Rosie, the waitress at Platinum restaurant, knows her employers perceive her as reliable and competent, despite her feelings of being unprepared and poorly skilled for some aspects of their expectation of her work. This expectation has proven stressful for her as she balances the responsibilities of her broader role as senior wait staff with her understandings of herself as a casual waitress who is only working to supplement her income while studying at university. She comments, I feel like I’m putting myself out a lot more, so I’ve got to manage that better. Her self-management to reduce stress, and thereby accommodate more self-caringly the increased demands of her senior wait staff responsibilities, is in part addressed by adjusting her thinking about the restaurant as a family business and her participation within it as some form of family member. This description of the restaurant as a small family business is one she has been accustomed to hearing from her employers and
has grown to accept, particularly due to the number of personally favourable conditions she has enjoyed (e.g., wage advances when requested, use of the restaurant delivery van when requested, the provision of wine at wholesale prices for private parties, etc.). She states,

*If you have a family friendly relationship with your boss that’s good, but if you start thinking of it as family or a friendship more, then you start to take away from the work relationship, which is the primary reason you’re there. So, yeah, that’s in my mentality now and again, but now I take things normally, as business, as it’s work for pay, not favours and stuff for family and friends.* (Int #4)

Rosie’s thinking and attitudes about her work are fundamental aspects of her personal practice, her personal work context. Within this context, she is negotiating and renegotiating her understanding of herself as employee within the parameters of both her employers’ and her own perceptions of the business as family relationship. As she states, it is good to see and know yourself as family and as a friend. However, it is better, more realistic in terms of enacting her personal work practice, to understand herself as working for money, not exchanging favours as courtesy and obligation within relationships that are less business like.

Hugh, Dick, and Rosie, like all the 12 worker participants in this investigation, enact personal work contexts that are based in part in the relationships they simultaneously negotiate between themselves and their colleagues and circumstances as they go about the activities that constitute their vocational practice. These relationships are self-referent, that is, primarily concerned with personally identifying and positioning a self-in-action within the broader set of relations that mediate engagement in work. Because of the simultaneity of their enactment, the negotiations that identify these relationships are referred to here as contiguous – they are enacted concurrently, concomitantly, with all the other negotiations that make up the personal context or negotiation frame in and by which individual workers enact their vocational practice as co-participation in work activity.

Some of the many contiguous negotiations that comprise current personal practice are presented in Table 6.3. In this table, the left-hand column lists some of the 12 workers. The middle column identifies a specific current work practice that is common within their daily routines. The right-hand column lists, respectively, some of the contiguous negotiations that are foundational to the enactment of these current and routine work practices.
Table 6.3

*Examples of Contiguous Negotiations Foundational to Current Negotiated Practice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker/participant</th>
<th>Current negotiation</th>
<th>Contributing contiguous negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosie – Platinum</td>
<td>Senior wait staff</td>
<td>Simultaneous roles enacted as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Full time University student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Casual waitress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Inexperienced staff manager/trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Valued employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Friend of owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayden – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>Discussing with gym member the benefits to be enjoyed though personal training sessions</td>
<td>Simultaneous roles enacted as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Subject matter expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• HealthyTrim representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal business promoter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian – CFS2</td>
<td>Acting station officer</td>
<td>Managing self-presentation and perception by others as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Novice station officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Experienced senior fire fighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Colleague, team member, and friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Peer supporter for fellow officers-in-training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John – Platinum</td>
<td>Head chef</td>
<td>Managing self-presentation and perception by others as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Restaurant owner/partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Master chef/trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Restaurant manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>Interaction with gym member at reception counter</td>
<td>Simultaneous roles enacted as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Gym manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Receptionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Friend and neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• New staff role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid – University ITS</td>
<td>On-call desk top support staff</td>
<td>Simultaneous roles enacted as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• ITS staff group manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Response team member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Client advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh – CFS2</td>
<td>Junior fire fighter</td>
<td>Managing self-presentation and perception by others as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Junior fire fighter in training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Experienced fire fighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick – University ITS</td>
<td>Reliable employee</td>
<td>Managing self-presentation and perception by others as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Multi skilled subject matter expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Appreciative of work diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Unfavourably disposed to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsible to gym management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Systems and protocols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>Reception encounter with disgruntled gym member</td>
<td>Managing self-presentation and perception by others as –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Casual employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Considerate of all gym members’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Empathetic to disgruntled gym member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsible to gym management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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So, personal practice, visible in the immediate enactments that comprise workers’ engagement in their current activities, their current negotiations, is founded on a range of previous negotiations and a range of concurrently occurring negotiations. The previous negotiations are here described as composite negotiations that compound over time to enable and support current participative practice. The concurrently occurring negotiations are here described as contiguous negotiations that identify the multiplicity of the self-in-action through the many roles and responsibilities (to self and others) that are simultaneously mediating current participative practice. Together, composite and contiguous negotiations comprise the personal negotiation frame that is enacted as personal practice. Comprised in this way, the personal negotiation frame may be said to conceptualise all the negotiations that individual workers are negotiating through their engagement in work. Negotiating negotiations is more than the personal management of participation in activity. It may be considered as learning practice and this consideration is taken up in the following section.

**Negotiation as frame and personal learning in work**

When the contingent negotiation forms of personal participation and the nested sets of negotiations by which they are constructed are viewed as integral components of the set of relations or factors that mediate personal engagement in work, an understanding of the relational nature of personal practice as being negotiated emerges. Such an understanding enables workers to be seen as negotiating their negotiations and thereby enacting a personal context or negotiation frame of participative practices that includes themselves and their work. As such, negotiation is not just the practice enacted, but is also the context in and of which personal practice is accomplished as current collective activity. As outlined above, there are two primary aspects to the negotiation frame personally constructed and sustained through personal practice. These are (a) composite negotiations, that is, those negotiations on which current negotiations are premised; and (b) contiguous negotiations, those negotiations that are concurrently enacted in personal practice.

Composite negotiations are those negotiations that compound to compose immediate work practice. In this sense, immediate work practice is negotiated participation that is defined and constructed by the negotiations that preceded and thereby enabled it. These requisite or premediate negotiations are best understood as relationships that mediate activity – relationships with people, things, systems, beliefs,
understandings, and so on. They may be very recently enacted or more distantly enacted and so are indicative of immediate necessity or well established prior knowledge. In this way, such negotiations may be indicative of the micro or momentary requisites of action (Werstch, 1995) and the personal dispositions or ontogenetic legacies that predispose individuals to interact in certain ways and not others (Billett, 2006b; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004). Composite negotiations may be considered as capturing a temporal and relational depth of personal practice in that what is accomplished now as vocational practice is emergent from and dependent on all the negotiations enacted to date.

In the broadest sense of personal practice and all that mediates it, composite negotiations may be seen to comprise personal ontogeny, a lifetime of engagement in sociocultural activity and all the developmental legacies this entails. Learning, as previous experience (Kolb, 1984), as prior learning (Billett, 2001a), as dispositional preference (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004), as personal learning strategies deployed in activity (Smith, 2006) and as all the cognitive structures on which accommodation and assimilation are based (Piaget, 1968), is foundational of composite negotiation. As such, composite negotiation, based in the temporal reality of lived experience, offers a means of describing and explaining personal learning through a conception of negotiation that accounts for both current activity and the socio-personal history on and from which immediate negotiation is premised. As Rosie illustrates, negotiating the tasks, equipment, and time constraints of waiting tables and preparing for the next service enabled and supported her learning new strategies to ensure the timely completion of all her work requires. The previously enacted discovered negotiation of using familiar equipment to remind herself of future task requirements became the realised negotiation of a learning strategy, a new personal vocational practice. So learning, in these terms, is more than the legacy of past experience: it is the negotiation of composite negotiations, a personal frame or context, in and by which she enacts her personal practice of work. The same is true of all 12 workers who, in their personal practice, enact the negotiation frame that, to some extent, comprises their composite negotiations.

The personal negotiation frame resembles, in part, what Bourdieu (1984) described as habitus, the socially sourced set of propensities to individual action. Composite negotiation, as fundamental aspect of negotiation frame, brings personal ontogeny more fully into focus as an integral element of habitus. That is, habitus must
be seen as more personally constructed and enacted as individuals’ negotiation of their past negotiations, not just as propensity to action that is socially given, but as a person-specific and person-defining frame of enactment. Equally, composite negotiation brings the collective nature of personal engagement in sociocultural activity into the enactment of disposition that Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) describe as the basis of individual difference enacted in work. People are different in work, in the same kind of work in the same workplace, because they negotiate their participation in current activity from a socio-personal history of very different composite negotiations. By bringing the person of the worker, through making the socio-personal mediations of their current activity – their personal practice – explicit as composite negotiations, negotiation as frame supports a conceptualisation of learning in and for work that accounts more personally for the contributions of experiential legacies on which immediate action is premised. Learning is more than the pursuit and securing of social capital through the enactment of habitus as Bourdieu (1984) describes. Equally, learning is more than the dispositional differentiation of mediated activity as Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) propose. More fully, and in terms of negotiation, learning in and for work is, in part, individual workers’ negotiation of the composite negotiations they construct through personal practice as their negotiation frame.

Additionally, learning in and for work is workers’ negotiation of the contiguous negotiations in which they are engaged. Contiguous negotiations are negotiations that are concurrently enacted in personal practice. As was illustrated, contiguous negotiations are identified through the different roles and responsibilities workers simultaneously hold and enact in their work and through individuals’ management of how they are variously perceived by those with whom they work. Simultaneity of role enactment and multiplicity of self-presentation and perception are important aspects of individuals’ personal work context and represent key sets of mediating factors that the 12 worker-participants identified as influencing their engagement in the negotiations that constitute their work. The relationships negotiated contiguously can be seen as sometimes competing and sometimes complementary, as the 12 workers sought to balance or accommodate the tensions between who and what they did and between who they knew themselves to be and how they were perceived by others. These relationships are relational properties of work and self that are simultaneously negotiated as side-by-side mediations, parallel influences, here
referred to as contiguous negotiations. Contiguous negotiations may be considered as capturing the relational breadth of workers’ personal practice in that what is enacted as vocational practice is mediated by and dependent on all else that is being negotiated.

So, the worker, as self-in-action, is multiply constituted in vocational skills sets, role enactments, personal priorities and preferences, and all the self-presentations this multiplicity of concurrent activity generates for the numerous audiences that populate these figured worlds, not least of which is the self, the worker themselves. As illustrated above, senior fire fighter Ian traverses a variety of fluctuating roles and relationships through his work. He negotiates the differences between his role as colleague and team member and his role as acting station officer. Similarly, Hugh negotiates the tensions between his junior rank and his extensive experience. He purposefully and reflectively manages the presentation of himself in practice by doing more than he perceives to be necessary. And Rosie negotiates the differences between the metaphors of family and business as they mediate her understanding of herself as employee, as colleague, and as friend to those with whom she works. Learning is based in these simultaneous negotiations of different work tasks, interdependent roles and responsibilities, meanings of action enacted and understandings of self as sometimes discrepant, sometimes complementary, and sometimes disassociated with all that is going on in work. As such, learning is relationally interdependent (Billett, 2004, 2008) with all the resources of sociocultural activity and those resources include all the negotiations underway in activity.

As activity theory indicates (Leontyev, 1978), these negotiations are numerous across levels of social, institutional, and personal significance. However, and as the 12 workers in this investigation evidence, it is the personal level, the level of personal practice, the self-in-action, that animates and activates these various significances. Learning is the self-in-action, negotiating the social significance of what they do by doing it, that is, negotiating through their personal practice, the negotiations in and of which they are participants. Ian, like Hugh and Bruce, is a fire fighter, enacting a social role of emergency response in the protection of persons and property. Institutionally, Ian is enacting and thereby negotiating multiple roles as senior fire fighter, acting station officer, and aerial appliance specialist. Personally, he is enacting additional roles as team member and colleague, peer supporter for others involved in officer training courses, not to mention his private life as family man,
swimming coach, and friend to many. Within all these enactments of self-in-action, Ian, the man, is variously presenting himself and being variously perceived by all the audiences and relationships he negotiates.

Ian’s negotiation of all the many negotiations that comprise his personal negotiation frame is his learning. This learning includes his skill development as a fire fighter through participation in the community of practice and the practices of his vocational community as Lave and Wenger (1991), Billett (2001a), and Gherardi (2009) assert. This learning also includes his understanding of what it means to be a fire fighter at all the levels of significance he enacts. These multiple meanings are negotiated and renegotiated as elements of all the resources that comprise and mediate his practice, his identity as practitioner, and his position within these fluctuating identities as Wenger (1998), Holland et al. (1998), Giddens (1991), Jarvis (2006), and Etelapelto and Saarinen (2006) advance. Additionally, this learning includes all the changes enveloped in these many negotiations. As Mezirow (1991, 2000) asserts, learning is personally transformative as better meanings of experience are constructed through encounters with conflict and crises. Similarly, as Engestrom (2001, 2008) asserts, learning is expansive of the object or conflict under scrutiny and the resources (i.e., people, activities, materials, understandings, etc.) brought to act on that object.

So, learning is the process and product of Ian’s development as fire fighter, as person, enacted in personal practice as the self-in-action. The self-in-action, and the changes (e.g., personal, situational, material, etc.) by which it is identified, are the evidence of this learning. Ian is the evidence of all this change, observable in what Dewey and Bentley (1975, p. 11) described as “the men themselves in action.” Ian’s knowledge of himself, his practice, his context, his relationships, is expanded, transformed through his personal practice that is, in part, founded on his negotiation of all the negotiations in which he is engaged. As such, this foundation, his negotiation frame, his personal context, what Smith (2006) would describe as his agenda and what Billett (2006b) would label his ontogenetic legacy, expands to enable the enactments to come.

Negotiation as frame brings all these elements of and perspectives on learning together in its broad conceptualisation of workers’ context as a socio-personal construct. This construct comprises the whole of the person, inseparable from their context and what they do within it. As such, this construct represents the unity of person, place, and practice as it is enacted by the individual worker in the very
person-specific ways that identify the unique self-in-action. Here, that personal enactment and the personal context it establishes is described as the personal negotiation frame. As elaborated throughout this chapter, negotiation as frame comprises composite and contiguous negotiations and these identify the range of negotiations that individual workers are negotiating. Learning is, in part, negotiating negotiations. Whether the personal practice of negotiating all the negotiations one has and is enacting is described as managing personal agenda (Smith, 2006), or figuring worlds (Holland et al., 1998), or collaboratively expanding the object of activity (Engestrom, 2008), or engaging in the differences between what the social world projects and what individuals do with these projections (Billett, 2006a, 2008), it is always a participative practice, always a collective enactment and, therefore, a learning practice. Negotiation as frame, the second dimension of negotiation advanced through this thesis, enables these practices to be conceptualised in terms of negotiation as both an activity enacted, a context in which such enactment occurs, and a relationship of and from which this enactment has personal significance.

The following Chapter 7 examines and elaborates the kinds of significance personal practice generates as processes and legacies of negotiation. It does so through the personal work practices of the 12 worker participants that evidence the self-in-action as always in negotiation and, thereby, always in transformation. To account for this transformation in the terms of negotiation, Chapter 7 elaborates the third and final of the three dimensions of negotiation advanced in this thesis as the means of describing and explaining personal learning in and for work as negotiation. That third dimension is negotiation as “flow.” Its focus is on change as ineluctable with negotiation and how it is the person of the worker, through the socio-personal significance they enact, who is the locus of this change, recognisable as personal practice and often referred to as learning evident in change.
Chapter 7

Negotiation as Flow

This chapter elaborates negotiation as flow, the third of the three dimensions of negotiation advanced here as the means of describing and explaining personal learning as negotiation. The major theme throughout the chapter is change, particularly, change as personal transformation of self and practice. Further, this theme is elaborated in the sense of change being an environmental phenomenon in which the transformation of sociocultural resource within activity, be it person, thing, event, or idea, is taken as the natural state of activity. Hence, change is ubiquitous. This theme contrasts with the previous Chapters 5 and 6 that, respectively, elaborated negotiation as form and negotiation as frame. The first dimension, negotiation as form, explained negotiations as sets of co-participative processes and outcomes discernable through workers’ personal practices and across varying levels of purpose and resolution enacted and accomplished through these practices. The second dimension, negotiation as frame, explained negotiation as a kind of meta-activity and how workers construct a personal negotiation frame that includes the negotiations mediating their personal practice in work. Workers enact this frame as they negotiate the negotiations in which they have previously and are currently engaged. The third dimension, negotiation as flow as elaborated here, explains negotiation as a personal practice in the broad environmental sense of personal engagement in work being ineluctable participation in the constant state of flux that is social activity.

The nature of engagement in such activity is inevitably change or transformation: nothing is static; nothing remains the same (Wertsch, 1995, 1998). At its simplest, this constant state of transformation necessitates viewing people as “actively engaged with the environment. They are always in the flow of doing something – the something being a historical, collectively defined, socially produced activity” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 39, italics in the original). However, more than this, individuals’ engagement with their environment is, in fact, a practice of environment and as such cannot be separated from it. That is, practice does not mediate between the person and the environment. Rather, practice is the evidence of person-environment that Dewey and Bentley (1975, p. 109) describe as “the organism-in-
environment-as-a-whole” and what is referred to in this thesis as the unity of person, place, and practice made visible as the self-in-action. So, people are more than always engaged with their environment. They are always of their environment: not simply active within it, but inseparably part of the activity that is the environment that is always in transformation (Dewey & Bentley, 1975). Negotiation as flow, therefore, captures the unity of person, place, and practice and the transformational nature of this unity in its conceptualisation as the third dimension of negotiation proposed here.

To flow is to move through a space, physical or conceptual, with a fluidity that carries and advances the measure and meaning of things and events in activity. Flow, therefore, brings change, not as sudden, inexplicable happenings (although such occurrence is not improbable), but as processional continuities that are part of the movement underway. The river flows across the land and whether it is crashing down through the mountains, engulfing the plains in flood, or gently sliding by in the calm momentum of its journey to the sea, the flow of the river brings new water to continue its sculpting and re-sculpting of its path through the landscape. The river is both in and of the landscape, inseparable from it, and by virtue of its flow, is shaping and being shaped by that landscape. It is in this sense of constant change through movement as integral to the environment, that the term flow is used here. In this way, flow conveys the nature of the constant state of flux that is social activity and engagement in it as transformation through negotiated participation in work.

So, negotiation as flow refers to meanings and properties of individuals’ work as representative or characteristic of a holistic understanding that views any particular activity, phenomena, or event as being in and part of a constant state of flux marked by continuous change. Individual workers, their personal and contextual practices, and the enactment and development of those practices may be understood as negotiation as flow because together, they constitute the constant state of flux that is progressing and accomplishing the production of goods and services that constitutes their work. Just as the river is identifiable within the landscape, so is the individual worker identifiable in work. Just as the river flows through its landscape, so the individual worker flows through their work. However, and as Dewey and Bentley (1975) assert, everything else that is integral to the landscape is also flowing. The air or wind is flowing across the land. The gases of the air are being taken up by animals as they make their way through the landscape. The minerals of the soil are being taken up by the plants and are passing through the bodies of the animals when the plants are
consumed as food. These various and many analytically isolated flows and the transformations they evidence are all transactions. For the animals, the air is transacted through breath. The plants and the minerals they contain are transacted through eating and digestion. For the land, the air is transacted as wind. The river, among other things, is transacted as erosion or sedimentation, as the case may be, with its fluctuating volumes of water and rates of flow removing material from one part of its course and depositing it in another. So, the river is not the only source of movement, of flow. It is merely conspicuous as evidence of the flow that is the flux of activity that is not just occurring within the environment, but is the environment.

So, equally, is the individual worker conspicuous as evidence of the flow that is work. Materials and ideas pass through production systems, through communications systems and distribution systems. Workers move in and out of connections, encounters, negotiations, with colleagues, with tools, with the materials and processes of their work. Decisions are made, circumstances change, the clock ticks and the freshness of the morning and the start of shift give way to the fatigue of the afternoon and the end of shift. Individual workers, busy through their personal practice, are not the only source of movement, of flow. They are, however, evidence of it, evidence of the many and various transactions that constitute work. In this thesis they are the primary evidence of flow because they are the locus of the negotiations that constitute the participative activity of their work.

To examine individual workers through the negotiations they enact, is to examine the changes they transact in and through those negotiations. Transaction is flow, is transformation, the carrying through of activity, as work, as personal practice and as learning. As Dewey and Bentley (1975) assert, transaction is inherently unifying. There can be no buyer without a seller, no novice without an expert, and no learning without participation. Further, what designates participants as either one kind of party or another is the transaction in which they are engaged. Learning, therefore, can be viewed as the transaction of engagement in participative practices and here those practices are described as work. Negotiation as flow is the conceptualisation of all the transactions in which the individual worker is engaged. As such, negotiation as flow permits an elaboration going beyond negotiation forms and frames outlined in the previous two chapters, to account for the changes that mark transaction as the natural state of being in and of the world. Here, that world is the world of work as
illustrated through the 12 worlds of work transacted by the 12 worker-participants reported in this thesis.

Additional to the Dewey and Bentley (1975) view of transaction as the human condition of collective being in and of the world, is the complementary view of transaction as the vehicle of exchange between negotiating parties engaged in what Saner (2005, p. 17) simply describes in defining negotiation as parties seeking “agreement to establish what each shall give or take, or perform and receive in a transaction between them.” To focus on what it is that parties “give and take” is to focus on transaction as the value of the goods and services, the sociocultural resources of activity, exchanged, transferred, or subrogated through the arrangements made. Further, as explained in Chapters 2 and 3, the value of resources enacted through negotiation is relationally determined. For example, value may be commonly measured by parties engaged in distributive negotiation and, thereby, lost or gained as outcome of the process. Equally, value may be differently measured and, thereby, enable integrative negotiation processes and outcomes (see e.g., Menkel-Meadow, 2009; Zartman, 1988). As Dewey and Bentley (1975, p. 276) state, “both parties (the idiomatic name for participants) undergo change; and the goods undergo at the very least a change of locus by which they gain and lose certain connective relations or “capacities” previously possessed” (italics in original). Importantly, the nature of the new locus and the connective relations and capacities transacted become the new value of resources enacted through transactions as the flow of negotiations continues.

Transaction changes the value of resources enacted and those changes and resources are the people, materials, processes, and understandings that constitute negotiation, albeit co-participatively. The transaction of breath turns the gases of the air into essential elements of bodily function. Likewise, the transaction of eating turns plants into food, into essential nutrients, to be further transacted through the chemical processes of cellular activity that sustain bodily function. Similarly, the transaction of felling turns trees into wood and the transaction of milling turns wood into timber and the transaction of building turns timber into structure and so on as the flow of negotiated activity transforms the resources enacted through activity. To flow is to transact the transformations that evidence the constant state of flux of activity manifest as worker, work, and learning.

These perspectives of transaction, as environmental continuities in flux and as the transformed relational value of sociocultural resources, are foundational to the
third dimension of negotiation, negotiation as flow. What follows is an elaboration of these aspects of negotiation as flow through an examination of the personal practices of the 12 workers who participated in the investigation reported here. This elaboration and examination is presented in three sections, each dealing with a specific theme of negotiation as flow: (a) the person in flow, (b) practice in flow, and (c) resources in flow.

First, the theme of person in flow elaborates the person as the locus of change, in that it is the presence of the person in activity that generates the interactions, and thus, the negotiations that change “who” people are. This capacity to alter reality, that is, to change self-understandings, others’ perceptions, and social position and standing in events, and to influence the direction of subsequent events, is conceptualised in the primacy and immediacy of the self-in-action. The person has presence in activity and that presence is charged with the immediacy to act, to choose, from the range of possibilities enabled by their presence. Enacting this primacy and immediacy is the initiation of transformation. It is the enactment of personal practice evidenced in the changes that flow through negotiation.

Second, the theme of practice in flow progresses this elaboration of transformation to discuss how workers apprehend the changes they enact. It does this in two sections: (a) workers’ self-evaluations of their influence upon activities, and (b) the personal values and levels of importance that comprise this influence. Self-evaluation, or the measure of personal practice on the basis of intentions pursued and accomplishments secured, is negotiated. Equally, the values enacted as evidence of the importance attached to personal practice are negotiated. So, the measure and value of personal practice is transformed.

Third, the theme of resources in flow elaborates the transformation of the material and relational resources that comprise transactions of personal practice. Things, tools, relationships, are transformed as workers enact the negotiations constituting their work. These transformations may be intentional or incidental, following from planning and design or from accident and coincidence. Equally, they may be significant and less so, as changes adopted to become new cultural practice or ephemeral changes that meet only immediate requirements and are cast off as the flow of activity brings other demands and other responses.

Together, these three themes elaborate the transformative nature of sociocultural activity in terms of negotiation practices that capture an environmental
perspective, that is, a perspective sufficiently able to account for the constant changes that are generated by and emergent from individuals’ purposeful participation in work and the negotiations on which it is premised and through which they learn. Important in this is the degree to which change is welcome and undesired, supportive and unsupportive of personal goals and, thereby, personally accepted and accommodated or rejected and possibly denied. Such a focus is not a key issue throughout this chapter, although the 12 workers do recount instances of when the kinds of changes they have negotiated in work have been less than welcome. However, and more importantly here, it is the 12 workers’ acknowledgement of the ubiquity of change and its recognition as a state or participation that is not passively experienced but is rather positively and actively enacted, personally and collectively, as negotiation in flow.

