Men’s Generative Narratives
Making meaning in retirement

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Dedication

During the writing of this thesis Australia lost four exceptional and inspiring advocates for older people. This thesis is dedicated to the memory and work of Jack Zinn, Sol Encel, Sheila Rimmer, and Averil Fink each of who, in their own unique ways, brought about real positive change. Everyone one of them inspired me and I will be forever grateful for the time I was lucky to spend with them and the support and encouragement they each gave me at different times and in different ways over the years.

I especially miss my friend and mentor Jack Zinn. Jack was a larrikin with a wicked sense of humour whose work first opened my eyes to the special needs and contributions of older men.

Thank you Jack, this one’s for you mate!
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The irony of doing a PhD about social connection and community involvement is that I have had to limit my own social connections and volunteering activities. I am very grateful to all my understanding family and friends who have been so patient with me. I am sorry for all the missed birthdays and other celebrations over the past few years, I am especially sorry for the missed catch-ups over coffee or a beer with so many. I promise to now seriously rectify this!

And of course a special acknowledgement of the men who participated in this research. They were so generous with their time and allowed me access to their lives and special enthusiasms. I hope this thesis is a fitting testimony to the trust they placed in me.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.
The lives of the noble Grecians and Romans

It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations, than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever. Therefore, as portrait-painters are more exact in the lines and features of the face, in which the character is seen, than in other parts of the body, so I must be allowed to give my more particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men, and while I endeavour by these to portray their lives, may be free to leave more weighty matters and great battles to be treated of by others.

Plutarch
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Abstract

This thesis interprets and describes older men’s experience of retirement using hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative analysis. The experiences and narratives of nine retired men who all participated in a hobby or enthusiast group were recorded and analysed in order to determine what makes a ‘good’ retirement and the impact of being active in an enthusiasm has on adjusting to retirement.

The study is informed by the philosophical phenomenology of Heidegger and the hermeneutics of Gadamer. Narrative analysis was used to uncover some of the meanings the men attached to their current circumstances in retirement and to their involvement in various enthusiasms. In-depth interviews were conducted with the men who were all members of enthusiast or hobby groups. The narratives from these interviews were subjected to structural, thematic, and dialogic/performance analyses for insight into how they ordered and made sense of their experiences of work, retirement, and being an enthusiast.

The men’s narratives reveal that having an enthusiasm and being part of an enthusiast community helped negotiate the transition to retirement by providing continuity of an enthusiast sub-identity during this time of change. Wider cultural narratives about male retirement were used by the men as reference points to make and share meaning around their experiences of retirement. These wider cultural narratives universally portray retirement as a difficult time for men, which creates a dilemma for men who are enjoying their retirement. The men used the available negative cultural narratives of male retirement by comparing their own positive experience with someone they believe fitted the cultural narratives. In this the men both perpetuate and discursively distance their own experiences from the negative cultural narratives.

The men’s narratives also reveal what appears to be attempts to create a new ‘shared’ identity as a retiree. An apparently new cultural narrative about leaving work appears to be circulating in Western Sydney, through which men can link their own experiences and still construct a shared understanding of what it means to be retired.

These findings extend knowledge of older men’s identities in retirement, as well as identifying the importance of the structure of cultural narratives and different narrative genres in constructing and conveying meaning.
1 Introduction

This thesis is about men’s experiences. It explores the meanings and identities that nine men have and construct around work, retirement, and their involvement in various hobbies and enthusiast groups. Specifically, it is about the meanings and identities these men have constructed in order to maintain a positive sense of self after leaving paid employment.

My aim in this study was to add to the limited understanding of older men’s subjective experience of retirement. Research into older men has mostly focused on male specific illnesses associated with ageing or on particular social problems. Men’s lived experiences and subjectivities in retirement remains largely overlooked. This research focus emerged from my previous personal and work experience, as well as from my involvement in research projects with older men.

One of my first jobs in the community sector was as the co-ordinator of a project that matched isolated residents in nursing homes with community volunteers. My three years with this project was personally very rewarding and I saw firsthand the positive differences such caring relationships could bring to isolated older people. During this time I found it difficult to make suitable matches for many of the isolated older men referred to the program, while at the same time recruiting significantly less men than women as volunteers. I fear that these experiences lead me to view older male residents as ‘difficult’ and younger and middle-aged men as not being interested or engaged enough with their communities to volunteer. More recent reflections on the structure of the visiting program itself and the differences in men’s and women’s life course have lead me now to a more sympathetic view of this situation.

My next job was working with healthy older people living in the community. I was involved in helping improve access for different sub-populations of older people to senior citizens’ clubs and centres. These clubs and centres are well established throughout Australia and provide older people with opportunities for social engagement. This project identified barriers to access for many groups of older people, mainly older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Research carried out at the time identified older men as a group who did not use the centres as much as older women yet no detailed investigation was held into the reason for men’s lack of attendance (Gotsis, 1999). At the same time other colleagues were working to develop new projects specifically for older men. One of these projects was Older Men: New Ideas (OM:NI) which brought older men together for regular
meetings and discussions, while another was the development of one of the first community men’s sheds in Sydney. It was through the work and experiences of these colleagues, who were older men themselves, that I first became conscious of the fact that older men face their own gendered barriers to full participation in community and access to services.

These colleagues also made me aware of the growing number of academics and service providers who, in the late 1990s in Sydney, were taking an interest in male issues across the life course. The colleagues alerted me to a new work opportunity at the newly formed Men’s Health Information and Resource Centre (MHIRC) at the University of Western Sydney, where I have been working since 2000. At MHIRC I have been involved in a number of research projects looking at older men’s experience of social connections. The ‘Keeping the Balance’ project explored older men’s conceptions of health and revealed how men’s experience of retirement, widowhood, social connectedness, and loneliness impacted both positively and negatively on their perception of health (A. J. Brown & Macdonald, 2001; Macdonald, Brown, & Buchanan, 2001). ‘Keeping the Threads Together’ looked at older men’s social connectedness, many of the men in this study were members of a range of community and activity groups yet despite the connections the men made through these groups many reported feeling isolated and lonely (C. Hall, Brown, Gleeson, & Zinn, 2007).

These studies attempted to show the complexities of older men’s lives. In their own modest way they investigated the problems and barriers older men experienced, in regard to social participation and access to services, while at the same time acknowledging and exploring positive factors in their lives and environments which strengthened their feelings of wellbeing and connectedness. I do not want to contribute to research which conceptualises older men only through their physical and social pathologies. With this in mind this thesis reveals some of the complexities, nuances, interconnections, and contradictions of aspects of men’s lives around work, retirement, and having an enthusiasm.

I also have no desire to contribute to the “decline narratives” that beleaguer the culture’s and gerontology’s understanding of older people, while at the same time cautious to present old age and retirement as overly rosy times of positivity and progress (Gullette, 2008, p. 190). Many academic explorations frame men as inherently problematic and are concerned either with male specific pathologies or the social consequences of harmful constructions of masculinity (Macdonald, 2012). Macdonald and Brown (2011) stated that a more rational and compassionate approach is needed when researching men. This thesis uses such an approach with older men.
My research questions were thus directed to uncovering the meanings men constructed around their subjective experiences of being retired. These ontological questions around ‘being’ were explored using hermeneutic phenomenology. The philosophical work of Martin Heidegger (1962) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1979) underpinned this approach of understanding the men’s experience of being-in-the-world through interpretation of their personal narratives. The analysis of the structure, content, and context of personal narratives provided the mechanisms through which the men’s meanings were uncovered and interpreted.

My intention was to identify and investigate a group of men suspected of having a ‘good’ retirement and to ascertain the aspects of their lives and life contexts which contributed to this. My previous work and research experience suggested to me that involvement in organised activities in retirement provided men with social connection, a sense of purpose, and involvement in meaningful activities, all of which are known to impact positively on wellbeing in retirement. I decided that recruiting men already involved in such organised activities would be an effective way to identify men enjoying their retirement. It was my original intent to recruit men involved in a range of activities, such as ‘traditional’ organised volunteering, members of service clubs and men’s sheds, as well as members of enthusiast clubs. My first two interviews were, by chance, with men who were members of enthusiast groups and although I had a vague interest in their particular hobbies, I found their passion and enthusiasm infectious. Further examination of the men and masculinities, and gerontological literature revealed this to be an unexplored area of investigation. With this in mind I decided, in consultation with my supervisors, to restrict the research to exploring men’s involvement with enthusiasms.

The concept of generativity, originally developed by Erik Erikson (1963, 1968), provided a framework for understanding much of the men’s actions. Generativity is both a concern for future generations and one’s own legacy (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). The hobbies the men are involved in provide opportunities to pass on skills and knowledge, as well as becoming mentors (Kotre, 1984) involved in “culture-tending” activities (Gutmann, 1987, p. 231).

The lives, life-contexts, and narratives of older men are the foci of this thesis. The meanings and identities associated with aspects of the men’s lives have been built up through interpretation of their narratives and life stories. This is both an attempt to counter the ‘invisibility’ of older men as well a way to bring older men and their experiences to the fore.
I begin, in Chapter Two, with a literature review around men, ageing, work, retirement, and involvement in enthusiasms. Chapter Two contextualises and situates this project within wider ageing and gender discourses. These discourses are presented through reviews of theoretical, research, popular literature, and some of the grey literature pertinent to the topic. Different ways of conceptualising men and masculinity are discussed, with particular reference to their relevance for both critical research and giving insight into the subjective experiences of men. The gendered nature of ageing is also explored with specific reference to men’s experience and understandings of work and retirement, as well as the relative ‘invisibility’ of older men within the various discourses.

Chapter Two also explores the literature around enthusiasms and enthusiasts. Enthusiasms are activities that people partake in freely and which “typically assumes the form of highly skilled and imaginative work, whilst remaining leisure and not employment” (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986, p. 1). Enthusiasms include such activities as hobbies and other leisure pursuits which people enter into with some passion and eagerness. Enthusiasts being, self-evidently, people with such an enthusiasm. The relatively small gerontological literature around men’s enthusiasms is presented, as are the variety of enthusiasms which the men in this study are involved in. The sociological concept of subculture is introduced as a conceptual framework for explaining and exploring men’s participation in the various communities, groups, and clubs that have built up around particular enthusiasms. This research focuses on retired men who are members of such organisations.

The key concept of generativity is also reviewed in Chapter Two. Many of the meanings associated with the men’s activities in retirement are directed towards others and generativity provides a conceptual base from which to interpret these actions and meanings. The enthusiasms the men are involved with provided them with opportunities to pass on skills and knowledge, as well as becoming mentors (Kotre, 1984) involved in “culture-tending” activities (Gutmann, 1987, p. 231). The busy ethic is also discussed as a key way in which retirees make sense of and ascribe a moral purpose to their activities in retirement (Ekerdt, 1986). The chapter concludes with formulating the research questions.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology and methods used in the study. The philosophical approaches of phenomenology and hermeneutics are described as paradigms for explaining how human beings make meaning of their experiences through language. This is followed by an exploration of the specific role of narratives in structuring and ordering personal experiences, in order to make sense of these experiences and to share these experiences and
their resulting meanings with others discursively. Personal identity and the role of narrative in forming and maintaining such identities are also explored.

A number of key concepts for the research are presented in Chapter Three. The concept of cultural narratives, introduced in Chapter Two, is defined in Chapter Three as those narratives which circulate widely within a culture or subculture in reference to individual people or groups within the moral framework of the culture or subculture in question. The mechanisms by which cultural narratives influence how people construct personal narratives, meaning, and identity are reviewed. Identity, the understanding of ourselves and the presentation of this understanding to others, is explored. The links between identity and narrative are conceptualised through the concepts of life story and narrative coherence, as ways to order and make sense of the totality of the events and experiences of a lifetime.

Processes of participant selection and recruitment, interview format, and techniques of narrative analysis are outlined in Chapter Three with particular attention to analysis of the structural, thematic, and dialogic/performance aspects of narrative. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the case-centred approaches used to present the findings of the analyses of the men’s narratives.

The findings of the study are presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Chapter Four sets out the results of structural analysis of two of the men’s narratives and life stories using a case-based approach. Chapters Five and Six take the findings and relationships identified through this structural analysis and compare them to similar analyses from across the other men interviewed, mapping similarities and differences around the themes. Chapter Five and Six use a combination of thematic and dialogic/performance analyses to achieve this.

The life stories of two of the participants are presented in Chapter Four using a case-centred approach. The life stories of research participants Arthur and Bill (both pseudonyms) are presented in this chapter in some detail and subjected to structural narrative analyses. These two men’s narratives were chosen as exemplars since their narratives and life stories allowed the themes around the study’s findings to be introduced and because they each represented different styles of storytelling. The structural analyses of Arthur and Bill’s narratives and life stories reveal some of complex dynamic matrices of relationships they have with other people, times, and places. Generativity emerged as a strong theme through both of the men’s narratives. Both men also had an involvement with their particular enthusiasms which stretched back to childhood, suggesting a continuity of activity and identity through periods
of transition, such as retirement. In addition both of these men have found space within their enthusiast communities to re-create aspects of their identities previous found through work.

Chapter Five examines in more detail the findings around social interactions with others, identified in the structural analyses of Arthur and Bill’s narratives in Chapter Four. Chapter Five brings the experiences and narratives of the other research participants together in a thematic analysis around generativity, social connections, and cultural narratives. The rich matrices of connections observed in Arthur and Bill’s narratives were also observed in the other men’s narratives. All of the men interviewed told of strong, positive connections with their wives, family, former workmates, and other enthusiasts. The similarities and differences of these various connections are also discussed.

Generativity was a strong factor in the majority of the relationships mentioned by the men. At the most basic level generativity was observed as concern for future generations of the men’s own family, namely children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren. Within their enthusiast communities the men also acted as mentors who passed on technical skills as well as performing culture-tending activities such as conveying the history and important ideas and ideals of their particular enthusiast subculture (Gutmann, 1987; Kotre, 1984).

Chapter Five also examines the impact of wider cultural narratives of male retirement. Every man interviewed referred to at least one of the three cultural narratives identified. Cultural narratives strongly influence how people understand themselves and their relationships to the wider culture (Somers, 1994). With no other common cultural resource available to build shared understandings around retirement, the men only had negative cultural narratives of male retirement to refer to and then had to distance themselves from the negative narratives. Paradoxically, however, the men distanced themselves from other men who they had applied the cultural narratives to. In this way the men interviewed both resisted and perpetuated the stereotypes of retirement as a time of stagnation and decay for men.

Chapter Six returns to themes of identity. The structural analyses of Chapter Four demonstrates how Arthur and Bill used their involvement with their enthusiasms to both maintain aspects of identity as an enthusiast in retirement, as well as being a way to adapt aspects of a previous positive sense of self found through work in a new work-like identity. As with Chapter Five, the experiences and narratives of the other men in the study were used to determine the extent and variation of these identity practices amongst the men. A continuum of identities was observed particularly around the formation of new work-like identities. A continuity of identity, stemming from involvement in an enthusiast community
in retirement, was observed in all but one of the men. Arthur and Bill’s life stories, as set out in Chapter Four, are returned to in order to compare the narrative coherence each has achieved or not achieved around leaving work. These two stories are compared to the other men’s narratives of leaving work, all of which had a remarkably similar structure. The possibility of a new emerging cultural narrative around leaving work is discussed. This narrative appears robust enough to accommodate the men’s different experiences of leaving work. This new cultural narrative appears to also help forge a collective retiree identity, assisting men with both the adjustment to retirement and to find a culturally acceptable role as a retiree.

I bring the findings of the study together in Chapter Seven, which also includes implications for future research and policy directions. The key interpretation of this thesis is that active participation in beloved enthusiasms and connections to other enthusiasts is one way that allows men to construct and maintain a positive sense of self in retirement. The findings of this research add to our knowledge of men’s subjective experiences of retirement and involvement. Insights from this study can help guide community workers and policy makers in designing better opportunities for meaningful activities and social connection in retirement.
2 Literature Review

This research aims to better understand the meaning men have of their subjective experiences of retirement and their involvement in enthusiast and hobby groups. This chapter presents a critical overview of a broad range of literature around men, older people, work, retirement, and enthusiasms (hobbies and other organised interests). The literature is critiqued on its suitability to provide insight in the subjectivity of older men and their experiences of being-in-the-world as an older retired man. Being-in-the-world refers to Heidegger’s (1962) concept of *Dasein*, the experience of existing, as explored in more detail in the discussion of Heidegger and his phenomenology in Chapter Three.

This chapter also establishes the conceptual frameworks used to interpret the understandings older men have of being retired, their previous employment, and their current involvement in various enthusiast and hobby organisations. These frameworks are developed through an overview and synthesis of the literature that informs this research. Literature around both men and older people are presented below together with a review of the theoretical concepts of salutogenesis and generativity which inform this research. Aspects of these discourses and theoretical concepts are critiqued and then intergraded into an understanding of older men in contemporary society. Likewise literature and discourses around work and retirement are also presented, critiqued and integrated into this framework. A review of the relatively scarce literature on older people’s involvement in hobbies and enthusiasms is also presented.

This review of the literature reveals that there are few studies into the subjective understanding men have of their experiences. The dearth of research into the subjectivities into men generally and older men specifically is explored in Sections 2.4 and 2.6.5 respectively. The existing theoretical approaches to men and older people are critiqued as to their ability to explore and explain older men’s subjectivities.

Key theoretical frameworks that inform and organise the research are also discussed. The two main frameworks being *salutogenesis*, that which is health creating and sustaining, and *generativity*, the concern and care for future generations and a concern for one’s legacy. Experience is understood, in part, to be the subjective dynamic ongoing interaction between the person and their physical, social and cultural environment. This definition is similar to Macdonald’s (2005) concept of health, which is further explored in Section 2.2. The discursive and narratives mechanisms of the relationship between the person and their experiences are explored further in Chapter Three.
2.1 Men

The literature around men, masculinity, and gender is vast and spans a number of disciplines. This current section provides an overview of the most prominent contemporary discourses and disputes around men and masculinity. These discourses are a mix of both academic and popular discourses which could be loosely defined as the ‘men’s movement’.

2.1.1 The ‘men’s movement’

The ‘men’s movement’ is a coverall term for the loose collection of grass roots activists, academics, and men’s groups who share an interest or concern for men, boys, and masculinity. The most prominent of the discourses that have informed the ‘men’s movement’ are explored in more detail below, as are the competing and sometimes contradictory claims and assertions of these various discourses within the ‘movement’. Older men are notable by their absence from most of these discussions, when older men are mentioned they tend to be either romanticised as ‘elders’, pathologised as diseased, or discarded as ‘past it’. These views of older men are discussed in more details in Section 2.3.

2.1.1.1 Mythopoetic men’s movement

The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of a popular men’s movement known to its members as mythopoetic. This sub-movement was heavily influenced by Jungian psychology and an interest in the role of men in traditional cultures (Bob Pease & Camilleri, 2001). The movement draws heavily on masculine archetypes from mythology and traditional folk tales, as well as having an interest in men and boys’ roles in traditional cultures. In doing so the men involved seek to “re-mythologise” what it means to be male in the modern world. Shepherd Bliss, one of the founders of the movement, describes this process of re-mythologising as ‘mythopoesis’, from which the movement derives its name (Bliss, 1986; Hoff & Bliss, 1995).

The mythopoetic men’s movement claims that modernity and industrialisation impact deleteriously on men. Mythopoetic men have an essentialist understanding of gender, in that they believe there is a universal ‘essence’ of what it means to be a man (Karoski, 2011). This essential masculinity can be understood through examining the masculine archetypes in folk tales and mythology and is described by various writers as “authentic”, “deep”, or “mature” masculinity. Mythopoetic men further claim that modern men are disconnected from this essential masculinity and that this disconnection is the source of contemporary men’s difficulties (Bly, 1990; Moore & Gillette, 1991; Rohr & Martos, 1996).
The mythopoetic understanding of essential masculinity should not be confused with popular notions of machismo. Mythopoetic men assert that masculinity is not a fixed concept and reject both the “macho man” and “sensitive new age guy” stereotypes of men (Mankind Project, 2012b). Masculinity is understood as ideally nurturing and empowering, respecting of women and other men. Indeed, some mythopoetic writers sympathise with feminist explanations of patriarchy and believe patriarchy to be the social manifestation of an immature, dysfunctional masculinity (Moore & Gillette, 1991). The paradox of conceptualising masculinity as both essential and fluid has not been lost on some commentators, while adherents to the movement easily accommodate this apparent contradiction (Karoski, 2007).

The mythopoetic discourse goes beyond theorising about male and societal dysfunction. Adherents to the sub-movement believe that through mythopoetic practices men can reorient with their essential masculinity through effecting personal positive change within themselves. Such change can be accomplished individually (Moore & Gillette, 1991), in therapy (McLeod & Pemberton, 1991), or with other men in mythopoetic men’s groups (K. Thompson, 1991). The tagline of the international Mankind Project summarises the key aim of the mythopoetic project “changing the world one man at a time” (Mankind Project, 2012b). This, to me, is the underlying aim and raison d'etre of the mythopoetic project, to ‘fix’ broken men by rediscovering and reconnecting them to their essential ‘deep masculinity’. In such a worldview contemporary men and boys are understood to be, almost universally, broken, wounded creatures, who need to be ‘fixed’ by mythopoetic methods and practice.

The theme that contemporary men are damaged and wounded by modernity is also reflected in the work of other more popular writers. Stephen Biddulph (1995) in Australia and Anthony Clare (2000) in the United Kingdom (UK) both raise concerns about contemporary society's influence and effect on men. While not aligning themselves directly with the mythopoetic project both authors go so far as to claim that present-day men and masculinity are in crisis, indeed “masculinity in crisis” is the subtitle of Clare’s book.

### 2.1.1.2 Feminist and profeminist understandings of men and masculinity

Writers and theorists within the academy who are concerned with men and masculinity tend to align themselves, although not exclusively, with feminism. Men writing in this genre are
likely to define themselves as profeminist (Connell, 1995; Flood, 2002; Kimmel & Messner, 1995; Sabo & Gordon, 1995). Profeminist men seek to understand men in terms of male privilege (Connell, 2005), and “the global dominance of men over women” (Connell, 1987, p. 183). Profeminist critiques and understanding of men could be broadly summarised as investigating men’s roles as oppressors of women and other marginalised and subordinate masculinities; as well as examining men’s role in maintaining patriarchy and male privilege.

Masculinity, for Connell, is not an essential attribute belonging to individual men or groups of men, nor can it be necessarily reduced to men’s behaviour. There are three interrelated aspects to Connell’s understanding of masculinity. Firstly, masculinities are “positions” within “gender relations” discourses, which are the external social understandings different men and groups of men hold in relationship to each other and to women. Secondly, masculinities are the “patterns of practice” by which men and women, but mostly men, engage with these “positions” in discourse. Finally, they are the effects of these practices in “bodily experiences, personality and culture” (2005, p. 71).

Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity (1987, 1995, 2005) has dominated much of the academic work around men and masculinity in recent decades. Connell maintains that “at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted” (1995, p. 77). It is this ‘exulted’ form of masculinity that Connell defines as hegemonic for that time and place. According to Connell’s theory of gender, hegemonic masculinity operates in such a way to ensure the continuation of patriarchy and male privilege (2005, p. 82). This exulted form of masculinity maintains hegemony over both women and other forms of masculinity. Connell identifies these other forms of masculinity as “marginalised” or “subordinate” in that they do not fit the cultural exulted form of masculinity, such as working class and gay

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There is some contention within feminist discourses around the term ‘profeminist’. There is debate within feminism as to whether a man who is sympathetic to feminism and works to challenge women’s oppression should call himself ‘feminist’ or ‘profeminist’. Some feminists and feminist organisations welcome men calling themselves ‘feminist’, while others do not. Many men who are sympathetic to feminist issues call themselves ‘profeminist’ so not as to imply that they understand what it like to be a women, as well as making clear that their efforts are not an attempt by men in “colonising feminism” (Flood, 2002). This thesis uses the term profeminism to mean the group of academic and activist men who work with men within an explicit feminist context. It also refers to their writings and more generally to feminist writings about men and masculinity. The inclusion of Professor R.W. Connell in this list of profeminist authors is also contentious. When Professor Connell wrote Gender and Power (1987), Masculinities (1995), and many of the other books and articles cited in this thesis, her public identity was that of a man and, being perceived as a man, her stance was generally understood to be that of a profeminist. Professor Connell now identifies as a transsexual woman and she cites her previously written books and articles as being authored by Raewyn not Bob or R. W. Connell (Connell, 2010). It is, therefore, perhaps more accurate to refer to Professor Connell as a feminist rather than a profeminist. Throughout this thesis Professor Connell’s identity as a woman is affirmed and acknowledged, she is identified as a profeminist writer in this discussion this is how she was perceived at the time of publication of her important works. This perception, that Professor Connell was a man, influenced the discourse around men and masculinity, and to how many men in the academy relate to feminism.
Connell proposes a dynamic interplay between these competing forms of masculinity, complicated and mitigated by class, race, and sexuality. Subordinate forms of masculinity seek to influence and change the current hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity in turn influences elements of these other forms of masculinity that it subsumes, while still maintaining dominance over them.

While there is much value in Connell’s insights into how masculinity operates aspects of her social theory of gender are contested. Most critics have called for a more nuanced approach, recognising multiple forms of masculinities beyond the ones originally proposed. The interplay between these various forms of masculinity has also been questioned, while Connell proposes that these masculinities organise themselves around a hegemonic form of masculinity other more fluid explanations of the relationships between different forms of masculinity have been proposed (Coles, 2009). Connell herself agrees that such concepts need to be better incorporated into the theory (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

### 2.1.1.3 Men’s and fathers’ rights

In stark contrast to the profeminist discourse is the men’s rights movement. Writers such as Warren Farrell (1994, 2001a, 2001b) have advocated that men, like women, are also victims of powerlessness in contemporary society. The fathers’ rights arm of this sub-movement is particularly concerned with issues that separated fathers face and is dissatisfied with men’s experience of family law courts (Karoski, 2011, p. 48). Many men’s rights advocates express concern that legal and political elites have been influenced by feminist ideas to the extent where many laws, legal processes, employment opportunities, and health services are either not welcoming to men or are decidedly anti-male and anti-father. Many men’s rights advocates use the metaphor of a “pendulum of rights”, which they claim is shifted too far in favour of women’s rights at the expense of men (Karoski, 2011, p. 48).

The men’s rights discourse has a somewhat confused relationship with feminism. Grass roots men’s rights advocates are very critical of both feminism and profeminist men, perceiving feminism as having tipped the balance in favour of women’s rights over men’s rights (Karoski, 2007). Warren Farrell, perhaps the best known advocate for fathers’ rights, advances a more ambiguous attitude towards feminism. Farrell was a former board member of the National Organisation of Women in the United States of America and he maintains sympathy for what he calls “the feminism that was”, but not for what he sees as the hypocrisies of modern day feminist theory and practice. Farrell explains that during the
1970s the “feminism that was” advocated for more equal mother and father involvement with parenting, but that today’s feminism is hostile to the idea (2001a, pp. 125-126).

The men’s rights sub-movement is, in my opinion, the most prosaic and least theoretical sophisticated arm of the men’s movement. Their activism is based not only on a stated desire to bring about more equitable treatment of men, particularly around family disputes and family law, but on a concept of the ‘naturalness’ and ‘rightness’ of traditional gender roles. When asked, men’s rights advocates tend to have essentialist ideas of masculinity, often driven by Christian values, as prescribed in the bible (Karoski, 2007). These views can broadly be described as conservative, which are sometimes at odds with Warren Farrell’s writings. Farrell is often broadly supporting of feminist and progressive ideas, although critical of these ideologies’ current methods (Farrell, 1994, 2001a, 2001b).

2.1.2 Other understandings of men and masculinities

2.1.2.1 Sociobiology and male behaviour

Since at least the 1960s, evolutionary biologists and animal behaviourists have been applying Neo-Darwinian approaches to exploring the origins of human psychology and social behaviour. During the 1970s interest in this field coalesced into the two interrelated disciplines of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. Both disciplines are interested in exploring the biological and evolutionary basis of human psychology, behaviour, and society. Seeking to determine a biological foundation for sexual and gendered behaviour has always been one of the explicit goals of the two disciplines (Richards, 1999; E. O. Wilson, 1975, 1978).

The claims of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology around the purported biological basis of sexed and gendered behavioural differences have been popularised in recent decades by a number of popular science writers (Diamond, 1997; Miller, 2001; Moir & Jessel, 1991; Ridley, 1993). These claims have also been given expression in popular culture through such titles as Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus (Gray, 1993) and Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps (Barbara Pease & Pease, 2001), which purport to demonstrate the underlying biological reasons for stereotypical gendered behaviour.

This research is interested in men’s experience of retirement and work. It seeks to understand what it is like for retired men to negotiate their world. It is not a reductionist or behaviourist investigation into any underlying biological causes of gendered behaviour. Sociobiology and
evolutionary psychology are briefly reviewed here not because they influence the study design but because they have had and continue to have a profound influence on the academic and popular discourse around men and masculinity. The idea of biological influence on gender has entered the popular discourse to the point where it is considered by many to be ‘common sense’, although sociologists and profeminists remain, perhaps rightly so, sceptical of all its claims (Connell, 2005). Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology have been adopted and adapted most explicitly within medical discourses around men. These discourses have their own way of framing men and positioning masculinity, while maintaining their special concern about the links between biology, pathology, and behaviour, as discussed below.

2.1.2.2 Men in health and medical discourses

Medical discourses around men and men’s health emphasise, perhaps not surprisingly, disease and male specific physical pathologies (Macdonald 2005). These range from clinical examinations of male specific diseases such as prostate cancer and to a much lesser extent testicular cancer, to more dubious and at times pseudo-scientific discussions and debates around erectile dysfunction, testosterone deficiency and the so-called andropause (T’Sjoen, Feyen, Kuyper, Comhaire, & Kaufman, 2003). Health promotion literature also takes a negative and perhaps overly simplistic behaviourist approach to men’s health seeking behaviour (Macdonald, 2006), while blaming men for poor health outcomes, reverting to stereotypes about men’s supposed lack of interest in their own health, while not acknowledging the confounding evidence that men do indeed take responsibility for their health (Ashfield, 2012).

This contrasts with women’s health promotion work that has focused on the lived experiences of women and girls and how health practices and outcomes relate to the social positioning of women (Department of Health and Ageing, 2010b). Thus men’s health outcomes are seen as a result of individual behaviours whereas women’s health outcomes are seen as a product of social circumstances (J. A. Smith & Robertson, 2008). Furthermore, the set of male behaviours that lead to poor health outcomes are seen as the behavioural pattern associated with hegemonic masculinity (Riska, 2000, 2002). Thus ‘masculinity’ itself is conceptualised as pathogenic within medical discourses. Masculinity follows other ‘normal’ aspects of healthy life that are problematized by medicine as a way of defining and understanding chronic disease (Armstrong, 1995). Thus seemingly scientific and ‘objective’ medical research and literature about male illness and disease is overlaid with value judgements about ‘traditional’ masculinity. The Cambridge History of Medicine reminds us
that “we must remain sceptical about claims that medicine has ever been, or has finally become, ‘values free’ in its accounts of diseases and their causation” (Porter, 1996, p. 105). It appears that masculinity, men’s health, and the pathologies of males have become another arena in which it would be wise to remain somewhat sceptical about all of medicine’s claims.

In 2010 Australia became only the second country in the world to adopt a National Men’s Health Policy. This policy calls for a move away from a purely clinical and pathological approach to working with men and boys, endorses a social determinants view of male health, and encourages health services to become more ‘male friendly’, a deliberate move away from constructing men as deliberately avoiding health care to a recognition of the role that health services themselves play in men’s attendance or non-attendance. The subtitle of the policy Building on the Strengths of Australian Males (Department of Health and Ageing, 2010a) is a direct challenge to many of the popular, academic, and medical discourses that construct men as deficient, deviant, or diseased.

There are calls for a better understanding of men’s health, moving away from the current emphasis on physical and social pathologies to more nuanced and holistic understandings of health (Macdonald, 2001a, 2001b, 2006, 2011; Macdonald, McDermott, Woods, Brown, & Sliwka, 2002). These salutogenic, health creating and sustaining, approaches to men and male health are discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.3.

### 2.1.3 Subjectivity and the men’s movement

The above discourses have surprisingly little to offer this research, in the way of theoretical understandings of men. Mythopoetic, profeminist, men’s rights, and medical approaches are all flawed along similar lines, that their starting point for understanding men is to emphasise flaws and pathologies in individual men or men collectively (Macdonald, 2005, 2011, 2012). The reductive and positivist approaches of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology have nothing to offer when considering men’s inner lives and subjective experiences.

In addition to the difficulties the discourses reviewed above have with exploring men’s subjectivities, they also have at their core an understanding of men as somehow deficient. Mythopoetic writers see men as wounded and disconnected from their ‘authentic’ masculinity, men’s rights activists understand men to be oppressed and victimised, and profeminist theories conceptualise men less as agentic people in society and more as subject

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2 Ireland was the first country to produce a national men’s health policy in 2008 (Department of Health and Children, 2008). The Irish policy also acknowledges the influence of Australian thinking around male health, reflected in the salutogenic approaches it advocates improving men’s health (p. 22).
positions within gender discourses. These subject positions equate either to men as oppressors, if the position taken aligns with hegemonic masculinity, or as marginalised or subordinate if they do not. Sociobiology, at its worst, views men as biological machines, enslaved to their genes and hormones. Health and medical discourses tend to incorporate aspects of both sociobiology and profeminist discourses; despite profeminism’s opposition to sociobiological explanations of gender. This leads to health and medical discourses that, for the most part, focus on male specific pathologies and continue to conceptualise men as recalcitrant and not interested in their health, despite growing evidence to the contrary.

What unifies these seemingly disparate discourses is a belief that there is something fundamentally wrong with men. Men are framed as diseased, despairing, dispossessed, depressed, or despotic. While individual men and different groups of men face very real challenges, it is not useful to conceptualise or theorise entire sub-populations based only on their worse experiences or behaviours. Such conceptualisations lead to such things as the now discredited disengagement theory for older people. I fear that many of these understandings of men have little to offer men facing real world crises and concerns.

There are calls for better understandings of men’s health, moving away from the current emphasis on physical and social pathologies to more nuanced and holistic understandings of health (Macdonald, 2001a, 2001b, 2006, 2011; Macdonald, et al., 2002). These salutogenic, health creating and sustaining, approaches to men and male health are discussed in more detail below. New discourses are, thankfully, emerging which offer a more sympathetic realistic conception of men and their lives, such as the social determinants of health, ‘strengths-based’, generative, or salutogenic approaches (Chudleigh, 2003; J. Fleming & King, 2010; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Macdonald 2001b, 2005, 2011).

2.2 Salutogenesis

Antonovsky (1979, 1984) in his research with survivors of the Nazi death camps observed how, in old age, a significant minority exhibited good mental health and a positive sense of self. This group of people had, amazingly, found some positive meaning from their appalling war time experiences. He developed the concept of salutogenesis to explain how these survivors not only survived, but in older age, experienced positive physical and mental health outcomes. Antonovsky conceptualised salutogenesis to explain this, which he viewed as the “factors pushing this person towards” health or disease (1979, p. 37). Macdonald (2000, 2001b, 2005) expands the concept of salutogenesis beyond Antonovsky’s original definition, to the dynamic health creating interactions between people and their
environments. This research focuses on the dynamic interactions between retired men and their environment, including the organisations they participate in.

2.2.1 Sense of Coherence

People who experienced the same environmental conditions can have very different health outcomes. Antonovsky recognised that good health or disease result from a combination of ‘external’ and ‘internal’ factors (1979, 1984). The way that a person interpreted and responded to external circumstances and situations was also important and is part of the explanation why the same traumatic life event, in this case internment in a death camp, affected people so differently. Antonovsky called this subjective meaning making the “Sense of Coherence”, which he understands to be “a general orientation which sees stimuli as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful” (Sagy & Antonovosky, 1990, p. 233). This is reminiscent of the theories developed by Victor Frankl’s from his own experiences of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Frankl’s famous Man’s search for meaning not only documents his experiences of Auschwitz, it also puts forward his theory that psychological health is only possible when one can create meaning out of one’s existence and experiences, even when those experiences result in suffering (1959).

In Chapter Three, Section 3.10, I discuss the concept of narrative coherence, in which people construct overarching life stories that make sense and meaning of their life experiences (Linde, 1993; McAdams, 2006a). The narrative coherence literature reviewed made no mention of Antonovsky or his sense of coherence, yet these two concepts are surely linked as both are concerned with how environmental circumstances are interpreted and the meanings made from these interpretations. Perhaps narrative coherence is one of the mechanisms by which a sense of coherence is constructed.

2.2.2 Salutogenic retirement

Sagy and Antonovsky (1990, 1992) further recognised that transitions between life stages are one of the factors that push a person towards health or disease. They looked at retirement as a time of transition and potential stress and found that retirees seemed to adjust to retirement better if they or their partner had a high Sense of Coherence (Sagy & Antonovsky, 1992). This finding reflects both the salutogenic effects of being able to find positive life affirming meaning in new life experiences and transitions, as well as the importance of partners to retirees’ health.
This current study is, in part, a response to Sagy and Antonovsky’s (1992) advocacy for further study into the “salutary rather than only risk factors” associated with retirement (p. 992). This research is investigating what are potentially positive factors in a man’s environment and asking whether they help create a positive, salutogenic retirement.

2.2.3 Salutogenic and strength-based approaches to working with men

In Australia a number of health and community services have developed strength or asset-based approaches to working with different populations of men. These practices have been adapted from strength or assets-based programs developed for other populations and applied to men. Strength based approaches developed in partnership with Aboriginal people in Australia have been adapted for work with Aboriginal men (A. D. H. Brown, 2004), likewise strength-based programs for vulnerable families have been adapted to explicitly include fathers, which was originally called the “non-deficit perspective” (A. King, 2000). These programs with fathers have, more recently, been influenced by “generative-fathering” a concept developed by (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997) and adapted and developed by family services in Australia (Chudleigh, 2003; J. Fleming & King, 2010).

Karoski (2007) identified a group of men he labelled as “inclusive” in his research of Australian activists, academics, and practitioners involved in the men’s movement. This group is distinct from the mythopoetic, profeminist, and men’s rights groups discussed above and focuses on the “balance between men as individual persons, their understanding and participation in social processes and the relationship with personal processes” (Karoski, 2007, p. 60). Members of the Inclusive men’s movement seek to develop, in their view, a more “holistic theory about men” (Karoski, 2007, p. 60). The desire for a new theory about men, incorporating elements of the other strands of the men’s movement, suggests that existing discourses and theories are not offering helpful practical frameworks for real world interventions and strategies with men. If this is the case then there is something lacking in the theories on offer.

All of these positive, strengths based approaches to working with men in the real world, fit within a salutogenic paradigm of men and male health. A salutogenic understanding of ‘maleness’ would then honour and encourage positive aspects of masculinity as contributing to men and boys’ health, while at the same time acknowledging and challenging the negative aspects of masculinity. Such an approach conceptualises maleness not as something to be apologised for and ‘controlled’, as in the understandings of men discussed above.
The concepts of salutogenesis and strength-based approaches are not developed further in later chapters, yet both underlie the basic ethos of the whole thesis.

### 2.3 Generativity

The preceding theoretical perspectives on salutogenesis were reviewed as part of the literature before going into the field. To a large extent the theme of generativity, being concerned for and contributing to the next generation and leaving a legacy, was a dominant theme that emerged during the interviews. The literature reviewed around the topic grew in response to this emerging theme.

Erik Erikson (1963) proposed that older adults strive for generativity, “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (p. 240). This concern for the “next generation” goes beyond caring for one’s own offspring and incorporates the desire to make a difference and leave a legacy. Generativity is, furthermore, understood to be more than just an internal concern or desire. Erikson originally saw the achievement of generativity as the goal of the penultimate stage in his theory of human development. This stage is conceptualised as “Generativity versus Stagnation” (Erikson, 1963, p. 240) and it is clear that by contrasting generativity to stagnation, Erikson understands generativity to be active, productive and creative in nature.

Dan McAdams and Ed de St. Aubin (1992) developed Erikson’s concept to create a more comprehensive model of generativity. This model rejects the ideas that generativity is only exhibited at a discrete developmental stage in mid and later life and incorporates a wide concept of generative behaviour that goes beyond guiding the next generation to include acts that benefit the culture or community in general. The model incorporates and accommodates post-structural and post-modern understandings of identity, reciprocity, life stage, life context, and societal expectations (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998).

For McAdams and colleagues generativity is motivated by ‘inner’ psychological factors and ‘external’ sociocultural demands. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) maintain that a person’s generative ‘inner desires’ are a combination of the wishes to leave a legacy and to continue to make a contribution. In mid and later life generative adults hope for “symbolic immortality”, that is the hope that something about them will endure after their death (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 2005). There is a corresponding inner desire that Erikson understands as the “need to be needed”, in mid and later life people desire to be able
to continue being able to make a contribution and be of use to others, for “mature man needs to be needed, and maturity is guided by the nature of that which must be cared for” (1968, p. 138). In addition to these internal desires, a wide variety of external social “factors and forces” make generative demands on people (Erikson, 1968, p. 138). These various social factors and forces create normative social expectations for people of various ages; in short they are groupings of social expectations that encourage people to take an interest in the next generation. These normative social expectations vary according to a person’s age and, presumably, gender. So at different stages of a person’s life there are changing social expectations on the extent and ways that one should engage and support the next generation.

This concern for the next generation is expressed through a variety of generative behaviour. Generative behaviour includes the creative production of objects and things, as well as the “conservation, restoration, preservation, cultivation, nurturance, or maintenance of that which is deemed worthy of such behaviour” (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, pp. 1004). A final aspect of generative behaviour is that the object or thing that has been created or maintained is offered to “next generation as a gift, granting the gift its own autonomy and freedom” (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, pp. 1006).