**Theme 1: The person in flow**

The individual may be viewed as the potential or power of activity that is carried in the immediacy to act. This power of activity is embodied in the presence of the person (Archer, 2000) as a co-participant (Billett, 2004) in a situational context that necessitates their personal engagement (Smith, 2005). Therefore, the person can be considered as an embodied ambit presence that generates interaction. That is, the person, as individual worker, as subject, as agent, has substance and capacity, has agency, and that agency, their propensity to influence activity, is evidenced by the negotiations they bring to, initiate, and engage with through sociocultural activity: and all of this simply by their being present. The individual is always an active co-participant because they are not just in the environment: they are of the environment, and always negotiating (by differing degrees) aspects and resources of that environment. So powerful is this quality of personal presence that the mere insinuation of the person in activity is often sufficient to influence how and why subsequent action occurs. This is particularly noticeable, for example, when those such as guests, authority figures, or respected officials are expected. The agency of such individuals to influence activity can be said to go before them as it attends their immanent presence. Often, there is a range of preparatory and anticipatory activity generated by the expectation of their coming, well in advance of their arrival.

The person, as embodied presence of interactivity, comes before questions of personal choices made, or decisions taken and actions initiated. Such a presence is
founded, in part, in the social norms and expectations that the person, as the self-in-action, will present in certain ways and be accepted by others who accredit them with influence or agency (Goffman, 1959). Further, this perspective acknowledges what Giddens (1991) and Holland et al. (1998) identify as positionality: the taking-up of a social position and, thereby, the power and influence that such a position holds. However, the immediacy of the person (i.e., self-in-action) carries more than a position in activity and an expectation of what should happen given the social roles and norms that identify position. The individual, as person, is the enactment of self-in-action and, thereby, brings a personalisation, the personal qualification, of any social position by their “who” it is that embodies that position. Therefore, the person, more than the position, activates the immediacy of personal presence and, thereby, the response necessitated by that presence. Enacting this immediacy is a person-dependent practice enabling a diverse range of personal and social possibilities. These enactments and possibilities (potential or actual) evidence the substance and flow of the person in and through the contexts and events in which they are engaged.

To illustrate: in the following statements, Hugh describes some of the reasons he enjoys his work as a fire fighter. He has not come to his current work in the fire service as a raw recruit; rather, he has migrated from his country of birth where he had previously worked as a fire fighter after working some years as a slate tile roofer. Hugh is a large and physically powerful man who, on arrival in this country, took employment with a furniture removal company for a few years before applying to and successfully joining the state fire and rescue service. As a means of securing extra income, Hugh still works part-time with the removalist company when his fire fighting shift rotations permit. He states,

*I enjoy being in the fire service because of the actual work, the variety of it, but also the respect that comes with the position. I mean, I first noticed it back home in my local pub. When I was just a roofer the old fellas at the top end of the bar wouldn’t particularly speak to me because I was just one of the village boys, you know, but as soon as I joined the fire service they all wanted to talk to me, sit down, have a pint, they would all tell me their World War stories.* (Int#2)

*If I’m at a BBQ and to answer to someone asking me what I do, I say, I’m a furniture removalist, they walk away. When I say I’m a fire fighter, then oh man, that’s interesting and they start telling you their story – because everyone’s got a fire story. They want to talk.* (Int#3)
In these two statements, Hugh is acknowledging something of the social origins and meanings of his work: meanings that identify him as the embodiment of socially familiar and respected emergency response to common threats and danger. Further, he reveals his personal construal of these social meanings in everyday situations away from work where his personal practices as a fire fighter are, nevertheless, enacted as vocational practice. When Hugh enters into these social activities, he enters as fire fighter, as roof tiler, as furniture removalist, and as accepted guest and participant in the occasion. It is not simply the case that a fire fighter has entered. Rather, it is the case that Hugh, the person, the unique self-in-action with all his history and legacy of past and current engagement in social activity (i.e., his negotiation frame), has entered. His presence in these situations generates socio-personal interaction over which he has some personal control. His presence is, firstly, the enactment of self and generates transactions that evidence the possibilities his agency enables. Some of these possibilities, these transactions, are realised as inclusion and sharing, and a conferred status of respect and interest as he reveals himself as fire fighter. Similarly, these transactions can include exclusion and isolation as he reveals himself as furniture removalist. Yet, in as much as these transactions attach to the diverse social positions Hugh embodies, they remain latent in his personal agency, indicative of the primacy, of the immediacy to act as personal choice or practice that attends his presence. Through his presence, participation has begun; negotiation is enacted and its trajectory and legacy wait on the choices and decisions participants will action as they enact themselves and so progress the transactions that define their activity.

So, the nature of Hugh’s flow through and into the negotiations by which he enacts will transact his personal practice as fire fighter in different ways as mediated by the different resources operant in the diverse circumstances in which he finds himself. We can only speculate what Hugh will discuss with the old fellows at the top of the bar; we can, however, be certain that Hugh’s personal presence has generated this particular interaction, made all the more salient by his having previously been just another labouring lad in the village. And similarly, at the next barbeque, will Hugh choose to identify himself as a fire fighter or a furniture removalist and what factors will influence this decision? These become important considerations because Hugh’s vocational practice is transacted in these seeming casual encounters as he
negotiates the terrain of his, others’ and society’s understandings of the work and position of fire fighters.

As Bourdieu (2000) explains and Hugh demonstrates, “the agent is never completely the subject of his practices” (p. 136) because those practices are not independently constructed – they are “acquired in the course of a situated and dated social experience” (p. 138). Yet, more than acquired, more than constructed, Hugh’s practices are “learned” through negotiations constituting his engagement in work. Fire fighters, like furniture removalists, like roof tilers, like guests at a barbeque, are guided by personal, vocational, and social norms and expectations (Archer, 2000; Giddens, 1991; Holland et al., 1998). These elements of sociocultural activity are, like persons and their practices, resources that are being transacted through the flow of activity that identifies them. Hugh transacts these resources through his enactment of them. He may not be completely the subject of his practices, but he is always the complete personification of them because only he practices the way he does, only he changes the way he does. Hugh enacts his personal practice in ways that derive from his personal construal of what it means to be and work as a fire fighter, whether at the bar, at barbeques, or at work.

The diverse work of fire fighters sometimes involves attending emergency situations in support of police. Often, these situations do not involve fire or accident, but require the fire fighters’ skills of entering locked premises quickly and securing the safety of trapped or disabled inhabitants. There are different pieces of equipment that make up the fire fighters’ “kit” in such situations. These include battering rams, heavy levers, and hydraulic spreaders used to quickly remove or simply smash in doors. The most commonly used tool is the sledgehammer. Hugh explains, at the end of the day a few good smacks with a heavy sledge hammer and most household doors come off (Int#4). In interview, Hugh described an incident where such circumstances and expectations applied. He recounted how he approached the entrance of a private home where police officers stood waiting for him to do what fire fighters do, hammer the door down. He stated:

* I carry a piece of milk carton plastic in my kit – no one else does. When you have to gain access – I’ve used it where there was an elderly person on the floor, there’s no damage. I’ve had the policemen look at me strangely when I’ve actually pulled it out of my pocket and popped the lock in front of them – they were gob smacked. (Int#4)
Hugh’s personal presence at the door, in full emergency response uniform and carrying the familiar sledgehammer, the usual kit, carries all the social press of standard roles and expectations. The interaction generated by his presence in this typical work scenario is both immediate and seemingly predictable. However, from the immediacy of his presence emerges a different set of possibilities, not because a fire fighter is on the job (although this is plainly the case), but because Hugh is on the job. He does what he is supposed to do – that is, gain access – and so confirms the social norms of fire fighters and their occupational practice. Additionally and most saliently, he also personalises the role through his personal practice of using the pieces of plastic to open the door. In doing so, Hugh transacts his personal practice in ways unfamiliar to the attending police. His knowledge and use of specific density plastics for tripping particular locks, a skill learned in earlier days, stands as a person-specific aspect of Hugh’s negotiated occupational practice. Together, this and other personal practices constitute an important ontogenetic base that he brings to his work of being a fire fighter.

So, as Hugh illustrates, there are two fundamental aspects of the person transacted as the self-in-action: (a) the fact and substance of personal presence, and (b) the enactment of person-dependent possibilities. First, being there, being present, brings more than a social role with attendant expectations to mediate activity. Hugh is the one who changes as soon as he becomes a fire fighter. Equally, the old men at the bar change, the other guests at the barbecue change, and the policemen change – become gob smacked – because Hugh changes, is transformed by the role he enacts, but also is transformed by enacting the role as only he can accomplish. So being there brings the immediate influential involvement of a person, a unique self-in-action, in the personification of a range of possibilities that go beyond the press of social roles and expectations. The worker in negotiation (e.g., of vocational task, of situation, of others’ expectations, of role, etc.) is the person in flow, in transformation, as evidence of the existential fact that being present in activity necessitates activity: the person cannot “not act” (Archer, 2000; Holland et al., 1998), cannot “not choose” (Sartre, 1989, p. 148). In this way, the person embodies a primacy and immediacy to action based on their presence in the environment. This primacy and immediacy manifests as negotiation.

Second, and from this, specific person-dependent possibilities are enacted. Hugh demonstrates that from what could be done, whether hidden in personal
potential or obvious in predictable behaviour, the self-in-action can negotiate and enact options from the range of possibilities it brings to the situation. These enactments evidence transactions that Holland et al. (1998) and Etelapelto and Saarinen (2006) would describe as personal and vocational identity formation, as Hugh continues figuring, through his choices, what it is to be a fire fighter, both at and away from work. Similarly, Hugh negotiates how he will bring himself, his history, and disposition (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004) to negotiate his immediate circumstance. And further, these enactments evidence transactions of personal work practice as Hugh negotiates the doors, locks, police agendas, tools and equipment, and urgency requirements that mediate his necessary response to the circumstances at hand. So, through work, Hugh practices who he is, what he does, and how he does it. And all these practices are negotiated transactions enacted as his personal flow in, of, and through participation in work activity.

In ways similar to Hugh, the 12 worker-participants recount experiences of their practice and awareness of transactions they enact through their embodied vocational presence in and out of work. The qualities of these understandings of person in flow are as different as the circumstances and contexts of each of the workers are different. To illustrate, Rosie is a full-time university student who works casually as a table waiter at Platinum, a small suburban restaurant. At 19 years of age and after approximately one year in the job (what for her seems a brief time in a job that is intended only as a supplementary source of income) she finds herself to be the longest serving of the wait staff. Moreover, from the perspective of her employers, she has established herself as a reliable and highly competent worker. In interview, discussing her learning and progress in the job, she acknowledges her new found seniority and subsequent new casual wait staff training responsibilities.

I find myself looking at how the restaurant used to be and how it is now under my kind of, bigger role. I guess even just having responsibility puts you in a supervising kind of role. I’m actually starting to look at my role a lot, in a very different kind of light … So I’m learning myself and stuff but it’s pretty well my own take on it. (Int#4)

For Rosie, that different kind of light is an awareness of her self-in-action, the immediacy of her agency and how she personally enacts this as her own take on it. Through enacting herself she is learning what it means to do her work in the ways she does it, to be experienced and to take responsibility for assisting others. Her person-in-flow, through vocational practice, is transacting her changing role, as learning, as
supervisory responsibilities, as something bigger than before that needs to be differently and yet personally comprehended. This is learning: experiential learning (Jarvis, 2006; Kolb, 1984), transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991, 2000), and situated learning (Billett, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991), as Rosie negotiates the many transactions that define her personal practice in work. And through all this changing personal understanding, the restaurant changes: not simply for Rosie, but because of her moving through the restaurant as an employee enacting her vocational practice in her ways, the restaurant is not what it used to be. Rosie and the restaurant are transformed through the negotiations that are the transaction of her personal practice.

In contrast with Rosie’s professed inexperience, Marilyn, the manager of HealthyTrim, is highly experienced and is purposefully pursuing her career in the fitness industry. Yet, despite a wealth of experience, she acknowledges her continual learning of how to be herself and how to enact her agency in ways that better accommodate the progression of her personal ambitions through the success of the gymnasium. Marilyn is a big woman, tall and strong, and this stature, in conjunction with the positional authority held as the manager, presents an immediacy of personal presence she acknowledges in the conduct of her work. She describes in interview,

> When you’re having management meetings with people – I used to always sit here behind my big desk and my big chair and people come in and I’m pretty tall and I can be pretty intimidating – so now I generally like to have a meeting downstairs at a little table and we’re just sort of chatting, maybe having a coffee, maybe relaxing a bit – because I can understand that I can be very intimidating for a staff member who’s thinking maybe I’m gonna rip their head off or give them a bit of you know, it’s a very intimidating. So I tend to maybe change the environment from where I’m going or change my persona. (Int #4)

Marilyn negotiates her practice in ways that sustain her role, and these follow from her developing expertise in exercising that role. She is more aware of herself than is Rosie, more experienced in the conduct of herself in work and more aware of the immediacy she embodies, physically and positionally. Nevertheless, she acts from the same base of personifying her work through her self-in-action and the possibilities her experience enables her. Marilyn speaks of being careful when she enters the child-care centre where children of gymnasium clients are supervised while their parents are exercising. Marilyn knows her sheer size is fearful for these little children. She has brought children to tears simply by being there. Marilyn also speaks of her stature assisting her in HealthyTrim group management meetings where she needs to
command the attention of colleagues and senior executives. Equally, she speaks of her stature as hindering her and her sometimes needing to overcome others’ false perceptions of her as being insensitive. Again, at other times through the interviews, Marilyn speaks of her stature being both assuring for and yet unnerving for new staff members. In these personal accommodations and understandings she enacts more than the role of the gymnasium manager with its accompanying positional authority. Rather, she enacts her self-in-action and so transacts her personal practice through the different negotiations she engages. She has learned through this practice to be authoritative, to be compassionate, to be supportive, to be accommodating within the circumstances mediating her negotiations. Her flow in and through work is constantly being adjusted, qualified as her way of doing things, and this is her learning how to participate in the vocational and contextual requirements of her work through the negotiations that constitute what Wenger (1998) would describe as her community of practice. She changes herself, her persona and her practice, in negotiation with the resources (e.g., clients, staff, furniture, etc.) and so evidences her transformation as she transacts her personal practice.

This is also true for Bob, a senior member of the university ITS team. Like Marilyn, he is experienced, but more, he is an expert in his field. Now 36 years of age, he originally moved into the computer technology field in his mid-twenties following health issues that prevented him from continuing work in the construction industry. He acknowledges the good fortune of discovering a natural talent for computing and the support of government funded retraining schemes that connected him with highly supportive employers who helped nurture his talent. In his current role at the university he is, among other things, part of the on-call team that responds to the service requests of academic staff who are experiencing problems with their computing equipment. This work takes him into private offices and research laboratories where he deals with equipment difficulties and failures and also with academics whose work has been interrupted by such technical problems. In response to questions about the kinds of decisions he makes through his work, Bob states,

*Anything to do with fixing something, well yeah, that’s totally free, that’s your decision – you’re free to make a decision any way you want. Basically it’s just time management and prioritizing. It’s not a hard thing, alright, IT, information technology. I look at what I do in this way – it’s probably, say, 40% IT, 60% time management and, tell you the truth, PR, public relations. If you can manage your times, manage your PR right, you will never have a problem in your life in this joint because once the clients like you, and that’s*
one of the most important things, making yourself more likeable – because if they like you, things will go smooth, the complaints are less. So decision wise, PR was my biggest decision. (Int#2)

When Bob enters the office of an academic who requires technical assistance, he knows that his technical competence will ensure faulty equipment is fixed quickly. And this is what is expected: the technician will do his job. Bob, however, does more than this. His purposefully developed people skills ensure a range of greater personal and organisational benefits. These may include the academic client’s satisfaction to the point of their making favourable comments about Bob and the ITS service in the feedback response mechanisms the university uses to monitor performance; their being more informed about the system they operate within; their feeling more confident with the levels of support afforded and being predisposed to a less stressful experience when next they encounter technical and computing problems. Bob aims to personally engage his clients, through conversation and instruction while he works, and seeks to secure important vocational outcomes for himself, his client, and his team. More than doing his job as faults service technician, Bob decisively enacts his self-in-action as a supporter of his clients and the work they do, beyond a technical encounter solely directed to the equipment they need and use. By doing so, Bob transacts his personal practice as public relations practices, as client services, as opposed to just a technical service. His expertise enables this broader enactment of his practice. The negotiations by which this enactment is accomplished are the one-on-one encounters in the private offices of university academics. Bob’s flow in and through work is transacted, in part, as making yourself more likeable, being personable and friendly, when clients are stressed and frustrated by the failure of their technical equipment. Learning to prioritise client satisfaction over, and yet in conjunction with, fixing equipment has become for Bob a decision he enacts as personal practice, a transaction he negotiates with his clients through the mediations of his work. And again, his work is changed because of this as evidenced by the smooth nature of things and the fewer complaints he notes. Importantly, here and through these transactions, he is transformed; he has made himself more likeable.

As illustrated by these examples of personal practice, the primacy of the person as self-in-action activates the negotiations that initiate transformation. Work necessitates the immediacy of personal action (Smith, 2006) and this is accomplished through the negotiations that transact personal practice as co-participative engagement
in joint activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In part, personal practice is transacted in the social roles and expectations that attend the vocational positions illustrated. In the terms of Holland et al. (1998), Hugh, Rosie, Marilyn, and Bob are active in highly figured worlds that ground their authoring of person in practice in strong and familiar sociocultural identities – those of fire fighter, waitress, manager, and technician. Further, each of these workers can be seen to be positioning their vocational selves in developing skill sets that strengthen and support the choices they are making through the negotiations in which they are engaged. However, what must also be emphasised here is that Hugh, Rosie, Marilyn, and Bob (like all the workers who participated in this investigation) are the embodied presence that holds the immediacy of social role and vocational identity in the possibilities of the self-in-action. That is, not as something that will happen, but as something that will be transacted as the identification of a unique person in flow, in work, learning to be who they are in and through what they do and how they do it.

The subtlety of this distinction, that it is the agency and substance, the primacy, of the person in flow and not simply their social or vocational role that is immediate in activity, is in part illustrated by levels of experience that are enacted. For example, Rosie considers herself a novice, inexperienced and untrained in her role of being responsible for new staff training. Marilyn considers herself as developing her managerial expertise and Bob considers himself an expert in his technical field and highly competent in prioritising clients and their needs, over and above simply solving their technical problems. From such instances, the immediacy to act, to influence negotiations, may be considered as more highly exercised by those of greater expertise and authority, particularly when expertise is partly defined by increased levels of procedural discretion, that is, freedom to choose how to do what is required by making judgements about what constitutes appropriate and effective practice (Billett, 2001a; Stevenson, 2003). However, the nature of transaction to transform parties and resources (Dewey & Bentley, 1975) as they flow through negotiation processes and outcomes enables a more person-specific view: a view of self-in-action that negotiates rather than accepts apparent social positions.

For example, throughout the interviews Rosie describes herself as inexperienced and, therefore, unable to meet the demands of training new wait staff. Similarly, she confesses a reluctance to accept the role despite knowing she has become the senior wait staff by virtue of her time in the job and demonstrated
competence. In all her inexperience and confessed reluctance to accept the training responsibilities of a more senior role, Rosie outlines some of the training approaches she has personally devised for new wait staff.

I don’t know whether people used to do this but I’ve kind of got this thing where I tell everyone, alright, the first time you go to the table, because you didn’t seat them, give them the menus and give them some water and glasses and if it’s appropriate give them the specials in that big kind of, oh, how you going, rah rah rah, sit down give them the menus – I’ll just let you know a couple of specials. Then the next time you come back to the table should be a drink order – they don’t want drinks or it’s a bread, right, if they’re ready for drinks then when you next come back with their drinks then you ask for bread. There’s always a kind of that flow on stuff happening with the one table so you’re always forcing decisions that aren’t too intrusive but something is always happening. And I kind of tell everyone that through that kind of going back those times – there’s three things you should have to ask first, before they’re ready to order so at least they’ve got something coming in between their talking and stuff. I was never told that, I just find that’s the easiest way I do things and it’s an easy way to get those three things straight out to the new ones. (Int #4)

Rosie, despite her self-perception, is a very competent trainer who draws on a developing awareness of herself-in-action to enact her new role. As can be seen in the excerpt above, she outlines and justifies the procedures she enacts as pedagogic practice and offers insight into how her personal practice acts as the basis of her development of this training for new wait staff. Rosie is effectively engaging in and contributing to the structured workplace curriculum (Billett, 2001a) of the restaurant. In this way, she is learning, through the negotiations of her practice (with customers, with staff, with systems, etc.), how to more consciously and efficiently enact her personal practice through her concurrently learning how to teach others to do what she does. Clearly, Rosie’s personal practice, transacted through the necessities and responsibilities of her new role as trainer, belies her novice standing, evidences her competence, and confirms her learning and transformation as negotiated co-participation in the requirements of her vocational practice despite her lack of any specific instructional provision.

By contrast, Bob is an expert who works with high levels of discretionary practice. He has been on many employer supported training courses, technical and managerial, and is increasingly working in a variety of special projects designed to enhance the university’s information technology systems. In interview, he discusses a prevailing aspect of the culture of IT expertise that emphasises the pride and skill of
problem solving, of being quickly able to access relevant information from the Internet and subsequently personally and privately adapting and applying this information in the field. Bob describes how IT workers, including his colleagues, would rather spend months researching something than talk to someone who knows. He describes this practice as wasting time in efforts to build and sustain personal expertise. Seeking assistance from more informed others is not considered a practice of the IT expert who can, does, and must, says Bob, go it alone. This sentiment is supported by Sid and Dick, Bob’s ITS colleagues (the two other ITS participants in this investigation), when they express similar opinions of the need of IT experts to be seen to know it all. Despite this prevailing performance norm that defines and confirms expertise as a solo effort, Bob describes his own practices in very different terms when he recounts,

*I’m not scared to walk out and ask questions – I know that doesn’t sound like a big deal to you, but in IT circles, walking up to a networking group and saying I don’t understand, that can be deemed – people don’t like doing it. It reveals ignorance and it’s a hard culture to get rid of. I’ve never been embarrassed to walk up and say I don’t know, tell me. Some of them look at me like I’m some kind of idiot, but I don’t really care – I have the information I need. You wouldn’t believe the culture of not asking in IT.* (Int #4)

The self-imposed pressures to complete work quickly and efficiently and so be seen by clients and the system to be supportive and reliable, drive Bob to ask the basic kinds of questions more closely associated with novices’ work practices. In so doing, Bob belies his expertise through this expediency and so transacts his personal practice in ways that threaten his vocational identity with colleagues and yet support his getting the job done with the seeming effortlessness of an expert. Bob negotiates this contradiction between novice and expert contiguously by his learning through accessing external sources of information with greater regard for getting the job done than for upholding vocational practice norms. Where Rosie’s flow, her transformation in personal practice, identifies the novice in practice and yet evidences the competent expert, Bob’s flow identifies the expert in practice and yet evidences the vulnerability and lack of knowledge of the novice.

Therefore, against criteria of experience that may be seen to indicate higher or lower levels of agency accorded experts and novices, Rosie and Bob enact personal practices that defy such simple divisions. They each bring an immediacy to act in their vocational practice that resides more fully in their personal histories and
embodied presence in work than in the norms and expectations of the roles they fulfil through this work. Rosie, in her inexperience, brings expertise to her new training role; Bob, in his expertise, enacts the novice for the benefits this creates. Each of them, like Hugh and Marilyn, bring a person of substance, a strong personal negotiation frame, to their work and from this enact the possibilities their selves-in-action enable. The self-in-action is not independent in its enactments, not outside the mediation of sociocultural context, both current and historic, as Bourdieu (1990) and Ratner (2000) rightfully indicate. Instead, the self-in-action transacts a personal practice, a person-specific engagement in the negotiations that constitute their vocational practice. What the participants noted above illustrate, is that the self-in-action, initiated in the primacy of the person present in activity and activated by the negotiation frame that founds their personal practice, is the locus of transformation that characterises sociocultural activity, here, work. From this base of engagement, the person of the individual worker flows in and through their vocational context, transacting their personal practice as the process and product of the set of negotiations their immediacy, their presence, generates as activity. Through transactions, of personal and positional identity, of learning, of mediated response, of relationships with clients, colleagues, systems, and so on, the person is transformed, changed, not in isolation but in conjunction with their workplaces and practices. Taken together, this on-going activity constitutes the constant flux of sociocultural activity identified here as work. To examine the person in practice is to examine their flow in and through this flux and to observe their primacy, their immediacy and transformation as evidence of negotiation as flow.