During the interviews with many of the men I was fortunate to observe the product of ‘generative behaviour’, in the form of an object or artefact that the men had either created or maintained. Generative behaviour consists of three related types of activity, namely activity that creates, maintains, and offers to others (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). Given this, it is clear that enthusiast groups are, by their very nature, generative. This is documented in more detail in Chapter Five below, yet it is clear that generative behaviour is at the heart of much of the actions within these groups.

All of the enthusiasms investigated in this research have a creative element. Many of the groups were established specifically for people to share creative pursuits together, such as the woodworking groups; while others have a strong creative element such as ham radios and model aircrafts clubs, where enthusiasts share ideas about creating, building, and innovating the radios or aircraft. Other groups are dedicated to the preservation and maintaining of certain artefacts, be they antique farm equipment or old railway engines, these groups in particular have an explicit desire to preserve these artefacts for the next generation. All of the groups share the explicit purpose of organising and maintaining the

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3 Ham radios are homemade radio receivers and transmitters built by amateur operators who communicate with other amateur radio operators or ‘hams’.
hobby or enthusiasm itself, so as to keep it alive and pass it on for future generations to enjoy.

John Kotre conceptualises four types of generatively, biological, parental, technical, and cultural generativity. Biological generativity is concerned with reproduction and fertility, the “begetting, bearing, and nursing offspring” (1984, p. 12). It is fundamentally about physically producing offspring and to a lesser extent to the “meanings attached” to these biological processes (p. 257). While Kotre is part of noble tradition of theorists expanding the concept of generativity beyond late adulthood and across the lifespan, he seems to have neglected possible aspects of biological and parental generativity that may be evident in older people. Kotre makes a passing mention of the importance of the concept of “a family’s ‘bloodline’” to biological generativity but does not explicitly mention grandparents and great-grandparents as the progenitors of this ‘bloodline’. While any biological implications of this are beyond the scope and methodologies of this particular research they surely should be acknowledged and incorporated into this typology.

Kotre’s parental generativity is distinct from biological generativity. Parental generativity is exhibited through parents’ practical expressions of care, “feeding, clothing, sheltering” and of course “loving” their offspring (1984, p. 11). The ‘aims’ of these expressions of care, according to Erikson’s original theories, is to produce psychologically healthy children (1963, 1968); these expressions of care also act to “preserve the continuity of the family” (Kotre, 1984, p. 11). The implication of Kotre’s original conception of parental generativity is that any intergenerational support provided by grandparents has no, or a very limited, impact on both the wellbeing of their grandchildren or to the “continuity of the family”. This is clearly not the case as intergeneration support from grandparents to grandchildren is substantial, Council on the Ageing (NSW) estimates that the childcare provided by grandparents just in NSW represents a saving of some $88 million in childcare costs to parents (2012), other studies of financial support within families shows that financial transfers between generations is most likely to be from grandparents to their children or grandchildren than the other way (Arber & Timonen, 2012).

While generativity is often conceptualised as positive and a moral good, both to older people and society, there are potential negative aspects to generative. Schoklitsch and Baumann (2012) in their review of generative and older people show that generative also has a potential “dark side” and can be motivated by “excessive narcissism and active destructiveness” and give Hitler and the Third Reich as an example of a person and culture
attempting to pass on “intense rejectivity (of non-Aryans) and warmongering” to future generations (pp. 264-265).

Of perhaps most relevance to this research is the concept of technical generativity (Kotre, 1984). At its most basic technical generativity is concerned with people passing on skills to others less accomplished. These skills may be important life skills, such as reading or learning to drive a car or they may be more vocational oriented. Kotre (1984) gives the examples of learning how to prepare a legal brief or learning how to steal; playing a musical instrument; or they may be around a particular hobby or enthusiasm.

With biological and parental generativity the “generative object” is a person, the child. With technical generativity, however, the “object of generativity” is both the person learning the skill as well as “the skill itself” (Kotre, 1984, p. 13). In passing on skills the teacher is also transmitting a “symbol system” which offers “initiates something more than a sense of competence”, knowing this “symbol system” offers students an understanding of the culture or the subculture they are entering through learning these particular skills, as well as making clear their place within that culture.

Skills are not transmitted in isolation. They bring in their wake symbol systems offering initiates something more than a sense of competence: a map of existence, a view of a place to settle on that map. These symbol systems, along with the techniques they animate, are commonly called cultures. During skills transmission, culture remains in the background and merely sets the scene. When an old man shows his grandson how to preserve seeds from the best produce in his crop, he is ostensibly passing on a craft. But he is also, by implication, passing on a culture.

(Kotre, 1984, p. 15)

A person becomes culturally generative, when what they pass on to students moves beyond technical skills to the symbols systems which make up the culture itself. When, for example, a teacher turns from instructing a student how to build and operate a ham radio, and begins to talk about the “mysterious wireless”, or when a man with an interest in model planes starts discussing the history of the hobby with new recruits, they move from passing on technical knowledge to passing on the ‘idea’ of their enthusiasm. When this happens they are no longer “a teacher of skills but a mentor” (Kotre, 1984, p. 14). As part of the process of cultural generativity the mentor becomes a “keeper of the meaning” for that culture or subculture (Kotre, 1984, p. 15).
The practice of generativity benefits not just the recipient of generative actions and the wider culture. In their review of generativity and ageing Schoklitsch and Baumann identify generativity as contributing to older people’s wellbeing and consider it a factor in “successful aging” (2012, p. 270).

2.3.1 Older Men and generativity

Kotre’s (1984) typology does not take the gendered nature of generativity into account, a deficiency Kotre himself notes. In traditional societies older women exhibit generativity through “kin-tending” in their roles of family matriarchs, while older men have responsibilities for “culture-tending” which involve mentor roles of holding, maintaining, and passing on lore and culture (Gutmann, 1987, p. 249).

Such culture-tending, although weakened, still exists in contemporary Western societies. Kotre asserts that older people engage with “cultural generativity” in the “passing on of values” (1984, p. 9). Older men in the United States have been found to re-engage in generative activities in retirement (Luborsky, 1994). In Australia men’s culture-tending has been observed in older men’s participation in research (A. A. Fleming, 2001) and in their enthusiasm to “contribute to the well-being of their family, community, nation or even the world (Koch, Annells, & Brown, 1999, p. 178).

2.3.2 Generativity and narrative

It is only through narrative, however, that a person comes to understand and make meaning of their generative motivations, plans, and behaviours (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998). The meanings that are constructed narratively inform and shape the person’s understandings of the other features of generativity. McAdams and de St. Aubin assert that to fully understand generativity in their life a person must examine all the generative aspects of their lives, including motivations, plans, and behaviour (1992, p. 1004). This process is reminiscent of Schleiermacher’s “hermeneutic circle”, in which understanding of the ‘parts’ can only be “interpreted within some understanding of the whole” (Woolfolk, Sass, & Messer, 1988, p. 7). This means that understanding a person’s narratives about generativity requires paying attention, simultaneously, to the person’s generative motivations, plans, and behaviours, which is relevant as personal narratives are the primary data source for this research. Chapter Three explores, in more detail, the hermeneutic circle and the importance of narrative in creating personal meaning.
The link McAdams and de St. Aubin make between generativity and a person’s life story is important for this research. One’s life story is the “internalized and evolving narrative of the self” that provides “a life with unity and purpose” (McAdams, 2009, p. 8). McAdams has written extensively about the life story, and his understandings, together with those of Charlotte Linde (1993), form a vital component of the methodology of this research and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. The narrative creation of meaning extends generative motivations, plans, and action into a meaningful future. Narrative not only gives meaning to the various factors currently at work within McAdams and de St. Aubin’s (1992) generative model. Through narrative one also constructs a “narrative script” which specifies the person’s future plans for their own legacy.

2.3.3 Generativity and this research

The understanding of generativity that McAdams and his colleagues have developed forms part of the conceptual and methodological underpinning of this research, in this study I am applying these concepts to older men’s involvement in enthusiast and hobby clubs. These organisations are in and of themselves generative in that they create, maintain, and pass on aspects of their particular enthusiasm. This is not, however, a study of the generative mechanisms by which organisations achieve their generative objectives, and as such the clubs and groups themselves have not been subjected to any organisational or other analysis. It is an investigation into the meanings retired men construct of their involvement with such groups, so the generative motivations, thoughts and plans, and behaviours of the men, as revealed by their narratives, are investigated.

2.4 Men’s Subjectivities

This study is concerned with older men’s experiences of work, retirement, and participation in chosen hobbies. The exploration of these subjective experiences requires, logically, a theoretical understanding of what it means to be a man that values and is interested in such subjectivities. As discussed above, both the mythopoetic and men’s rights discourses hold essentialist views of masculinity. Ideologies that hold an essentialist position of masculinity make explorations of subjectivity difficult, if not impossible. Such positions are more interested in evaluating the extent that a particular man’s experiences align or deviate from their pre-defined version of masculinity. Leaving aside other aspects of each of these ideologies, their epistemological assumption that men automatically know and have access to what it is to be a man are inadequate to inform this research. Essentialist views of gender also tend towards the normative (Connell, 2005); as what is seen as essential is then advocated as being ‘authentic’, ‘correct’, ‘God-given’, or ‘healthy’ depending on the specific
discourse. Leaving aside the ideologies informing the various essentialist normative discourses on masculinity, mythopoetic, men’s rights, sociobiology, and medical, such discourse reveal little about men’s subjectivity as such normative approaches “gives no grip on masculinity at the level of personality” (Connell, 2005, p. 70).

Kenedy argues that the “lived male experience” is under-researched and little understood and calls for more studies looking at men’s lives, from “boys in their life course through high school and post-secondary education” (Kenedy, 2012, p. 55). This is echoed by Ashfield who calls for an understanding of gender that is, in part, “grounded in the reality of men’s and women’s lived experience” (Ashfield, 2012, p. 20). This current study is a contribution towards better understanding the lived experiences of men, in this case retired men.

The social gender theories of Connell provide a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the cultural concepts of masculinity and the interactions of various types of masculinities with each other and with women. Despite these concepts having been developed from life story interviews (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) there remains contention about the usefulness of this approach in understanding men’s subjectivities (Jefferson, 2002; Ridge, Emslie, & White, 2011; Roper, 2005). There is concern that the theoretical understandings of Connell have led to “an ‘oversocialised’ view of male subjectivity” (Ridge, et al., 2011, p. 147). Roper goes so far as to say much current research purporting to be about masculinity and subjectivity has lost “any sense of subjectivity as a matter pertaining to individual psychic make-up” (2005, p. 147). This is refuted somewhat by Connell and Messerschmidt’s response to such criticisms that the concept of hegemonic masculinity was informed by men’s life stories and developed from psychoanalytical principles (2005).

The profeminist writers are in general agreement about men’s collective and personal contribution to patriarchal structures and inequities. This is not surprising given that the discourse grew out of feminism and the understandable desire of many men within the academy to align themselves with the feminist project and to better understand the processes that perpetuate male privilege. Yet this very understanding of men as perpetuators of patriarchy has led some to question the extent to which the theory can be applied to investigating and understanding men in the real world. Bloodwood (2010) argues that while people do indeed take up various “subject positions” within many different discourses, we are much more than merely the sum of these various subject positions. Bloodwood is concerned that Connellian understandings of the self do not adequately take up the complex and ambiguous interactions between the person and the many different subject positions they
occupy. To reduce a men’s or women’s identity merely to the subject positions they take up in gender discourse is to deny or ignore a fundamental aspect of ‘personhood’.

Constructing and understanding ‘men’ purely as “subject positions” within the profeminist discourse has, as a consequence, limited the usefulness of applying the theory to understanding the entire range of men’s experiences as actual people in the real world. Connellian theory is well placed to examine the positioning of various masculinities within the field of gender relations. The theory does, however, rely heavily on social constructionist views of the subject, which define male subjectivity as the positions men take up in gender discourses. Connell understands masculinity to be, in part, the effect of masculine practices in “bodily experiences, personality and culture” (2005, p. 71) yet this research is more interested in the meanings and understandings men have of their experiences, rather than just the effect of these experiences or their positions in discourse. As such, a phenomenological rather than Connellian approach to subjectivity is used in informing the research design. In other words, this research defines subjectivity as the personal experience of being in the world. I realise, of course, the importance of subject positions within discourses, including gender discourses, on understanding personal subjective experiences. Yet one’s subjectivity is more than just an interaction with discourse. The nuances of these influences on personal subjectivity are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, Sections 3.8 and 3.9. For these reasons profeminist theory, while insightful for understanding the operations of masculinities on many levels, is not being used as a major theoretical underpinning of this research.

2.5 Gender and Old Age

The experience of growing old is gendered. This section explores some of the social, financial, cultural, and biological factors that a person experiences over the course of their lifetime that cumulatively impacts on their longevity, morbidity, and social and economic circumstances as an older person (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003). Men and women experience different social, economic, and health circumstances over their life course, and as such the experiences of being an older man or an older woman are different, in all of these arenas (Baltes, Freund, & Horgas, 1999; Clair, Karp, & Yoels, 1993).

There are more older women than men in Australia, due mainly to women’s longer life expectancy. A baby boy born in Australia in 2009 has a life expectancy of 79.3 years compared to 83.9 years for a baby girl (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). According to the 2010 census, there are some 3.0 million Australians aged 65 and over, with men making up 1.3 million or 45.8% of this older population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). This
growing realisation of the demographics of old age, together with a growing understanding of special needs and concerns of older women, was part of the reason why the gender focus shifted from older men to older women during the 1970s.

2.5.1 Old age a ‘tragedy’ for older men

In the early years of the 20th century the problems of old age were seen as problems mainly for older men. Older men were understood to suffer a crisis of identity, brought about by retirement from work, resulting in disconnection for personal meaning, leading to men withdrawing from social life, and an inevitable physical and mental decline (Russell, 2007).

Townsend’s ground-breaking study into older people’s family life originally published in 1957 described retirement as a “tragedy” for older men. The men in Townsend’s study had decreased social and economic status in retirement, reduced social connections, increased disagreements with their wives and families, and were at a loss for meaningful activities. Townsend describes these men’s lives as having “become a rather desperate search for pastimes or a gloomy contemplation of their own helplessness” (1963, pp. 168-169). This compared to women who were more likely to maintain successful and meaningful activities as well as social and familial connections into old age (Townsend, 1963).

2.5.2 Feminisation of old age

Social gerontologists over the past four decades have more and more come to define old age as a women’s, indeed as a feminist, issue. This has been driven in part by the demographics of old age, as well as by feminist writers and academics redefining research into ageing (Friedan, 1993; Sontag, 1972). Sontag (1972) was one of the first Anglophone feminist academics and writers to draw attention to the special needs and issues of older women, leading to the situation where “by the 1990s, claims that the issues associated with ageing are predominantly ‘women’s issues’ had become commonplace” (Russell, 2007, p. 101). It is not surprising therefore, that ageing studies have often been given a feminist connotation and framework. Framing ageing within such a paradigm has contributed (perhaps unwittingly) to older men and their concerns being marginalised, particularly within the academy where gendered studies of ageing for the past 30 years have overwhelmingly concentrated on older women (A. A. Fleming, 2001).

This trend is still very active, with many gerontological texts continuing to ignore older men. The Higher Education Division of McGraw-Hill Publishing produces a semi-annual publication on ageing aimed at graduate and postgraduate students. The 2010 edition
contains no specific articles on older men and their issues and concerns (Cox, 2010). Admittedly this publication does not cover diversity well; most of its articles are concerned with issues for healthy, active and most likely white, older Americans. There are two articles specifically on the concerns of older women, one on single older women (Mahoney, 2010) and a reprint of an article from *The Gerontologist* on abuse of older women (Fisher & Regan, 2006). These issues are, of course, important and all social gerontology students should be aware of how they impact on older women’s lives, yet the lack of any article on older men implies that men do not face their own gendered challenges in old age.

Practitioners have also been encouraged to view the concerns of older women as more important than those of older men. Atchley’s 2000 text book on social gerontology exemplifies this view: in an otherwise excellent chapter on social inequality, Atchley encourages readers to consider issues of diversity amongst older people, as a way to appreciate disadvantage in old age (Atchley, 2000). The book draws particular attention to social class, race, ethnicity, and gender. These factors, with the exception of gender, introduce the reader to the complexity and multifactorial nature of disadvantage; yet the discussion on gender does not consider older men at all.

Atchley concludes his discussion on gender with the comment that “the greatest disadvantage is being a woman” (original emphasis) as “the gender difference in median income is much greater than income differences associated with differences in education or minority status” (Atchley 2000, pp. 450-451). Atchley (2000) makes no mention of older men at all in his discussion on gender. His conclusion that older women face “Multiple Jeopardy”, by reason of being older and female, is repeated often in other literature, where it may also be referred to as “double jeopardy” or “double whammy” (for example Posner, 1977; Sontag, 1972). It is disturbing that Atchley’s text is aimed at undergraduates, who may be informed of this view of gender and ageing and become practitioners and researchers with little or no knowledge of the male experience of ageing and the concerns and difficulties older men face. As (A. A. Fleming, 2001) points out, the result of defining older women as being in “double jeopardy” has been that older women are seen as a legitimate field of gerontological research; whereas older men, if considered, are defined or implied to be a privileged minority, living in “relative comfort” (E. H. Thompson, 1994, p. 9).

Gibson also questions the positioning of older women as doubly disadvantaged from a feminist perspective. While agreeing with the basic tenant that older women face special and significant disadvantages, she makes the point that constructing being older and female as particularly disadvantaged does older women a disservice, as it has the effect of
problematising older women themselves (Gibson, 1998). Gibson was only looking at the impact of this construction on older women; her critique, while insightful, does not discuss the problem inasmuch as it impacts on older men (A. A. Fleming, 2001).

### 2.5.3 Invisibility of older men in existing discourses of older people

Despite the increasing interest in both men’s health and older persons in recent years, older men are almost invisible in both academic men’s and ageing discourses (A. A. Fleming, 1999, 2001; Kaye, Crittenden, & Charland, 2008; E. H. Thompson, 1994). Within specific discourses around ageing the absence of older men has been noted in discussions around elder abuse, grandparenting, and international development (Arber & Timonen, 2012; Beales & Peterson, 2000; Knodel & Ofstedal, 2003; Kosberg, 1998; Reitzes & Mutran, 2004a). There are also times when important issues, such as grandparenting, are investigated without acknowledging gender (Arber & Timonen, 2012; Mann, 2007; Roy, 1989; Tarrant, 2012; Timonen & Arber, 2012), or in the absence of evidence assigns roles to older men based on stereotypes and essentialist assumptions (Tarrant, 2012).

### 2.5.4 Moving beyond invisibility and ‘competitive suffering’

Cherry Russell summaries the discussions about gender and ageing throughout the 20th century as a “paradigm of ‘competitive suffering’ ”, where scholars and activists situate one gender or the other as being “‘worse off’ in old age” (Russell, 2007, p. 99). Constructing older women as being disadvantaged by both age and gender implies, erroneously, that men are somehow the recipients of multiple advantages as they age. Such an implication means that the concerns and issues of older men are seen as less important than those of their female peers (A. A. Fleming, 2001). While acknowledging that there are factors that impact negatively on older women disproportionately more than on older men, such as income and disability status (Power & Bevington, 1995; Walker, 1987), it is also true that older men fare worse on other indicators, such as life expectancy, health outcomes, and suicide rates (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004, 2012a). Trying to determine which gender ages most or least successfully has the paradoxical effect of problematising the gender considered least successful while also marginalising and making invisible the gender deemed most successful.

Women are more likely to be poorer and have higher rates of morbidity and functional disability in old age, yet men have higher rates of mortality and are less likely to make it to old age (Arber & Thomas, 2007). This trend is changing and the most recent difference in life expectancy between the genders in Australia is only 4.6 years (Australian Bureau of
Statistics, 2011a). Yet the differences in mortality and morbidity between the genders are small compared to the differences between people of the same gender of difference socio-economic status. So while men, on the whole, are less likely to reach old age women are more likely to be poor in old age. Poverty is becoming feminised, especially amongst older women and single mothers (Arber & Thomas, 2007).

Given the gendered nature of ageing and the history of the ‘competitive suffering’ discourse it could be assumed that there are vast differences between the circumstances and experiences of older men and women. This is not the case. Baltes, Freund, and Horgas found, as expected, differences in men’s and women’s “physical, mental and functional health” (1999, p. 272) and while gender differences were observed in the domains of men and women’s personality and social integration, these differences were, however, slight and in some case not statistically significant. In reflecting on the differences between the genders Baltes, et al. concluded that older men and women have more similarities than differences, within these domains.

Cherry Russell suggests the way forward, understanding the interplay between gender and age, is to go beyond the paradigm of ‘competitive suffering’ and to focus on the level of older men and women’s “individual experience”. For

while sociologists quite properly are concerned to document the demographic, social and political forces and interests that shape the lives of older women and men, it is equally important to address the personal and cultural implications of population ageing as lived realities.

(Russell, 2007, p. 114, emphasis added)

Exploring and understanding the lived realities of older men and women’s lives are, therefore, a largely unexplored area which complement existing sociological and demographic research into population ageing through explaining and understanding older men and women’s lives and life contexts.

### 2.6 Older Men

The above discourses around men and older people have been largely silent when it comes to older men. The various strands of the so-call men’s movement, as discussed in Section 2.1.1, have been mostly concerned with the issues of boys, younger and middle-aged men; while old people’s discourses tend to dismiss or marginalise older men; and medical discourses
have been overwhelmingly concerned with the pathologies of older men. This section further explores the absence, marginalising, and pathologising of older men.

### 2.6.1 Invisibility of older men within the men's movement

The so-called men’s movement has, on the whole, neglected older men. The concerns of the various sub-movements tend to focus on the issues and concerns of younger and middle-aged men. The above sub-movements all contribute to a pathologising of men and masculinity. Despite their vastly different ideological and intellectual backgrounds they all contend that contemporary men are seriously flawed; either by being oppressors, lacking suitable masculine roles, or by losing touch with their ‘essential’ masculinity. Biologically determinists argue that the cause of men’s ills and men’s natures lies in their genes and testosterone, while social constructionists argue that traditional male roles and traditional ideals of masculinity are outdated and the cause of interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict that results in ill health and poor behaviour (Bob Pease & Camilleri, 2001). This is an extension of Russell’s concept of “competitive suffering” (2007, p. 99) discourse for older men and women applied to all men. This is an unhelpful conceptual basis to underlie research with men of any age, as to focus on men’s role in female oppression as the sole, or even the main, cause of the disadvantages that some men face is to ignore and silence the complexity of these men’s lives and the causes of disadvantage and marginalisation.

#### 2.6.1.1 Mythopoetic Understandings of Older Men

The Mythopoetic men’s movement is influenced by Jungian psychology and has an interest in the role of men in traditional cultures (Bob Pease & Camilleri, 2001). Men involved with the mythopoetic movement take the position that men have become disconnected from their ‘authentic’ or ‘deep’ masculinity, which they must discover and reclaim. This discourse tends to focus on the needs and concerns of younger men.

Robert Bly and Shepherd Bliss were two of the founders of the mythopoetic movement. Their writings in the 1980s and 1990s are the most seminal texts of the movement (Bliss, 1986; Bly, 1990; Hoff & Bliss, 1995). There is little mention in these texts of the needs and concerns of older men. In the subsequent years the mythopoetic literature focused on the importance of male role models for boys, rites of passage and initiation for adolescents into manhood, concern for fathers of young children, and work-life balance. Retirement and the concerns of men post-work are largely absent from this corpus.
This focus on boys and younger men has both made older men’s concerns invisible and, most worryingly, implied that older men are perhaps the cause of younger men’s difficulties and disconnection from the ‘deep’ masculine. One of the main contentions of the mythopoetic movement is that men suffer the “father wound”, which is caused by the “absence of healthy male role modelling” (de Castella, 2005). Such a concept runs the risk of isolating older men from this arm of the men’s movement, as it emphasises the shortcomings younger and middle-aged men perceive regarding their own fathers’ parenting. These negative perceptions of their fathers are often, perhaps unwittingly, generalised to encompass all men of this older generation.

In recent years mythopoetic practices has moved to be more accommodating to older men. The Mankind Project, an umbrella body for mythopoetic groups worldwide, has developed a “Council of Elders” who “bless, counsel and gift younger men with the experience and learning they have gathered though the years”. The Mankind Project models this “Council of Elders” on “traditional cultures” where “elder men have been valued as repositories of wisdom, strength and unconditional love” (Mankind Project, 2012a). The establishment of “age-based male hierarchies” and the creation of ‘elders’ has been criticised as a form of cultural appropriation, which it undoubtedly is (Bonnett, 1996, p. 275). There is another concern, that by establishing older men as ‘elders’ they are expected to demonstrate the societal approved role of older person as a source of “unfailing wisdom”, this is an impossible task for anyone to fulfil, and when older people do not meet such high expectations there can be negative consequences, including exclusion and vilification (Minichiello, Browne, & Kendig, 2000). Establishing older men as elders, while at first appearing to be something that is respectful of old age, can be in fact a subtle form of ageism.

2.6.1.2 Profeminist Understandings of Older Men

In her seminal work Masculinities, Connell (1995) analyses, reviews and critiques, amongst other things, the development of male (masculine) identities, the structure of workplaces and careers, and the role of fathers and families. In all this there is no mention of development of identity for men in later life, the impact of leaving workplaces and careers, or the role of grandfathers. While Masculinities has greatly influenced the masculinities or pro-feminist men’s discourse, it gives scant attention to older men. Such ageism is evident when books with titles such as Men’s Lives (Kimmel & Messner, 1995) and Men’s Work and Male Lives (Goodwin, 1998), which could reasonably be assumed to include some mention of older men’s lives and experiences post work, fail to give any consideration to men’s lives after
paid employment. Similarly *Male trouble: Looking at Australian masculinities* (Thomsen & Donaldson, 2003) concerns itself with issues of younger men, with a big emphasis on sport. This text constructs Australian masculinities as problematic and spends much of its time pathologising men while totally ignoring older men and their masculinities.

### 2.6.2 Medical discourses around older men

Old age itself has been described as a disease since at least Roman times (Parkin, 2005), an attitude which continues to influence Western medical discourses (Thane, 2005b). Furthermore, the observed decline in physical and sexual function of men over the course of their life has been explicitly conceptualised as a disease process since at least the early 18th century (Marshall, 2007). In recent decades this decline was explained, by some, as mostly due to a corresponding decrease in testosterones and other androgens over the life course (Carruthers, 1997) however mainstream medical opinion was less certain.

It is, sadly, not surprising that discussion of older men in the medical literature focuses on certain pathologies. The medical and profeminist discourses have developed in parallel asserting that ‘traditional’ masculinity is ‘toxic’ or pathogenic (Macdonald, 2012). Medicine tends to conceptualise old age itself as a disease (Ebrahim, 2002), so it is perhaps not surprising that older men are medicalised and pathologised within these discourses.

The increase in so-called “sexuopharmaceutical ‘solutions’ ” to erectile dysfunction and increased research and clinical interest in testosterone deficiency has led to a change in not only the clinical but the public discourse around men, ageing, and sexuality (Potts, Grace, Vares, & Gavey, 2006, p. 306). Such changes have also lead to a greater “medicalization of masculinity in middle and late life” (Marshall, 2007, p. 509). This medicalization of older men only compounds the view that medicine views men in terms of male specific diseases, resulting in older men being conceptualised and understood by their pathologies.

The medicalising of middle-aged and older men’s masculinity has increased dramatically within the past decade. The World Congress of Men’s Health offers a window into the changes in medical interest in older men and medicine’s changing attitudes, as exemplified by the field of older men and hormone replacement therapy. The 2nd World Congress of Men’s Health in 2002 had only three presentations concerned with men’s testosterone and androgen levels, androgens being male reproductive hormones including testosterone (Stedman's Medical Dictionary, 1990). Over the two day program there were two presentations on “Androgens and Prostate Cancer” and “Hormonal changes throughout the
life cycle” and one panel debate on “Male Hormonal Replacement Therapy” (International Society of Men's Health, 2002). None of these presentations had the word ‘testosterone’ in their title and the broad consensus from the international panel convened for that debate was that there was probably no such thing as the ‘andropause’ and that clinicians should be very cautious about placing older men on testosterone replacement therapy. I was present for this panel and recall that one participant strongly rejected routine prescribing of testosterone to older men with the words “we are not charlatans!” The 8th World Congress of Men’s Health in 2011, however, had some 20 presentations on testosterone, androgens, and hypogonadism (clinically low levels of androgens), including three testosterone themed sessions (International Society of Men's Health, 2011). In just under a decade there has been an increase and popularising of research into testosterone and androgens to the point where androgen replacement has moved from ‘charlatanism’ to become an accepted therapy within the medical fraternity.

### 2.6.3 Older men's friendships and social worlds

Men and women ‘do’ friendship in different ways. This difference is generally summarised as women’s friendships being characterised by *connectedness* and men’s friendships being characterised by *separateness* (Davidson, Daly, & Arber, 2003) or that women’s friendships are concerned more with “self-disclosure and empathy” and men’s friendships are about “the sociability of enjoying or doing things together” (Vernon, 2005, p. 9). This connectedness versus separateness has been explained variously by boys and girls having different patterns of attachment and separation from their mothers (Chodorow, 1999), from their socialisation as children (Vernon, 2005), or a combination of both (Dowrick, 1997). Whatever the supposed reason, all the literature reviewed conceptualises men’s friendships and the ways that men relate to each other as not just inferior to the way women conduct their friendships but, at best, borderline pathological.

Men’s one-on-one friendships with other men are conceptualised as inadequate and contributing to patriarchy. Groups or organisations that provide men the opportunity to come together and make friends are also seen with suspicion by some in the academy. Organisations that consist entirely, or mostly, of men have been criticised for being overly homosocial, the “seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex” (Lipman-Blumen, 1976, p. 16). Homosociability amongst men has been problematized to the extent that some claim that male friendships and male groups act in ways to reinforce exploitative sexual relations with women and homophobia (Flood, 2008; Kimmel, 1994). There is a trend for academics and policy makes “to measure the quantity and quality of
social networks with a 'feminine ruler' rather than considering different ways of viewing intimacy and friendship patterns in the lives of older men” (Arber, Davidson, Daly, & Perren, 2003, p. 2).

Work and leisure activities are an important source of older men’s friendships (Scott & Wenger, 1995). Retirement and the loss of paid work are therefore life events that place potential strain on the social lives, health and wellbeing of older men (Foner & Schwab, 1981; Fudge, 1988; Hanson, Isacsson, Janzon, & Lindell, 1989). Participation in leisure activities, volunteering, and joining community groups are opportunities to learn and share knowledge and experience, as well as making contact and connection with peers and others across generations (Davis Smith & Gay, 2005).

Men of all ages tend to have fewer friends and smaller social networks than women. This trend increases post retirement, due in part to men finding it difficult to maintain friendships formed in the workplace (Macdonald, et al., 2001). Diminishing social networks increase older men’s risk of becoming socially isolated, as retired women are more likely to be “embedded within … a network of family relationships” (Phillipson, Bernard, Phillips, & Ogg, 2001, pp. 229-230). This is especially true for single older men, who are at greater risk of isolation than single older women and their married or cohabitating male peers (Tomassini, Glaser, & Askham, 2003). Older men may have fewer friends than older women; they do however value these friendships, especially long standing friendships with other men, as much as women value their friendships with other women (Scott & Wenger, 1995). Men themselves identify social connections as a health priority (Fletcher, Higginbotham, & Dobson, 2001). The social connections that older men create and maintain assist them to be resilient against some of the challenges of ageing such as physical deterioration, bereavement, disability, depression, and suicidality (Eng, Rimm, Fitzmaurice, & Kawachi, 2002). Jenny Green and Blackett (2004) noted that the impetus to volunteer often follows major life events, including retirement.

Given older men’s increased risk of social isolation it is of great concern that many of the organisations established to deliberately enhance older people’s social lives have difficulty attracting older men. Senior Citizens’ Clubs and Centres exist in most local government areas in Australia and were founded to provide all older people with social activities and, ideally, physical and creative activities and outlets (Donovan, 1960) yet they have a membership that is mostly female (Gotsis, 1999). Both Fleming (2001) and Zinn (2002) found older men report that the activities on offer in these organisations are of little interest to them and there are “too many women” involved (Zinn, 2002, p. 180). Such gender
homogeneity in organisations creates homosociability. Just as organisations and workplaces that are made up mostly of men have developed a homosocial culture that perpetuates sexist norms and gender imbalances (C. R. Smith & Hutchinson, 1995), so homosocial processes may be at work to subtly and unwittingly exclude men from Senior Citizens’ Clubs and other organised social activities for older people. Despite the reports of older men’s exclusion from seniors activities and organisations (A. A. Fleming, 2001; Zinn, 2002) no research has been identified into why this is the case.

Social wellbeing is an essential element in the overall health of older men. *The Solid Facts* notes that “belonging to a social network of communication and mutual obligation makes people feel cared for, loved, esteemed and valued; this has a powerful protective effect on health” (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003, p. 22). The quality and quantity of older people social networks have been found to have a positive impact on aspects of health and wellbeing; including mortality, suicidality, depression, self-rated health (Antonucci et al., 2002; De Leo, Hickey, Neulinger, & Cantor, 2001; Iwasaki et al., 2002; Seeman, Kaplan, Knudsen, Cohen, & Guralnik, 1987; Zunzunegui et al., 2004). There is also supportive research that implies that participation in voluntary and community work also has a positive impact on health and wellbeing as well as perceived health status (Luoh & Herzog, 2002; Thoits & Hewitt, 2002; F. Young & Glasgow, 1998). Volunteer work and community involvement for older men, therefore has rewards beyond that of the contribution men make to others. It would seem from the above research that community participation enhances older men’s health and wellbeing.

### 2.6.4 Family

All the men in this study reported being in intact long-term heterosexual relationships, indeed all were married. This reflects the high proportion of married men in this age group, the most recent Australian census data reveals that 70.6% of men aged 65 and over are married, compared to only 46.4% of women (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012c), the difference due perhaps in part to many of these women being widows. Marital status was not something actively selected for and while it was expected that married men would be the majority of men interviewed the complete absence of divorced, widowed, or never married men was unexpected. Given the documented importance of marriage and relationships to men’s health and social connections (Askham, 1995; S. L. Brown, Bulanda, & Lee, 2005; Phillipson, 1997; Scott & Wenger, 1995) it was originally hoped that comparisons could be made between men of different marital statuses.
In their review of literature on grandparenting (Arber & Timonen, 2012) concluded that contemporary research into grandparents seeks to understand the complexity of their lives and circumstances. Literature on grandparents acknowledges their changing family and social roles, contexts, and experiences, yet despite this awareness of complexity and context, gender remains largely unacknowledged in research into grandparents, “with very little research on grandfathering” (Arber & Timonen, 2012, p. 258). In the absence of evidence some researchers assign roles to grandfathers and grandmothers based on out-dated stereotypes and essentialist assumptions (Tarrant, 2012). There are growing calls for research on grandfathers and on men’s experience of being a grandfather (Timonen & Arber, 2012).

Adopting a gendered perspective is fundamental when studying the practices of grandparents. The term ‘grandparenting’ often, in reality, reflects care and support provided by grandmothers and this construction of grandparenting as “feminised”, has resulted in the specific contributions, involvement, and roles of grandfathers being underestimated and under-investigated (Mann, 2007). It is important to consider that women and men ‘perform’ grandparenting in different societal and family contexts, and that “different cultural and societal changes shape the gendered nature of grandparenting” (Timonen & Arber, 2012, pp. 1-2).

The experience of being a grandfather is, unsurprisingly, diverse. In a survey of Australian grandfathers a range of experiences and expectations were observed. Some men immensely enjoyed being a grandfather; their relationship with their grandchildren was a source of great joy and meaning for them, which provided them with a renewed sense of being needed. Yet for others being a grandfather is not enjoyable, some men resent being a grandfather and feel they are ‘too young’ or not prepared (Gonski & Zinn, 2005, p. 20). Other men have created a new post-retirement life and space for themselves which they fear grandchildren will encroach on, some feel inadequate and not up to the role, while others experience anxiety worrying about their grandchildren and the world they are growing up in. Whatever the experience, one point of commonality appears to be that most men did not anticipate how much their lives would change when they become a grandfather, nor were they aware, until after their grandchildren were born, that this was a major milestone in their life (Gonski & Zinn, 2005).

2.6.5 Older men’s subjectivities

Scholars such as Ashfield, Kenedy, and Groth, are engaged in creating a new discipline of Male Studies. Male Studies is an attempt to overcome the deficit approaches inherent in the existing discourses and create a theoretical understanding of men and masculinity that is
more inclusive and integrated (Ashfield, 2012; Kenedy, 2012; McGrath, 2011). Kenedy advocates a better understanding of the “male lived experience”, from “boys in their life course through high school and post-secondary education” (2012, p. 55). It is unfortunate that this long overdue call for a radical rethink of the study into men has not yet considered older men. Despite the assertion of the heterogeneity of men, Kenedy lumps all male experiences after high school into a vague category of “post-secondary education”, implying a lack of interest in male experiences post adolescence. Placing the subjective experience of being male at the centre of research is clearly needed; it is however unfortunate that no authors within the new discipline of male studies have been identified with a specific interest in older men. I fear that A. A. Fleming’s (1999) criticism that the developing men’s health discourse ignored older men and thus rendered them invisible now seems to be true of the emerging discipline of male studies.

Understanding the experience of what it is like to be an older retired man is at the core of this research. Such experiences are by their very nature subjective and understanding older men’s subjectivities is thus crucial for this project. This research understands subjectivity to be the “feel” of what it is like “on the inside” to have these experiences for the person experiencing them (Randall, 2008). This definition of subjectivity is central to this research and is explored in more detail in Chapter Three, Section 3.8. As discussed above, there have been very few investigations into men’s and older people’s subjective experiences. This, together with the invisibility of older men from the various men’s and older persons’ discourses (A. A. Fleming, 1999; Kosberg, 1998, 2009; E. H. Thompson, 1994), has meant that there is an absence of research and understanding of older men’s subjectivities (Randall, 2008; Roper, 2005; Russell, 2007).

2.6.6 Summary

The invisibility of older men in such discourses is not just a matter of rhetorical concern, it has real impact on older men’s lives and health and wellbeing. Just as the disregard for men generally in wider health discourses impacts on men’s use of health services (Macdonald, 2005, 2006), Kaye and colleagues have explored the implications of this on older men in relation to access to health services, they conclude that this invisibility is a significant barrier to older men’s ability to access such services (Kaye & Crittenden, 2005; Kaye, et al., 2008).

It is my contention that men’s ability to form and maintain relationships, including intimate relationships and friendships, are so derided that men themselves have internalised these beliefs. Creating a self-fulfilling prophecy where men with the interpersonal skills and desire
to form friendships do not believe they can do so. Older men believe that they do not have
the same level of interpersonal skills as older women, despite being observed to demonstrate
high levels of these skills (C. Hall, et al., 2007). This review is not intended as a hagiography
of male friendships, as some men do have genuine difficulties in forming friendships and
aspects of many male friendships are undoubtedly sexist and homophobic. What is clear
though is that a more nuanced explanation of male friendships is needed than those which
are currently conceptualised. One that explores the variety of male friendships, from the
pathological to the healthy, while at the same time being able to hold and critique the
ambiguities around both the health creating potential of male friendship and the negative
aspects of such relationships.

2.7 Ageism, Misandry, and Older Men

The experience of being a male retiree involved with an enthusiast organisation must be
influenced, to some extent, by wider social and cultural understandings of and attitudes to
gender, retirement and enthusiasms. The mechanism of this influence is explored in more
detail in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4. The concept of patriarchy and male privilege are well
entrenched theoretical understandings of gender relations and structures (Connell, 2005). It
may seem, at first, unnecessary to consider the impact of negative social attitudes on what
could be seen as a relatively privileged population. The discussion on gender and old age in
Section 2.5 shows that older men do indeed face a number of challenges; challenges that
need to be considered in their own right.

2.7.1 Ageism

The term ‘ageism’ was coined by Robert Butler in 1969 to describe discrimination, negative
attitudes and stereotypes applied to old age and older people (Butler, 1969; Butler & Lewis,
1982; Bytheway, 1995). Such attitudes have been expressed in Western society for
millennia, as previously discussed, and in the four decades since the naming of this prejudice
as ‘ageism’ there has been a broad consensus that ageist attitudes and stereotypes of older
people are common in contemporary society (Butler, 1969; Butler & Lewis, 1982;
Bytheway, 1995; Calasanti, 2008; Gullette, 2008). Ageism is more than negative societal
attitudes and expectations of older people, it is also “the subjective experience” older people
themselves have of encountering such age related prejudice (Butler, 1969, p. 243). This
notion of the subjective experience of ageism is of particular relevance to this research with
its concern for retired men’s subjective experience of their everyday lives. Such experience
could be either how other people treat them or experiences of how they understand and make
meaning of being a certain age or at a certain phase of life, such as retirement.
The extent that society holds and perpetuates negative images of old age and older people means that older people themselves can come to internalise these attitudes. Being immersed in an ageist society can lead to older people looking “at themselves as so many younger people see them and thus do not like what they see”. They can incorporate “the negative cultural view of themselves” and develop “self-hatred” for themselves (Butler & Lewis, 1982, p. 178).

It is not just academic literature that reports on the experience of ageism. In April 1992 the Australian House of Representatives published a report on older people and the ageing population, *Expectations of life: Increasing the options for the 21st century* (Australian Parliament, House of Representatives, Standing Committee for Long Term Strategies & Jones, 1992). The chair of this committee, The Hon. Barry Jones, recently reflected that “the message given in submissions to the Committee was that the major problem about ageing was not the aged themselves but myths and denigrating or disparaging attitudes towards them” (Jones, 2011, p. 6).