From the brief illustrations above, Hugh, Rosie, Marilyn, and Bob can be seen to personify vocational practice as experience, learning skills and preferences, interests and motivations, awareness and maturity, the guidance and support afforded by the workplace through employers, colleagues and operating systems, norms, roles and values, power and authority, and many more indicators of how and why vocational practice is manifest in unique and familiar ways. These personifications represent an array of negotiations by which vocational practice is transacted as personal practice. To apprehend these personal practices is, in part, to observe and acknowledge the changes, the personal transformations manifest in transaction of a person in flow, as they move in, of, and with the environment that constitutes them as person, place, and practice in action.
Further, to apprehend such changes is to examine notions of accrediting people with more or less agency, stronger or weaker capacities, and comprehensive or less comprehensive understandings of themselves-in-action as evidence of the negotiations that mark their transformations transacted in flow. The following section turns to these considerations in the second of the three themes of negotiation as flow examined in this chapter: practice in flow, the measure and value of personal practice.

**Theme 2: Practice in flow**

*The measure of personal practice*

The notion of qualifying and quantifying (i.e., measuring) personal practice is possibly fundamental to individuals’ understanding of themselves as progressing and, thereby, succeeding or failing in their endeavours at work. The centrality of evaluating personal practice in terms of purposes enacted and resolutions accomplished is foundational to categorising the negotiation forms that the enactment of personal practice represents. Such measuring may be viewed as reflective learning practice (Mezirow, 2000) whereby the self-in-action makes sense of and gives meaning to experience after activity as evaluation, before activity as planning, and during activity as monitoring (Jarvis, 2004). Such measuring may be viewed as self-appraisal and stands as an essential negotiation practice. For example, Lewicki et al.’s (2006) nine-phase negotiation model outlined in Chapter 2 (see Table 2.1) stipulates that knowing and assessing one’s interests, limits, alternatives, and targets and doing so in relation to others’ interests, limits, alternatives and targets is essential for successful negotiations in the standard sense. Additionally, self-appraisal stands as a socially regulated practice whereby the self is subjected to and, therefore, a subject of engagement in the cultural norms and values of their context: their social milieu (Dewey & Bentley, 1975; Foucault, 1980; Holland et al., 1998). These norms and values are the social and personal criteria on which self-appraisal is likely based. So workers, through the negotiations enacted as personal practice, monitor and evaluate themselves and their practice: in terms of personal agency, with having more or less discretion to act autonomously (Billett, 2004; Smith, 2006); in terms of skill, with levels of competence demonstrated and mastered in different contexts (Fuller & Unwin, 2004); in terms of authority, with how much organisational responsibility is accepted and managed (Ellstrom, 2001); in terms of motivation, with degrees of
efficacy and effort displayed and exerted (Bartram & Roe, 2008); and in terms of status, with collegiate regard and standing as elements of personally held social capital (Hodkinson & Hodkindson, 2004).

Such measures of personal practice are integral to understanding the self-in-action as knowledgeable, powerful, effective, and valued, both personally and socially. All such measures are concerned, to different extents, with comprehending the dimensions of individuals’ contributions to, responsibilities for, and consequences of what is done or could be done through engagement in sociocultural activity. Archer (2000) advances personal priorities, cares, and concerns that arise from personal reflection as bases upon which people decide how much of themselves they will invest in living out their social identities. From these bases, important evaluative issues arise. They include assessing how personal priorities are established, understanding how important concerns are differentiated from the less important, and how levels of personal investment are accounted. These evaluative issues are particularly salient when it is realised that individuals often can and do invest more of themselves in matters of little concern and less of themselves in matters of great concern. In other ways, Bourdieu (1990) advances the pursuit and realisation of social capital through the enactment of habitus as the means of securing success within the field of social relations in which individuals participate. So, individuals’ evaluative issues relate to how much capital is sufficient to ensure that desires (or needs) can be secured and how much personal effort is required to establish this level of capital. In yet other ways, Engestrom (2001) advances that positive change is dependent on social system participants’ questioning current practices. Questioning is a skill of inquiry based in recognising levels of inadequacy in the system (Engestrom, 2001). So, evaluative issues arise around what levels of expertise are necessary to identify and evaluate systems’ deficiencies and what levels of interpersonal openness, acceptance, and trust between participants are needed to ensure the levels of collaboration sufficient to appreciate the legitimacy of questions posed.

These kinds of evaluative issues are central to understanding personal practice as transformative through participation and the negotiations that constitute work. They are also issues about what sociocultural resources are personally and socially valued, what constitutes more or less skill, knowledge, or capacity, and how these are connected and activated in motivations, contexts, and life trajectories. Such issues begin to illuminate the complexity of the negotiations that constitute personal activity
and what is transacted as the personal and social accomplishment of the vocational self-in-action. These are issues of learning (for example, the object of learning, Engestrom, 2001; and the practice of learning, Billett, 2006b) and particularly, learning as evidenced by changes of personal practice: that is, practice in flow.

Additional to these issues as indicators of the kinds of negotiations enacted in the measure of personal practice, are issues of perspective and locus of evaluation. That is, personal practice (and all the negotiation processes and outcomes enacted) will be perceived, measured, and understood differently by individual workers concerned, by those closely associated with them, and by those more loosely or more distantly associated (Rousseau, 2005). All these issues of personal evaluation noted above, of assessing personal practice in and through the negotiation of personal practice, are evidenced in the personal practices of the 12 participants in this investigation as personal concerns upon which their personal transformations are premised.

For example, Rosie does not think of herself as having a high degree of autonomy or discretion to enact her new role of trainer. When discussing this in interview she makes it clear that she can’t just do anything she likes and is restricted by what Robert (her boss) instructs. However, observations of Rosie dealing with new staff while Robert is present indicate that the level of instruction from Robert is minimal and often amounts only to his responding to Rosie’s requests with brief comments of confirmation of her actions such as not a problem and sure, just do it. The level of guidance this affords Rosie is low but the levels of agency seemingly afforded her can be interpreted as high, meaning she is more free to do what she feels is appropriate than she perceives herself to be. This seeming discrepancy in the measure of Rosie’s agency due to differences in perception, in tandem with the complexity of composite and contiguous negotiations in which she is engaged (e.g., levels of self-confidence, degrees of experience, quality of support offered, knowledge of and respect for authority of business owner, training needs of new staff, etc.) highlights the relational nature of her personal practice and the broad range of interdependencies that bear on its measure. Within this complexity, Rosie expresses a need to measure, that is, quantify and qualify, her personal agency as a means of better understanding her personal practice and how it is developed for improved work outcomes such as increased self-confidence, higher levels of employer support, better training outcomes, and so on. These are the personal bases from which she transacts
her practice as learning to do her job. In discussing her training efforts with new staff and the learning she is transacting through these efforts, she states,

*Sometimes I know exactly what I’m doing and what I’m capable of but other times I don’t. I’m like, winging it, making it up as I go. You need that – but it could help to know how far you can go, like when is a mistake OK and how many times can you get away with it – because you don’t know most of the time, especially when all the new girls are so different and there’s so many of them who come, stay a while, then leave or get sacked.* (Int #5)

In such statements, Rosie evidences the need and effort of measuring her self-in-action – that is, reflectively evaluating her personal practice – before, during, and after its negotiated enactment. Clearly, such measuring and the need of it is more than post-action reflection. It is an immediate element of active participation, a learning practice (Jarvis, 2006) that is negotiated through the joint activity of training others. In Dewey and Bentley’s (1975) terms, such knowing is transacted and Rosie is relationally defined as learning and transforming through her instructing others. As this example of Rosie’s personal practice illustrates, there is a negotiated relational interdependence between the person, what they do in their work, and with whom they do it. A central aspect of that interdependence and a fundamental quality or need of her personal evaluation of practice is not knowing, and not knowing relative to others’ levels of not knowing (e.g., not knowing what you can get away with in terms of Robert’s requirements, how far mistakes can be tolerated in terms of the new staffs’ accurate knowledge of good practice, and what her true and potential capabilities are in terms of being a good trainer, etc.). For Rosie, knowing what she does not know is foundational to her evaluation of her personal practice and this becomes self-evident through the negotiations she enacts as personal practice.

For Hugh, the measure of personal practice is premised on different criteria. He is keen to continue working at the large city-based fire station, instead of one of the smaller suburban stations. The constant activity of the larger city stations (there are two), including their greater demands on his structured learning, the multiple crews and equipment types operational at any one time, and the more frequent emergency call outs, motivates him to work to secure his position both within his crew and within the station. Generally speaking, a four-member crew operates the standard pump appliance vehicle (i.e., fire truck) that attends to emergency call outs. Each of the four crew members has specific tasks and responsibilities that differentiate their roles in responding to emergencies. These roles can be identified by
the seating position each takes in the vehicle. Fire fighters, through the normal course of their progression in the service, become senior fire fighters who have attained sufficient training qualifications and experience to assume any role and therefore seating position within the vehicle crew. Hugh, who has not attained this rank as yet, is limited to filling position number three in the crew and there are only two such number three positions available within the station – one per day and evening shift. To secure his place at the station and avoid transfer to a less active suburban station means making himself more flexible within the workplace. This equates to qualifying himself to take on other roles additional to the number three position. This is a difficult task given his official junior status. However, his desires are supported by his demonstrated competence and openly expressed willingness to contribute more fully. Hugh explains,

*I want to stay at this station and the only real way to do that is to become an all car driver. It’s something I want so I’m pursuing it.*

Yeah well – as it is at the moment, due to my lower rank and limited time in the fire service, there’s only a number of places I can ride machines. In the back of a pump you get a number one and a number three. Well number one is in charge of the breathing apparatus team, number three is just a team member – so I can’t – because I’ve only been in just over 2 years – I can’t ride as number one. So in the back of the pump at the moment I can only ride as a number 3 and I’ve not made driver yet, so I can’t drive any of the vehicles apart from the control unit, Tango – that’s a Mercedes Sprinter van. So that at least allows me two positions that I can ride. The more positions you ride the more useful you are to the shift. So I’m pushing now to get made up on second car, Bravo, and then it’ll just be experience driving that for a few months before going up to the heavier ones. It’s just flexibility – the more useful you are, the easier it is to keep you here because they can slot you in with someone and just move you around – and it also helps the boys. If you’ve only got two blokes on the shift that drive one particular machine, well it’s only ever going to be either of those driving it – and they get stale or they might drive the same thing for months in the same position, doing the same job every day. Well some blokes don’t mind it, but some find it a bit limiting. Especially when you get a run of good fires and they’re not in a position to be wearing breathing apparatus – actually getting in there, squirting water around – they’re back from it a little bit. You start to lose why you joined the job – you know? So it’s a combination of making yourself more useful, more flexibility and more change. (Int#5)

The interdependence between individual aspirations and workplace affordance is apparent in Hugh’s brief outline of his desired movement through the structures of his work tasks. Time constraints, task/role formalisation, and the managed allocation of human resources with equipment operations are all workplace structural
requirements that mediate the ways and degrees by which Hugh can engage in the work and learning necessary to realise his goals of remaining on station. Equally, his aspirations are clear as he pushes to take full advantage of the opportunities the station supports. He is not content to simply hold position number three with its guarantee of getting in there and doing the job of directly fighting fire: something he could sustain by a willingness to accept being sent to one of the suburban fire stations. Driving the two smaller control vehicles, Tango and Bravo (equipped with the command and communications facilities necessary to managing larger emergency responses), is not a task that gets you into the action of directly fighting the fire. For Hugh, actually getting in there and fighting fires is the primary motivator, his reason for being a fire fighter. The fundamental importance of this is a constant throughout Hugh’s discussion of his work. However, and importantly for Hugh, becoming a designated driver of these two vehicles is a negotiated opportunity to secure a station position by enabling his greater capacity to be deployed across other essential work tasks and roles. His increased utility may mean being in position three less often, and being more valuable at the station, more easily deployed, and thereby less likely to be rostered to less active suburban stations.

Hugh’s actions and motivations for seeking to stay at the city station evidence a range of negotiations by which he measures and evaluates his personal practice. For example, Hugh explains himself as pushing, and pushing hard, for what is relationally possible given the negotiations between his aspirations and workplace affordances. Similarly, he positions himself as relatively successful following his qualifying to drive Tango, the smaller of the two control vehicles. For Hugh, pushing means finding time in a busy daily work schedule to devote to driver training without detracting from other duties, not least of these being a readiness to attend emergency call outs. Throughout the interviews, he discusses how he must continually initiate requests for training opportunities that will support his aspirations to remain at the station. Pushing means badgering senior station officers to set aside time, to organise contingencies, and to allocate appropriately qualified staff to supervise driver training. It means being diplomatic in all of this, being careful to balance personal priorities with the capacities and interests of colleagues and work requirements. Pushing means being successful, knowing that the right balance of enacted personal and organisational objectives can secure an outcome that fits with greater personal plans. So, pushing is a relational measure, a negotiated self-appraisal of himself-in-action.
that confirms a relatively high measure of personal agency that achieves personal success. This high level of agency equates to purposeful, directed personal practice that is negotiated through personal goals transacted as organisational goals. What Hugh wants and pursues is personally apprehended as what the fire service needs and affords, within structural limitations that are negotiated mediations. His personal practice enacts these negotiations and is transformed by the actions he takes and the accomplishments achieved.

In the terms of Holland et al. (1998), Hugh is figuring his world through choices made from a position that is supported by his work. The choices he makes, the decisions he takes, progress from a base of relational interdependence (Billett, 2006a) between his personal aspirations and the affordances of his work. The efforts he makes, the definitions of his goals, the actions he takes, and the successes he achieves or fails to achieve become measures of his personal practice as he personally manages his vocational pathway, purposefully negotiates the self-in-action trajectory he has envisioned. This is how his practice flows through the many negotiations that constitute all this work activity. Initially, he is a junior fire fighter who does not drive. As he transacts his personal practice, he participates more fully in his vocational community (Lave & Wenger, 1991), strengthens the relational bonds (Dewey & Bentley, 1975) through realised negotiations that equate his goals with the goals of the community (i.e., the fire service), engages more robustly in the affordances his work enables him (Billett, 2004), defines more fully the object of his learning practices as collaborative endeavour (Engestrom, 2001) and, thereby, becomes, through the measured awareness and enactment of himself-in-action, a junior fire fighter who drives at least one vehicle and soon a second before moving onto the heavier vehicles. Hugh the person, Hugh the fire fighter, is now practising as a driver and so his vocational practice flows through the fire service as transacted personal practice that engages him in securing greater influence over his personal work trajectory that necessitates further negotiations.

In these ways, Hugh’s measure of his personal practice as purposeful and directed by his agency is premised primarily on the positive resonance between his intentions and the chances of their being realised and this within a context of high command and control protocols that resemble the strong authority structures of military culture. His practice is transformed and measured by negotiations premised
on a base of the relationship between what he wants, what he perceives the fire service wants, and how effectively his actions can secure parity between the two.

By contrast, Dick, a senior member of the university ITS team, equally measures his personal practice positively, but for very different reasons and from quite different premises. Dick is in his mid-fifties and, when interviewed, had been working at the university for 27 years. He has always worked in the electronics and associated technology fields since completing his apprenticeship in the mid-1960s. He has worked with radio, television, recording studios, film and photography, numerous science laboratories, and now in computing and associated technologies. The depth and breadth of his experience, together with his confessed passion for the field and the constant source of new product and capacity it represents, are central to the personal practice he enacts in and through his work. Whereas Hugh is progressing his ambitions and seeking to strategically position himself in work, Dick is content to go wherever the university sends him across its five campuses and do whatever work they require of him. Consequently, he has worked at all five campuses in many different capacities and roles and prides himself on this versatility. His practice in flow is marked by the many roles and locations he has experienced. He has been in his current role of IT support for approximately three years and during the period of this investigation was shifted from the large central campus to one of the smaller campuses. Dick describes himself thus:

I’m an autonomous worker, I like being by myself and not being told what to do. I know what needs to be done and I do it … It doesn’t matter what I do … Whatever I set my heart to, I do a good job and I enjoy it. So whether, if I was taken out of here and put in another job tomorrow, I’d roll with it straight off and I’d do well. That’s just the sort of person I am. I love challenges. I used to sort of resist changes but really when a change is made I look back and I think – I enjoyed that. (Int #2)

Dick’s positive measure of his personal practice is primarily premised on the resonance between personally preferred methods of working and the affordance his work enables him to enact these preferences. Like Hugh, Dick works as part of a team within strong command and control protocols. At the university, these protocols consist partly in the information services policy and provision system. For Dick’s work in staff and student IT support, this system is represented by what is called the standard operating environment (SOE). The SOE is a set of computing software and hardware conditions and procedures that seek to standardise the university’s
computing operations. The system generally specifies that if clients’ computing problems cannot be fixed within 20 minutes, then the computer is simply “re-imaged”: that is, rather than waste time trying to find and resolve a software failure, the whole of the computer’s operating system (i.e., the programs installed in accordance with the SOE) is simply removed and a new fully functioning operating system reinstalled. Computing and, therefore, staff downtime is minimised by replacing rather than fault finding, problem solving, and repairing when the time and cost of repairs is greater than that of replacement. In interview, Dick explained that the SOE, and working within it, did not represent a dumbing down, a deskilling, of highly technical work that no longer required the expertise of problem solving. Rather, the SOE was a dynamic set of standards and with the 20-minute time constraint generally represented a challenge that stimulated his innovative capacities that in turn demanded a comprehensive and rigorous set of learning and application skills. Dick explained that his ways of working within the protocols of the SOE illustrated a strong fit between who he knew himself to be and the demands of his work. He states,

> You’ve got to be a proactive sort of person to be in IT anyway and you’ve got to have a bit of drive and nous and initiative and without that basic personality, I don’t think you’d last long. For me, I think it’s just a natural born sort of thing. I remember, in the past, when you were a so-called specialist. People will come to you all the time, knowing that you had this knowledge base and you were the specialist and you felt, I suppose, proud that you’d gotten that skill base by forgetting everything else and just concentrating on one thing. You were the ivory tower boy and you’d get calls from everywhere. We’ve gone from specialists to multi skilled, and probably multi specialists almost. When you think of the technology and the knowledge base you have to have compared to the days of old, when you have to go across so many things, you almost – they call it multi skilled but, in comparison to old, its almost multi specialist – and that’s pretty taxing, taxing on your mind, what you have to absorb and what you need to know more in depth. Multi skilled, in my opinion, is knowing just enough of everything to get by. Now, that’s not good enough. You have to know more, have in-depth knowledge of everything, in my opinion. (Int #4)

For Dick, it is his innate proactivity, that natural born sort of thing, and the constant need to be competent with all the new and updated computing software and hardware essential to the university’s daily operations, that sustains him in work. This, with his willingness (sometimes initially reluctant) to go wherever deployed and do whatever is asked of him, together with the level of expertise he has developed and continues to develop, are the foundations of his measure of his personal practice. For
Dick, who he is, what he does, and what he has to do have co-emerged, coalesced through years of transacting his personal practice in the negotiations that characterise his engagement in work. His practice in flow evidences the personally realised negotiation of a versatile expertise that is personally measured positively through the transactions that relationally unite him with the university as valuable employee.

Bruce can likewise stand on his experience as the foundation of his measure of personal practice. He is in his late forties and through 16 years of active duty in the fire service has progressed through the ranks to now hold the position of senior station officer. He has developed a high level of expertise that he discusses in terms similar to those used by Dick when describing the multi-specialist requirements of his work. In interview, Bruce discusses a long list of the kinds of tasks and roles undertaken in the course of his work as a senior station officer: a list that illustrates his description of himself as a necessary jack of all trades and an all-rounder. Important in this list are the responsibilities associated with three key aspects of his work: (a) administration and station management, (b) legislative and public relations requirements, and (c) staff training and pastoral care.

First, administration and management includes everything from ensuring stationery supplies to the procurement and maintenance of multi-million dollar firefighting equipment, the balanced rostering of station staff that most importantly includes full readiness for emergency response, and taking up the primary role of incident co-ordinator when large-scale responses of multiple units are required. Second, the legislative and public relations responsibilities of ensuring that laws and emergency awareness are understood and executed accordingly includes everything from high-rise building safety and security inspection and enforcement to the provision of information sessions and fire trucks at local primary schools. Third, staff training and pastoral responsibilities includes ensuring all fire fighters at the station are progressing successfully through their training and are cared for through and after the arduous work of attending to emergency situations that can be physically and psychologically damaging. For Bruce, this caring supportive aspect of his work is the most important. Throughout the interviews of the project he expresses this sentiment often. He states,

You’ve got to be an all-rounder. You’ve got to be somebody there if they’ve got a problem, help them through, a trainer, help them learn new things, help them achieve their outcomes for their training as they go through their ranks;
to making sure when you go to emergency situations they come home safe. 
(Int#4)

You need to be a jack of all trades. You've got to be the sort of person who can take a lot of information in to achieve the best outcome – save life, first and foremost and then property if you can. You're not supposed to put yourself in a situation where your own life is at risk but you have to help others, the public, and most importantly, the crews. If they've got problems they can always approach you – and that's a good thing because they know that if they come to you for advice that what you say is good information and not bullshit at all. (Int#5)

Through the busyness and diversity of roles and tasks that comprise his work, Bruce prioritises staff training and support responsibilities. He measures his personal practice as the purposeful control and conduct of himself in work, particularly in relation to always being approachable and caring of those in his charge. However, the negotiations that constitute the transaction of personal practice and, thereby, the flow of his practice into and through the years of developing this expertise are not always so positively measured.

Throughout the interviews, Bruce mentions times and instances of personal frustrations when his expertise was both overlooked and ignored. He recounts being asked to conduct procedural enquiries, head up staff committees, and write reports with recommendations that were later shelved and ignored. Similarly, he describes instances of compliance to procedures and senior management requests that have resulted in what he knows to be less than satisfactory outcomes. Such instances are described as bemusing and expected of a command and control culture that he acknowledges as necessary despite its being prone to inflexibility and lacking creativity. And yet, Bruce loves his work and applauds the fire service for its culture of care and concern and the part he plays in ensuring those under his command are well trained and supported. In interview, he elaborates instances of station- and district-wide administrative procedural changes he has initiated and implemented and prides himself on designing and securing a broad range of training opportunities that bring welcome diversity and challenge to the constant training schedule that constitutes much of the fire fighters’ working day.

Bruce estimates that under his management, more than a half of fire fighters’ working day is devoted to training. This training comprises a mixture of routine and familiar competency maintenance training and learning related to the constant changes occurring within the fire service and the fast developing city it services.
Bruce describes facilitating this training and ensuring it is stimulating and effective as the second most important aspect of his work (after staff pastoral care). He is always looking for the different, the new, and the unexpected as the base of his training responsibilities. In interview, he discusses the changing nature of new high-rise buildings and building sites as the commercial office space focus of the inner city is now complemented by an increasing residential emphasis, new vehicle specifications as security and design systems make getting to injured drivers and passengers more difficult and varied, new retail and entertainment precincts that get larger and more inaccessible as operating hours increase, new traffic systems and passageways as the transport networks develop to handle greater volumes of people and vehicles, new operating systems and equipment as fire and rescue workers need to work higher and deeper and in more confined and potentially toxic spaces. All these changes are discussed and highlighted as the drivers and sources of the training activities and resources that Bruce uses in his work. Consequently, he is in contact with many managers and executives from the numerous organisations that oversee and facilitate the development of the city and the fire and rescue service. His personal practice is similarly transformed as the sites, materials, and procedures of training are changing in line with the changes of the city and in line with the increased numbers and types of contacts he now negotiates in his efforts to keep fire fighter training stimulating and effective for his staff.

For Bruce, the resonance between how he sees himself, that is, “who” he is, and what he does is strong in some aspects of his work and weak in others. He describes himself as a people person for whom the most difficult and equally most satisfying tasks he undertakes are directly related to the need to lead and support a very diverse set of fire fighters with very different temperaments, capacities, and aspirations, and equally the need to secure the support and cooperation of many external partners in the training provision of those staff. Against Billett’s (2001c) list of work and personal affordances, Bruce’s work is complex and intense, demanding high levels of variable awareness and consideration to support the decisions he makes. His perceived high measure of personal practice is founded on his experience and the senior position he holds. He has learned over years of participation how to weigh and hold the varying levels of discretion he enacts across the various aspects of his work, some more successfully than others, some more forcefully than others. However and more importantly, his personal practice is premised on the positive resonance between
his caring disposition and the demands and duties of his training and support role, a role he is continuously strengthening and enhancing through his conscientious and creative endeavour. His personal practice in work is the negotiation of all these mediations. His personal measure of this practice is based in the flow his developing expertise has enabled and that has been transacted over many years of engagement. Bruce feels, knows, and states in interview, that within reason (as the balance between who he is and what he does) and given the changing requirements of his work as carer, trainer, and administrator, *there’s not much I can’t do but there is plenty I wouldn’t do.*

This statement may be described as an “equation” that captures and expresses his measure of his personal practice. This seemingly simple statement is richly nuanced with self-understandings and evaluations that he elaborates in interview. By *not much I can’t do* Bruce effectively means he can do all and more that his work requires of him. By *plenty I wouldn’t do* Bruce acknowledges that his work sometimes requires him to undertake tasks he feels are unnecessary, and so effectively he means, not that he will not do them, but more, if it was entirely up to him, he would not do them. The measure of his personal practice, as evidenced in this statement, is the negotiation of his personal priorities and preferences and the requirements of his work.