By the mid-20th century the view that older people do, or should, withdraw from society and life in general, was explained by the now discredited disengagement theory. Disengagement theory explained the observed “systematic reduction in the amount of social interaction” of older people as something “normal in late maturity” (Bromley, 1966, p. 68). The theory saw older people’s withdrawal from society as inevitable and even advantageous (Rose, 1965a). The theory was challenged in the mid-1970s by researchers who questioned both the circular logic of the argument and its proposed universality (Hochschild, 1975). Anthropologists, most notably Gutmann (1997), showed that in more traditional cultures older people often have clearly defined age appropriate roles requiring them to engage with their families and communities in certain ways. Taking on these culturally defined roles allows older men to in fact *re-engage* with their society and culture, albeit in different culturally defined age appropriate ways. Disengagement, then, “is not the natural condition of the elder but an aberration brought on by the secular nature of advanced societies” (Gutmann, 1997a, p. 65). Disengagement theory, itself, has come to be seen as a form of academically sanctioned discrimination against the elderly (Butler, 1975).

### 2.7.2 Misandry

Misandry is the “hatred towards men”, which like its counterpart misogyny, is “culturally propagated” (Nathanson & Young, 2012, p. 7). Misandry has been identified in popular
Like ageism, misandry is internalised by some men. Perceiving the world to be indifferent or even hostile to men, some men “act up” reacting to the world with hostility and violence, while others “give up” and succumb “to the apparent emptiness of manhood and thus abandoning an indifferent society” (Nathanson & Young, 2012, pp. 14-15). Indeed, other research has shown that being able to construct “a valued sense of themselves and their own masculinity” is needed for men’s recovery from clinical depression (Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland, & Hunt, 2006, p. 2250). Nathanson and Young further speculate that the internalisation of this cultural emptiness of what it means to be male partially explains the relatively high male suicide rates. As Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 show older men are at particular risk of suicide; with the rate of male suicide increasing after age 70 to reach levels close to those of men aged 35 – 44, the sub-population most at risk of suicide (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012a). It is conceivable then that some older men’s experience and internalisation of misandry and ageism contributes to their relatively high suicide rate.

Table 2.1. Suicide Rate for Older Men and Women in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male rate</th>
<th>Female Rate</th>
<th>Male : Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-84</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85+</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rate per 100,000 estimated resident population for each age group and sex.
The cultural mix of misandry and ageism can be seen in the variety of cultural stories and expectations about male retirement. These stories frame retired men as not being able to cope with life post-employment and construct retired men as useless, purposeless, underfoot, and waiting for death. These cultural stories are explored in more detail in Section 2.9.2. The impact of these ageist and misandrist cultural narratives on the men in this study is examined in Chapter Five, Section 5.4.

2.7.3 Ageism and misandry a ‘double whammy’ for older men?

By discussing ageism and misandry I am not trying to present old men as somehow being doubly disadvantaged. The literature on both ageism and misandry is considered because of the negative experiences older men themselves report. A case in point is a participant from a study I was involved in. This man’s experience lead him to curtail his engagement in the community as a direct result of ageist and misandrist attitudes. The study was investigating older men’s experience of community engagement. The man in question was seeking volunteer work in his local community and he answered an advertisement in his local newspaper for a group looking for volunteers to assist with a youth group. He rang for more information and had the following conversation with the coordinator of the group:

Figure 2.1. Age-Specific Suicide Rates, 2010

Rate per 100,000 estimated resident population for each age group and sex.
… she asked me ‘was I over forty-nine years of age?’ I said ‘yes’. So she said ‘we won’t take any members over forty-nine years of age’. I said why and she said ‘Well there is the, um, things that old men do to young boys’. And I said well that’s the finish of it.

(Macdonald, et al., 2001, p. 17)

Not surprisingly, he found this experience to be very humiliating and he did not seek any other volunteer positions after that. This combination of both ageism and misandry, the unfounded assumption that he would endanger children because of his age and gender, had a very real deleterious effect on his self-esteem and he curtailed his social involvement as a result. This unsettling example from my own experience means I wish to remain open to the possibility that the men in this investigation may experience prejudice on the basis of their age or gender.

The arguments outlined in Section 2.5 above about the dangers of constructing older women as doubly disadvantaged are also true for older men and I have no desire to present older men as more or less ‘worthy’ than older women. Each gender faces similar but different challenges as we age.

### 2.8 Work

It's WORK!

the most important thing is WORK

It's WORK!

the most important thing is WORK

*WORK*, Lou Reed and John Cale (1990)

There is much intrinsic and obvious value to being in paid employment. Work provides the means of income that allows us to purchase the necessities to live. This discussion on work will not focus so much on the material wellbeing that work allows but more on how the social, moral, political, psychological, and religious discourses frame work as a social and moral good. People are expected not only to be working but also to have a socially acceptable story around their work. This external demand for each of us to have a meaningful life story around work, including preparing for work, working, and, for retired people, leaving work; is reflected in the socially acceptable question “what do you do?” as an “opening topic of conversation” (Linde, 1993, p. 8).
2.8.1 Work and men

The importance of paid work features prominently in much of the academic and popular literature about men. Men often construct much meaning and self-identity through their work (Fudge, 1988; Goodwin, 1998; Gradman, 1994; Macdonald, et al., 2001; Phillipson, 1982; Zinn, 2002). The discussion on work is skewed, however, to distance older men, as seen in the bulk of the literature reviewed on men, in Section 2.1. Much of the discussions about men and work concentrate on work/life balance issues for younger men, particularly issues of working and being the father of younger children, as discussed in Section 2.6.1. Older men enter the literature in discussions on mature aged unemployment (Kossen, 2008; Mission Australia, 2000; Perry & NSW Committee on Ageing, 2001), which are relevant for men seeking to remain in the workplace but not for those who have left it.

2.8.2 Work as worthwhile, productive, and healthy

The importance of engaging in paid work, to the individual, society, and the state, has been the subject of discussion across disciplines and cultures down the centuries. Work is conceptualised as ‘moral good’ that people should participate in. For individuals work is seen as adding to their physical, psychological, and spiritual wellbeing, while engagement in work is also seen as bringing wider benefits for society and the economy as a whole. Philosophers, sociologists, theologians, and physiologists have all contributed to the literature on the moral importance of work.

Framing work as worthwhile, productive, and health creating of course implies that work is a moral good. The moralism of these discourses is rarely explicit, however, and the discussions tend to be couched in the language of psychology, sociology, health, or economics. What follows is a summary of the explicitly moral arguments about the value of work, often from religious or spiritual traditions. The discourse around the moral value of work has a long history. This discourse includes psychological, sociological, health, as well as spiritual and religious explanations for the value of work at both the personal and societal level.

The ‘work ethic’ is a set of values that sees work as being virtuous in its own right as well as conferring a moral benefit on those who work (Ekerdt, 1986). The work ethic, in Western culture, has its roots in the writings of the early Protestant reformers, in particular John Calvin (1509-1564) (Osgood, 1982). Calvin taught that work was an outward sign of one’s spiritual worthiness. Virtuous work and labour are therefore seen as a sign of God’s favour and assured heavenly reward. Through Calvinism and American Puritanism work came more
and more to be seen as something virtuous in its own right, while those not engaged in productive or worthwhile endeavours were viewed as morally suspect (Weber, 1971).

Marx also acknowledges the positive affirming aspects of work. In Marx’s view workers who labour in order to provide themselves with their own source of living, experience this labour as nothing less than a “free manifestation of life and an enjoyment of life” (Marx, 1967, p. 281, original emphasis). This belief in the potential life-affirming enjoyment of work is the assumption that Marx’s theory of alienation of labour is based on. When the relationship between workers and provid ing their own source of living is broken, as happens when people work for others in jobs that they hate, then labourers are alienated from the tasks of their labour and experience powerlessness.

Christian contemporaries of Marx, in particular the Catholic Popes, wrote extensive condemnations of Marx, communism, and socialism (Fremantle, 1956). Yet even while denouncing much of Marx’s claims and supporting the right to hold private property, the Catholic Popes shared a common belief with Marx on the value of work and the worker. This can be seen most clearly in Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical Rerum Novarum; the Catholic Church’s direct response to Marx’s Das Kapital (Fremantle, 1956). This official Papal letter or teaching is also known as The Conditions of the Working Classes, it affirms the dignity of labour and the labourer and affirms the moral value of work as “labour is a thing not to be ashamed of … but is an honourable calling, enabling a man to sustain his life in a way upright and creditable” (Leo XIII, 1956, p. 174). Rerum Novarum has influenced much of Catholic social teaching and thought throughout the 20th century. By the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s the value of work, or labour, had been elevated to the point where work not only ‘confers’ dignity on the working person, work becomes the means through which a person becomes both a “partner in the work of bringing God’s creation to perfection” and “associated with redemptive work of Jesus Christ” (Paul VI, 1966, p. 274).

Scholars, particularly from business and management disciplines, have been keen to attach work ethics to non-Christian religions. There is, apparently, a ‘Buddhist Work Ethic’ (Keyes, 1983) reflecting Buddha’s teaching of “Right Livelihood” (Saddhatissa, 1976, p. 36). Some scholars argue that there is also an ‘Islamic Work Ethic’ which, like the Protestant Work Ethic has both moral and social dimensions. The Islamic Work Ethic provides “the faithful with a sense of worthiness” as “work is viewed not as an end in itself, but as a means to foster personal growth and social relations” (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008, p. 5). The Islamic Work Ethic appears to have been first identified in Muslims working in the West but has since been observed and measured in Islamic countries (Ali, 1992; Ali & Al-Kazem, 2007),
as well as in contemporary Australia (Bouma, Haidar, Nyland, & Smith, 2003). Likewise, a ‘Hindu work ethic’ (Cimino, 2008) and a ‘Jewish Work Ethic’ (Schnall, 2000) have also been identified. While the existence of the various work ethics may be debateable, the importance of work as a moral good, for the person and society, appears to exist across different cultures and religious systems and has persisted throughout history in one form or another.

Freud brings the social and psychological aspects of work together. He sees work as “indispensable to the preservation and justification of existence in society”. For Freud “the communal life of human beings” is founded on “the compulsion to work” and “the power of love” (Freud, 1966, pp. 80, 101). Freud understood that while work is necessary for society to function not everyone is necessarily nourished by their work, indeed “the great majority of people only work under the stress of necessity” (1966, p. 80). Yet, for a lucky few, work can be source of psychological wellbeing as “professional activity is a source of special satisfaction” (1966, p. 80).

2.8.3 Work and Health

Working confers many health benefits, the most obvious being a regular income. Being employed does not, of course, guarantee affluence but the relationship between poverty and poor health is well documented (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003). There is evidence that work has the capacity to promote and maintain health, through the following salutogenic factors: conferring a sense of being in control of one’s life (Marmot et al., 1991); feelings of being productive (Herzog & Markus, 1999); doing something that others value (Macdonald, 2005); as well as being an importance place where men make friends (Scott & Wenger, 1995). One of the themes running through much of this literature throughout the 20th Century is that men personally invest much in their work, that it gives them status and a sense of identity (Fudge, 1988; Gradman, 1994; Macdonald, et al., 2001; Zinn, 2002). While being involved in productive and valued work has many health benefits, men of lower socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to be in unfulfilling and unsecure employment, are less likely to have adequate retirement savings, and are at greater risk of poor health outcomes (Breeze et al., 2006; Eng, et al., 2002; D. R. Williams, 2003). Recent popular discourse around health and ageing have emphasised individual responsibility around health and ageing, without taking a person’s access and ability to work in health creating environments into account.
2.8.4 Mature aged unemployment

Many of the men in this study received voluntary redundancies from their employment, which meant they left the workforce while still relatively young. Some of these men looked for other employment, only to find that despite their skills and knowledge nothing was available to them. Mature aged unemployment is well documented, in particular the gendered nature of this form of ageism (House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2000; Perry & NSW Committee on Ageing, 2001). There has been a rise in recent years of the number of older women in both part and full time employment, while there has been a decline in older men’s full time employment and a rise in their part time employment. The rise in older men’s part time employment has been insufficient, however, to accommodate the number of men leaving full time employment and seeking work. Both older men and older women who have left and re-entered the labour market tend to be underemployed, as they are more likely to be employed at a level below that which they were working at previously and mature aged men are more likely to be working part time when they were seeking full time employment (Perry & NSW Committee on Ageing, 2001).

2.8.5 Summary

From many cultures and times there is also a wider moral aspect to work. Work is both a civic duty and a moral right which people should engage in. The cultural narratives about work do have some grounding in psychological, sociological, and religious reasoning. Marx, Freud, and Erikson all believe that work has the potential to provide happiness and psychological wellbeing, if freely chosen and rewarding. Likewise, religious discourses, be they Catholic or Protestant in the West or non-Christian in the East, also affirm the ‘moral value’ of work. Yet, these basic human understandings of doing something that is valued and productive, not always in an economic sense, are perverted somewhat into moral and economic imperatives to be productively employed.

By framing work as a moral good the economic, religious, and social discourses discussed above imply that not working is a sort of personal failing (Hamilton, 2003). As a result any negative health or social consequences of not working are seen as being the result of individual choice rather than understanding the context of a person’s life and the nature of their salutogenic or pathogenic interactions with their environments (Macdonald, 2005).

The Christian discourses above are discussed in some detail because Christianity played a “significant role in forming Australia’s national heritage” (Morrissey, Mudge, Taylor,
Despite a decline in the number of observant Christians and a continued increase of non-Christians in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012b), Christianity continues to influence important sectors of Australian society, including education, the law, health, and social welfare (Morrissey, et al., 2005) and there remains, what historian and Catholic priest Edmund Campion calls, the “force of the religious idea in Australian life” (Campion, 1996, p. x). This influence is not always direct and sometimes it is a reaction against explicit religious forces, nevertheless, the impact of Christian thought and institutions remain important in Australian life (Morrissey, et al., 2005). This is relevant to this study as the men interviewed were all (with one exception) born in Australia and all spoke English as their first language. No data was gathered about the men’s religious affiliation or practices, while Hugh Mackay reports that this generation have tended to shift away from organised religion (1997), so it is reasonable to assume that men in this study, even if they are not Christians, have been influenced throughout their lives by the continued influence of the Judaeo-Christian “religious idea” in Australian life.

### 2.9 Retirement

Leaving paid work is a major life-transition. It is a time of contradictions, tensions, and ambiguity around leaving paid work and the public sphere and ‘retiring’ to the private sphere. The attempt to balance a dignified independence, while also withdrawing from public life to make way for younger generations has been an issue individuals, families, and societies have grappled with over the centuries. The vast differences in the experience of retirement, from a long, healthy and luxurious retirement, or living in modest comfort, through to desperate poverty by being unable to work and having no support, have been constants in Western societies since at least the 13th century (Botelho, 2005; Parkin, 2005; Shahar, 2005).

Given the discussion above about the importance of work to men’s sense of self and identity, it is not surprising that authors since the 1930s have seen retirement or retrenchment as a potential crisis for many men, as this source of meaning is no longer available (Bossé, Aldwin, Levenson, Workman-Daniels, & Ekerdt, 1990; Bromley, 1966; Gradman, 1994; Rose, 1965b; Townsend, 1963).

#### 2.9.1 Development of the contemporary construction of retirement

Discussion around the personal and intergeneration ambiguities and tensions around when to leave work and what to do in retirement have been occurring for millennia. Cicero (tran. 1971) advised that older people should not withdraw from society, but should remain active
and independent in order to win the respect of younger generations. Writings from the Middle Ages in Europe document younger generations bemoaning that older generations remain in positions of influence and power and should move aside to make room for the younger generations (Shahar, 2005).

The notion of ‘retirement’ as a stage of life is a relatively recent concept. Older people have been ‘retiring’ from work and the public sphere for millennia, yet the phenomena of mass retirement, that is of the majority of older people being able to spend a number of years outside the workforce, only became the norm for most older people during the 20th century (Thane, 2005a). In Europe from medieval times to the 17th century royalty and members of aristocracy had the ability and resources to pass assets and responsibilities to their adult children, leaving them free to ‘retire’ from the public sphere. This was not an option for the ‘aged poor’, including labourers, journeymen, and peasants, who were expected to continuing working, indeed they could not afford to leave work (Botelho, 2005; Shahar, 2005).

Mass retirement could only occur when a sizable proportion of the population live to old age and are healthy and affluent enough to enjoy considerable time away from work. The introduction of pensions allowed some older people to leave work in relative security. Pensions developed in 17th century Europe to support older people who were too infirm to work. The pensions came either from the church in the Catholic south or the State in the Protestant north (Botelho, 2005). During the 19th century the private sector also began to offer pension schemes, in the UK, mainland Europe, and throughout the British Empire. This was pioneered by the friendly societies that provided “sick pay, burial expenses, unemployment, medical treatment and old ages pensions” (Cole & Edwards, 2005, p. 229). At the same time employees of United States companies began to be offered pension schemes by their employers (Sheppard, 1991). These programs did not cover the majority of the workforce but they meant that retirement became for the first time a realistic option for many people. Many more people were enjoying a time of relative good health between leaving paid employment and becoming incapacitated, during which time one could afford to partake in some modest enjoyments (Graebner, 1980).

Developments in American capitalism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries had a profound role on the development of mass retirement (Graebner, 1980). The rise of scientific management, from the late 19th century through to the 1950s, placed much importance on both automation and productivity and lead to many older workers being deemed unproductive and inefficient. Capitalism in the early 20th century encouraged employers to
rid themselves of such workers in pursuit of productivity. Companies not only terminated older workers they felt were not productive they also introduced mandatory retirement ages for their workers and explicitly sought to hire young men for these new positions. Not surprisingly trade unions, some academics, and other instruments of civil society objected to these practises, and many called into question the wisdom of dismissing workers based solely on age. Paradoxically, some of the proponents of scientific management also began to question the good judgment of these practices (Graebner, 1980; Thane, 2005a).

The slow growth in the acceptance of a universal ‘retirement’ likewise developed throughout the 20th century in Britain. Up until the 1950s the concept of ‘retirement’ was not prevalent amongst working class men and leaving work was often perceived as a tragedy that impacted negatively on all other aspects of life, as discussed in Section 2.5.1. It was only during the last half of the 20th century that working class people in Britain began to see retirement as a potential enjoyable time, when people could enjoy themselves while still relatively young and healthy (Phillipson, et al., 2001, pp. 230-233).

2.9.2 The ‘crisis’ of retirement for men

Leaving paid work can represent a potential crisis of identity for some men. Work is potentially a source of a number of positive aspects of self-identity, as discussed in Section 2.8.3. Leaving work can, therefore, represent a crisis for some men (Gradman, 1994), as this source of self-identify is removed. Townsend’s work on ‘tragic’ retired men who were at a loss for meaningful activities to occupy their days (1963) has already been mentioned in Section 2.5.1. Men report that keeping in contact with work friends is more difficult in retirement than they anticipated. This is particularly true if those friends are still working, as they have lost the common interest of work. This can reduce men’s social networks bringing unexpected isolation (C. Hall, et al., 2007; Macdonald, et al., 2001), with an increased risk of morbidity and mortality (Hanson, et al., 1989; Mistry, Rosansky, McGuire, McDermott, & Jarvik, 2001).

For some the reality of retirement falls short of their pre-retirement expectations. Leaving work is eagerly anticipated by some who anticipate retirement as a time of freedom and activity (Fudge, 1988). Others however approach retirement with trepidation and are concerned about having sufficient money and having ‘enough to do’ (Heartbeat Trends, 2001). A man’s perception of having a ‘successful’ retirement is partly determined by how these pre-retirement expectations are met (Zinn, 2002). Unanticipated negative life events,
such as illness, disability or dissatisfaction with social supports, can lead to positive expectations of retirement being unmet (Alpass, Neville, & Flett, 2000; Zinn, 2002).

Despite these challenges, many men do have a healthy and happy retirement. For some men this is achieved through maintaining and even building new satisfying social networks (Riggs, 1997), while others seek out work-like activities to participate in (C. Hall, et al., 2007). While it is important to acknowledge that the ‘crisis’ of retirement is very real for some men, it is by no means universal and many men adapt well to life in retirement. I suggest that this time of leaving paid work should perhaps more accurately be seen as a time of transition, which brings its own challenges with the potential to cause a crisis of meaning, rather than necessarily a time of crisis.

### 2.10 Cultural Narratives about Male Retirement

Widespread cultural beliefs, attitudes, and or stereotypes affect the way that people talk, think, and internalise attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others. These beliefs, values, attitudes or stereotypes can be transmitted in narrative form. These ‘cultural narratives’ help people make sense of their shared experiences within a culture (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1991) as well as proscribing the culture’s normative expectations of people and their life course, based on age, gender, and life-stage (Bruner, 1987; A. Phoenix, 2008). The values and attitudes coded within these ‘cultural narratives’ are not always apparent and it is by telling stories about real or imagined people that the consequence of certain actions make their message clear. Narratives are modes of discourse that link different events sequentially and consequentially, as discussed in Chapter Three Section 3.3. The mechanisms by which these cultural narratives influence personal narratives are explored in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.