Bruce’s simple statement, described here as an equation or expression of his measure of personal practice, is similar to the kinds of personal practice measures all 12 participants offered as explanations of themselves as effective, capable, and responsible workers who were very aware of themselves in relation to the work requirements of their vocational practice. Table 7.1 lists some of the sentiments expressed through their accounting of themselves and their personal practice. Each of these statements illustrates the personal nature of practice in flow, the kinds of practice transformations that position workers in the constant state of flux that is their working environment.

The equations or expressions of measured personal practice noted in Table 7.1 indicate a broad range of negotiations that stand as the bases of individuals’ comprehending their practice in flow. Sid, manager of ITS, acknowledges change as routine practice in work and that, because of this, the measure of his personal practices involves negotiations with an anticipated future that can reasonably be expected. Negotiating practice and its flow, its transformation, is anticipatory, based
in what might happen in an unpredictable future. Similarly, Rosie is negotiating an unpredictable future, but in a far more immediate sense. Her *w winging it is* experimental practice based in negotiating the immediate training needs of her junior colleagues and her inexperience in supporting those needs effectively. Bob enacts similar negotiations as he risks a negative perception by others in efforts to secure successful performance. Hayden, Dick, and Ian are more singularly focussed on themselves and the negotiations they enact internally, with their personal capacities to meet external demands of work. Marilyn acknowledges her negotiations with others as the foundation of her personal evaluation. Her practice in flow is premised on feedback and mutual growth. All these equations, in their highly person-specific ways, illustrate the negotiating partners, processes, and outcomes that constitute the transformation and subsequent comprehension of personal practice.
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<td>Bruce – station officer CFS2</td>
<td>There’s not much I can’t do but there is plenty I wouldn’t do. (Int#4) You need to be a jack of all trades. You’ve got to be the sort of person who can take a lot of information in to achieve the best outcome. (Int#5)</td>
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<td>Rosie – casual waitress Platinum</td>
<td>I’m learning myself and stuff but it’s pretty well my own take on it. (Int#4) Sometimes I know exactly what I’m doing and what I’m capable of but other times I don’t. I’m like, winging it, making it up as I go. (Int#5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hugh – junior fire fighter CFS2</td>
<td>It’s something I want so I’m pursuing it. (Int#5) So it’s a combination of making yourself more useful, more flexibility and more change. (Int#5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick – senior IT support ITS</td>
<td>I’m an autonomous worker, I like being by myself and not being told what to do. I know what needs to be done and I do it … It doesn’t matter what I do … Whatever I set my heart to, I do a good job and I enjoy it. (Int#2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marilyn – manager HealthyTrim</td>
<td>If you’re not willing to assess where you’re at and where you’re going – if you’re not willing to take in some criticism and to accept it and to understand it and change, there’s no point. You don’t learn anything if you’re not willing to listen to it. (Int#4) We learn, we listen – how we learn is we listen to what other people say, and have them listen to you, make sure they listen to you. (Int#4) As I grow, obviously, the company grows, and people grow around me and you learn and – it’s personal. (Int#4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert – junior partner Platinum</td>
<td>There’s always things that pop up at the 11th hour that you don’t expect and, and it’s quite exciting sort of being on edge like that that you actually have to perform under, quite a high level of stress and you still have to perform you can’t just go oh this is too stressful and walk off, so you have to make things work, there’s there’s no out, the only out is when the job’s finished. It has to be finished and completed properly. (Int#2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hayden – personal trainer HealthyTrim</td>
<td>It’s something that you’re always doing. There’s not a time where I sit down and say okay, I’m going to think about a bunch of exercises, but yeah, something just might come into your head and you say, oh, I could maybe do that – do it this way and it might work better … It’s an inner thing, just up in your head. Generally it’s in your head – you think of an idea and then you just go away and practise, try it yourself, see if it works, see if it hurts in the right places, and then, okay. (Int#4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ian – senior fire fighter CFS2</td>
<td>It’s a self-paced thing so you have to make sure that you’re on track here at work. No one’s going to sort of get on top of you and say you’re behind here, you’re not on track. It’s up to you. You just feel it yourself and do it. (Int #5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane –casual receptionist HealthyTrim</td>
<td>I don’t get uptight about many things and if there’s a problem that I can’t fix well I’ll try my best to but it will get fixed in the end somehow, so I don’t tend to get very worried about stuff. It’s not complex … it does take a little bit of juggling to make sure that you get all those little jobs done but it’s not hard to do it well. (Int #1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid – manager ITS</td>
<td>We change, we change products often enough. I don’t think anything is – other than changing – routine. We’re always trying to be one step ahead of the changes, planned and anticipated. In general terms, everyone’s got to have a reasonable knowledge of what might be coming. (Int#4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>John – senior partner Platinum</td>
<td>There are some times when I’m doing it for the money, there are times when I’m doing it because it’s a challenge, times I’m doing it because I woke up that morning going I really want to be busy today. The number one thing here, that the bloke calling the shots is getting in there and doing it, not just for half an hour ten minutes an hour he’s in the first one in and the last one out 95 percent of the time, that’s what’s makes me go forward because I practise what I preach you know. (Int#2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob – team member ITS</td>
<td>I’ve never been embarrassed to walk up and say I don’t know, tell me.</td>
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So, the flow of practice is the personal culmination of constant transaction and reflective evaluation of the negotiations enacted. As illustrated above, Hugh cannot control the staff deployment decisions his managers will make; yet, he is hopeful that his transforming practice will secure his goals. Dick is not overly concerned with the staff deployment decisions his managers will make; he is confident the practice transformations that will flow, will continue to support him. By contrast, Bruce is highly influential in staff deployment decisions about himself and others: he is busy in shaping alignments between his transforming practice and the negotiations on which it is premised. Such mediation of participation is significant in determining what kind of work each will do and what kind of personal practice each will enact. However, each of these workers places very different importance on the weight of this mediation to impact their daily work practices and this is more and above the simple definitions of their positions in work as junior, senior, and manager. Each of them is successful in moving their intentions forward, progressing their personal and work agenda in directions that support their practice and thereby characterise their flow in practice as positive and measurably so. And yet, each knows and recounts instances of where this was not the case. In interviews throughout the investigation, Hugh relates times when hopes were dashed through temporary transfer to suburban stations and when pre-arranged driver training sessions were cancelled; Dick describes instances when confidence was undermined by software problems that could not be diagnosed despite great effort; and Bruce discusses work projects when the business of careful planning and thorough preparation resulted in demoralising wasted time and energy.

Equally, the other workers recount similar work experiences. They each, like Hugh, Dick, and Bruce, discuss instances of success, instances of failure, instances of discovery, and instances of loss of personal and work goals and objectives both as intentionally and, on occasion, accidentally realised. And yet, each in describing and explaining these instances of the transforming nature of their personal practice offers some overall measure and understanding of themselves and their practice in work as strong and effective. All 12 participants present themselves as both self-accountable and work-responsible and very aware of how their personal practice changes through the negotiations that mediate and are mediated by their work. The full measure of personal practice, that is, how workers evaluate themselves through the constant changes that mark their practice in flow, comes to be a complex index of the set of negotiations enacted and thereby the personal accounting of all the transactions these
negotiations represent. Every mediation and resource implicated, every resolution, successful or otherwise, every action, that comprise the set of negotiations that constitute an individual’s personal practice, are relationally interdependent on and with all others in the set (Billett, 2006a). As 12 workers reveal, the nature of this interdependence, that is the varying degrees by which each of these elements of the set are less or more influential through the negotiation process that is work, is evidenced by the individual concerned as their practice in flow. In Archer’s (2000) terms, the evidence is the measure of personal practice as the enactment of the cares, concerns, and priorities individual workers transact through their work.

So Hugh, for example, measures his personal practice by an index that prioritises the set of negotiations transacted as the on-shift training opportunities available, his capacity to participate in such opportunities, the time necessary to complete and the effort needed to meet training certification requirements, the staffing needs of outer stations, the deployment of new recruit intake, and the frequency of emergency call outs. Some of these priorities represent participation and practice negotiations over which he has some strong influence and others represent negotiations over which he has little to no control. Some are personal capacities developed over a lifetime and some are workplace structural constraints and affordances established through the organisational and cultural practices of a fire service. All are interdependent and, together, comprise the index by which Hugh measures his personal practice. Dick’s and Bruce’s indexes are different. Each is a personal blend of varying comprehensions of the negotiations that combine to identify the personal practices of each of the workers and thereby the measure of their personal practice, their practice in flow.

The following section, value in flow, turns to consideration and elaboration of the importance of personal evaluations, the personal weightings and justifications of resources that each of the 12 workers negotiates in the measuring of their personal practice. Its focus is the personal worth and social value of transformations through the transaction of person and practice in flow.

The value of personal practice

Personal practice has value, a personal and social worth. That worth is accomplished through enactment as not just the reasons for doing something but as indication of the importance of those reasons. So, the enactment of personal practice, as negotiated and
measured by the self-in-action, is the enactment of personal and social worth. This is more than evidence of what Archer (2000) notes as personal cares and concerns – priorities – but represents justifications of those priorities. Such justifications are the personal proof of the value in doing the things that are done. Frankfurt (1988, pp. 80-81) refers to this aspect of a person’s actions as the need to know and understand “the importance of what we care about” because there is an “intimate connection between what a person cares about and what he will … do.” Personal practice, its measure and flow in the flux of sociocultural activity, is the negotiated means of personally enacting, apprehending, and thereby justifying that importance.

Historically, the justification of action is transacted in practice as the values, per se, that stand as culturally sanctioned indicators of personal and social worth. They are the artefacts by which we assess the importance, the significance, and consequence of what we do and how we do it. As such, values in the general sense are psycho-social resources that mediate personal practice and are important components of the index of mediations that support the measure of personal practice. Some values are more influential than others; some are more easily recognised in action. For example, Rosie understands the importance of being a responsible supervisor and the value of good training as the foundation of workplace performance at the restaurant. She enacts this in her work knowing that her employer shares similar values. Equally, Marilyn knows the importance of staff satisfaction and the need of strong support from management to ensure this satisfaction is maintained as the foundation of workplace performance at the gymnasium. These kinds of values, to greater and lesser extents, are grounded in the broader sociocultural norms and practices of contemporary work (Noon & Blyton, 2002) and so stand as bases from which personal practice is enacted. Rosie and Marilyn, like all adult workers, are the embodiment, the personification of the greater and lesser extents to which these values permeate their particular practice. They will or will not (to greater and lesser extents) have experience of these values in action through their lives and work to date. They will or will not (to greater and lesser extents) share these values with their employers and colleagues. These are important aspects of the relational interdependence between the individual and the social that Billett (2008, 2001b) identifies as ontogeny (i.e., personal social development across lives) and reciprocity of values (i.e., personal cultural intersubjectivities). The personal worth of these social values is the ways and means by which personal practice, as the apprehension and
enactment of such seemingly external values, interprets and transforms them to evidence the personal importance they hold.

As illustrated in the previous sections, Hugh is effortfully pursuing a personal goal of securing a position at the city fire station. Importantly, advancing this goal directs his personal practice to driver training on all of the station vehicles, moving from establishing competence with the smaller operations command vehicles to the large pump and aerial ladder vehicles. In this way, he is personally managing an aspirational pathway through work. As previously outlined, the efforts Hugh makes, the definitions of his goals, the decisions he takes, and the successes he achieves or fails to achieve become measures of his personal practice. He flows through the fluctuating perceptions of more or less influence in the negotiations he enacts and this is a measure of his engagement in his work and his contributions to the relationship of worker and work. Similarly, the work context is changing. Personnel are being moved around, new recruits are arriving, suburban stations require new staff, the emergency call out bells do and do not ring, and operational equipment and procedures are constantly being adjusted. These activities are measures of the contextual press that Hugh negotiates. They are variably strong and weak, undesired and welcome as they impact Hugh’s capacities to negotiate his engagement in work.

Important within these mediating resources, as both personal contention and contextual variable, is the degree to which Hugh’s enactment of personal practice impacts his colleagues. To this extent, Hugh’s personal and vocational worth may be seen as contingent on the level of assistance his practice affords his fellow fire fighters: “the boys.” As quoted earlier, Hugh explains and justifies his practice – *the more useful you are, the easier it is to keep you here because they can slot you in with someone and just move you around – and it also helps the boys.* Hugh perceives that his pursuit of a secure position within the station is helpful for his colleagues. His personal practice realises freedoms for other staff to overcome limitations imposed by work structures and opportunities for them to practise the vital core competence of their work. The more useful he is, the more secure his position, the more able are other fire fighters to practise fire fighting, and this is understood as seemingly valued by them as much as by Hugh. The worth of Hugh’s practice lies, in part, in its capacity to support colleagues to be better able and thereby more satisfied in the performance of their work. Hugh’s personal practice of pushing for driver training has
worth beyond personal goals, worth that justifies his self-in-action as collectively valuable.

Throughout the interviews and the subsequent personal rationalisations and justifications of actions discussed, Hugh does not acknowledge that there may be other staff who, like him, want to secure a position at the station. The dialectics of personal practice as negotiating a contested terrain of competing goals (Billett, 2001a; Rousseau, 2005) requires that its measure includes colleagues as both personal and contextual variables and its value accommodates both potential and real contradiction. The boys are important to Hugh for personal reasons that must be accounted. Equally, the boys are the embodiment of the contextual press. In this regard, the worth of personal practice may be as strongly restrictive as it is liberating for both self and others at work. That is, what Hugh can do is contingent on what others cannot do because of what he does. Hugh’s personal worth is relationally enacted, that is transacted, through the negotiations that account for both the costs and benefits of personal practice.

The cost of pursuing personal goals includes enduring the frustrations of contextual barriers that restrict that pursuit (Ashton, 2004; Ellstrom, 2001). Successfully negotiating those barriers, that is, overcoming them, giving in to them or transforming them, are measures of endeavour that define the costs of personal practice and thereby contribute to apprehending its value. Doing something implies the opportunity cost of not doing something else, given that personal practice is in part negotiated through choices from among alternatives. What is done contrasts directly with what otherwise could have been done. For Hugh, such costs are sometimes experienced as lower commitment and motivation to work and to the necessary learning (structured and unstructured) on which his work is premised. In responding to questions about possible changes in the ways he engages in work, Hugh elaborates some of the transactional contingencies that underpin his practice.

*My commitment always wavers with how rosters treat you really. For me personally, I want to work in the city station. I like the busyness of the station, I like working with a large group of blokes – whereas at some of the out stations there would only be four blokes on duty at one time and they might not have a call out for the whole four shifts of the week – so for me I want to stay here.*

*The only negative thing about it is that I always find it hard in the quiet stations to get motivated. At least in the city station there’s always boys doing some level of exam of some description – so you might not actually be studying*
with them but to see people picking up their books and going into the study room – you think, I’ll go in there for an hour as well and do a bit – and you achieve something. But, if you turn up at an out station, you do your daily training routines, you do your cleaning routines, anything else – everything is done. The blokes just crash in front of the TV and there’s only three of them – the three of them have sat there. It’s hard to think well I’ll go and get my books and sit in the corner and study on my own. You know, there’s no motivation there.

I’m trying to make myself as useful as possible to try and secure the permanent or semi-permanent position here – and then rosters turn round and send me to an out station for 6 weeks or rostered me into do this for a couple of weeks. So yeah, your commitment does waver because you think – I’m trying to help them out because they’re going to need the drivers anyway. But I’m doing it for my own reasons to secure a place, but then I can’t even achieve that because rosters are buggering me about and sending me elsewhere. So then your commitment for the job does wane quite a bit and then you think, oh well, bugger them, I’m not going to do the driving training. (Int#5)

Despite this emotional reaction to the reality of temporary transfer to suburban (out) stations, Hugh is not about to give up his pursuit of becoming an “all car driver.” He makes repeated statements to this effect throughout the numerous interviews and discusses how his previous tours in different suburban stations, some for 2, some for 3 and, as indicated above, some for 6 weeks, have not defeated his resolve. He knows this is a regular aspect of the work: he has and will be transferred as the staffing needs of other stations change and so he negotiates the realities of his personal practices. Through these negotiations, the constraints of transfer away from the city station are transformed as transaction of his growing understanding of himself and the fire service in relation to the different practices of the sites in which he works. Suburban stations require different practices of his self-in-action if he is to secure his goals. He knows he must be more self-motivated, more willing to act outside what he perceives as the norms of the suburban stations where there is less activity (relative to the city station) that supports his goals. Similarly, he knows he must adjust his goals to support a viability he can sustain. His personal and vocational worth is in part calculated by such adjustments, such transactions. One such adjustment is indicated in the acceptance of his securing a semi-permanent position at the city station. His rhetoric has changed to reflect a newly transacted personal practice of “semi-permanent” where before only permanent was acceptable. Permanency at the city station, as a goal to be pursued, is transacted as the new and seemingly more realistic
evaluation of semi-permanent in the light of transfer experiences and practice negotiations. His practice has transformed. He has transformed. And these transformations coincide as the value of his practice is negotiated.

Importantly for Hugh, this newly transacted goal is not accepted as a lowering of goals, as some lesser measure of his practice and, thereby, some diminution of the worth of his practice, either personally or socially. Hugh is transforming, his context is transforming, his practice, its measure and value, are transforming, as the flow of his enactment of work progresses. These transformations are marked by the changes in the direction and nature of his negotiations, his active co-participation. These changes evidence the transformations he enacts. The changing nature of Hugh’s personal practice is into a broader understanding of the fire service as a large organisation that is buggering me about at the same time as it needs the drivers anyway. The negotiation of these seeming contradictions is in part undertaken through directional change into personal practice focussed on responding to challenges to personal commitment and motivation. These challenges emerge as choices to be made: Hugh could watch TV or study; he could bugger them and not do the driving training or he could continue trying to help them out. In pursuing his goals through his personal practice in work, he confronts himself as much as he confronts his work. Negotiating personal practice is the resolution of conflict, here, the resolution of this confrontation. His personal practice, that is, what he does and what he does not do, is evaluated and justified as the personal worth and social value of his practice.

Jane similarly justifies her worth despite the very different conditions and aspirations that mediate her engagement in work. Like Hugh, Jane knows and enacts the worth of her practice through the on-going negotiations, the transactions of the relational contingencies that constitute her practice. Jane is not yet 21, but has worked as a casual front counter receptionist at the gym, HealthyTrim, since she was 16½ years old. Through those years she has worked very regularly, at least two days per week for anywhere from 6 to 18 hours, and has become a reliable and respected member of staff. In that time, she has also completed senior high school as an independent “home” school student and has commenced university study in physiotherapy. She could be described as highly intelligent and very focussed, driven to succeed in ways that defy her youth, ways that identify a maturity seemingly beyond her years. Her primary project (in Hegel’s (1977) terms) is her tertiary studies, the necessary preparations for taking up a career in post-operative clinical
physiotherapy. Working at HealthyTrim has been and remains a convenient and welcome source of income that supports her student life. It has also meant free membership at the gym for which she would otherwise pay to attend as a personal health and fitness enthusiast. Importantly, working at the gym offers a valuable vocational connection with her personal preferences and professional pursuits.

In interview discussions focused on the individual and personal bases of her work, Jane describes herself as a people person and this self-perception complements her work that she describes, in terms of the gym’s customer focus, as, *probably the most important because we’re the ones that interact with people every time they come in and we are the first people that they see. It’s all about servicing the members, who are the top priority.* (Int #1)

The personal worth and social value of her practice is, in part, transacted as the degree to which she can assist members in their dealings with the gym. There are levels to this, levels of complexity and intensity that correspond to the demands of her work. For example, when work is very busy – when the phone is ringing with incoming calls, while other calls already taken are on hold so as to deal with multiple requests and enquiries of members coming and going from the reception counter, when the shift hand-over is incomplete due to insufficient time to record the necessary information in the data log for incoming staff – it is at such times that the quality of decisions made in responding to individual members’ needs is diminished to fit the busyness of the circumstance. Salient within such busy times, but equally at others less busy, are the judgements Jane makes regarding the importance of members’ concerns. Such judgements are made in terms of (a) her perceived importance of the particular member’s concerns, (b) their importance to her, (c) her immediate work task requirements, and (d) their importance to the gym as markers of sustaining member satisfaction. Sometimes these judgements are matters of life and death. In interview, Jane recounts instances of members collapsing while operating exercise equipment and requiring immediate assistance that included first aid and ambulance. Such serious instances become times of clearly apprehending personal capacities and priorities relative to members’ needs and the gym’s responsibilities. Such instances are clear moments of transacting personal worth and social value. Jane described her responses in one such emergency as highly focussed, efficient and effective, and on reflection, highly self-rewarding as she discovered a personal calmness under pressure she had never confronted before.
On other occasions through the interviews, Jane recounts instances of members complaining that the air conditioning was not set low enough or not on at all, that equipment had been left lying around and unreturned to its rightful position, that other members were wrongfully placing personal items like keys and water bottles on equipment to secure its use in their absence, and that other members were not using towels when there were rules requiring they do so. To this list of member complaints, Jane adds instances of member requests for television channels to be changed, mobile phones to be monitored for expected important calls, children in the crèche to be reminded of the need to be ready to leave when mum is finished, and water bottles to be refilled, and all so the members concerned would not have to interrupt their sessions on equipment or while in fitness classes. Deciding how to respond to these requests requires a consideration of various levels of importance. Jane states,

I have to make decisions about how to handle customers and their problems. You know people will come and say, this equipment is not working or that window’s open, there’s a draft and we’re not happy with that and someone complains about something that one of the trainers said to them and then you’ll have to deal with people on the phone. So somebody might come up and say, listen you’ve got such and such channel on that TV can you please change it to what I want to watch? So like if it’s 8.00am in the morning and there’s three people using the cardio equipment then I will say no problems I will change that for you but if at 6.30pm in the evening when there are 30 people on the equipment I can’t go and change it because there might be half the class who want to watch it. We don’t have like a manual that says if someone asks to change the television channel you cannot do it or you can do it, yeah you just kind of assess the situation, yeah – I think that will work for everyone, so I’m going to do it – but sometimes you like can’t do it and sometimes I just ignore it. (Int #1)

For Jane, the personal worth and social value of her personal practice is the continuous negotiation of what she wants to do, what she can and cannot do, and what she will not do. The need of such judgements is her work. Ignoring the trivial, responding to the reasonable, and hastening to the urgent are personal practice judgements that transact vocational value through what she values, what members’ value, and what the gym values. The agency she exercises in her practice is the freedom to balance these values. There are choices to be made, selections from amongst viable alternatives, and Jane makes them as conscious transactions of what mediates her practice. So she enacts what she knows is important to her and what she discovers is important to her because of how it is important to others. Practice
transacts priorities that transact vocational values, that transact personal worth and all such transactions are flowing as all aspects of work are transformed through the negotiations by which it is constituted.

In other discussions throughout the interviews, discussions focused on the congruence between her physiotherapy studies and her reception counter work, Jane describes herself as a physiotherapist in training and how this training supports her work at the gym that is about helping people meet their health and fitness goals. This connection is not a purposeful employment choice on Jane’s part. She has been working at the gym since high school, well before her plans to pursue a career in physiotherapy were formulated. For Jane, physiotherapy represents a career trajectory into medicine and supporting people recovering from surgery. She sees herself working in hospitals, rather than in the sport and fitness field. Indeed, this aspiration was, in part, realised in the last month of the investigation when she secured casual Saturday morning employment as an allied health assistant, working with the occupational therapists at a large metropolitan hospital. That difference notwithstanding, Jane acknowledges a complementarity between her reception work, the purpose of the gym, and her university studies. She recounts instances of opportunities to offer therapeutic advice to members and being specifically called on to do so by those who knew of her studies and trusted her capabilities. She states,

*I really like the fact that I know our customers and the whole health and fitness industry side of things and that I get to give advice on exercise and people who have injuries – I can like help them with that sort of thing. Yeah just like the other day somebody came up to the desk and said oh in a month or something he’s going snowboarding, but he said oh what sort of things can I do to make my legs strong and yes I just had all this information about what sort of stuff he should do and the muscles that he needs to work and exercises and like how often he needs to do them and all that sort of thing, so yeah it’s just out of choice. (Int#2)*

*So like whenever anybody asks me a question about an injury or do I think like they should do this exercise or I am going to have a baby soon do you think I should keep exercising and that sort of stuff I do feel confident enough to give them my opinion. A couple of months ago, one of the members came up to the desk and said I’m getting really bad shin splints and I don’t know what to do about them and Ian, one of the managers, said, I’ll let Jane answer that question seeing as she is studying physiotherapy. So yeah, he didn’t say anything, so I said do this and do this and you know cut down on some of your training a bit – so yes I do have to call on that knowledge occasionally, not often, but enough to know how it helps. (Int #1)*
Through these kinds of choices, that is, how and when to respond to those who could benefit from her developing knowledge of the body and its therapeutic management, Jane is figuring her world (Holland et al., 1998). And this world, that creates and values such knowledge, encompasses a number of bounded domains that each, and differently, support the person Jane is becoming and the personal worth and social value she embodies through her practice. The highly independent senior school student who chose to study at home and away from the support school could have afforded her, whose personal drive and self-discipline was nurtured through competitive swimming and all the training this requires, who took a casual reception job at the local gym and so strengthened a developing fascination with the human body and its workings, who pursued this fascination into university studies aimed at professional practice as a clinical physiotherapist, is now offering therapeutic advice to those whose needs she supports in an administrative-service capacity as the front counter receptionist of HealthyTrim. The figured worlds of casual employment, small business, the health and fitness industry, medicine and physiotherapy, hospitals, university education, and professional qualifications all intersect or overlap as Jane’s personal and professional current and aspirational practices. Her personal worth and social value is founded on her bringing all the values and resources of these diverse worlds together in her personal practice as a receptionist at the gym. That personal practice is her negotiation of sets of values, diversely sourced, variably powerful and personally weighed, that identify her self-in-action and the ways she figures her world (Holland et al., 1998).