There are many negative cultural beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes about retirement, including that retirement is a non-productive, idle, and potentially deadly time, when men in particular are at risk of losing their identity and sense of self (Mackay, 2007; Zinn, 2002). As has been discussed above, there is some basis for these concerns. These negative views often coalesce into stories around what can happen to men in retirement. Some of the men interviewed told negative stories about men that they knew, which they saw as warnings to all men, despite the fact they themselves had many positives experiences.

Three negative cultural narratives about retirement were identified in this research. Other investigators have also made reference to these narratives circulating in the wider
community (de Vaas & Wells, 2003; Mackay, 2007); this research shows the impact these negative stories have on individual men. The men interviewed did give numerous examples of men enjoying retirement, yet despite this no overall positive cultural stories of male retirement was identified. The negative cultural stories identified in this research see retirement as a time of ‘sitting on the rocking chair, waiting to die’, the ‘underfoot husband’, and ‘dead in a year’. None of the men in this research identified personally with any of these negative cultural narratives of male retirement. Yet, as Chapter Five, Section 5.4 shows, the men used the negative stories of male retirement as well understood cultural narratives which they dialectically positioned themselves against.

2.10.1 The rocking chair on the verandah

The image of the older retired person sitting in a rocking chair, often on a porch or verandah, is a common, ageist assumption of inactivity in old age. Ansello coined the phrase “rocking chair syndrome” almost four decades ago to describe this misinterpretation of old age (1976). The ‘rocking chair’ has become so potent an ageist symbol that even those challenging the stereotypes it represents need only name it to make their point, such as Llyod’s (2009) “Ditch the rocking chair” and Down and Patricia’s (2000) “Escape from the rocking chair”.

A variety of authors have challenged the symbolism of the rocking chair, naming it for the ageism it is and entreating older people themselves to “ditch the rocking chair” and all it represents (Lloyd, 2009), while others have drawn attention to the use of this symbol, particularly in children’s books, as a way of forming and reinforcing negative stereotypes about old age and retirement (Ansello, 1976; P. A. Crawford, 2000), and with young adult’s perceptions of older people (Downs & Patricia, 1981).

Some older men do experience retirement as a time of reduced activity and interaction. Some retired men report that being retired involves leaving behind the “active world of work” for “a different kind of world … which is inactive” (Macdonald, et al., 2001, p. 14). This perception of retirement as a time of idleness is resisted by others, sometimes in the extreme. In 2005 former US President George H. Bush celebrated his 85th birthday with a parachute jump, the former President made it clear that this jump was about remaining active, he was reported as saying: “Just because you're an old guy, you don't have to sit around drooling in the corner”, and he encouraged other older people to “Get out and do something. Get out and enjoy life” (Sharp, 2009).
When John Glenn, the former US Senator and astronaut, returned to space on the space shuttle in 1998 the headline of the New York Daily News declared “No rocking chairs for him yet” (Sisk, 1998). Here the rocking chair is again the symbol for an inactive male retirement and again Sen. Glenn, as an active retiree, is positioned in opposition to the rocking chair. The cultural narrative of the rocking chair is extended to include another familiar element by one of Sen. Glenn’s aides who is reported in the article as saying “This guy is not going to sit on the porch.” The point here is that this headline makes sense to readers because the metaphor of the ‘rocking chair on the porch’ is so culturally entrenched.

2.10.2 Underfoot husband

Hugh Mackay refers to this as the experience of retired men finding themselves at a loss once leaving work and attempting to compensate for this loss of direction by becoming “a newly enthusiastic couple” much to his wife’s annoyance (Mackay, 2007, p. 93). Mackay documented many Australians, retired and otherwise, talking about the underfoot husband and the discontent this causes both partners. Other researchers agree with the widespread nature of their cultural narrative but question the extent to which this is a reality in Australia (de Vaus & Wells, 2003). The remark, attributed to the Duchess of Windsor, “I married him for better or for worse but not for lunch” has come to represent the frustrations of the wives of such men who feel they are spending too much time with their semi-dependent retired husband (de Vaus & Wells, 2003).

In Japan retired men in this situation are demeaned by the term nure ochiba or “wet fallen leaves”, in reference to how they get in the way and ‘cling’ annoyingly to their wives (Hori, 2011). This particular maladjustment to retirement has been recognised in Japan as the so-called medical condition “Retired Husband Syndrome” and therapeutic interventions have been developed (Mackay, 2007).

2.10.3 “Dead in a year”

Older men are rarely discussed in the growing popular discourses about men, as discussed in Section 2.6. Stephen Biddulph’s book Manhood (Biddulph, 1995) was the start of much popular interest in Australia about men and their role in society. The focus of Manhood, like so many other books about men, is very much on the needs and concerns of younger working men, such as the important issues of fathering young children, and maintaining work/life balance. Retirement is briefly discussed as a “bad idea” because in Biddulph’s own words “when you retire, you die” (Biddulph, 1995, pp. 162-163). Anthony Clare’s polemical On men: Masculinity in crisis offers a British perspective on the concerns of contemporary men
it too is concerned with fathers and fatherhood and the emphasis and importance placed on paid work and being a provider. Clare makes no reference to older men’s roles or expectations in families, such as being a grandfather, and only discusses the negative impact of retirement on men who work too hard. To Clare, retired men have lost the things that define them and give them purpose, they are “to all extents and purposes, no longer a man” (Clare, 2000, pp. 89-90). Like Biddulph, Clare relates retiring to dying, a retired man “is dead” who can expect to “just slowly wither away” (Clare, 2000, p. 90).

The linking of retirement to death is a common theme in many popular discussions about retirement. The expectation that one will die soon after retirement is perhaps not surprising given the discussion about the perception of retirement as a time of decrepitude, decay, and uselessness. While there is some evidence that people who retire early have a higher mortality rate than their peers who remain working (Lievre et al., 2007) this could be accounted for by people retiring early due to pre-existing poor health. The majority of retirees however are no more at risk of increased morbidity or premature death than their working peers (Litwin, 2007; Tsai, Wendt, Donnelly, de Jong, & Ahmed, 2005).

Despite the evidence to the contrary the linking of retirement with premature death is very strong in the public imagination. The strength of this misconception is such that Ascough lists “retirement as the end of the road” as the first of the Australian “retirement myths”’ that he debunks (Ascough, 2002, p. 18). Perhaps this should, sadly, be no surprise given the above ‘rocking chair’ narratives about retirement as a time of inactivity and uselessness.

2.10.4 Busy ethic

My old dad went to work every day
He did overtime on his holidays
They offered him retirement when he turned 65
He said he’d rather work till the day he died

*My Old Dad, Mike Rudd (2004)*

David Ekerdt observes that “one cannot talk to retirees for very long without hearing the rhetoric of busyness” (Ekerdt, 1986, p. 243). The ‘work ethic’, as discussed in Section 2.8.2, frames work and employment as both a social and moral good hence people who are not engaged in work are therefore at risk of being seen as idle and morally suspect. Ekerdt argues that retirees must, therefore, constantly position themselves discursively as busy active people in order to maintain a positive identity both for themselves and others. He calls
this set of personal and societal values and beliefs the ‘busy ethic’. The ‘busy ethic’ is a continuation of a person’s own personal ‘work ethic’ that values being busy and active, as well as being a set of cultural attitudes and cultural beliefs which require retirees to present an active ‘face’ to the world (1986). That retirees subscribe to such a ‘busy ethic’ and present a busy, active ‘face’ to the world has been confirmed in the subsequent work of Savishinsky (2000) and Weiss (2005).

Being ‘busy’ is a way that some people adapt to the cultural expectations of retirement. The ‘busy ethic’ places a boundary around the retirement role, ‘legitimating’ and even ‘esteeming’ leisure that is “earnest, occupied and filled with activity” (Ekerdt, 1986, p. 239). The leisure activities which are esteemed most, by retirees and wider culture, are those which are “infused with aspects of work” (Ekerdt, 1986, p. 241).

Problematising ‘busyness’ in retirement may seem at odds with the ample evidence that remaining physically active and socially connected maintains older people’s health, reduces morbidity, and increases longevity (Buchman, Yu, Boyle, Shah, & Bennett, 2012; Dishman, Heath, & Lee, 2012; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999; Michaud, Murray, & Bloom, 2001; Ross & Mirowsky, 2002; Skladzien & O’Dwyer, 2010). Retirees are encouraged to be active and busy not just through cultures morals and mores but also deliberately by the “gerontological community” that advocates, on the basis of strong evidence, that retirees remain active and socially engaged. In Ekerdt’s view, the way this evidence is presented to retirees has the paradoxical effect of increasing the moral imperative to remain ‘busy’ in retirement. The scientific gerontological and medical evidence is thus co-opted into reinforcing the prevailing societal norms and moral imperatives about retirement.

The “rhetoric of busyness” is also used to discursively position oneself in opposition to the cultural narratives of male retirement as a time of inactivity and uselessness. Richard Sennett (2006) observes that in contemporary capitalist societies the “spectre of uselessness” haunts those who are perceived as not having marketable up-to-date saleable skills (p. 86). Older people feel this “spectre” in many ways, through ageist assumptions about people’s abilities, or lack of them, in the workforce and that once out of the workforce they are no longer productive or useful. In the “modern economy” old age is seen as “a measure of uselessness” (Sennett, 2006, p. 94). It is clear that some older men have internalised these ideas of retirement, which they see as time of “enforced idleness” (Zinn, 2002, p. 22). Presenting oneself as ‘busy’ therefore allows retirees to positively adapt to the social norms around retirement, while at the same time perpetuating the moral imperatives within the culture to remain active and engaged (Ekerdt, 1986).
2.10.5 Summary

These negative cultural stories about male retirement do have some basis in fact. Retired men do have to redefine their perceived ‘worth’ against a new norm and they are at increased risk of becoming socially isolated in retirement. Traditional cultures tend to have defined, respected, and valued cultural and familial roles for older men and women. There is a diminished cultural imperative for such roles in modern urbanised cultures and older men are no longer, for good and ill, resource rich family patriarchs (Gutmann, 1997b). While older women’s roles have also changed and diminished there is still the retention, to some degree, of their traditional “kin-tending” roles as family matriarchs (Gutmann, 1987, p. 249). The prevailing negative cultural narratives about male retirement are, in a sense, warnings about realistic threats for some men.

While modernity has brought a diminution of older men’s power and influence it has conversely also allowed men to construct meaningful retirements in new ways. It is regrettable that these pervasive cultural narratives of male retirement acknowledge neither the diversity of the experience of retirement nor the possibility of retirement as an enjoyable and productive time of life.

2.11 Enthusiasms and Hobbies

The focus of this study is on the experiences older men have of work and retirement and of their hobbies in retirement. This research drew on the emerging literature around the development in Australia of community men’s sheds and other literature from men’s health and social gerontology, as reviewed below. The literature from discipline of leisure studies was only briefly reviewed; in particular Bishop and Hogget’s work on organised leisure groups (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986). The literature reviewed was that which focused more on the psychological and social benefits that derive from participation in such activities and in belonging to these groups. As such the social gerontological and men’s health literature has proved the most useful.

I have used Bishop and Hoggett (1986) term ‘enthusiasms’ to describe the range of activities explored in this research. The term encompasses a range of activities beyond the traditional notions of ‘hobbies’. Bishop and Hoggett define ‘enthusiasms’ as any activity in which people freely partake and which “typically assumes the form of highly skilled and imaginative work, whilst remaining leisure and not employment” (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986, p. 1). ‘Enthusiasts’ are, self-evidently, people with a particular ‘enthusiasm’. The word ‘enthusiasm’ has its origin in the Greek word *entheos*, meaning “inspired by God”.

56.
‘Enthusiast’ was first applied, often in a pejorative sense, to people expressing strong religious views, similar to the usage of the word ‘fundamentalist’ today. In the 18th century the word came to be used in much the same way it is used today, to describe a person who has a strong interest, or even “an obsession” with a particular activity or thing (Kieran, 2009, pp. 6-7).

Men’s enthusiasms and hobbies, particularly older men’s enthusiasms, have received little interest from the academy. Older men’s membership of voluntary organisations has, likewise, been neglected by researchers (Perren, Arber, & Davidson, 2003). I suspect this lack of attention is a product of the ‘invisibility’ of older men within academia (A. A. Fleming, 1999; E. H. Thompson, 1994). Men’s participation in a range of other collective endeavours has been problematized, as has women’s participation in activities deemed to be stereotypically female.

Second wave feminism problematized women’s traditional handicrafts that, together with housework and motherhood, “fell into a kind of feminist disrepute” (Grace, 2006, p. 317). This resulted in some feminists deliberately suppressing “stereotypically feminine activities”, which Marty Grace characterises as “Don’t mention the children and don’t knit in public” (2006, p. 317). Grace is among many craftswomen who are currently reinventing and ‘reclaiming’ traditional female crafts such as knitting, sewing, and quilting as feminist endeavours (Gandolfo & Grace, 2009). There are craftswomen working today who see these activities as ways of connecting and identifying with other contemporary craftswomen as well as “with women across thousands of years” (Stephanie, 2011).

Enthusiast groups appear to have, on the whole, escaped the specific attention of feminist and pro-feminist academics. I expect though they would be treated with misgivings, as such groups tend to be both male dominated and stereotypical masculine, attributes which have generally been viewed as suspect amongst such scholars (Adams & Coltrane, 2004). As discussed above, activities or organisations which promote homosociability, the “seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex” (Lipman-Blumen, 1976, p. 16), amongst men have been problematised, as some believe that male friendships and male groups act in ways to reinforce exploitative sexual relations with women and homophobia (Flood, 2008; Kimmel, 1994). Men’s participation in organised sport has been particularly critiqued by feminist and pro-feminist scholars as a way of entrenching “competition and hierarchy amongst men” and the “exclusion and domination of women” (Connell, 2005, p. 54). This view has been challenged more recently by those advocating a more balanced view.
of men and masculinity, which recognises that there are also positive aspects of participation in sport, especially for young men from disadvantaged backgrounds (N. R. Hall, 2011).

Homosociability and male friendships are discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.6.3. Haring’s (2007) study of ham radio culture includes an analysis of the masculine nature of the enthusiasm, which promotes stereotypical masculine behaviour and marginalises women who take up the hobby, while at the same time being a hobbyist presents an identity somewhat at odds with broader societal expectations of what it means to be a man. Haring’s is the only academic work identified that tackled gender issues in such enthusiasms.

2.11.1 Older men’s membership of enthusiast groups

Enthusiasts partake in their enthusiasm either alone or collectively. Bishop and Hoggett use the term “communal leisure group”, or just “group”, to refer to the various clubs, societies, and associations where enthusiast come together around their enthusiasms (1986, p. 1). Research in London in the 1960s found that many older men were members of a number of such enthusiast or hobby organisations (Willmott & Young, 1960). Membership of such organisations was conceptualised as a way to “replace the gap” left by having contact with fewer relatives (Phillipson, et al., 2001, p. 231). There is a danger however in framing such ‘organised sociability’ merely as a gap filler, as this implies that the organised activities are somehow second best to activities with family or informal friendship networks. Such an approach devalues the importance organised activities may have in their own right, both to the people involved and the wider community.

This research is investigating retired men who are members of hobbyist or enthusiast organisations. No literature was identified which quantified the number or proportion of men involved in various types of hobbyist or enthusiast organisations. In 2010 some 424,900 retired men participated in some sort of organised volunteer work in Australia, as defined and measured by the (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b, p. 14). This represents 28.4% of retired men in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b, p. 15). A breakdown of the number and proportion of older men involved in organised volunteering is given in Table 2.2. These are the only data identified that give an indication of the number of retired men involved in organised volunteer activity but they are not sufficient to give insight into retired men’s involvement in enthusiast groups. The ABS identifies different categories of volunteering and it is not possible to estimate the number of people involved in hobbyist or enthusiast organisations from these categories. Some organisations such as rail or technology museums may be included as “Arts / Heritage” organisations, while others may be counted
in the “Sports and physical recreation” category. Obviously, these categories would also capture involvement in organisations other than enthusiast groups, while others, such as members of ham radio groups, may not be measured under any of the ABS categories.

Table 2.2. Men over 65 and retired men who volunteered in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Volunteers '000</th>
<th>All '000</th>
<th>Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men 65-74</td>
<td>299.4</td>
<td>784.0</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men 75-84</td>
<td>115.9</td>
<td>434.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men 85+</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 65+</td>
<td>419.7</td>
<td>1,314.4</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All men 18+</td>
<td>2,845.0</td>
<td>8,281.8</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian population</td>
<td>10,703.9</td>
<td>16,788.2</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(men and women 18+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired men</td>
<td>424.9</td>
<td>1,494.3</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: data from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b

No other data has been identified which gives a more accurate indication of the number or proportion of people who participate in hobbyist groups. Likewise, an analysis of older men’s organisational affiliations in the UK was unable to report on the number of older men who were members of such groups. The British Household Panel Study, who collected the original data, did not appear to explicitly ask about membership of enthusiast groups, although participants’ membership of sporting groups, religious groups, social clubs, volunteer groups, and pensioner organisations was collected. The UK study reveals that men from professional, managerial, or “skilled non-manual” backgrounds are more likely, on the whole, to join organisations. This is especially true for organisations with a civic, religious, or sports focus but the trend is reversed for social clubs, where men from skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds are more likely to be members (Perren, et al., 2003).

The ABS reports that in 2006 men aged 65 and over spent an average of 15 minutes per day on activities labelled “games, hobbies, arts, crafts”; compared to 26 minutes a day for women of the same age (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, p. 9). This is less than the average amount that women of a similar age spend on these activities, more than middle
aged men, as shown in Table 2.3. This measure uses the same categories of activities as discussed above and so does not neatly capture all enthusiasms.

Table 2.3. Average time spent on games, hobbies, arts and crafts, by age and sex, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-44</th>
<th>45-64</th>
<th>65 and over</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minutes per day</td>
<td>Minutes per day</td>
<td>Minutes per day</td>
<td>Minutes per day</td>
<td>Minutes per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The measure of average time spent on these activities shows the general trend of the relative time men and women of different ages spend on games, hobbies, arts, and crafts but it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from such time use data without knowing more about the total number of people involved. The ambiguity in the reported ABS data makes it impossible to estimate the number and characteristics of older men involved in enthusiast groups.

In the absence of such quantitative data I have had to rely on anecdotal evidence of others and my own experience. From my previous experience working with both men’s and older people’s groups it appears that more men are involved in the more established forms of community involvement, such as organised volunteering and service clubs (such as Rotary or Lions Clubs), than in the emerging forms of community engagement such organisations as Older Men: New Ideas and community men’s sheds⁴. In the absence of any objective measure, I suspect that many more men are members of such groups than commonly assumed but far less than are involved in more ‘traditional’ organised volunteering. This lack of information about numbers and characterises of men involved in enthusiasms influenced the eventual choice of recruitment strategies for the study.

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⁴ These are 2 Australian organisations that have successfully engaged older men in recent years. Older Men: New Ideas (OM:NI) is a network of small men’s groups where men aged over 55 regularly meet and talk about their own experiences in a safe, confidential, group environment (Older Men: New Ideas, 2005). Community men’s sheds are community owned workshops, often fitted out with woodworking or metalworking equipment, where men come to together to work on community and personal projects (Australian Association of Men’s Sheds, 2011).
2.11.2 Enthusiasms as subcultures

People who participate in an enthusiasm can be seen as belonging to a distinct subculture, with its own norms, values and expectations. The term subculture is used throughout this thesis to refer to the particular culture and cultural norms of the enthusiasms to which the men belong. Using the term in this way is consistent with its use in other investigations into enthusiast or interest groups which have been defined as subcultures (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986; Fuller, 2007) even though most other sociological investigations into subcultures tend to focus on groups that radically deviate from mainstream or hegemonic culture (Leuner, 1999).

Although not as radical as the punks of Hebdige’s (1979) seminal work on subculture, members of woodworking associations, antique machinery restoration clubs, and other enthusiast groups do modestly resist aspects of the dominant culture. This is particularly seen in their opposition to attempts to commercialise parts of the enthusiasm (Bishop & Hoggett, 1986; Fuller, 2007). Although for some hobbies this is complicated by their need to purchase specialist equipment, such as the electronic components needed to build a ham radio. Ham radio operators do however assert that hams should build their own radios and resist the commercial pressure to buy ready built radio units (Haring, 2007). The resistance of these enthusiast subcultures to such commercial and other pressures are mentioned at various times throughout this thesis, they do not, however, form a major part of this work.

This study focuses on the meaning retired men make of their involvement in various enthusiasms. Subcultures provide their members with “security and identity” and generate “a set of meanings” which help the group and its members “tolerate the exigencies” of their situation (Leuner, 1999, p. 837). It is these shared meanings and the ways in which they assist the men to form and maintain an enthusiast sub-identity which are, therefore, the focus of much of this research. Some of the sociological implications of the complex interplays between these enthusiast subcultures and the majority culture are examined but this is limited to how these interactions relate to the meanings the men interviewed made of their involvement in these subcultures.

2.11.3 Enthusiast magazines and websites

Enthusiast magazines and websites constitute part of the wider discourse of each enthusiasm subculture. Most of the men interviewed had collections of magazines connected to their enthusiasm, some had even written articles, and many used the internet extensively to learn more and share information about their enthusiasms. Most of the clubhouses and museums I
visited in the course of this research had copies of the relevant magazines and other enthusiasm related literature. At the railway museum enthusiasts also talked about and informally shared other media, such as DVD documentaries.

Enthusiast magazines influence both individual enthusiasts and the enthusiast subculture as a whole. Haring (2007) found that specialist magazines are one way that the ham radio community shares and codifies common values and expectations. Glen Fuller found a similar mechanism at work in Australian modified car culture. He asserts that modified car magazines influence various social institutions within the modified car subculture; institutions which include regulatory bodies, commercial interests, and enthusiast organisations themselves. By selecting and ‘valorising’ certain “elements and events” of the enthusiasm at the expense of others enthusiast magazines “affectively modulate the collective enthusiasm by stimulating and enabling the enthusiasm in certain ways” (Fuller, 2007, p. 222).

Establishing common values and mores, via these magazines, also helps shape radio enthusiasts’ ‘ham’ sub-identity. The concept of people having ‘sub-identities’ which are context dependant and part of one’s overall identity are explored in more detail in Chapter Three, Section 3.9.1. A large popular literature was identified for all of the enthusiasms touched on in this research, so it is presumable that similar mechanisms of identity development are at work in other enthusiasms, as they are for ham radio operators.

There are many more, but these were identified during the course of the project:

- **Ham Radio**
  - Ham Radio Magazine
  - CQ - Amateur Radio
  - AR magazine (Australia)
- **Control line flying**
  - Model Aircraft
  - Aviation Modeller International
- **Machinery**
  - Old Tractors (UK)
  - The Old Machinery Magazines (Australian)
- **Woodturning**
  - Australian Woodworker (Australian)
  - Woodturning Magazine
- Various specialist magazines for wooden toys, etc.

- Railway
  - Railway Digest (Australian)
  - Railway Magazine

Likewise, numerous websites were identified. They include websites for individual groups and regional, national, and even international governing bodies, together with enthusiast blogs and chatrooms. In addition the numerous commercial websites advertise specialist equipment for enthusiasts. The enthusiast run Australian Control Line Nostalgia website brings both web and magazines together with a listing of various relevant magazines for model aeroplane makers and flyers published in Australia from 1950 to present day (Kidd, 2005a).

### 2.11.4 Community men’s sheds

This research is not focusing on community men’s sheds. There is growing research interest in community men’s sheds (Ballinger, Talbot, & Verrinder, 2009; Golding, 2011; Golding, Brown, Foley, Harvey, & Gleeson, 2007; Morgan, 2010; Ormsby, Stanley, & Jaworski, 2010; N. J. Wilson & Cordier, 2013), the burgeoning men’s shed literature has found that men enjoy and benefit from the “participation, camaraderie, socialisation and skill development” that comes from belonging to a shed (N. J. Wilson & Cordier, 2013, p. 1). Community men’s sheds are similar in many respects to the groups explored in this research; they differ from enthusiast groups in two key ways. Firstly, many of the men who join community men’s sheds do not necessarily have a long standing involvement and enthusiastic interest in the work of the shed, and secondly community men’s sheds tend not to be as focused on one particular activity, as is the case with enthusiast groups. As this is a study of retired men’s enthusiasms it was felt that too few hobbyists and enthusiasts could be sourced from men’s sheds and that it was better to focus directly on enthusiast groups.

### 2.12 Research Questions

It is clear from the above review that investigation into older men’s subjective experiences is needed and has been overlooked. Male retirement tends to be problematized, in both academic literature and in more general discourse throughout the culture and yet many men appear to be leading happy and healthy retirements. The following research question therefore seeks to understand male retirement from the ‘inside’ of men’s experience:
What meanings and identities do retired men construct of their experiences of retirement and of leaving work?

Involvement in a hobby or enthusiasm increases social connection and physical activity, both of which are associated with increased physical health and feelings of wellbeing, yet the link between being an enthusiast and the experience of retirement is largely uninvestigated, leading to the sub-question of:

In what ways does having an enthusiasm and being a member of an enthusiast group impact on men’s meaning and understanding of being retired?

2.13 Chapter Summary

Older men are mostly absent in contemporary discourses around men and older people. When older men are considered they are most often depicted in stereotypical, problem-focused terms, with a focus either on the problems and difficulties older men face or as older men themselves as problems. Where salutogenic or assets-based approaches have been applied to men or older people they have not, as yet, been specificity adapted to older men. The few positive conceptualisations of older men which have, unfortunately, taken the opposite extreme, conceptualising older men as wise elders, creating unrealistic expectations for the men concerned which can only lead to disappointment when they fail to meet these idealistic, romanticised ideals. A realistic and compassionate understanding of older men is needed, which acknowledges and is concerned for the challenges they face, while at the same time being aware of and celebrating the positive generative contributions of older men.

Investigation into older men’s lives remains restricted and when older men’s experiences are considered they are usually framed not around research based evidence but on stereotypes and gendered assumptions. The lack of understanding around older men’s experiences is well documented and there remains a dearth of research into older men’s subjectivities despite numerous calls for more research (Randall, 2008; Roper, 2005; Russell, 2007).

Thus the experiences, meaning, and sense of identity of retired men are the foci of this study. Specifically in regard to: being retired, leaving work, having an enthusiasm, and being part of an enthusiast community. In Chapter Three I explore methodologies adept at uncovering subjective meaning and identity, specifically hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative analysis.
3 Research Design: Methodology and Method

“The best teachers are the aged…
Their talk is not merely literature, it is great literature”
Robert Louis Stevenson (1882/1988)
“Talk and Talkers (Part II)”

Chapter Two demonstrates that older men are largely absent from contemporary men’s health and gerontology discourses. This research aims to counteract this trend by contributing to the small but growing literature around older men and their experience of being-in-the-world. The metaphor of giving ‘voice’ to this neglected population is explored through methodologies which focus on listening to and interpreting how older men themselves come to understand their experiences.

This chapter establishes the methodological foundations of the study. The chapter discusses why hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative theory have been chosen as the methodologies that inform both my understanding of how people make meaning of their experiences in the world as well as the methods chosen to carry out this study. Part A, Methodology, discusses the methodological underpinnings of the research, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics, and narrative theory. Part B, Methods, explores the methods and analytic procedures used to carry out the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the case-centred approach used to present the findings.

This chapter also outlines and defines the key scientific terms used in the research. The phenomenological concepts of ‘knowing’, ‘understanding’, and ‘meaning’ are used throughout the research, they are employed here as scientific terms which differ from their vernacular use. The section below on narrative reviews some of the history and contentions around the word and its use. A definition of narrative is arrived at and used throughout the thesis. The use of these scientific terms in this thesis is intended to contribute, modestly, to the ongoing use and development of these concepts.
PART A METHODOLOGY

Not life but memory makes man.
Life leaves no mark on time;
But memory has given us words.
Words are the steps by which we climb.

*Arrows*, Dame Mary Gilmore (1960/1990)

This research explores the meanings retired men construct of both their current involvement in organised community activities and their remembered experiences of paid work and retirement. Methodologies have therefore been explored which explain the processes by which human beings build and come to understand the meanings we attach to particular experiences.

### 3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology seeks to explore and understand the subjective perspective of experiencing events. It is in effect “the analysis of experience” (Macann, 2007, p. 20). Phenomenological inquiry in the early 20th century was concerned with how human beings come to know and understand our existence. The leading phenomenological thinkers of the first half of the 20th century, Edmund Husserl (1859-1928) and his student Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), saw this project of understanding and knowing one’s subjective existence in the world as fundamentally different from trying to know and understand the objective real world.

#### 3.1.1 Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology

Taking his lead from Descartes, Husserl understands that one’s consciousness, the ego, knows that it exists. Furthermore, this knowledge of the ego’s own existence persists through time. The ego “is continuously constituting himself as existing”, a state Husserl defines as “Transcendental Self Constitution” (Husserl, 1977, p. 66, original emphasis). Husserl mapped the process by which the transcendental ego comes to know and understand its existence, and the wider world. For Husserl, the ‘site’ at which this transcendental understanding of the self occurs is the *Geist*, the ‘mind’ or ‘spirit’ (1977).

Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology is an *epistemological* project that investigates and seeks to explain how a person’s *Geist* comes to know and understand itself and the world. Husserl held that this understanding was achieved through *bracketing* or the holding in abeyance of one’s existing assumptions, preconceptions and knowledge (Husserl, 1977). The
concept of bracketing also influenced a body of researchers who advocated and practised a purely Husserlian approach. These researchers, when considering their research participants and data, would endeavour to arrive at an objective understanding of their participants’ experiences by attempting to hold their own preconceptions and presuppositions in abeyance, while reflecting deeply on the experiences of others (Ray, 1994, p. 118).

### 3.1.2 Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology

Heidegger departs fundamentally from Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, by understanding phenomenological inquiry to be an ontological, rather than epistemological, project (Ray, 1994). In other words Heidegger sees phenomenology as concerned with being and existing, rather than knowing. Heidegger shifts the site of phenomenological inquiry from the Geist (spirit or mind) to the Dasein (the experience of being-in-the-world). Dasein means ‘existence’ in vernacular German and was used as such by Hegel, Husserl and other German philosophers (Collins & Selina, 1999). Heidegger expands the term to also incorporate the notion of being, using a play on words to read Dasein as Da/Sein (There/Being). Dasein then comes to mean both existence and being-there, it is “the entity that we each ourselves are, which each finds in the fundamental assertion: I am” (1992, p. 6E). For Heidegger phenomenology became a reflection and investigation into the nature of being and the nature of being/existing-in-the-world⁵ (1962, pp. 30-32).

Heidegger further postulates that such ontological inquiry can only be achieved through a hermeneutic (interpretive) approach. For Heidegger interpretation and thus understanding of the world occurs through and with reference to, a person’s presuppositions and existing understandings of being-in-the-world (Ray, 1994, pp. 120-122). This rejection of bracketing represents a significant break with Husserl’s phenomenology. Thus Heidegger not only allows room for subjective interruptive influences, he recognises that it is only through the lens of such subjective experience that Dasein can come to understand the experience of one’s own being and through this the Dasein of others. This rejection of the concept of bracketing and reclaiming of the subjective as a site of interpretation, which frees researchers from attempting to bracket their own assumptions, understandings and preconceptions when considering the experiences of others. The researcher’s existing understanding of their own place in the world becomes then an essential tool in interpreting the subject’s Dasein.

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⁵ Dasein is explained in this instance as being/existing-in-the-world to demonstrate the dual meaning of ‘being’ and ‘existence’ that Heidegger gives the word. For the remainder of this thesis it will be referred to simply as being-in-the-world which is consistent with most English translations.
3.1.3 Phenomenological knowing, understanding, and meaning

Edith Stein (1891-1942) was another of Husserl’s students. Stein distinguishes ‘knowing’ and ‘understanding’ as different but related concepts. Knowing, in a phenomenological sense, is the “mental grasping” of external phenomena, it is the means by which a person perceives through their senses “that something is” (Stein, 2000, p. 65, original emphasis). This knowledge, the “sense perception of a thing, is never concluded in itself” and it is not until some sort of judgement is applied to knowledge that it comes to be ‘understood’\(^6\). In other words, a perceived object remains just an object until it is made intelligible through analytic and synthetic acts, which make the known object ‘understood’ as a specific object in a specific context (Stein, 2000, p. 72).

Heidegger explains that once understood entities can then become meaningful, when they are understood in relation to one’s own being-in-the-world. Other entities are “discovered” as being “within-the-world” alongside our own Dasein, “that is, when they come to be understood [verständlich] – we say that they have meaning [Sinn]” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 192). So meaning, in this context, is the understanding that is given to other entities in the world, in relation to our own being-in-the-world. Understanding the uniqueness of a particular phenomenon is not enough to confer meaning on that phenomenon. A phenomenon becomes meaningful when it is understood in relationship to, or along with, our own being (Dasein). So entities become known when they are perceived, are understood when the particularities and context of the specific entity are appreciated, and then are made meaningful when a relationship is established to one’s self and one’s own being. Not all aspects of being are, however, understood or given meaning. Dasein does not however confer meaning, or even understanding, on all aspects of being. Some people, objects or experiences may not be understood (in a phenomenological sense) and will remain without meaning [sinnlos] (Heidegger, 1962, p. 192).

For Heidegger meaning is achieved primarily through language. Language is the way that people (Beings) “open themselves up” to each other and to each other’s Dasein, understandings, and meanings (Heidegger, 2000, p. 86). This fundamental relationship between language and meaning making was explored further by hermeneutic phenomenologists, such as Heidegger’s student and colleague Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002).

\(^6\) The translators of Heidegger’s Being and Time offer both “intelligible” and “understanding” as English translations of the German verständlich, (Macquarrie & Robinson, 1962, footnote 1, p. 193). In quoting from both Stein and Heidegger the words ‘intelligible’ and ‘intelligibility’ have been replaced with ‘understanding’ and ‘understandable’ as I feel this better conveys Heidegger’s argument in the context of this discussion around understanding and meaning.
3.1.4 Summary and implications for this research

The phenomenon of being-in-the-world is itself perceived as existing and through this perception Dasein comes to know that it exists. In other words, we are beings in-the-world who know that we are beings in-the-world. This knowledge of our own Dasein is further contextualised to the point where we understand the particularity and subjectivity of our own being-in-the-world. Through understanding Dasein we move from being-in-the-world to being-me-in-the-world. By being-in-the-world we also perceive, interact with, and come to know that there are other entities in the world. Once known these other entities, be they people, objects or events, come to be understood as specific entities in specific situations.

Hermeneutic phenomenology provides an explanation of the mechanisms through which human beings create meaning. Hermeneutic phenomenology thus informs my understandings of how retired men come to understand and give meaning to their experiences of work, retirement, and belonging to enthusiast organisations. It is also employed as a methodology that informs the analytic processes used in the research.

3.2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutic inquiry builds on Heidegger’s phenomenological appreciation of how we come to understand our being-in-the-world (Woolfolk, et al., 1988, p. 4). We are therefore hermeneutic beings, using interpretative processes, both as individuals in our personal attempts to understand our own Dasein and as researchers investigating others’ and our own constructed understandings. The Western tradition has had a long interest in the nature and limits of interpretation. The term hermeneutics is used to describe a variety of epistemological and methodological approaches to “the art or science of the interpretation of texts or works of art” (Quinton, 1999). Heidegger’s student Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) developed the interpretive aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology, and as part of this traced the historical development of hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1979, 2001).

Interest in the nature of interpretation can be traced back to ancient times and the ancient Greek word hermeneuein (interpretation) can be found in Plato and Aristotle, and was considered by later Roman philosophers. The Medieval Scholastics adopted the word and concepts as a means of biblical interpretation and while the interpretations themselves changed, early Protestant thinkers adopted and adapted hermeneutic approaches to biblical scholarship. Since the Reformation, hermeneutic approaches continue to be influenced by theology and biblical scholarship as well as by more recent philosophical movements.
Contemporary hermeneutics owes much to the Rationalist thought of the Enlightenment, and the German and English Romantic movements of 18th century (Gadamer, 2001, pp. 36-39).

In contemporary discourses, hermeneutics is used to describe theory and method in disciplines as varied as biblical scholarship, philological methodology, and linguistic and textual analysis (Palmer, 1969, pp. 12-45). While there are controversies and disagreements between and within the Christian and secular discourse over the definition and use of the term hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969), the common thread in all uses of hermeneutics is the interpretation of words, texts and pictures in the Geisteswissenschaften, a useful German word concerned with “all the humanities and social sciences, all those disciplines which interpret expressions of man’s inner life” (Palmer, 1969, p. 98).

3.2.1 Gadamer and the hermeneutics of language

For Gadamer language and conversation are essential means through which we create, organise, and understand our being-in-the-world. Gadamer recognises that human understanding is underpinned by language, indeed “that which can be understood is language” (Gadamer, 1979, p. 432). We come to understand our being-in-the-world through language, when something is put into words we are attempting to understand and make others understand the entity (event, experience or thing) being spoken about. The processes of language and understanding are neither separate nor distinct from each other, “language is not a supplement of understanding. Understanding and interpretation are always intertwined with each other” (Gadamer, 2001, p. 51).

The dynamic intertwining of language and understanding brings with it certain complexities, ambiguities, and paradoxes. Even when an understanding is achieved, that understanding may not always be spoken, for “the way in which that understanding comes about – whether in the case of a text or a conversation with another person who presents us with the object – lies [in] the coming-into-language of the thing itself” (Gadamer, 1979, p. 341).

Conversations are potential sites where such understanding occurs. “[A] conversation is a process of two people understanding each other” (Gadamer, 1979, p. 347), an understanding achieved through language. Language, which in a conversation, “bears its own truth within it, i.e. that it reveals something which henceforth exists” (Gadamer, 1979, p. 345). Of course not all conversations reveal truth or increase understanding, and Gadamer acknowledges that for understanding to be achieved each interlocutor needs to enter into conversations prepared to listen to the other, for “we do not need just to hear one another but to listen to one another.”
Only when this happens is there understanding” (Gadamer, 2001, p. 39, original emphasis). ‘Listening’ implies reflective thoughtful attention to what is said in conversation. The importance of listening in the research setting is explored in more detail below in the discussion on research interviewing (Section 3.17.1 below).

Language and conversations are not the only way through which we arrive at an understanding of our being-in-the-world. They are vehicles by which the factors that influence our understanding of the world are passed on (Ray, 1994, pp. 121). Understanding, therefore, comes through seeing language use as the “lived reality to be understood” (A. A. Fleming, 2001, p. 63). This is explored further in the discussion below about narrative.

### 3.2.2 The hermeneutic circle

Implicit in the discussion above is that these interpretative processes themselves are dependent on existing understandings and contexts. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was the first to describe this contextual process as the *hermeneutic circle* where the “parts are interpreted within some understanding of the whole” (Woolfolk, et al., 1988, p. 7). This “understanding of the whole” includes the extant beliefs and understandings through which the hermeneutic process is informed and which builds the emergent understanding of current experience. This emergent understanding in turn influences and informs the pre-existing understandings and meanings that preceded it. Within this dynamic “circularity of understanding”, understanding is fluid, constantly changing in reference to new emerging understandings (A. A. Fleming, 2001, p. 60).

The emergence of understanding and meaning are active discursive processes. Both speaker and the listener contribute to understanding and making meaning, even though each may reach different understandings and meanings. For Gadamer the process of sharing meanings with others is *productive* as well as *reproductive*. To use a computer metaphor, the listener does not just ‘download’ the exact meaning of the speaker *in toto*, meaning for the listener is built up through the circular referencing of their understanding of the current interaction and its context, to their own existing forestructures and prejudices (Sass, 1988, p. 251). The “communication event” is thus much more than two simultaneous unrelated hermeneutic processes in the minds of the speaker and listener (Sass, 1988, p. 252). The richness of the communication event comes from the interaction between the 2, the context in which it occurs, and the degree of similarity and difference between each participant’s previous experiences and prejudices. Meaning, therefore, is not created solely within the mind or

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What Heidegger referred to as “forestructures” of knowledge (1962, p. 193), and Gadamer termed “prejudices” or “prejudgements” (1979, 2001).
Geist of an individual speaker or listener but in “the dialogue itself” (Sass, 1988, p. 252). Thus understanding and meaning are dialectically constructed by both interlocutors in a conversation.

Hermeneutics offers both an understanding of how we make sense of their world, as well as a methodology for enquiring into this understanding. Hermeneutics acknowledges that people exist within a spatial, temporal, social and cultural context. These contexts in turn contribute to the understandings we form about our being-in-the-world.

### 3.2.3 Hermeneutic phenomenology: A rejection of scientisms

Heidegger, Gadamer, and other “hermeneutic thinkers”, criticised the growth of scientism, the desire to model all forms of inquiry on methodologies employed by the natural sciences. Hermeneutic approaches therefore reject scientism, empiricism, and other forms of positivism as the only methodologies of legitimate inquiry (Kenyon, Ruth, & Mader, 1999; Woolfolk, et al., 1988), and align themselves with the post-modern assertion that “knowledge is metaphorical, historical and contextual” (Kenyon, et al., 1999, p. 42).

Husserl is also suspicious of scientism and saw phenomenology as a potential bridge between understanding the ‘internal’ world of the person and the ‘external’ world of positivist science. Throughout his writings, Husserl divides human inquiry into two general fields, the natural sciences which seek a “universal explanation of nature”, and the “humanistic sciences” which are concerned with the “personal life and activities” of human beings (Husserl, 1965a, pp. 149-150). Husserl saw both modes of inquiry as philosophically and methodologically constrained. For Husserl the natural sciences are limited by their inability to contextualise their investigations within wider socio-historical contexts (Husserl, 1965a, pp. 186-187), while the “humanistic sciences [Geisteswissenschaften] lack… the rigour and objectivity of the nature sciences” (Husserl, 1965b). Husserl proposes that phenomenology can act as “philosophical science” to bridge the natural and humanistic sciences, by providing the philosophical and methodological solutions to the deficiencies of each (Husserl, 1965a, 1965b, 1977). A proposal echoed in the mid-20th century by Père Teilhard de Chardin, who as a scientist, palaeontologist, and priest, hoped for a union of these apparently different methodologies into:
a kind of phenomenology or generalised physic [sic] in which the internal aspect of things as well as the external aspect of the world will be taken into account. Otherwise ... it is impossible to cover the totality of cosmic phenomenon by one coherent explanation.