Jane’s actions are not without risk. Her worth lies, in part, in the quality of the judgements she makes, the advice she gives, the opinions she expresses, and how these improvisations transact the consequences of her actions and the worlds she brings together. In some of those worlds (e.g., student and gym receptionist) she is an expert, empowered by her years of experience and proven success. In others (e.g., medicine and physiotherapy) she is a novice, legitimate and peripheral (Lave & Wenger, 1991) through her studies and casual hospital work and, thereby, already a valuable member of her new vocational community of practice. Her worth lies, in part, in her successful progress into this vocational aspiration. Avoiding risk, in terms of being personally successful and not jeopardising herself and others with faulty advice and information, is evidence of the balancing and weighing, the negotiations of diverse values Jane is enacting in her personal practice. The worth of personal
practice is founded on her successfully bringing balance to these sets of values and the numerous levels of importance they represent for all the parties engaged in her negotiations.

For John, the balancing or negotiation of competing priorities represents an economic livelihood that is his business, the restaurant Platinum. The worth of his personal practice is as palpable as money in the cash register at the close of business each night. What is important for John is what is important for the success of his business. The worth of his practice resides, in part, in knowing what this importance is, recognising how it is constituted, and accurately assessing his enactment of it in his personal practice: a practice he labels as the need to do everything small business proprietor.

John and his brother own 75% of Platinum. The other 25% was sold to Robert who was previously employed as a chef by John and his brother in a bistro they operated before Platinum. John, in his mid-30s and a first-time father to his new daughter, is a highly experienced chef. Now, as he has done for the last 8 years, he owns and runs yet another successful restaurant. He comments on the naturalness of this work when he states,

*That's what I do, I only know how to do this, so I do it for a living, I'm comfortable with what I do. I'd be probably fairly uncomfortable with doing anything else because this is all I've ever known. You know, I left school and became a chef. And the natural progression was to, once I'd satisfied my personal goals in becoming, you know, following my career path, the natural step was then to, to set up my own business and keep doing what I do.* (Int #1)

Unlike Jane, John is a fully functioning expert in his highly figured primary world of the owner-operated restaurant catering business. As John describes, he is what he does, and he lists a long and complex inventory of tasks and responsibilities he must undertake to both survive and prosper in his field. This list he describes as defining him as a chef, as a businessman, as an employer, as a brother and parent, and as a person, because fundamental to all his practice across all these roles is the pursuit of quality and the support of people. Achieving quality and assisting others to do likewise stand as the foundational values that drive his practice. The worth of his personal practice is, in part, based on the high standards of quality and performance he expects of himself and, thereby, his business and its employees.

One of those qualities is founded on his family life and the values inculcated through growing up in small business. His parents owned and operated a fruit and
vegetable shop in a major city. The shop opened 7 days a week and he and his brother were regular workers alongside their parents before and after school, on weekends, and during their school holidays. Now, in his own business, John emulates what are for him the proven business and personal acceptance values of family and paternal authority.

*I try and create a, you know, a family atmosphere here and an atmosphere where things are pretty easy going I guess to a point. Dad will be grumpy and sometimes you can’t explain it and sometimes you can. If the family’s not happy they come and speak to Dad and the same situation applies here. I guess Dad knows best, and that’s how we run things here. Dad may not always be right, say the right things or do the right things, but we’re still going, still doing well, and that’s important.* (Int #2)

For John, this paternalism of the small business operator means leading by example, working hard and doing whatever needs to be done. It means caring for and nurturing employees as those for whom you are responsible. Throughout the interviews, he recounts stories of the delight and frustration of taking on and training apprentices. Some apprentices are good, some are bad – meaning they do or do not show some talent and enthusiasm as they respond to his directions in the kitchen. His pride in this training aspect of his practice is exemplified by Robert, the young chef who completed his last year of training with John, stayed on to run the outside catering arm of the business, and a year later accepted the opportunity to become a junior partner in the business with 25% ownership. Similarly, John recounts assisting staff in ways that affirm his family paternal focus as employer. With the restaurant van, he and another of the kitchen staff moved the furniture and belongings of a new waiter from one house to another over a weekend and between lunch and evening service shifts. The work van, so fundamental to the catering side of the business, is often on loan to staff to support their transport needs. Other such instances recounted in interview include his addition of personal finance and budgeting sessions in the weekly staff meeting following inquiries about such matters from young casual staff members, his provision of wine and food for staff members’ private functions, and his allowing staff to order product for their personal use through the restaurant’s wholesale suppliers.

Supporting staff in these ways extends to supporting them in their aspirations, aspirations that will take them away from the restaurant. John recounts stories of assisting his chefs and apprentices to find positions in other restaurants, positions that
broaden their cooking experience and get them closer to the kinds of experience they want to advance their careers. John knows and understands the need and advantage of diverse experience for those seeking to pursue a career as a chef. These kinds of personal practices, afforded him as the owner of the business, evidence the long held family values he chooses to enact as business decisions – decisions that act to embrace his staff as more than employees and more as accepted and respected members of a family that works together for the benefit of the business as the source of benefit for the members. For John, family is about supporting one another, in business and in life.

Accompanying these family values are expectations of loyalty, dedication, and enthusiasm for quality product and service. John laments having to deal with confrontation from disappointed and angry staff who, by his reckoning, fall foul of these values and expectations. He recounts stories of having to dismiss competent kitchen and wait staff who seemingly would not make themselves available for work when unforeseen circumstances meant extra or replacement staff were needed. The failure of these staff, these family members, to be available when required could mean being explicitly and directly sacked or it could mean being phased off the staff schedule to be replaced by more reliable on-call staff.

The demands of Platinum’s dual restaurant and outside catering business make staff needs very volatile from week to week and from function to function. Some weeks are very busy, particularly through the summer months when the restaurant is always full and there are many catering functions. To cover this highly fluctuating staff demand and overcome the traditional restaurant industry culture of high staff turnover, John manages a large list of staff. This management requires ensuring that the staffing requirements of the business are met and that the personal circumstances and preferences of those staff are carefully matched with the available work. Some staff are permanent (i.e., both full- and part-time) and their workloads must be met even when business is quiet. These are the immediate family who have proven themselves to be reliable and appreciative of the effort and support John offers them as employer. John states,

I’m doing what’s best for my family, and they’re my family. You know, deep down, my staff go, he’s doing what’s best for his business, he’s doing what’s best for us. And we joke about it but you can see that the staff actually go, gee, he actually cares about what we’re doing and more importantly he cares about his customers. (Int #2)
Many staff are casual on-call and this list requires careful maintenance to ensure that each of the staff gets sufficient work, at times that are convenient to them. If this can be achieved, these staff will want to stay on the list. This on-call staff schedule includes the usual dish washers, kitchen hands and waiting staff, many of whom are university students living and studying in the area and looking for a few dollars to supplement their incomes. However, the list also includes highly experienced chefs and silver service waiters who could be required at large catering functions such as weddings and private parties. Some need to be contracted well in advance of planned catering functions. Others need to be ready to respond within minutes of an emergency call from the restaurant. Some cannot be secured no matter how well advanced the planning. People move, change jobs, take up other interests and responsibilities. John knows that as much as his efforts will be successful, they will also fail to secure the staff he needs when he needs them. The success of his business, despite the high levels of personal agency he holds as the proprietor, is dependent (to a certain acknowledged dangerous extent) on the uncontrollable desires and circumstances of staff.

For John, managing and maintaining this staff list is perceived as the fatherly role of balancing the needs of the family with those of its individual members whose complement is constantly changing as people come and go for the many reasons that bring them in and take them away from Platinum. Getting the balance right is evidence of his expertise, evidence of the success of the business and evidence of the importance of his value system as the foundation on which his personal practice is based. The worth of John’s personal practice is, in part, based on the priority he places in the “family” as the evaluative metaphor for his practice. Importantly, it is further based on the importance he places in the role of the “father” within this family. In terms of motivating staff to do and give their best, John states,

*I’d say that’s the number one thing here, that the bloke calling the shots is getting in there and doing it, not just for half an hour, ten minutes, an hour, he’s in, the first one in and the last one out 95% of the time, that’s what’s makes me go forward because I practice what I preach you know, being the dad, it’s not just a job, it’s also, I guess, a bit of a way of life.* (Int #2)

For John, like Jane and Hugh, the personal worth and vocational value of personal practice is based in a complex array of competing and complementary priorities that are negotiated through work. These negotiations enable John, Jane, and Hugh to both confirm and develop their apprehension of and commitment to what is
important for them, important for their workplace and important for the host of others (e.g., colleagues, suppliers, and customers) that mediate the transaction of personal practice. That which is important for each of them is more than evidence of what they do, more than the colleagues they consider (e.g., Hugh), more than the vocational realisation of aspirations directed by study (e.g., Jane) and more than the understanding of small business as a family of co-workers (e.g., John). Such practices and understandings are central to what is important, what is valued, and how these values are transformed through negotiation. Equally, these practices are evidence of who is the self-in-action. Each of the 12 worker-participants, in their unique ways, practices a set of personal priorities that bring together relevant aspects of who they are where they are. As Lave and Wenger (1991) assert, these practices and the values they represent and transform are situated in immediate work activities. Additionally, these negotiated practices and transforming values define the highly figured cultural worlds through which personal and vocational identities are constructed, as Holland et al. (1998) describe. And, equally, these practices and transforming values are evidence of socially derived and developing personal ontogenies (Billett, 2006b) that bind these workers not only to their histories but also to the futures they will transact from the relational positions in activity they enact (Dewey & Bentley, 1975; Giddens, 1991).

So, the value of personal practice is not fixed in its measure as an indication of how well or how poorly the self-in-action is accomplishing their goals. Similarly, this value is not fixed in vocational or social values that identify and define work performance norms. Rather, this value, personally and socially, is negotiated as the transaction of individuals’ varying perceptions and justifications of the importance of what they do in work. Yet, what is personally important in work, is mediated by ontogeny, by social norms and expectations, by the immediate demands of task requirements. However, these mediations are negotiated and through this negotiation, the levels of influence they exert are transformed, varied, with now more and then less impact on personal practice. What Billett (2001c, 2004) describes as the constraints and affordances of engagement in work, the opportunities to participate that workers experience, are in a constant state of flux as their levels of influence are negotiated in personal practice. Workers’ negotiation of these opportunities weakens and strengthens the levels of influence these opportunities represent to the importance they place in their practice. The value of personal practice is, therefore, constantly
changing. Highly measured personal practice equates with successes accomplished but such successes may not be regarded as important. By contrast, highly valued personal practice is always important.

The value of personal practice goes to the control of self-in-action through the prioritising and balancing of competing mediations in negotiation. This personal practice is the weighing of mediations and the reflective evaluation of options. It is the enactment of what is important. Personal practice has value and worth that goes beyond the pursuit of intentions. That worth resides in the personal criteria, cares, and concerns that evaluate intentions as ways to proceed and, thereby, find purpose and give meaning to actions and aspirations as upholding the value of self-in-action.

When viewed individually, this worth can be described as exercising “who I am” on the basis of historic self. When viewed situationally, this worth is the exercise of “who I am and what I am doing.” When viewed socially, this worth can be described as “who I am, what I’m doing and why I am doing it.” The worth of personal practice is the personal value of self-in-action, a form of making sense of what is happening and where that happening may lead. All the participants in this investigation reveal different personal bases of value that enable them to steer the transformation of their control of themselves in work. In this way, they transform their practice through the negotiations that transact their personal and vocational value.

Negotiation as flow conceptualises this transformation of practice made visible in the ways the self-in-action negotiates the measure and value of their personal practice. As the person is transformed and as their practice is transformed, so too are the material and relational resources that, like the person and their practice, constitute the state of flux, the environment, in and of which these transformations are characteristic. The following section progresses to elaborate the kinds of environmental resource transformations that ineluctably accompany the person and their practice in flow.

**Theme 3: Resources in flow**

As Dewey and Bentley (1975, p. 276) attest, all the resources engaged in the transactions of social activity are transformed. As elaborated in the previous sections, this is true of workers and their practices as they flow through the negotiations and transactions of their work and true of the importance and value of these practices as contributions to work. So too is this equally true for the “goods” or artefacts caught up
negotiated participation in work. As timber millers, through the purposeful enactment of their
practice, turn the wood of felled trees into timber for construction purposes, so also do
chefs turn meat into meals, restaurateurs turn meals into profit-generating dining
experiences, fire fighters turn dangerous accidents into emergency responses, fitness
trainers turn human movement into exercise, computing technicians turn academics’
research and analysis into software applications, and managers turn staff skills and
competencies into performance indicators. Equally, and yet more personally, as
outlined earlier, Hugh turns the plastic of milk bottles into keys that open locked
doors. In doing so, he makes such plastic become tools of his personal practice and
expands the fire fighters’ personal kit as he simultaneously expands the repertoire of
their vocational practices. Certainly, the police officers who witnessed Hugh’s actions
will not be so surprised when next they see such practice by fire fighters. Similarly,
Jane turns some gym members’ enquiries into diagnostic consultation as she draws on
her developing physiotherapy skills to answer and advise on questions of managing
exercise and movement when pain and other health issues become important. In doing
so, she turns the reception counter into a physiotherapy advice counter thereby
expanding the gym’s client services. Her personal practice enacts these
transformations as receptionist’s vocational practice and so she, the gym members,
and the gym business expand and develop further transactions as the flow of work
negotiations progresses.

To different extents the goods, or more fully, the resources transformed
through the negotiations of work practice, may be considered as either directly
involved and integral to the transactions enacted, or indirectly involved and, thereby,
incidental to the transactions enacted. These two considerations are elaborated below.

First, when specific resources are integral to the transaction, the nature of their
transformation is a primary aspect of the negotiation. When this is the case, the
resources concerned are elements of what negotiation theorists and researchers refer
to as the bargain mix, that is, the issues (resources and concerns) brought into
transaction through the negotiation. Such resources are very purposefully and
intentionally managed through the negotiation process (Lewicki et al., 2010). To
illustrate, in the simple case of the car-yard sale of a motor vehicle, successful
negotiation outcomes are evidenced by ownership of the vehicle being transferred
from one party to another. The transformation of the vehicle, here a primary resource
of the negotiation, is purposeful and twofold. For the car dealer, the vehicle is transformed through the transaction from a non-liquid product asset into a liquid profit realisation, if the sale price is greater than the purchase and sale costs. For the new owner, the vehicle may have transformed from a product for sale that encapsulates a family’s need of private transport into a family vehicle that is solution to unmet transport requirements. Wenger (1998), from a perspective of learning as the negotiation of meaning through communities of practice, would assert that the meaning of the vehicle has changed, and this in fact is the case, made so by the practices of the negotiating participants. The vehicle is now enacted as a family car (a very different practice from that of its enactment as product for sale) by the purposeful actions of the parties concerned. The transaction of sale has transformed the nature of the vehicle.

The transformation of milk bottle plastic into a tool that forms part of Hugh’s personal practice kit is, equally, an example of the transacted transformation of resources that are integral to the negotiation in which they are enacted. To understand such transformation fully is to see it as more than the transformation of the meaning of resources through negotiation. This transformation is more fully understood as the transacted flow of resources through the negotiations in which they are enacted as practice: and that as the personal practice of the parties involved. Hugh physically cuts up milk bottles to secure pieces of plastic that vary in size and shape from small rectangles approximately the dimensions of a standard credit card to large squares approximately 12cm x 12cm. Such variation enables him to meet a range of door and door-frame constructions. The negotiated transformation of the plastic’s meaning is dependent on its being put into practice. Negotiated meaning is but one aspect of this practice.

Like Hugh, the 12 participants in this investigation described and discussed instances of vocational practice where they were personally and purposefully engaged in the transaction and thereby transformation of resources that were integral to the negotiations of their work. For example, senior fire station officer Bruce recounts his creation of a staff scheduling system that supported the temporary deployment of staff for outer suburban fire stations in the southern region of the city. His work enabled him to notice inefficiencies in the way suburban station officers reported their daily staffing situations and requirements at the start of day and night shifts. When unplanned staff absence due to illness or other personal circumstance left suburban
stations short staffed, they would contact the central and larger city station that would
deploy appropriately qualified staff as required. This meant vehicles and fire fighters
were constantly travelling from the city. Bruce initiated a region-wide information
network that enabled all southern suburban fire stations to know the temporary daily
staffing requirements of all stations in the region thereby enabling the closest
available staff response. With the new information network and the reporting system
that supported it, neighbouring fire stations could now more efficiently support each
other rather than the single central city station supporting all suburban stations. The
resource of the temporary staff deployment system was directly and purposefully
transformed by Bruce’s personal practice. What for him seemed simply a good idea at
the time became, through his efforts and the negotiations these efforts enacted, a
region-wide practice that secured greater efficiencies for the city fire and rescue
service. This instance of vocational resource transformation, enacted as personal work
practice, is listed in Table 7.2. This table lists a range of similar instances of resource
transformation discussed in interview with others of the 12 workers. The left column
lists the specific participant, the central column lists the original resource, and the
right column lists the descriptions of what the original resource has been transformed
to become.
As noted, Bruce transformed the vocational resource of a CFS2 centralised operating system into a new set of practices, engaging station officers from across the southern region of the city in new decentralised work practices. Similarly, Bob from the university’s IT desktop support team created a new university system-wide practice that enabled academic staff to connect to all printers on campus via their personal log-in details. Bob’s idea developed from attending to staff printing difficulties encountered on one of the university’s smaller campuses. His new system meant that academic staff would not be prevented from printing necessary documents when the printing machine they were connected to through their personal computer was broken down or temporarily off-line. His system enabled access to all printers and so the failure of a single printing machine could be quickly circumvented through access to others. He communicated the success of his system to more senior managers.

Table 7.2
Instances of Resources in Flow: Transformed through the Negotiations of Personal Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>original resource …</th>
<th>transformed to …</th>
<th>new resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugh – CFS2</td>
<td>old plastic milk bottles</td>
<td>“keys” for forcing door locks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce – CFS2</td>
<td>centralised temporary staff roster system</td>
<td>decentralised temporary staff roster system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob – ITS</td>
<td>single user single printer connectivity</td>
<td>single user multiple printer connectivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosie – Platinum</td>
<td>designated study time</td>
<td>on-call work response time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John – Platinum</td>
<td>restaurant wholesale suppliers workplace</td>
<td>wholesale suppliers for staff discount shopping venue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>gym member reception counter</td>
<td>physiotherapy consultation counter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian – CFS2</td>
<td>hospital treatment room</td>
<td>private study room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayden – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>bath towels, water bottles</td>
<td>exercise equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn – HealthyTrim</td>
<td>member, staff and community enquiries</td>
<td>Staff training foci</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert – Platinum</td>
<td>children’s outdoor play equipment</td>
<td>food servery counters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid – ITS</td>
<td>staff morning tea</td>
<td>informal staff meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick – ITS</td>
<td>computer cameras and imaging systems for staff communication</td>
<td>toys for inter-office humour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
at the university. Consultations followed and eventually, with some variation, the system was adopted for use across the whole of the university. Bob’s personal practice, negotiated as the enactment of his work, transformed an operating system and so altered personal and organisational practice across the university. In less substantial and less serious work practices, Dick realised that the cameras installed with the instant messaging system operated by the ITS staff members could be used to capture images of staff working at their desks when they were actually away from their desks. This capacity enabled the lighter and funnier side of inter-staff chat and surveillance. Some ITS staff started leaving images of themselves with their heads down as if they were asleep at their desk. Others left images of themselves making silly faces into the camera or images of themselves against backgrounds that made them appear outside the office. For a short time, this play, as Dick described it, transformed sophisticated communications equipment designed to support work processes into toys that brought humour and fun into the serious business of discussing and sharing work issues with other staff.

In different ways, as was outlined earlier, Rosie, who became the senior casual waitress at Platinum restaurant, transformed everyday items of her vocational practice (e.g., napkins, forks, etc.) into signals that assisted her completion of the many tasks that constitute her work. In yet other ways, she transformed the fundamental resource of time through her personal practice. For Rosie, as for the restaurant, time is a very precious resource. Its careful management is essential to meeting the demands of a full-time student study load and the efficient running of a business. At Platinum, when customer numbers were unpredictably higher than the rostered wait staff could support, the Platinum manager would start phoning the pool of casual wait staff. The first of these to be available for this work, meaning those who were available and could be at work within 15-20 minutes, would be those most likely to be offered additional work in the future. For Rosie, this meant being at home, ready to take the call and respond quickly, particularly late on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings when the lunch trade bookings might increase and thereby require additional staff. If she was away from the home, although contactable by mobile phone, her response time would be longer than that required and so would prohibit her from taking up the extra work on offer. So Rosie had allocated these times (i.e., Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings) as home study times. If the phone rang, she would secure desired extra work. If it did not, the frustrations of
waiting for a call that did not eventuate and the inconvenience of putting off necessary out of the home duties were outweighed by progress with her studies. This negotiated engagement in her work was ongoing, atelic, and yet had generated unacknowledged transformation of the meaning and value of time for Rosie and the restaurant. For those hours, on those days, Rosie’s personal practice transacted time as effective and necessary study and assured additional income if the restaurant called. For the restaurant and their practice of securing additional staff quickly, Rosie’s personal practice enabled time to be transacted as the assured availability of reliable and loyal staff. For Rosie, this reliability and loyalty was initially rewarded with consistent extra work, and later, when requested, employer acceptance of her taking time off in peak periods without jeopardising job security. Through the negotiations that constituted her personal practice, Rosie transformed the resource of time to enact mutual value for herself and the restaurant.

As illustrated above, Bruce, Bob, and Rosie, like Hugh, are directly engaged in the purposeful transformation of resources transacted through their personal work practices. Their efforts and the negotiations in which these efforts are enacted define these resources as integral, as primary elements of the bargain mix. A second set of resource transformations are those indirectly or incidentally enacted through the negotiations of work. Such resources are not primary aspects of the negotiations that characterise personal practice but are nevertheless transformed through the flow of person and practice in transaction.

As noted above, Jane’s personal practice and the negotiations she enacts with some gym members indirectly transforms the reception counter of the gym into a consultation site where her developing physiotherapy skills are practised. Also outlined earlier were the indirect transformations of the restaurant into a wholesale supplier of wine and other food products through John’s personal practice of supporting his restaurant staff like family. Such transformations are incidental to the negotiations that characterise Jane and John’s personal practice. Their concerns are with other primary resources involved in the specific negotiations of members’ enquiries and staff satisfaction.

Similarly, others of the 12 participants discussed instances of personal practice that evidenced the incidental transformation of resources. Ian, senior fire fighter and aerial specialist who is undertaking officer training, describes himself as passionate about his work. He states,
I put a lot of energy into it – that’s me personally because I’m passionate about the job, I love it and I do want to advance with it and you have to keep learning if you want to advance. The officer training is self-driven, it’s all self-driven and there’s a lot to learn – they don’t take you by the hand and say we’re going to learn this today. If you don’t do it, it doesn’t happen. (Int #4)

Within this personal negotiation frame of high self-motivation and focused practice, Ian recounts a time when he accompanied his wife on a hospital visit.

A couple of weeks ago my wife had a procedure done in hospital where she’s going to be there all day – just her and me sitting there all day where she has no choice but to lay there for hours and I have no choice but to sit there with her. I took a book up, one of my study books, and made use of the time. I was child free, in a quiet place and I was able to learn and able to use my wife to a degree too and say look, ask these questions of me, and she was happy to do that. (Int#4)

In ways similar to Rosie, Ian is purposefully transforming the resource of time through transacting his personal practice. He intentionally takes his books with him. He intends to study. Incidentally to this, his practice transforms the hospital room into a site of progressing his learning, a study room. Equally, his personal practice transforms his wife into a personal learning assistant as she responds positively to his request to quiz him on his reading. These transformations were unplanned. He discusses through the interviews how surprised he was by these outcomes. He had imagined his wife sleeping, resting with a magazine and he spending time in the coffee shop and the hospital gardens in attempts not to disturb his wife’s resting and the hospital staff as they carried out their duties. Additionally, Ian recounts instances of his own incidental transformation into a learning assistant by others in the officer training program when, as an observer pursuing his own agenda at another officer’s incident management exam, he was unexpectedly tasked with the role of simulating a bystander at a motor vehicle accident by the senior officer conducting the examination. Through others negotiating their personal practice, he was no longer a peripheral observer as he had anticipated but had become, albeit still peripheral, an active participant in the exam being undertaken by his colleague. As a resource within the activity of work, he was transformed through the transaction of others’ practice in the same way as the transaction of his own practice had transformed his wife.

As temporary as these incidental transformations may seem, they indicate the strength of the influential interconnectedness, the relational interdependence (Billett, 2004, 2006a, 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1991), between all resources active within work.
This interdependence is evidenced in the flow of people, practice, and resources through the transactions generated by the negotiation of personal practice. More permanent transformations are equally visible. Where Ian’s wife may never again become a learning assistant or he may never again become a participant in colleagues’ officer examinations, more permanent resource transformations have been incidentally generated by Ian’s negotiation of his personal work practice.

Ian’s wife’s illness required that she attend hospital on an increasingly regular basis through the period of this investigation. To assist his wife as fully as possible through this difficult time, Ian made frequent requests for changes to his shift roster and for time off work. Even within the generous and varied leave provisions of the fire service, Ian quickly used all his leave entitlements and was left with no option but to request leave without pay or perhaps cease employment all together. The fire service was fully aware of Ian’s position and his wife’s health needs and sought to support his requests within the parameters of the human resource management policy that governed their organisational practices. Throughout, Ian negotiated his personal practice within the affordances this management policy context enabled. He sought no special treatment from his employer and expected none. What Ian didn’t know at that time, was that fire service senior management were seeking ways to amend this policy in efforts to make it more able to accommodate and support the difficult personal circumstances Ian was experiencing and that similarly valued others may experience in the future. Ian’s value to the fire service resides in his being one of only a few highly trained aerial specialists and his successful progress through the numerous modules of the officer-training program. Consequently, Ian was very surprised when he was summoned to a senior management meeting to offer his views on proposals regarding the nature and suitability of conditions governing station officers’ meeting their routine work requirements by working from home with the aid of employer-supported computing and telecommunications facilities. What eventuated, and not until many months later, was the provision of organisational policy that enabled Ian (and others like him) to undertake special-project research and report work from home during regular day-shift rosters. Ian’s release to complete such work was complicated by his aerial expertise and the shortage of others who could fill his role. However, these new work provisions did alleviate, to some extent, the pressures on Ian to pursue special consideration outside the standard (and perceived as generous) leave and work
provisions of fire service policy and, importantly, the pressures of having to consider
ceasing employment while his wife was ill. Ian comments,

*In the end I had 6 weeks annual leave, plus 6 weeks at home as day work. They offered me more but my wife and I decided I needed to be back at work. I did feel obligated to be at work and didn’t want to overly use their generosity and we were able to buy in some help for my wife – but there is the understanding that if I need to be at home then it’s possible. That was the beginning of setting up this precedent as a case-by-case scenario for future similar situations. Guidelines have been drawn up to stop the likes of ingrown toenails qualifying for this consideration and further supporting those ‘who do the right thing’. (Int #3)*

Ian’s direct negotiations with the fire service to secure leave and work provisions that could support his difficult personal circumstances resulted in him exhausting the generous provisions afforded him. He was ready to resign. His wife and family were immediately far more important than retaining his employment. His negotiations had transformed the policy provisions of the fire service from perceptibly generous to effectively inadequate for his specific circumstance. However, indirectly, his negotiations of his personal practice led to the resources of the fire service leave and work policies being permanently transformed to now accommodating a broader range of staff circumstances and work practices. The negotiations of others (i.e., senior management) directly transacted this transformation of organisational policy as incidental of and yet interdependent with Ian’s personal work practices.

In summary, as Dewey and Bentley (1975) attest, the resources that enable and support personal work practice are always in flow, always being transformed, through the negotiations in which they are ineluctably transacted. This transformation can be the direct result of resources being integral to the negotiations in which they are primary elements of the bargain mix that defines the conflict or conditions being jointly acted upon. The generation of new product, amended practice, or different usage through purposeful and directed effort as work, such as illustrated by Bob’s new printer connectivity system, Rosie’s reclassification of time, and Hugh’s new uses for plastic, are clear examples of such direct transformations. Additionally, the transformation can be indirect as resources are incidentally caught up in other negotiations related to other and different joint activity. Examples noted above include the gym reception counter becoming, albeit temporarily and dependent on Jane’s presence, a physiotherapy consultation counter; and the new fire service leave and work policy, enacted as an organisational change by the directed negotiations of
others that follow from related but different negotiations enacted by Ian. Like persons and practice, the resources of sociocultural activity are in constant transformation as they flow through and are transacted in the negotiations that define that activity. These are environmental transformations, mediating influences in and emergent accomplishments of the constant state of flux that is work activity, enacted by workers as the negotiation of their personal practice.

**Negotiation as flow**

Individuals’ participation in work needs to be understood in terms of a holistic or environmental perspective that enables personal practice to be seen as one aspect of sociocultural activity that is best characterised as a constant state of flux. The nature of that activity is transformation: and transformation of all that is taking place. However, the genesis of that activity, the initiating enactment, is the presence of the person and so as one aspect of sociocultural activity, personal practice is the primary aspect. Further, the initiating enactment is always a negotiation, always a co-participative practice, because the person is never alone but always socially situated and always actively engaged in that situation. So, personal practice is always in transaction because all action is transactional (Dewey & Bentley, 1975). And transaction is the active form of transformation, not as solely outcome accomplished but as change under way, unfolding, in progress. Conceptualising these qualities of workers’ experience, their enactment of their work, in terms of negotiation is achieved in the concept of negotiation as flow. As Holland et al. (1998, p. 39) assert and as the 12 worker-participants in this investigation illustrate, people are “always in the flow of doing something” and that something, as much as it is always a socially-derived activity, is always the enactment of change, transforming the who, what, and why of activity.

This chapter has elaborated negotiation as flow across three key themes that emerged from examination of the 12 participants personal work practices. The themes are person in flow, practice in flow, and resources in flow. These three themes illuminated some of the transformations that characterise the negotiations in which the 12 were engaged as the transaction of themselves, their personal and vocational identities, their reflective and evaluative means of apprehending the transformations enacted in these transactions, and the material and relational transformations that coincide with their negotiation of work, their enactment of their personal practice.
When conceptualised as self-in-action, individual workers can be seen to embody the bringing together, in negotiation, of a complex array of personal, practical, situational, and social resources that flow in the enactment of a unique activity identified and generalised as personal practice.

The first – the person in flow – reveals personal practice as, in part, the power of individual presence in sociocultural activity. The immediacy of being in activity is a form of transformative power, embodied in the person, to influence and alter the nature and direction of self, of events, of practices, of values, of resources. Gross or subtle, the consequence of individuals’ being in activity is to change what is happening, what otherwise would occur, and so evidence the primacy of the person as the locus of the new, the different, the altered. When viewed individually, this kind of change could be described as learning. Person in flow is the shaping and reshaping of vocational identity as agency, as the enactment of self for self and others in the development and progression of better or differently apprehending who one is through what one does (see e.g., Billett, Harteis & Etelapelto, 2008; Holland et al., 1998; Illeris, 2002, 2007; Lave & Wenger, 1991). When viewed situationally, this kind of change could be described as practice. The enactment of self-in-action is visible as situated in joint activity with others, with tools, in systems, in communities of practice (see e.g., Engestrom, 2008; Fuller & Unwin, 2004; Wenger, 1998). When viewed socially, this kind of change can be described as participation within shared histories and legacies, norms and roles, values and ideologies (see e.g., Bourdieu, 1998; Giddens, 1991; Jarvis, 2004). All views are simultaneously operative and valid. Personal practice, as demonstrated by the 12 participants, is the embodiment of the power to transform self and work simply by being engaged in it.

The second theme – practice in flow – illustrates how personal practice initiates the quality and quantity of mediating influences operant within activity. Work is a collective endeavour, mediated by all the resources, personal, historic, material, cultural, political, and so on, that shape how things are done. All these resources generate the different levels of influence they achieve through the actions of the individual worker as the measure and value of personal practice. Some of the participants in the investigation position themselves to be highly agentic, exhibiting strong capacities to influence the nature of their activity. Others felt less agentic, more weakly or less able to influence the nature of their activity in work. Such measures, when examined through the lens of personal practice, are personally calculated.
through the negotiations that constitute this practice. The diversity of influences mediating work as personal practice is not simply experienced as structural constraints and affordances of the self-in-action. Rather, these mediations are knowingly, purposefully, and personally managed, dealt with, overcome, embraced, and so on, as the enactment of negotiated participation in activity. The 12 worker-participants describe themselves as very much in control of the ways they go about their work as evidence of being themselves, being who they know themselves to be and who they want to become. They are all highly engaged in the negotiations that transact their personal priorities in work. Their apprehension of this personal control is evidenced by the changing measures and value of personal practice they enact in negotiation. Practice in flow, visible in changes to personal practice, is marked by the transformation in the personal measure of what is enacted and the value or importance this enactment holds.

The third theme – resources in flow – elaborates how personal practice transacts the material and relational resources that enable and support work activity and thereby transform them through the processes of exchange, creation, and reformation that mark negotiation (see Dewey & Bentley, 1975; Zartman, 2008). The discovery and creation of new uses for things and new things to use is a negotiated practice. As illustrated, such outcomes can be intentional and incidental. However realised, such outcomes are always emergent from and complementary of the negotiations that constitute personal practice. When viewed from individuals’ perspectives, such transformations of things and relationships could be seen as the creation of new meanings, better understandings and explanations of personal practice and the self-in-action who generated them. When viewed situationally, in the immediate context of enactment, such transformations may be seen as new procedures, different emphases or directions that could be generalised as new cultural practices, new ways of doing things. When viewed socially, such transformations may be seen as precedents, guides or suggestions into new ways of evaluating and regulating practice. The broad impact of change is initiated in the negotiation of personal practice that transforms the resources of sociocultural activity.

Overall, these three themes are not offered here as comprehensive outline of the transformations to person, place, and practice that flow through and from negotiated participation in work. Rather they illustrate the reality, whether perceived positively or negatively, of the constant flux of activity and the need to account for
this state in an environmental wide understanding of negotiation as a form of human practice that evidences the unity of person, place, and practice enacted as self-in-action. To describe and explain learning as emergent from and a fundamental aspect of participation in work requires an environmental perspective that positions the worker, the active person, as of their environment rather than simply in it or acting on it. Negotiation as flow enables this environmental perspective to be accounted and sustained within a conception of learning through participation as negotiation. It does this by illuminating that all action is transaction (Dewey & Bentley, 1975) and accounting for this transaction as the transformations of person, place, and practice that are accomplished in the individual’s negotiated enactment of themself in work: and this made visible, comprehensible and consequential, to self and others, as personal practice.

So, personal practice, as illustrated by the 12 worker-participants in this investigation, is individuals’ enactment of the negotiations that constitute their work. These negotiations generate change, transformation, of all the resources brought into relationship as aspects and elements of these negotiations. These many aspects and elements are not separable, not isolatable. Rather they are the evidence of an environmental unity that must be accounted in explanations of activity. Personal learning is one such activity.

This Chapter 7 has elaborated how the range of transformations transacted through the negotiations that comprise work needs to be conceptualised in terms of an environmental unity evidenced by the self-in-action. The worker enacts their personal practice and so initiates the changes encompassed here in the third dimension of negotiation, negotiation as flow. Negotiation as flow is one of the three dimensions of negotiation presented in this thesis as a means of describing and explaining personal learning in work as negotiation. Doing so comprehensively, within the perspectives of sociocultural activity theory, is reliant on viewing flow and the transformations it illuminates, in terms of negotiation as frame and the personal context it clarifies, and in terms of form and the diversity of purposes and resolutions that typify the kinds of processes and outcomes by which negotiation practices are commonly identified. The following Chapter 8 progresses to elaborate and summarise these conceptual interrelationships among the three dimensions of negotiation and thereby illustrate how personal learning can be described and explained in terms of negotiation. That is, personal learning is negotiated engagement in the participative practices that
constitute work and these can be understood as negotiation practices when negotiation is conceptualised as comprising the three dimensions of form, frame, and flow.
Chapter 8

The three dimensions of negotiation

Through the personal work practices and experiences of 12 individual workers, this thesis has explored the concept of negotiation as a means both to describe and explain participation in, and learning through, the socially-prescribed and personally-engaged process of work. This exploration has involved conceptual and empirical representations of negotiation and has examined them in terms of individuals’ enactments of self and the complex integration of multiple resources such enactments require. This chapter summarises this exploration through the following three sections. First, the key findings and deductions are presented through an explanatory account of the three dimensions of negotiation. Then, six explicit propositions are outlined as the contributions this thesis makes to advancing understandings of learning as participatory practice. Finally, and in conclusion, some considerations for further enquiry are offered as the means to both test and expand the three dimensions of negotiation as an analytic tool for exploring work, learning, and related socio-personal practices.

Conceptual foundations of negotiation

As has been foundational throughout this dissertation, for the individual worker, to work is to learn, is to actively engage in the co-participative practices that enable and accomplish the production of goods and services that characterises work. Such a depiction is representative of the perspective of work and learning advanced by Lave and Wenger (1991) and by many of the researchers and theorists whose work is engaged with throughout this thesis. This depiction integrates the activities of worker, work, and learning as rightly relational and interdependent within the unifying practice of participation. That is, work, like learning (indeed like all human activity) is the interactive practice of individuals engaging with others (i.e., people, ideas, tools, etc.) and, thereby, becoming part of the action that is underway. To engage in this action is to “join in” with others and co-participate in the creation and progression of the practices of social activities recognised and associated with work. Learning is one such activity and so learning in, through, and for work is conceptualised as participation: individuals’
interactive engagement in social activity. This foundation may be described as the participation and practice paradigm that is common within current work-learning theory.

As elaborated throughout in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, and as illustrated by the actions of the 12 participants in this investigation, the kinds of practices that evidence co-participation are personally and collectively enacted as the bringing together of all the resources necessary for the accomplishment of work. This enactment is made observable in personal practice as the ways and means by which individual workers do what they do in work in the person-dependent ways only they can do them. Equally, it is proposed in these chapters that this enactment is made individually meaningful as workers’ personal perceptions and understandings of their contributions to the activities and events that secure this accomplishment, an accomplishment that is always a social practice, always something done with others. The individual worker is evidence of this social practice and that evidence is embodied in the person of the worker and enacted as the self-in-action. However, the self-in-action is a socio-personal being whose personal practice needs to be conceptualised in ways that (a) capture the unity of the person, their place, and their practice; and (b) identify the uniqueness of the individual as the enactment of an environment from which social activity emerges. If participation is engagement in this enactment, and co-participation the acknowledgement of individuals’ unique contribution to this collective enactment, the question arises, how do individuals secure this enactment of co-participation: what do they do? How is workers’ personal practice achieved as a collective accomplishment of work and learning? So, participation and co-participation are useful descriptive terms but they are insufficient explanatory terms.

A way of addressing this question is summarised by Billett (2003) as the need to socialise the individual and individualise the social and so acknowledge and highlight the relational interdependence between personal and social agency in the enactment of work and learning. In doing so, Billett (2004, 2006a & b, 2008), like Wenger (1998), Mezirow (2000), Rainbird, Fuller, and Munro (2004), Illeris (2007), and many other learning theorists concerned with explaining the socio-personal nature of learning, draws on the concept of negotiation to capture the practice of learning as an interactive accomplishment. Yet, these theorists use negotiation in a broad and taken-for-granted way to accommodate a phenomenon that comprises varying levels of interconnectedness and mediation that constitute relational interactivity in socio-personal accomplishments. These authors fail to elaborate specifically how the relational interactivity they identify can be explained as negotiation. Instead, they just label the work and learning practices
they observe and analyse as being relational and interdependent. Nevertheless, work, like learning, is multiply constituted in ranges of interacting practice variables that include the individual, their situational context, and the activities that are deemed to mediate them or represent the relationships they comprise. Hence, the failure to account for these variables leads to an incomplete explication of what constitutes the personal practice of negotiation, in the way that the concept of participation similarly fails to achieve. Consequently, what eventuates is that the terms interaction, participation, and negotiation become synonymous, each achieving some degree of description of socio-personal practice but similarly, each failing to explain comprehensively how individuals’ personal practice is the enactment and accomplishment of the practice being described. What remains are the ambiguities and loose associations that lack clarity and are therefore insufficient to the explication of negotiation. So, and as proposed through Chapters 1, 2, and 3, existing accounts fail to elaborate or define negotiation comprehensively. Instead, it is proposed here that such accounts emerge from viewing parties in negotiation as temporarily interactive and seeking resolutions to identifiable concerns that have brought them together: what has been explained throughout as the commonsense understanding of negotiation (e.g., Lewicki et al., 2006; Menkel-Meadow, 2009; Saner, 2005).

As proposed throughout, the aim of this thesis is to bring a stronger and more specific focus on the concept of negotiation as it is deployed in explaining work and learning. The purpose is to seek more explicit and comprehensive ways of describing and explaining learning in and for work as negotiation and, particularly, individual workers’ personal learning as negotiated practice. It is not the case here that learning is not accepted as negotiated. Rather, the case here is that within constructivist perspectives of work and learning that deploy the term negotiation, the term has not been sufficiently explicated to explain how individual workers negotiate their learning in and for work through the enactment of their personal practices.

Learning has been fundamentally considered and accepted throughout as a complex socio-personal practice that requires a range of theoretical perspectives in its elaboration. So, this thesis draws on theories of experiential learning (Dewey, 1963, 2002; Kolb, 1984,) to highlight understandings of enquiry and reflection processes that individuals engage in through their encounters with others such as clients and colleagues. Transfomative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000) and expansive learning theory (Engestrom, 2001, 2008) are also used to highlight the impetus that conflict and insufficient explanation can have in forcing people to confront their worldviews, both
individually and collectively, in efforts to find adequate understanding and address common problems. The process and products that mark these personal endeavours and collaborative efforts are lifelong learning activities (Jarvis, 2006, 2009) conducted across the range of contexts that people operate. So, situated learning theory (Billett, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2004; Fuller & Unwin, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and learning through practice (Billett, 2010; Wenger, 1998) are used to highlight how learning is relationally shaped by the practices and mediations people are able to engage in and with and, thereby, the kinds of transformations they will experience as the transactions (Dewey & Bentley, 1975) they are part of continue to necessitate their active engagement in the action environment from which they are inseparable.

Similarly, negotiation is a highly complex activity that Strauss (1978) describes as being central to the construction and sustaining of social order: an order always based on the need of doing things with others. So fundamental is this need that negotiation is seen as the most common form of human interaction (Lewicki et al., 2006). In everything from the simplest greeting to multinational politics, from the immediate act through a lifetime of experience, meanings (Wenger, 1998), positions and standings (Giddens, 1984, 1991), values and qualities (Saner, 2005), engagement processes and outcomes (Greenhalgh, 2001; Zartman, 1988, 2008), and self-identities and cultural relationships (Archer, 2000; Fiske, 1991, 2004; Goffman, 1959; Holland et al., 1998) are being created, managed, and transformed through the transactions that connect and unite people with people and their shared activity environment (Dewey & Bentley, 1975). Like learning, negotiation is described here in terms of dynamic and identifiable processes, outcomes, contexts, influences, and priorities that shape and are shaped by those engaged. The ubiquity and dynamism of negotiation as a form of interaction makes it a highly suitable action concept by which to describe and explain learning across people’s lives, particularly given its basis in the tension between possibility and uncertainty. That is, the only thing people can be sure of through their activities is that things will be different from what they were and this is the new beginning for what happens next and, thereby, the point of enquiry about what has and will happen (Dewey, 2002).

Through these learning and negotiation perspectives, the focus on negotiation was enabled by the central research question guiding the investigation reported here. That question is – How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work? This question is supported by three sub-questions designed to uphold the focus on negotiation through
an additional and specific focus on the person of the worker as unequivocally unique. The three sub-questions are:

1. What are workers’ personal work and learning practices?
2. How can these practices be understood as negotiation practices?
3. How can negotiation practices be understood as learning?

These sub-questions are not to motivate separate vehicles of enquiry but rather to acknowledge the integration of work, negotiation, and learning that is the conceptual foundation of this investigation and its focus on the individual, the person of the worker, and their personal practice.

**From participation to negotiation**

The findings of the investigation that was used to explicate, elaborate, and advance these ideas are reported across Chapters 5, 6, and 7 through advancing three dimensions of negotiation. Together they represent an explanatory account of negotiation derived from examining the unique and personal ways the 12 worker-participants in this investigation engaged in their work: that is, how they enacted their self-in-action and secured their active co-participation in the range of negotiations that constitutes their work. Further, the three dimensions of negotiation represent the primary deductions that emerge from this investigation.

In summary, the three dimensions of negotiation are (a) form, (b) frame, and (c) flow. Together, they constitute a complex, yet holistic, representation and explanation of workers’ socio-personal practices in, of, and for work. The framework depicted in Figure 8.1 offers a means of analysing individuals’ work practices as negotiation practices. Because work and learning are complementary socio-personal practices (i.e., to engage in work is to engage in learning: Billett, 2004; Harris et al., 1998), the framework also presents a means of analysing workers’ learning practices as negotiation.
The first dimension: Negotiation as form

Negotiation as form is the first dimension, and as elaborated in Chapter 5 it refers to the categorisation of work practices as specific types or forms of negotiation on the bases of the diverse purposes and resolutions workers enact and accomplish through their personal practice. There are a number of forms and each is determined by the level of analytical refinement brought to the examination of specific practices. At the most general and first level of analysis, negotiation forms are telic and atelic. That is, individuals’ particular work and learning practices can be differentiated as telic negotiations – those that tend to realised outcomes based on purposeful action, and atelic negotiations – those that tend to not being so readily recognised and acknowledged as purposeful and outcome achieving. Telic negotiations are typically marked by workers’ agentic actions (e.g., choices made, decisions taken, aims pursued, etc.) and the recognisable outcomes generated (e.g., agreements reached, experiments concluded, results accepted, circumstances altered, etc.). Such outcomes may be perceptibly positive or negative, welcomed or shunned, accepted or disputed: importantly, they are recognisably resolved or resolving. Atelic negotiations are typically marked by a lack of intentionality and so remain unresolved as the purpose and outcome that guide activity remain circumstantial and incidental, ongoing and, thereby, never recognisably concluded.
At a second level of analysis, workers’ personal practices as form can be categorised as one of four contingent negotiation forms: (a) realised, (b) discovered, (c) concealed, and (d) protracted. The variables of workers’ perceptions of intentionality and outcome resolution following from the enactment of intentions can be mapped using continuums of intentionality and resolution as axes that construct a matrix. The personal work negotiation matrix (see Figure 8.2) identifies the four contingent negotiation forms.

![Matrix Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 8.2.** Four contingent forms of negotiation.

All practice is negotiated practice and, thereby, indicative of the different types of negotiation enacted. Some negotiations are intentionally conducted and achieve identifiable outcomes (i.e., realised negotiations). However, some negotiations are ongoing and are yet to resolve the issues that initiated them (i.e., protracted). Others are unintentionally conducted and are yet to accomplish identifiable outcomes (i.e., concealed), while other unintentionally enacted negotiations become identifiable as such when incidental outcomes are recognised or discovered (i.e., discovered negotiations). So, the four contingent forms depicted in this matrix are indicative of the variability of negotiations personally enacted through work.
Further, a third level of analysis begins to categorise negotiation forms as elements of other negotiation forms. That is, workers’ perceptions of the negotiations they are engaged in identify the relational properties of their work practices. Realising outcomes in one domain of practice may be a contributing element of failing to realise outcomes in a different yet related domain. So, the four contingent negotiation forms are not fixed categorisations of personal practice; rather, they are relational properties that assist the identification of how personal practices such as questioning, naming, experimenting, evaluating, and reflecting (i.e., familiar learning practices conducted directly and indirectly with others: Dewey & Bentley, 1975; Engestrom, 2001) and the negotiations in which such practices are enacted, can be understood as simultaneously forms of negotiation, elements of forms of negotiation, and negotiation processes.

Negotiation as form, thereby, enables the analysis and categorisation of personal practice as types, elements, processes, and outcomes of negotiation. That categorisation is person dependent. It derives from the enactments of workers and their understandings of the purposes and resolutions their practice enables and supports. Conscious or otherwise, planned or accidental, workers’ personal practices can be categorised and differentiated as negotiation and thereby described and explained in the negotiation-specific terms advanced here through the first dimension of negotiation.

**The second dimension: Negotiation as frame**

Negotiation as frame is the second dimension of negotiation and was explained through Chapter 6. It explains how workers negotiate the negotiations in which they are engaged through their participation in work. Workers do this in the exercise of the very person-specific ways they monitor and manage their personal context and thereby enact a personal frame of engagement in current activity. This dimension emphasises negotiation as both an activity enacted and a context in and of which that enactment is accomplished. So workers are always in negotiation and always negotiating, and this with all the elements and aspects of the personal context they are co-constructing through activity. There are many variables involved in this socio-personal framing.

Frame can be taken as mediating factors. These mediations may be simple and singular, a situational requirement, such as the specific time and location in which an activity is to be enacted. Equally, they may be complex and multi-faceted, requiring the careful orchestration of many resources over long periods of time. Similarly, these mediations may be personal and historic, representing a lifetime of interests and priorities.
learned and enacted as dispositional factors and personal epistemologies. Or, they may be deeply entrenched cultural traditions that define the people and positions enacted. In all circumstances, workers mediate and are mediated by the practices in which they are engaged. This shaping and being shaped is a negotiation practice and a negotiation context that workers enact in very person-specific ways to evidence their personal negotiation frame. So, personal practice is the negotiated enactment of all that contributes to current activity and the very person-specific ways this contribution has been co-participatively constructed.

Negotiation as frame privileges two significant aspects: composite negotiations – those negotiations that are compounded through a history of personal engagement in activity and are contributory to current activity, and contiguous negotiations – those negotiations simultaneously enacted in current activity. Composite negotiations may be seen as the learning, personality, and priorities that inform and support current activity. Ontogeny and culture, person and situation, are negotiated as the self-in-action brings all that is required to the situation at hand in the decisions and choices made possible, enabled and enacted in their negotiating the immediate and the activity it necessitates. The now is culmination of the history that has generated it and this history is present as prerequisite and initiating. Equally, contiguous negotiations are significant influences in current activity. Individuals are multiply constituted in activity through the roles, responsibilities, obligations, and aspects of self they simultaneously negotiate in their immediate practice. Workers and their workplaces are sites of intersection where individuals can be friends, colleagues, respected experts, senior managers, or any and all of the subjectivities that comprise the self-in-action. Current activity is rich with this multiplicity, potential and actual, as individuals simultaneously enact the many social and personal identities they are and are becoming.

Negotiation as frame, thereby, enables the analysis and explanation of the self-in-action, multiply constituted (i.e., as self-in-history, self-in-situation, and self-in-practice) in current activity as negotiating their negotiations. This framing is more than personally managing the mediations that shape personal practice as Smith (2006) describes, and more than figuring a world as Holland et al. (1998) propose. Instead, it is negotiating the multiple intersections of person, place, and practice enacted in immediate activity, that is, the bringing together in unique person dependence of all the resources necessary for what is currently happening. Expressed as a relationship transacted, the personal negotiation frame is a context in, of, and through which the self-in-action acts.
The third dimension: Negotiation as flow

Elaborated in Chapter 7, negotiation as flow is the third dimension of negotiation. The self-in-action brings together all the resources necessary for its enactment through negotiating personal practice. It is, thereby, the locus of activity and hence, the site of the transformations that evidence activity. To act is to change things (Wertsch, 1995, 1998) and so all action is transaction (Dewey & Bentley, 1975) and all that is transacted is transformed. As proposed in Chapter 7, such a perspective is necessarily environmental and accounts for the unity of person, place, and practice through the sweep of relational influences all elements of the environment evidence as they are activated through people’s actions, however weakly or strongly, in the numerous transactions that hold as the constant state of flux in and by which social activity is constituted. Therefore, never “not engaged” in the activity of personal practice, the self-in-action enacts their transformation, their becoming, in relation to all that is happening, as movement into and through their future, their immediate possibilities, their circumstances, their relationships with all they are part of, as a flow. To flow is to be transformed as integral to the transactions that constitute being in activity. Negotiation as flow elaborates three key aspects or themes of the transformations that evidence the self-in-action and the transaction of personal practice that is their engagement in activity. These are (a) the person in flow, (b) practice in flow, and (c) resources in flow.

The person in flow refers to the ways transacting personal practice, that is being who one is, enacting the self-in-action, generates changes in person, in position, in others, by simply being present. This capacity to initiate change is described as the primacy and the immediacy of the self-in-action. It is the interactive necessity of being with others, and so, as Goffman (1959) notes, the individual can do nothing but perform and, thereby, negotiate who and what they are. So the action unfolding and the transformations that evidence that action are the negotiations that reveal the personification of who and what is happening and that personification is in flow.

Practice in flow refers to the ways by which the self-in-action apprehends the changes they are part of, the transformations that mark their action in their environment. To know oneself is to identify the differences one makes and so label and enact them as knowings (Dewey & Bentley, 1975). Such personal practice is the measuring and valuing of the self-in-action. Measuring and valuing are negotiation and learning practices. It is individuals, through the negotiations enacted, who measure the degree to which their personal practice resonates with who they are and what they do and thereby apprehend
the self-in-action as a socio-personal being whose practice is constantly being negotiated and transformed.

Further, practice in flow evidences the personal and social worth of transforming practice. Individuals varyingly invest themselves in action for all sorts of reasons; the value or worth of such investments is negotiated. However, high levels of investment do not necessarily equate with high levels of perceptible value and vice versa. This is because the levels of importance they bring to those reasons further mediate their practice. What is important may not be apparent in effort expended or outcomes welcomed. For example, securing personal goals through high levels of effort expended may prove less valuable when the cost of doing so is the weakened trust and respect of colleagues. Such understandings are negotiated through the transaction of personal practice on the bases of personal and social values held, encountered, and constructed. Learning, as such, is the transformation of the value of personal practice and this value is negotiated.

Such negotiations include composite negotiations, that is, personal values constructed and enacted ontogenetically. They will include social and cultural values, equally negotiated, and perhaps institutionalised, through a history of supported activity. They will also include the situated values of specific context where sanctioned activity as localised norms and codes of conduct may or may not align with all other values within the negotiations transacting the value of personal practice. What is personally important is negotiated through these now competing, now aligning, then fragmenting, then complementary, then transforming sets of values. The socio-personal value of personal practice is constantly transforming, and engaging in and with these transformations is the negotiation of practice in flow.

The third aspect or theme of negotiation as flow is resources in flow. The transaction of personal practice transforms all the resources implicated in the negotiations that constitute work. As people change, their practice changes and the people, ideas, and things brought together in those changes are similarly relationally transformed. At the simplest level, using tools and similar materials (intentionally or accidentally) for purposes that did not feature in their design and creation marks the transformation of equipment through personal practice. Chairs become exercise equipment, children’s outdoor play equipment becomes food serveries, table forks become memory aids, sophisticated telecommunications equipment becomes toys, and so workers’ creativity becomes an outcome of negotiated practice as necessity and possibility negotiate the
resources present in activity. Similarly, people, relationships, and systems are transformed through the transaction of personal practice. Colleagues become friends, employees become partners, spouses’ health issues become policy limitations, and tragic circumstances become learning opportunities as changes in one aspect of personal practice initiate and implicate all manner of changes in other aspects of the same personal practice. The transaction of personal practice is constituted in a broad range of composite and contiguous negotiations of all forms that evidence the transformation of all the resources brought together in individuals’ enactment of that practice. That transformation is ongoing, unceasing, and referred to here as the negotiation of resources in flow.

In sum, the three dimensions of negotiation elaborate an explanatory account of workers’ personal practice in work as negotiation. It does this in both broad and specific terms. Broadly, it captures the environmental nature of social activity as a constant state of flux of which individuals are relationally and interdependently partnering all the resources of their practice and so transforming and being transformed by and within all the transactions that constitute this flux. Specifically, it accounts for the seemingly singular and person-dependent actions that in analytic isolation present as interactive practices between separate parties to an activity. In doing so it does not present personal practice as action that mediates between the social and the personal, between self and others, between what was and now is. Rather, it elaborates personal practice as being explicable within negotiation that is the means of identifying and articulating the unity of person, place, and practice – here, worker, work, and working and learning. This unity is embodied and observable in the self-in-action, and specifically here, the 12 selves-in-action who participated in the investigation reported in this thesis.

The description and explanation of practice enabled by the three dimensions of negotiation framework is directly applicable to learning as synonymous with working. The self-in-action learns and works as the transaction of personal practice enacted through the many negotiations in which it is engaged. In addressing the central research question guiding this investigation – How do individuals negotiate their learning in and for work? – and doing so within the constructivist perspectives on which it is based, this thesis advances the following response.

For the individual worker, to work, is to learn, is to enact the self-in-action. The self-in-action is the unique person-specific embodiment of the socio-personal relationship that is the inseparability of the individual from their environment. The enactment of the self-in-action is the transaction of personal practice and this transaction comprises all the
negotiations in which the self-in-action is engaged. Negotiation is the bringing together of all the inseparable resources necessary to the accomplishment of activity. To capture the complexity of what it means to bring together resources that are always connected, negotiation needs to be conceptualised in ways that can describe and explain the kinds of actions people undertake in their associations with each other, the kinds of relationships these associations represent, and the kinds of ceaseless changes that generate and emerge from these relationships. Such a conceptualisation is offered by the three dimensions of negotiation – form, frame, and flow – where the integrity of the person, their collective constitution in social activity and their constant transformation is aligned with the personal practice they accomplish through inseparable partnership with others. Learning, and particularly personal learning, can be described and explained as negotiation through this multi-dimensional conception because it is the person-specific transaction of practice that secures the transformation of self and, thereby, the resources brought together in that transaction.

**Contributions to understanding work and learning**

From the findings and deductions provided above it is held that this thesis makes six distinct contributions to further developing the participation and practice paradigm and the descriptions and explanations of work and learning derived from it. These contributions are as follows:

- First, it extends and advances an understanding of the commonly used metaphor of learning as participation in socially-derived activities and with social partners. Participation and, therefore, co-participation is more than “joining in” with activity underway, more than mediated engagement in others’ practice. Rather, participation is “meeting” others (including self) and, thereby, bringing together, in personal practice, all the resources necessary to the enactment of the self-in-action and the new and transforming activity generated.

- Second, it also extends and elaborates the taken-for-granted use of the term *negotiation as learning* that is widely used in contemporary accounts of learning mainly, but not restricted to, sociocultural theory. Negotiation as a metaphor for social relations is more than generically making deals and settling disputes. Its meanings need to encompass the transforming accomplishment of being in
relationship, not as separate parties connected in need but as partners always
connected by varying levels of socio-personal purpose and resolution. Negotiation
is more than meeting. It is the state of being “in meeting” and, therefore,
transformation.

- Third, the three dimensions of negotiation practices explain and illustrate how
individuals’ practise their socio-personal accomplishment of negotiating work.
Personal practice is not simply an interactive practice because interaction implies
separation and connection and this is not how co-participation is enacted. Rather,
personal practice, like the social relations of which it is part, is transacted. That is,
it begins from a base of inseparable connection and flows through varying the
transformations that characterise the numerous negotiations conducted. The
processes and outcomes that comprise these negotiations are the transaction of
personal practice.

- Fourth, these three dimensions present an analytical framework enabling the
differentiation and explication of the array of negotiation practices enacted as
personal practice. Each of the three dimensions makes examinable the actions,
relationships, and transformations that constitute negotiation as activity, context,
and environmental flux. In doing so, the framework establishes a mechanism that
simultaneously focuses on the individual and the collective and removes the
limited conception of activity as a mediator of person and context, or process and
outcome. Moreover, it can be used to comprehensively appraise the form,
purpose, and factors shaping the process of learning.

- Fifth, it re-asserts the primacy of the person as the purpose and locus of social
activity and, thereby, accounts for individuals’ contributions to and of these
practices. Workplaces, like all social arenas, are meaningless and account for
nothing when the people who create and sustain them are removed. The
abstraction of people to mediated subjects of activity is akin to removing the
person from the transformations they enact. To focus solely on activity or the
results of activity is to lose sight of the initiating person who is the worker, the
learner, the self that activates and animates practice. The three dimensions of
negotiation is about personal practice and how this is transacted in uniquely personal ways that emanate from the self-in-action who, unable to “not act,” does so in ways that cannot “not influence” the flow of events, people, things, and ideas brought together in their practice.

- Sixth, it offers an account of learning in and across work life that may be broadly applicable to lifelong learning and development. That is, it enables the examination of lifelong learning as a socio-personal practice that identifies the individual within all the activity necessary to its accomplishment. Learning, like working, indeed like all human endeavour, is both the practice and the practise of negotiation, a distinction to differentiate the noun and the verb which is fading from common usage. However faded, the distinction is important because negotiation is both the act of negotiating (verb) and the context in which such acts are enacted (noun). Therefore, individuals are always “in” and “of” negotiation. So, learning practices are negotiation practices. How individuals construe their experience, their encounters, is negotiated (with self, others, etc.). Similarly, how individuals collaborate with others is negotiated. The specific manner by which these practices are enacted identifies the individual as the learning self-in-action and their negotiations will always be both the action and context of their enactment and similarly, both intra-psychological and inter-psychological indicators of the socio-personal nature of learning.

Together, these six contributions to current accounts of work and learning support the clearer and more comprehensive description and explanation of learning in and for work as a socio-personal practice in terms of negotiation. The three dimensions of negotiation framework, and its focus on individuals’ personal practice, is the key vehicle of this explication. Negotiation comes to be seen as more than a generic term for interactive processes of “dealing” with others. Its scope as a metaphor for social practice goes beyond coming to arrangements that resolve conflict whether as personal need for better understanding or collective solution for overcoming differences.

**Limitations to understanding work and learning**

This thesis and the research it reports are founded on conceptions of work and learning as socio-personal practices of specific and situated participation in broader socio-historically
derived practices. Its primary focus is the individual worker and the uniquely personal ways individual workers enact their work practice as always with others and, thereby, always in negotiation with the wealth of resources necessary to such enactment. Further, this primary focus is limited to the personal practices of only 12 workers who individually and collectively cannot be said to present more than limited accounts of some of what they do and comprehend through their engagement in work. As rich and as detailed as this researcher supported presentation may be, it is not construed here as comprehensive or generalisable. Rather, the thesis, its focus and methodological foundations, are advanced as limited indication of ways by which further understanding workers’ personal contributions to the negotiations that constitute their work and learning may be developed. The scope of the research is clearly limited by the low number of participants and the small amount of time spent with them collaboratively exploring and examining their work and learning experience.

Further to this, the primary focus on the individual and the personal enactment of practice emphasises the personal over the social and so skews the balance implied in viewing work participation as socio-personal practice. The social is effectively de-emphasised throughout and the power of the social as the cultural and historic press that contextualises and shapes human activity, despite being acknowledged throughout, is downplayed in efforts to focus on personal aspects of practice. Two aspects of this de-emphasis are important and need to be noted here as limitations of the research. First, the question of how genuinely unique any individual workers’ actions and perceptions can be is not fully examined. Granted, all 12 workers were engaged in predominantly dissimilar work and this dissimilarity was a purposeful aspect of the research design. However, the accounting for idiosyncrasy as unique ontogenetic development is not tested, not explored beyond accepting how the 12 workers briefly accounted for their histories as pathways to the current work and values practice. The significance of the social in shaping the twelves’ immediate contributions to the negotiations enacted in work was relatively lost to seeking accounts of current practice and the contextual resources brought into action through that practice. Second, and specifically methodologically, the focus on the personal and the dominance of self-account interview data acts to exclude the perspectives of others engaged in the very negotiations examined. This exclusion results in the mediation of others being only accounted for by the individual focussed on. Granted, this focus is the primary target of the research and the depth of specifically personal analysis afforded and secured enables the intentionality and autonomy of the
individual to be made explicit and accessible. However, given that all resources enacted in negotiation practices (including the self) are socially sourced, the perspectives of others engaged within the same activities are significant indicators of the nature of personal practice as socio-personal enactment. The primary focus on the personal and individual, although a fundamental tenet of the research design, does not account for the multiple perspectives that necessarily comprise social practice.

Overall, the limitations of the research stem from its small number of participants and its primary focus on the individual worker who can only be, no matter how significant, but one of the parties engaged in the negotiations that constitute work. These limitations do not detract from the focus of seeking to capture the personal contributions of individual workers within the negotiation practices their participation secures. They can become indicators of how to progress and refine the conclusions drawn and the methods deployed in coming to them.

Possible directions for further research

The findings, deductions, contributions and limitations here suggest the need for, and to further, inquiry that both tests and expands the understandings and capacities of negotiation advanced. The following five suggestions are indicative of the direction and focus such enquiry could take.

First, the empirical work undertaken here was premised on the accounts, however detailed and carefully validated, of just 12 participants from only four workplaces. Given the potential for the broader applicability of what was found here, it would be both helpful and necessary to undertake further studies to appraise the degrees by which the negotiation and personal practice claims and concepts are applicable to more and different kinds of workers.

Second, and additional to broadening the number and nature of participants, it would be helpful to engage with all participants in a single or series of interrelated practice events. Examining how all personal contributions and engagements within immediate practice alter and (re)evaluate the range of mediations enacted in a single negotiation sequence of transactions may offer insight into the social resources enacted in participative practice and the nature of the relational interdependence among them. That is, for each of the individuals engaged in immediate negotiation practices, how are personal resources enacted as others’ social resources and how are others’ personal
resources enacted as self social resources? Are such differentiations perceptibly significant as mediators of transactivity?

Third, work is not a benign activity, so given the contested nature of workplaces as social arenas in and by which workers varyingly compete and collaborate for access to and use of resources for both personal and situational purposes, it becomes important to examine a range of specific negotiations that evidence these different relational levels. For example, how are negotiation practices enacted when such mediating factors as hostility, isolation, and danger are heightened, and what qualities of learning associate with these and other seemingly less and/or more supportive aspects of people and their contexts?

Fourth, there is a particular conception of learning as negotiation advanced that may support different understandings of the pedagogic and curriculum practices directed at enhancing learning in and for work. Both individuals’ skill development and organisations’ learning provisions may be examined more closely as negotiation practices. For example, learning to learn skills, increasingly salient given the pace and quality demands of the technical and policy changes that characterise contemporary work, may be explored as learning to negotiate skills. Similarly, training provision may be explored as the directed integration of composite and contiguous negotiations.

Fifth and finally, personal learning and directed learning provision in and for work are increasingly work-life-span focused pursuits. Although not specifically focused on issues of lifelong learning conception and facilitation, the negotiation and personal practice findings of this thesis may support ways of exploring learning as the protracted negotiation of self-in-action. So, for example, how could the personal work negotiation matrix (as is and as may be amended) better support understandings of how individuals conduct the many negotiations that constitute their engagement in any and all social enactments?

These indications of possible further enquiry emerge from the thesis as responses to both its limited scope and its extensive examination of the work and learning experiences and practices of those who participated in the investigation. As these individual workers personally evidence, and as national economies and private businesses institutionally and financially evidence through their policies and expenditure, personal learning in and for work is a fundamental and salient priority on which contemporary social order is established, sustained, and developed. The fundamentality of the
individual, the person of the worker, cannot be over-emphasised within this broad perspective. It is the individual worker, the self-in-action, who brings together in their personal enactment of work, all the resources necessary to the accomplishment of what is currently happening and, therefore, and most importantly, what happens next. For the individual worker, as for the workplace concerned and ultimately the economy and lives into which that work is contributory, what happens next is both the purpose and realisation of current effort and activity. To work, is to learn, is to transact the quality of that next.
REFERENCES


continuity and intentional self development (pp. 323-350). Gottingen, Germany: Hogrefe & Huber.


Appendix A: Information sheet and consent forms

WORKPLACE PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES:
LEARNING THROUGH AND FOR WORK.

INFORMATION SHEET

What people do in their work and how they do it is closely connected to what and how they learn at work. This connection between learning and working can be a strong influence on an employee’s job satisfaction, their workplace productivity and performance. Likewise, it can be a strong influence on an employer’s organisation of the procedures and practices that are undertaken at work and the staffing arrangements that bring all this about. Understanding this connection more fully is important for employees and employers alike. It offers opportunities to improve work based learning and the experience of work in general from the personal and productivity points of view.

This research project aims to strengthen an understanding of this connection by examining what people do at work and how they learn from these activities. It focuses on small groups of three individuals from four very different workplaces. These twelve people are volunteer participants who, with the full approval of their employer organisations, will describe and discuss their work in a series of interviews. The interviews are private and informal and will take place over a 16-18 month period. They are designed to get each of the participants talking about their experience of work and learning at work. The sorts of things discussed would include, the duties and tasks they perform at work, the kinds of problems they experience at work and their solutions to these problems, the kinds of decisions they make at work and the effects of these decisions and the kinds of changes that happen at work and how they respond to these changes. Additionally, and also with the full knowledge and consent of all concerned, some observations of the workplace and its practices will be made by the researcher. All this information, gathered from interview and observation, will be used to build a better understanding of what the participants do at work and how this contributes to their learning at work.
The interviews will take place every 6-8 weeks at a time and place that is convenient for each of the participants. They will be recorded and transcribed. All the information gathered remains anonymous and confidential. The volunteer participants will be assured of this and asked to sign a consent form acknowledging their awareness of the conduct of the project and willingness to be involved. A copy of the consent form is attached.

This research project is viewed very much as the collaborative effort of individual employees and the research team. Together, they will enjoy building a better understanding of the relationship between work and learning. Volunteer participants in similar projects have reported an appreciation of the opportunity such research presents for them to reflect on their work and learning. As workplaces continue to change and make more demands on workers as learners needing to respond to these changes, a fuller understanding of workplace learning becomes increasingly important. This project aims to contribute to this important understanding.

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INFORMED CONSENT FORM

What the research project is all about

The project aims to examine the relationship between individuals’ participation in and their learning through paid work. Understanding this relationship is important and urgent as the interest in and expectations of learning throughout working life are growing. Ongoing improvement of individuals’ capacity to be effective in work is held as being central to maintaining individual, local and national well-being. However, the responsibility for learning throughout working life is increasingly being transferred to the individual. Yet, without knowing more about how individuals are able to engage in learning, be motivated to continue to learn and the kinds of learning that occurs, there can be little certainty about whether the expectation of learning throughout working life are realistic.

What it will involve

The project will involve gathering information from you about your work and your learning in the workplace through a series of interviews over a sixteen month period. This will initially comprise of some observations of your workplace and work practice and interviews with three individuals performing quite different roles in each workplace. While these individuals will be identified to each other, you will not be asked to comment on each other. The observations will be as unobtrusive as possible. They are being used to assist us understand the context in which you work. Each interview will be of approximately 45 to 60 minutes duration. These will occur not more than every six weeks to eight weeks. You will be asked about incidents in your work life, how you went about responding to these and what helped in learning how to respond to these incidents. This is to assist making the information as real as possible to your actual work activities. Most of the information will be gathered in interviews with you and for ease of gathering and analyzing this information these interviews will be recorded on audio cassette. Information on the cassettes will be made into typed transcripts.
As part of the research procedures you will be provided with copies of the transcripts or particular extracts as well as our analysis of the transcripts for comment at subsequent interviews.

**How your interest will be protected**

Informed consent is required for your participation in the research project. This consent extends to the information provided by you to be used in the project. Your contributions will remain anonymous and confidential to the Chief Investigator. A pseudonym (substitute name) will be assigned to the information you provide that will hide the identity of its source. All the information will be in the keeping of the Chief Investigator. No identifiable information will be left in the workplace once it has been gathered from you. Also, no information will be made available to your employer or supervisor without your express approval. You will be provided with the opportunity at each subsequent interview to identify any data that you wish to be made less identifiable. You will retain the right for any data not to be published in any identifiable form.

It is important that you should feel free to participate in the research project without fear or favour. You have the right to contact the Chief Investigator about any aspect of your involvement. You also have the right to withdraw from the project should you wish to. However, given the efforts taken by the researchers to maintain your anonymity and treat any information in confidence it is not anticipated that you will be in any way discomforted by the research project or put at risk by it. In most situations, participants engaged in these kind of projects find them to be rich learning experiences. Just as you have been briefed about the project before being asked to consent to your involvement, at the completion of the project, you and the other participants will be briefed in detail as to its outcomes.

In seeking your consent, it is important for you to understand that you participation is voluntary and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits should you refuse to participate or decide to discontinue your participation. Should you have any complaints about the research project, you are encouraged to raise these with the researchers, in the first instance and if you remain dissatisfied or require an independent person please use the contacts mentioned.

Griffith University gratefully acknowledges the support you have provided to its research initiatives.

Thank you

Stephen Billett and Michelle Barker
**Consent Form**

Research Project – ‘Workplace participatory practices: Learning through and for work’

Chief Investigators – Stephen Billett and Michelle Barker

To satisfy the requirement of its ethics processes it is necessary that you give consent to the following statement.

I ……………………………………………………… agree to participate in the ‘Workplace participatory practices: Learning through and for work’ project and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be carried out as described in the information statement, a copy of which I have retained. I realise that whether or not I decide to participate is my decision and will not affect my treatment in the workplace or by the researchers. I also realise that I can withdraw from the project at any time and that I do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.

Signatures:

Investigator Date

Participant Date

Chief Investigator(s):

Dr. Stephen Billett (07) 3875 5855
School: Vocational, Technology and Arts Education, Faculty of Education

Professor Michelle Barker (07) 37357952
Griffith School of Business, Department of Management

**Complaints**

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the national Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.

Complaints concerning the manner in which the research project is conducted can be directed to the Manager, Research Ethics on 3875 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au
Appendix B: Interview question schedules

There were five interviews undertaken through the investigation. Some were more formally directed by specific questions than others.

The interview schedules A – E are presented below.

Interview 1 - Schedule A (Initial interview)
This first interview aims to gather information about your work practice and how you participate within it. It involves firstly, identifying the work area in which you engage; and secondly, gaining an understanding of the requirements of that work practice.

The data gathered in this interview will be returned to you for verification at the next interview.

Please contribute freely. All the data gathered will be treated confidentially, none will be either left at or returned at your workplace without your permission.

In any reporting of the data, anonymity will be provided to the degree of your satisfaction. That is, you will decide the level of masking that is required to maintain your anonymity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section One: Your work and your workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firstly, it is necessary to understand something about your workplace and your work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 What is the key focus or purpose of the organisation for whom you work (what happens here and why)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 What are the key goals for this organisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 On what bases will it continue to exist and, therefore, offer you employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 What will threaten its continuity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 What is your work role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 What is the scope of this role?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Two: Describing the requirements for work and participation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this section we are attempting to capture information about how you see the requirements for performing and participating in your workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are interested in understanding, from your perspective, what is required to do your job properly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To do this we need to ask you a lot of questions, using a schedule of Activities and Interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This may take some time and effort. However, we feel it is important to fully capture the richness of your work. You will have the opportunity to add to this information in subsequent meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After we have worked through the following table of Activities and Interactions, please suggest any factors we may have missed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Activities and interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities within work practice are held to be described in terms of their:</th>
<th>To understand the range of activities that comprises work, the bases for the distribution of and participation in those tasks and as a consequence the learning that arises from them.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1 Multiplicity</strong> – the range of activities expected to be undertaken as part of work practice</td>
<td>2.1.1 What is the range of tasks you are expected to conduct in this workplace?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **2.2 Routineness** – the degree by which work practice activities are routine or non-routine thereby requiring robust knowledge. | 2.2.1 Describe the range of activities you frequently engage in at work.  
2.2.2 From this list, which are hardest to learn? Why?  
2.2.3 Describe activities that you engage in less frequently than monthly?  
2.2.4 Which of these are hardest to learn? Why?  
2.2.5 Describe any activities that you may be called to engage in but which occur only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. air stewards in plane evacuation/ditching)  
2.2.6 Which of these are hardest to learn? Why? |
| **2.3 Discretion** – the degree by which the scope of activities demands a broader or narrower range of decision-making and more or less autonomous practice. | 2.3.1 How broad is your scope for decision-making in the work place?  
2.3.2 What are the rules that determine the kinds of decisions you can make? |
| **2.4 Intensity** – degree by which the intensity of work tasks demand strategies for managing the work load and undertaking multiple tasks simultaneously | 2.4.1 In what ways could your work be described as being intense?  
2.4.2 What are the skills that enable you to manage the intense parts of your work? |
| **2.5 Complexity** - the degree by which work task decision-making is complicated by compounding variables and the requirement for negotiation among | 2.5.1 Using a recent workplace incident – could you indicate the complexity of the tasks you conduct, and identify the range of variables that need to be considered in responding to that task.  
2.5.2 How did you learn to respond to incidents like that? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>those variables</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **2.6 Accessibility** (opaqueness of knowledge) - the degree by which knowledge required for the work practice is either accessible or hidden. | 2.6.1 What knowledge do you need to do your job that is unavailable in the workplace?  
2.6.2 If someone were not fully involved in the workplace, what would they have difficulty learning? |
| **Interdependencies** within work practice are held to be describable under: | In what ways the interactions in the workplace proceed and how they shape thinking, acting, and learning at work |
| **2.7 Homogeneity** - degree by which tasks in the work practice are homogenous. Similarities may provide for greater support (modelling etc) in development of the ability to perform. | 2.7.1 How similar is the work that you do, compared to others in the workplace?  
2.7.2 To what extent does that homogeneity allow you to participate in the work practice? |
| **2.8 Artefacts/external tools** - physical artefacts used in work practice upon which performance is predicated. | 2.8.1 In what ways does the physical environment, workplace tools and equipment determine what you do?  
2.8.2 How do they influence your participation in the workplace? |
| **2.9 Working with others** (teams, clients) – the ways work activity is premised on interactions with others. | 2.9.1 In what ways do you have to interact with others in order to get your job done effectively?  
2.9.2 On what bases do these interactions proceed?  
2.9.3 On what bases are they inhibited? |
| **2.10 Engagement** - basis of employment | In what ways is the distribution of work tasks and acknowledgement of performance dependant on the: |
| **Status of employment** - the standing of the work and whether it attracts support | 2.10.1 Employment basis (e.g. full-time-part-time – home workers – shift worker)  
2.10.2 Standing of the individual (e.g. personal competence, affiliations, membership of cliques etc)  
2.10.3 Standing of the work role (e.g. high status – low status work) |
| **Access to participation** - attributes that influence participation |  |
| **2.11 Reciprocity of values** - the prospects for shared values | 2.11.1 What parts of your job do you value, and why?  
2.11.2 In what ways do you share the values and norms of the workplace/organisation/work team? |
Interview 2 Schedule B (Work history and participation at work)

This second interview aims to gather information about your working life, how you participate in your current work and how participation is enacted in this workplace. It involves firstly, telling the story of your working life to date; secondly, how you participate in this work practice; and, thirdly, workers here are able to participate in your work.

The data gathered in this interview will be returned to you for verification at the next interview.

Please contribute freely. All the data gathered will be treated confidentially, none will be either left at or returned at your workplace without your permission.

In any reporting of the data, anonymity will be provided to the degree of your satisfaction. That is, you will decide the level of masking that is required to maintain your anonymity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section One: Your working life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Briefly outline your personal history and working life to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Could you explain briefly how you came to be doing your current work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Which job(s) or occupational activity(ies) did or do you find most engaging or satisfying?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Why is that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 What motivates you to engage in paid employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Why this employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 What are your aspirations for your working life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 How does this work relate to your values and personal history?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Two: Participation and engagement at work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 How long have you been doing this kind of work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 What aspects of your current work do you find most interesting? Why is that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 What are your aspirations for work within this workplace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 What aspects of your work do you not like? Eg. What activities are you doing that you don’t want to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 In what ways are you able to make decisions about what you do in your work?(please provide an example)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 What kind of tasks do you have the freedom to make decisions about? Why is that?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 What areas of your work are constrained by others, and you are less able to make decisions about? Why is that?
2.8 In what ways is the workplace assisting you to realise your aspirations?

Section Three: Bases for participation in workplace

This section aims to gather some further information about factors that determine participation in the workplace and what motivates your engagement with the workplace.

3.1 Who gets taken notice of in your workplace?
   Why is that?
3.2 What qualities are the basis of being taken notice of at work?
3.3 What qualities should be the basis of being taken notice of at work?
3.4 Who do you go to for advice? Why is that?
3.5 In what ways do workplace factors assist (support and guide) individuals to participate more fully?
   Eg. What happens at work that encourages you to participate fully and do your best?
3.6 In what ways do workplace factors inhibit participation (what stops you participating more fully)?
   Eg. What stops you participating fully and giving your best at work?
3.7 To what extent do you feel involved in what happens in the workplace?
3.8 What would need to happen to make you more involved in the workplace?

Thank you again for your contribution for this research
Interview 3: Schedule C

The purposes of this interview are two-fold. Firstly, to determine whether there has been any changes to the participatory practices in the workplace. Secondly, to reflect on the initial analysis of the information gathered earlier from you.

Section 1 - Workplace practices and engagement

1.1 What, if any, changes have occurred to the work activities you have engaged in over the last couple of months?
1.2 What brought about those changes?
1.3 In what ways have these changes transformed your capacity to participate in the workplace?
1.4 Why was this?
1.5 What new learning has occurred for you in the last couple of months?
1.6 How did this come about?
1.7 What existing practices has been reinforced over the last couple of months?
1.8 How did this come about?
1.9 Have there been any changes in the bases of your engagement in your work practice over the last couple of months? (e.g. interest, commitment)
1.10 What brought about this change?

Section 2 – Verification and review (by workplace and participant)
Schedule C

CFS2-Fire Services

Questions for all participants

1. You comment on the interesting and satisfying work of fire fighting that is so engaging. It is also very secure and well-paid work. To what degree was it those factors that initially and continues to attract you to this work?

2. There is much that is common in the three participants views; particularly about the importance of front-line emergency work. To what degree is this commonality of views a product of living and working together? How else is this commonality generated?

3. To what degree and about what is a diversity of views tolerated among fire fighters who work together?

4. In what ways is the concern about being promoted out of front-line emergency duties a concern about: (take each of the following one at a time) (i) loss of status a fire fighter; (ii) concern about loss of autonomy to manage your own time during work; (iii) not being able to have a second job; and (iv) loss of working closely with other fire fighters?

5. You all seem to be saying that this work provides you with extensive opportunities and support for advancement. Do you think this level of support is really justified? Why? Have you made good use of this support through your work to date – explain?
Schedule C

CFS2- Fire Services

Questions for each participant

Hugh

1. A major work place goal is to be recognised as a fully qualified/experienced fire fighter – RPL application etc. From your perspective as a previously experienced fire fighter, has there been a sense of having to prove yourself or earn the respect that fire fighters enjoy because you are more than new, you’re an outsider, and how has this influenced your engagement in work?

2. How have you responded through your work to the apparent double standard of skills recognition applied to exchange fire fighters and those, such as yourself, seeking employment?

3. You refer to wanting to be in charge and you exhibit strong qualities of personal agency. Why isn’t there a contradiction between your preferences and working in a command and control culture of the Fire Service?

4. In what ways does your second job influence or impact your Fire Service work? Eg, fatigue, loyalties, attitude – using the support of the FS to build wealth for the future etc.

5. You mention that RPL success will enable you to “skirt” some of the compulsory 3yr diploma course. Given that there have been numerous changes in the service since you worked in Wales and the differences between the Qld and Welsh systems, is there any prospect of you missing out on vital learning if your RPL is successful?

Bruce

1. You refer to working by rules. These seem to be big part of fire fighters means of working. Can you provide examples of when rules need to be broken? Is it more likely that a senior fire fighter will break rules? If so, why and under what circumstances?

2. You seem to be suggesting that the command and control system of management works well in the Fire Service when it assists you as Station Manager, but you find it frustrating when you are subject to it from above. Is this a fair account of your views – explain? How do you reconcile the difference between your discretion and authority to control an incident and your lack of discretion and authority in relation to senior management requests?

3. You say satisfaction comes from working with a “good bunch of people”. What is it about a team that makes them a good bunch of people?

4. What could assist somebody overcome the labelling of being useless or a slacker?

5. You talk about retiring at 60 after moving to another section (eg Fire Safety) where it is not so hard as the front line. When do you imagine making such a move and how will you know when the time is right? How will this affect your identity as a fire officer?
Ian

1. How does your work as a specialist fire fighter influence your membership of the team/shift?

2. How effective do you think you have been working from home – explain?

3. You refer to wanting to be in charge and you exhibit strong qualities of personal agency. Why isn’t there a contradiction between your preferences and working in a command and control culture?

4. At what level was your ability to work from home authorised? How did this come about? What were your expectations of the Fire Service at this time – explain? To whom would this opportunity be afforded and whom might have difficulty securing it?

5. The authority for you to work from home must be difficult for you, given your strong associations with your work colleagues. How have you been staying in touch?
Schedule C

University ITS
Questions for all participants

1. There is a strong sense of team membership as necessary for the successful performance of your work and yet of little impact on that work as most of it is done quite autonomously. (i) What work activities and interactions strengthen your membership of the team? (ii) What work activities and interactions weaken your membership of the team?

2. Continuing from this question – (i) In what ways do you strengthen the team? (ii) In what ways do you weaken the team?

3. In what ways is it important for you to understand the University’s key goal - ie the big picture? In what ways does the work team’s activities fit into this big picture? How consonant are your goals with those of the big picture?

4. The increasing capacity and requirement to monitor and document work performance seems to be generating a competitive element within the workplace, both within the team and across teams. Is this the case and how does this influence your work?

5. In what ways should there be greater recognition or reward for the work you do? Explain.
Schedule C

University ITS
Questions for each participant

Dick

1. There is a strong sense of “fate” in your response to work and the changes that have taken place in your working life over the years at the University. Reflecting on your current approach to work, are there ways in which you could be or need to be more proactive in your work?

2. What is it about the workplace that encourages some workers to be very productive and others to be less so?

3. You state a core purpose in life as wanting to help people. Given the service orientation of your work there appears to be a strong affinity between your life purpose and your work. Have you had experience where this is not the case, where your work seems more to hinder people than help them? What were its consequences for you? Explain using an example.

4. You make the point of having to pace yourself so as not to burn out because of a propensity to do too much. How do you manage this given that your work load and its intensity are governed by periods of peak demand beyond your control?

5. In order to do your work successfully, in what ways are you working against or around the requirements set by upper management? Explain using an example.

Sid

1. How has the emergence and continued refinement of the SOE to be more universal across the University enhanced your work?

2. You note the introduction of the fee-for-service provisions has provided a welcome diversity to your work by affording new work practices. Have there been experiences where this new form of available work has proved to be unwelcomed or ‘more hassle than its worth’? Please explain.

3. You make mention of perhaps doing further study – a masters – as a means to advancement through your work. What other avenues are available for advancement at work and what would you have to do to engage in them?

4. There seems to be a strong sense in which it is important for you to be seen as an expert in your field? What do you do to ensure this is the case?
Bob

1. You mention the need to keep your working life and your private life very separate, yet at the same time acknowledging that this is difficult due to the fact of work being such a large part of your life. Why is this separation important to you and what do you do to ensure it?

2. How are your plans to move into the server group going? Are you working any differently to accommodate these plans? You mentioned the need for confidence as the basis for realising your plans. How does work influence your levels of confidence?

3. You note the increasing need to protect your ideas from being ‘pilfered’ by so called ‘ladder climbers’ yet at the same time expressing the need for there to be an openness and sharing of knowledge and information within the workplace to ensure the work is completed well and quickly. How do you reconcile these two seemingly opposing views?

4. How important are your family and other outside interests to your work? Do they influence how you work – explain?
Schedule C

HealthyTrim

Questions for all participants

1. There is a long association with the Gym – a loyalty, that goes back to part-time work in your secondary school years. What is the basis for this loyalty? What about your day to day work experience expresses this loyalty?

2. A commonly stated source of work satisfaction is helping people to achieve their health and fitness goals. What other rewards/satisfactions do you enjoy through your work and how do you go about realising them?

3. Do you take advantage of all the opportunities that the workplace affords you? Are there opportunities afforded that you do not take advantage of – explain?

4. There is a sense in which your performance at work is constantly being monitored and assessed in a variety of ways – member sign ons, complaints handled, attendance at training sessions, targets met, etc. How does the management system under which you work control your workplace performance? – eg. Could you do more and be rewarded for it, could you do more and go unnoticed, could you do less and go unnoticed, etc. – explain.
Schedule C

HealthyTrim

Questions for each participant

Jane

1. You present yourself as a committed staff team member who gives her best at work for the benefit of clients and the organisation as a whole. What is the basis of this commitment? How do you know when you are giving your best to the job?

2. How important to your job is your Gym membership? Do you think your engagement in the workplace would change if you were not a member?

3. Who do you think benefits most from your current working circumstance, you or the Gym – explain?

4. How would you respond if for some strange reason the Gym said that it can no longer employ casuals who can't work at least say three five hour shifts per week? Or it can no longer afford free memberships for casual staff?

Hayden

1. Working for the Gym as a direct employee enables you to meet and associate regularly with new members who are potential personal clients. If you become a full time personal trainer, how will you secure new business? How will your engagement in the workplace change?

2. How do you calculate the price you will charge your personal clients? Do you have different rates for different clients? If so, what considerations do you make in coming to these decisions?

3. You talk about the loyalty you feel to your clients. What other loyalties do you experience through your work? How do these influence how you work? Eg, loyalty to the manager, the business, the local area (living at home with parents) etc.

4. You talk about establishing quite strong personal relationships with your clients – getting to know them well, their work, family and personal situations. In what ways does this assist you in your work? In what ways can these relationships hinder your performance at work?
Marilyn

1. The Gym has evolved over numerous years to its present state and you have been part of this process. What were the reasons for these changes? How have you responded to these changes? To what extent do you think your working life has been influenced by the changing shape of the building itself?

2. You see yourself as goal orientated with specific workplace objectives to achieve through continuing to do what you already do well. Does that seem an accurate description of your approach to work? Could you be further described as cautious, perhaps overly so – explain? How does being cautious assist your work? You further state a personal need for structure and planning in your life as assisting you in management work. To what extent is the opposite true, ie that the planning and goal setting required by the management system for work assists you in your personal life?

3. Although not planning specifically to become a manager, you state that you planned to do all the right things that you should have been doing. Do you think that following the guidelines set down by owners and managers should naturally flow onto advancement opportunities – explain?

4. There is a sense of maintaining numerous employment options open through your work with the Drug Agency and keeping up your accreditation as a fitness trainer. Could this be interpreted as working to overcome a feeling of job insecurity – explain given your long association with the Gym?

5. You state that apart from your own attitude there is nothing that stops you from giving your best. You bring this understanding into a workplace that is goal oriented and sets business targets that have to be met. How do you know you are giving your best especially when targets are not met because of factors that are not in your control? Or similarly, how do you know you are giving your best when targets are met with seemingly little effort say during busy times or promotions?
Schedule C

Platinum Restaurant
Questions for all participants

1. Given the relatively small size of the business - number of staff, seating capacity, etc. – in what ways does the workplace offer you opportunities for advancement and are these important considerations in how you work – explain?

2. Apart from the tasks themselves, how would you describe the differences between your work in and out of service time? Does one influence the other – explain?

3. During service you are very much on show to the public. In what ways do you conduct yourself differently during this time? Can you give examples that illustrate these differences? Is there a need/desire occasionally to be away from the public gaze during this time and how do you achieve this?

4. From the previous interviews there is reference to the staff team being described as and encouraged to be like a family. In what ways is this good and how does the workplace encourage the staff to be members of the team/family?

5. A good staff member is presented as someone who prioritises the customer as number one. What does it mean to prioritise the customer and how is this practiced through your work?
Schedule C

Platinum Restaurant
Questions for each participant

John

1. Apart from customer numbers and income, how do you know when you are working well? What do you have to achieve to know this?

2. A strong sense of needing to be liked and accepted runs throughout the interview. Does this seem a reasonably accurate conclusion to draw? To what extent does your work enable you to meet this personal need?

3. There are a great variety of variables that need to be monitored carefully to ensure good reliable information is supporting the numerous decisions that need to be made. How do you assess the quality of your decisions? Give an example of a good decision and a bad decision and explain how you came to know that.

4. You talk about possibly moving into sales or consulting within the hospitality industry some time in the future. What factors do you think will influence such a decision? What sort of an employee do you think you would be and why?

5. How has your new and growing relationship with your daughter shaped or influenced your engagement in work?

Robert

1. The idea of “starting from scratch”, with the raw ingredients or the phone enquiry seems significant as some sort of proof of capabilities, evidence of self-reliance and independence. Do you think this is the case? If it is, then why is this so given your role as an owner of the business is increasingly one of the business man looking to reduce costs and improve efficiencies?

2. Explain further your concern to maintain a clear separation between your working life and your private life. What are your normal working hours in busy times and quiet times? How do you practice this separation given the seemingly opposite attitude of your partner Dave who claims that working life is private life especially for the business owner?

3. Obviously the busy time of the year is very demanding, time consuming and thus testing of your commitment to the business, customers, staff and yourself. To what extent is this planned for, prepared for, in the downtimes or quiet times?

4. Catering work requires that you often need to improvise using only the circumstances available to you. Further, you state you enjoy these 11th hour challenges. How does this fit with the need for the careful planning and execution that is required?
5. You state that the key to retaining and getting the best performance from staff is to make them feel they are important. How do you do this?

6. Work is always challenging, pushing you “out there”, forcing you to do what has to be done to meet your obligations to customers, staff, etc – and rightly so – its your business and its success is yours to secure through your efforts, management etc. Have there been times when you have said no to some business? Explain why. Have there been occasions where you have said yes to business and in hindsight realise you should have said no? Explain. How has your approach to assessing and accepting business changed over these last few years as the business has grown?

Rosie

1. The owners make enquiries of you regarding the customers habits and preferences, seeking knowledge from you that they can use to best run their business. Do these enquiries help your work – explain? What other of the owner’s practices influence your learning to do your job – explain?

2. Seeking time off looms as a major risk to your job security. This, in conjunction with the loyalty you feel and the nature of your work as casual presents a strong contrast between work as meeting your needs and the needs of the restaurant. Could you elaborate on how you balance these contrasting needs?

3. A lot is said about learning general life skills through your access to the boss – eg budgeting. Given that you only work casually a few nights per week, how does this learning come about? Have there been any other similar learning experiences?

4. You talk about “picking your people”, ie choosing which customers to interact with, when, how etc – making numerous decisions based on your reading of the customer and their situation. How have you learned this? Does the workplace assist you with this – explain?
Interview 4: Schedule D

Section 1.

This section asks you to give a brief account of and comment on your learning in relation to your current work.

1. What learning have you undertaken and are undertaking specific to your current work? How did this come about?

2. How would you describe this learning? – suited to you, useful, important, necessary, etc. Explain.

3. To what purposes is your learning directed? Explain.

4. How do you best learn at work? Use examples to illustrate and explain.

5. Reflecting on your current work practices and learning – What would you say has been your most memorable learning experience – why?

6. How would you describe your engagement in learning at work? Give an example of learning that illustrates your being, a) strongly engaged, b) weakly engaged. Explain.

7. What would you say are the main reasons for your learning at work? – job security, promotion, systems changes, time pressures, etc. Explain.

8. What would you say are the main influences on your learning at work? – employer, colleagues, tools and equipment, family etc. Explain.

9. What sort of influence do you have on your learning at work? What needs to happen for you to be more influential in your learning at work?
Section 2.

This section asks you to give a brief account of and comment on the relationship between your learning and work and the changes that have occurred.

1. In what ways do your current practices differ from what you originally learnt? How and why has this come about?

2. Give an example(s) of a current work practice that is performed differently to its original learning. How and why has this come about?

3. Give an example(s) of a current work practice that can now be performed in a number of ways where previously only one existed. How and why has this come about?

4. Give an example(s) of a current work practice that despite the possibility of it being performed in a number of ways remains the same as when it was originally learned. How and why has this come about?

5. Give an example(s) of a current work practice that you have changed. How and why has this come about? What have been the results of this change for you and your work?

6. How has your learning at work changed? Explain. (Generally, then ask specifically for each workplace in relation to the following.)
   a. Fire Service – breathing apparatus and management directives.
   b. Griff IT – SOE software and management directives.
   c. Restaurant – ingredients in menu items and management directives.
   d. Gym – floor equipment and management directives.

7. On what bases do you make judgements about the changes to your learning in and for work? Give examples to illustrate and explain – changes for better, worse, etc.
Interview 5 - Schedule E

The purposes of this interview are two-fold. Firstly, to determine whether there has been any changes to the participatory practices in the workplace. Secondly, to reflect on the analysis of information gathered earlier from you.

Section 1 - Workplace practices and engagement

1. What, if any, changes have occurred to the work activities you have engaged in over the last couple of months?
2. What brought about those changes?
3. In what ways have these changes transformed your capacity to participate in the workplace?
4. Why was this?
5. What new learning has occurred for you in the last couple of months?
6. How did this come about?
7. What existing practices has been reinforced over the last couple of months?
8. How did this come about?
9. Have there been any changes in the bases of your engagement in your work practice over the last couple of months? (e.g. interest, commitment)
10. What brought about this change?

Section 2. Learning practices and engagement

Part A. Preparedness for learning

1. What initiates and motivates your need for learning at, for and through work?
   Probe - How is that acknowledged to yourself and others? In what ways do you “confess your ignorance” or express a “need of learning”?

2. What constitutes a good learning opportunity for you?
   Probe - In what ways do such opportunities fit with your “readiness for learning” or “desire for learning”?

Part B. Engagement in learning

3. In what ways are you able to control your learning at/for work?
   Probe - What kinds of arrangements have you negotiated for yourself at work?

4. In what ways could your learning for work be improved?
   Probe – self and or workplace

5. What influences do you have on the work and learning of others at work?
6. How do you know when your learning is effective?

7. In what ways would you describe your work as learning?

**Part C. Rewarding learning at work.**

8. In what ways is your work related learning rewarded?
   Probe – tangible and less tangible

9. Which of the numerous roles you perform at work are the most important? Explain

10. In what ways are you able to achieve your personal goals through work?

11. In what ways do your personal goals differ from those that are important for the workplace?

**Part D. Promoting learning at work.**

12. In what ways and for what purpose do you discuss with others your learning at/for work?

13. What kinds of things about yourself do you choose not to discuss with others at work and conversely, what kinds of things about work do you choose not to discuss with others?

14. What are the important outcomes of these discussions?
   Probe - differences between immediate learning concerns and future learning concerns?

**Part E. Interviews and responses.**

15. During our interviews, have there been times when your responses to my questions have been a conscious effort to represent yourself in a particular way?
   Probe - For instance, to reflect a different view than others claim of you.

16. In what ways have these interview sessions over the least 18 months been learning opportunities for you?
   Probe – reflection, beneficial?