( Teilhard de Chardin, 1955, p. 58)

Husserl and Teilhard de Chardin’s hopes for the development of an overarching methodology robust enough to explore both the ‘subjective’ internal and ‘objective’ external worlds remains elusive. There is growing recognition that both qualitative and quantitative methodologies each have their strengths and uses. Investigations of people’s ‘inner’ worlds of meaning need to move beyond

the traditional ‘scientific’ methods [as they] are often not adequate as a way of understanding how people behave ‘in context’. This does not mean that one should give up an empirical, evidence-based research tradition but adapt to what is possible and, more importantly, what is likely to yield a truer picture.

(Gillham, 2000, p. vi)

Many hermeneutists remain sceptical to the idea that the natural sciences have anything to offer hermeneutics. Spence (1988) for example asserts that the natural sciences, through their empirical and scientific methodologies, seek to discover the underlying patterns of the universe, which the scientist assumes are there to be found. Hermeneutical inquiries, on the other hand, do not assume that there are universal “laws” to be discovered. Instead patterns are made by the hermeneutist that make sense of the texts, people, and the world presented to us (Spence, 1988). In other words “we construct and create rather than discover patterns in human behaviour” (Meichenbaum, 1988, p. 86). This construction and creating of patterns occurs both in people’s everyday lives and in hermeneutic research.

### 3.2.4 Limits and traps of hermeneutics

The word hermeneutics is derived from the Greek noun hermeneia “interpretation” from Hermes, the messenger-god of the ancient Greeks (Palmer, 1969, pp. 12-13). There is a vast body of hermeneutic literature including philosophical explorations, methodological explanations, and various research studies using hermeneutic analyses, only a fraction of this literature is reviewed here. Within this literature, however, no reflection on the ontology of the word ‘hermeneutics’ itself has been identified. Hermes was the go-between for the gods and humanity and as such was the first interpreter of the transcendent to the profane, as he
had to render the meanings of the gods’ messages into a form mortals could understand. However, Hermes was also a trickster and patron of thieves and liars so his messages often contained half-truths and were not always clear and sometimes contained traps for the unwary, the unworthy, and unprepared (Graves, 1960; Leeming & Page, 1996). It behoves researchers using such approaches to remember that hermeneutics, like its namesake, is mercurial both difficult to define and requiring us to remain open to other possibilities and interpretations not immediately apparent, and different to our own.

Hermeneutic researchers need to remain cautious and remember that ‘findings’ are our own interpretations and not necessarily something inherent or essential to the research subjects or the texts they generate. Hermeneutists construct and create rather than discover patterns (Meichenbaum, 1988). Consistent with adopting a hermeneutic methodology is the recognition that the findings of this research are, in part, my own constructions and are potentially no more than patterns I have formed in an attempt to make sense of the participant’s narratives about themselves and their retirement. The findings are a result of reflective practices based on an informed understanding of the relevant literature as reviewed in Chapter Two and my own experiences and understanding. Such understandings have a temporality, in that they are based on my current experience and understandings. These experiences and understanding will change over time and which could result in me developing different interpretations. This is not to say that my current understandings, meanings, and interpretations are wrong, just that other legitimate interpretations are also possible, nor does it mean that these interpretations are entirely my own construction as they do reflect some of the reality of the participants.

### 3.3 Narrative

Narratives function as a means of human discourse, to help connect people and explain one person’s experience to another in ways that makes sense. They order experiences in contingent ways that make a “meaningful pattern” out of what could otherwise be seen as disconnected and random events (Salmon & Riessman, 2008, p. 78). Meaningfulness is developed out of the consequentially linking of otherwise disparate ideas and events (Salmon & Riessman, 2008).

Interest in defining and understanding narratives, in the Western tradition, dates at least to Aristotle (384-322 BCE), who in his *Poetics* sought to understand and explain the construction and composition of poetry and plays. For Aristotle *plot*, “the structure of events”, was the most important element in telling a story (Aristotle, trans. 1996, p. 11).
Successful plots should seek completeness, connection, and unity. A plot is whole or complete when “the underlying sequence of actions” makes sense by having “a beginning, a middle and an end” (Aristotle, trans. 1996, p. 13), which do not necessarily have to be exposed to the audience in that order (Heath, 1996). Furthermore, the events which make up the plot make sense when they are connected, that is when one event follows as a consequence of the previous event. These connected and consequential events make a plot or narrative whole when they are united as a self-contained series of events, with the last event bringing the sequence of events to its conclusion (Heath, 1996, p. xxiii) and where each event acts to both further the plot and contribute to the understanding of the play or poem in its entirety. Aristotle’s concern with the importance of narrative structure, connection, consequence, and overarching unity is remarkably ‘modern’ and anticipates more contemporary aspects of narrative understandings, such as emplotment, narrative coherence, and continuity, as discussed below in Sections 3.3.4 and 3.10.

Aristotle’s approach to narrative is based on his study of literary forms. In such forms the ‘events’ of a play or a poem are observed by an audience and analysed from a distant third-person viewpoint. So while Aristotle’s explanations of plot are a useful starting point for understanding narratives, a broader approach is needed to understand how people use narrative in everyday conversation to describe their subjective experiences. Bringing narrative understandings within a hermeneutic understanding requires a shift away from seeing narratives as the mere ordering of ‘events’, to understanding narratives as the structuring of human experiences. As such this research takes an “experienced centred” stance, which considers “narratives as stories of experience rather than events” (Squire, 2008, p. 41). These experiences are contextual and are, of course, not just limited to the experiences of the narrator but the experiences the researcher, as interpreter, as well as the experience of producing the narratives themselves, these subjective experiential issues of narrative are explored in Sections 3.4 and 3.20.4.

In the last half of the 20th century many disciplines in the human sciences developed and refined ideas and concepts around the use of language and narrative. This growth of interest in narrative has been called “The Narrative Turn”, which has permeated much of the human sciences and wider culture since at least the 1960s (Berger & Quinney, 2004; Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004; Denzin, 2000; Riessman, 2008). The above section of this chapter has mapped some of the thinking that led to that development in the fields of phenomenology and hermeneutics, yet this interest in narrative is much broader than these fields and claims an antecedence that includes semiotics, linguistics, history, literary criticism, psychology, cultural studies, sociology and anthropology (Riessman, 2008; Riessman & Speedy, 2007).
This rich diversity of theoretical and methodological origins, together with the proliferation in recent years of cross-disciplinary narrative work, has led to a multitude of diverse and often contradictory definitions, methodologies and methods for doing narrative work (for example (Andrews, Day Sclater, Squire, & Treacher, 2000; Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Denzin, 2000; Riessman, 2008).

Scholars from Aristotle to the present day agree that one of narrative’s key functions is to order discourse in ways that make sense and are meaningful (Aristotle, trans. 1996; Salmon & Riessman, 2008, p. 78). The meanings thus embedded in narrative offer insight into the context of people’s lives (Hammack, 2011). People talk about and understand their narrated lives in relation to their understanding of their physical, relational, spatial, temporal and social environments. The following section explores the ways in which various narratives are ordered and structured, using the linguistic formalist approaches that Labov and Waletzky (1967) developed to describe simple narratives, through to the structure of more complex life-stories and other interrelated narratives. Of course people used and understood narrative structure before the epistemologies, schemas and taxonomies discussed below were devised. These lay understandings of narratives remain the basis of much vernacular discourse and meaning making and follow some basic human logic

3.3.1 Structure of narratives

In their seminal work in the 1960s, Labov and Waletzky define a narrative as relating to an event experienced by the narrator. Furthermore, a narrative consists of at least two clauses that are “temporally ordered”, that is clauses that describe events in the order in which they occurred (Labov, 1982; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Labov further defines “an overall schema of narrative structure” that identified the functions of certain clauses within narratives (Stirling, 2007). These functional elements consist of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td>a clause or two summarising the whole story and signalling that a narrative is about to commence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation</strong></td>
<td>a series of clauses filling in background information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complicating Action</strong></td>
<td>a series of clauses, each of which describes an event in a temporal sequence of events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation where the narrator comments on the action from outside the story world.

-Evaluative clauses indicate the point or reason of the story and reveal what the narrator is ‘getting at’.

Resolution the termination of the series of events around the complicating action, and

-Coda a section that shifts the time-reference of the narrative and bridges the gap between story time and present, signal the finish of the narrative and possibly restates the meaning or moral of the story.

Labov and Waletzky define a narrative that contained all of these elements as being “fully formed” (1967). Yet all elements are not required to be present for a text to be a narrative. Indeed a narrative only needed a complicating action to ‘work’ as a narrative. The most basic narrative, using Labov and Waletzky’s definition, need only consist of two clauses which make up the complicating action.

Labov and Waletzky’s approach to understanding the underlying structure of narratives remains a useful approach for analysing simple narratives. Identifying the functional elements of such narratives can alert researchers to important information about the narrator and their story, for example identifying what elements are present or absent in orientating clauses can give an appreciation about what the narrator feels is important and unimportant, evaluative clauses and a coda often given invaluable insight into why the narrator is telling the story and what they understand the meaning of it to be. This understanding of narrative limits the types of narratives that can be explored to the most basic recounting of specific events in a person’s history.

Labov’s schema is a useful tool for analysing simple narratives but was not designed to analyse more complex narratives or narratives that extend beyond a single event. There are times when a modified version of this schema (as adapted by Riessman, 2008, p. 87-88) is used to identify the role served by various sections of more complex narratives. Results achieved through such an approach are contextualised within the broader context of other narratives and from the participants’ life-contexts and life-stories.

The telling of something as complex and overarching as the experience of work, retirement, and involvement in various enthusiasms cannot be reduced to one simple narrative. Such
experiences played out over years during the life course and more nuanced definitions of narrative are required to interpret them and their meaning. When relating experiences that played out over a number of weeks, months, years or even lifetimes, people usually give “extended accounts of [their] lives in context”, where “the discrete story that is the unit of analysis in Labov’s definition gives way to an evolving series of stories that are framed in and through interaction” (Riessman, 2008, p. 6).

These stories emerge through interaction with people and with wider cultural stories or discourses. Narratives are told with an audience in mind, me in this case, and therefore they are influenced not only by the questions asked, but by the research participants’ ongoing interactions with me. I am, therefore, the co-narrator of these stories, initiating some narratives with certain questions, allowing others to develop through silence or with prompts, and even preventing some stories being told through asking other questions.

### 3.3.2 Non-textural narratives

There are broader definitions of narratives which extend beyond the spoken word. Some contemporary narratologists are investigating the narrative characteristics of historical and document-based narratives, such as the Tamboukou’s exploration of the identities of women artists through journals and other historical documents (Andrews, et al., 2008). Others are exploring narrative elements of visual and artistic images (Riessman, 2008, explores the methodologies and methods of those using visual narrative analysis in some detail). Such projects have the potential to extend the possibility of narrative beyond that of personal conversation and even beyond the spoken word or written text. This extension of narrative is consistent with and analogous to the expansion of understandings of ‘text’ and ‘discourse’ in discourse analysis. Where ‘discourse’ can encompass most “abstract forms of knowledge” and ‘text’ becomes the “concrete realisation” of such abstractions (Wodak, 2007, p. 187).

This study, however, limits its definition of narrative to the verbal and textual elements of conversation.

### 3.3.3 People are stories – or are they?

Gadamer emphasised that human experience is temporal and historical (Ray, 1994, p. 121). It is not surprising therefore that constructing, telling, and listening to narrative plays an important part in defining who we are and how we understand ourselves. Some researchers have even gone so far as to claim that “human beings not only have a lifestory, they are stories” (Kenyon, et al., 1999, pp. 40-41, original emphasis). Seeing people as stories is a reference to, and a logical extension of, the oft quoted metaphor that ‘people are texts’.
There is some contention about considering people as stories or texts. It is necessary to consider these metaphors in more detail, given the importance of story and text to this research.

‘People are stories’ is seen by some as the “root-metaphor” for the proposition that “people think, perceive, and act on the basis of stories” (Kenyon, et al., 1999, p. 40-41). The metaphor has been criticised by others, for establishing another form of Cartesian mind-body dualism. Such a split, the critics contend, means that such texts and stories are ‘unreadable’ and unable to be understood by others. These texts are only really available to the person who creates them and they become a form of inner-knowledge that others, and the researcher, have imperfect access to (Gergen, 1988). In addition, the metaphor ‘people are stories’ appears to privilege language and narrative over the aspects of people’s lives that cannot be rendered into text, such as actions and gestures. To consider people solely as texts implies that actions and other non-language aspects of a person’s life can be dismissed as unimportant or unreadable.

Actions do tell a lot about a person but interpretation of actions can only occur in the context in which the action occurs. One way that we build up an understanding of this context is by putting the actions and context into a textual form, through speaking or writing (Spence, 1988). Seeing people simply as texts runs the risk of removing the person from the contexts of their lives (Spence, 1988). The danger for a researcher who considers people merely as text is that we are left with only dry, limited, de-contextualised data, and not with the reality of the complex whole person living in a rich social, spatial, and historical ecology.

It seems to me that this contention over the use of the term comes from taking the metaphor too literally. The concerns raised above are indeed limitations of the metaphor but, as defenders of the term remind us, it is only a metaphor. We should not literally believe that people are in fact only stories and the texts these stories generate. Stories and texts are the ways in which people understand and make sense of the world. We are, of course, more than just the stories we tell each other, but stories are one means that offer insight, albeit a limited one, into the meanings we construct around who we are and what we do.

It was expected therefore, that the retired men interviewed during the research, would use narratives. This was indeed found to be the case. Narratives were often used as the way to describe how the present situations came about and also to illustrate important or significant themes. Of course, not all the text generated during interviews took the form of stories; this is explored in more detail in the discussion below of data analysis.
3.3.4 Narrative epistemologies

Narrative situates us in temporal and spatial networks with other people and through these networks helps us order and make sense of the world and our experiences. Thus narrative operates both epistemologically and ontologically. Narratives provide an ordering and structuring of our experiences and through this ordering provides an epistemological way of knowing the world. As discussed above, narratives help us construct understandings of what our experiences mean to us, this ontological function of narrative has been discussed in some detail above and this insight into meaning is the reason why narrative analysis has been chosen as a methodology for this study. This section explores ‘narrative ways of knowing’ and what such epistemological approaches have contributed to the study.

Jerome Bruner originally conceptualised two distinct “modes of cognitive function” through which we order experience and construct realities, which he called “paradigmatic” and “narrative” modes of knowing (1986, p. 13). The paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode orders experiences into classifications and categories applying pre-existing decontextualized knowledge to the situation (1986, p. 11). The pre-existing abstract knowledge and concepts that are used in paradigmatic reasoning are, in part, social and culturally determined. Humans make use of paradigmatic modes of thought through linking abstract concepts to particular things or experiences.

The narrative mode of knowing, by contrast, retains the particularities of events and experiences. Experiences come to be known through “emplotted stories” which locate the experiences in time and space (Bruner, 1986, p. 13; Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11). Narratives not only fix the spatial and temporal aspects of the experience, they also maintain “the complexity of the situation” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11), complexity which includes “the emotional and motivational meaning” surrounding the experience (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11) and the related “intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences” (Bruner, 1986, p. 13). The knowledge that narrative imparts, to the speaker as well as the listener, is “a legitimate form of reasoned knowing” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 9).

This understanding of how we understand narratives creates a binary between paradigmatic and narrative reasoning, a binary which we seemingly flip back and forth across as we create and make sense of narratives. Bruner has, in his more recent writings, problematised the binary aspects of this model to the point where he thinks that his earlier “belief that there were two mutually translatable worlds of mind, the paradigmatic and the narrative, was profoundly mistaken” (2002, p.101). Bruner now asserts that these two ‘worlds’ operate not as binary opposites but together. He has abandoned reference to these specific ‘worlds’ in his
more recent writings and now warns against what seems to be his own earlier interpretations of the separateness of these two narrative ways of knowing, for “when we lose sight of the two in league that our lives narrow” (2002, p. 102).

Paradigmatic and narrative reasoning thus work together to produce complementary knowledge that allows us to understand experience. The understanding of everyday experiences requires simultaneous knowledge of the generalizable and the specific. In other words, we make sense of the physical, emotional, relational and other elements in the environment through reference to that which we already know and through the specific arrangement of these elements in any given situation. The understanding of these elements’ unique inter-relationships and inter-connectedness change and rearrange in the specific encounter of a particular story.

Thus narrative has both ontological and epistemological functions. Narratives create and share ontological meaning and our sense of what is to be in-the-world, while at the same time they are one of the ways in which come to know the world and experiences.

3.3.5 Summary

Although acknowledging the importance of the non-textual, non-language and non-narrative elements of peoples’ lives and experiences, this research will not delve too deeply into the nonverbal elements. Likewise, I acknowledge the important contribution to narrative research that is occurring in projects which extend narrative beyond the spoken or written word to include artistic expression and the visual. This research thus restricts its definition of narrative to those concerned with written and spoken text.

I realise that this means that some aspects of the richness of the human communication and interaction will be lost, see the discussion on transcription below. However, narratives in and of themselves convey much more than just recounts of experience. Retaining and retelling the participants’ narratives retain other important aspects of communication beyond just the stories themselves. Narratives are more than just accounts of people’s experiences; they allow the listener to understand aspects of the narrator’s life beyond just the recounting of events and experiences. Narratives are encoded ‘ways of knowing’ that people read and understand in their own context. So while only recording and retaining textual aspects of communication means losing important non-verbal aspects of the communication, maintaining the narrative elements of the communication retains other important ‘narrative ways of knowing’.
One of the primary functions of narrative is the construction and reconstruction of personal identity. There is general agreement within the various disciplines reviewed above about the role narrative plays in the construction of identity (Bruner, 2002; Cain, 1991; C. Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1991; Randall, 2008; Riessman, 2008; Rosenwald, 1992; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992; Somers, 1994; Taylor, 2005, 2006). The link between narrative and identity formation is not, however, universally accepted and some theorists (such as Redman, 2005) negate or diminish narrative’s importance in identity formation, based on competing theories of identity and identity development. Furthermore other scholars, while appreciating that phenomenology has contributed to the theoretical underpinning of narrative inquiry, regard narrative understandings as having developed beyond the usual scope of phenomenology (Riessman & Speedy, 2007).

This research aligns itself with the phenomenological notion that narrative is one of the ways in which human beings come to understand themselves, their life-contexts, and experiences. The ontological claim of much of contemporary narrative theory is consistent with the importance that hermeneutic phenomenologists, such as Heidegger and Gadamer, place on language and conversation as ways that humans understand their being-in-the-world. While aware of and appreciative of the theoretical richness that other disciplines have given contemporary narrative thought, hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative theory are thus the main philosophical underpinning of this project.

### 3.4 Narrative Space

Narrative understandings of time and place create a metaphorical ‘narrative space’ in which the narrative plays out. Clandinin and Connelly understand this metaphorical “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” to be the intersection of interaction, the personal and social aspects of the narrative; continuity, the setting of the narratives in the past, present and future, and the relationships established between these temporalities; and situation, the meaningful relationships between the various ‘places’ in the narrative (2000, pp. 49-50). It is within this three-dimensional narrative inquiry place that the researcher begins to understand these interplays and through them gain insight into the identities of the narrators. Narratives situate their narrators in temporal, spatial, relational, and social environments and thus allow the listener to understand the meaning created by these environments in the context of the narrator’s life (Hammack, 2011). Dialectically situating themselves within these subjective environments creates “identity spaces” where the narrator positions themselves “within a matrix of changing relationships” (Mishler, 1999, pp. 111-112). These relationships are not
only relationships to other people, but also to places, times, situations, and broader sociocultural narratives.

### 3.4.1 Temporal aspects of narrative

Both Aristotle and St. Augustine assert that human beings come to know and understand time, less through its passing, than through experiencing and noticing change (Aristotle, trans. 1952; St. Augustine, tran. 1961). For Heidegger this insight reveals that our experience of *Dasein*, of being-in-the-world, is fundamentally linked to how we come to know and understand “the phenomenon of time” (Heidegger, 1992, pp. 12-13), for “the detection of change is vital to the performance of meaning” (Matz, 2011, p. 291).

Narratives seek to make sense of the “phenomenon of time” in a number of ways. Narratives firstly ‘fix’ an event or experience within time by emplotting the changing events in a sequential order that moves the action forward through time (Polkinghorne, 1995, as discussed in Section 3.3.1). Telling an emplotted story creates “narrative temporality” which allows for multiple simultaneous experiences of time (Matz, 2011, p. 275). There is, of course, the temporality of the story, or stories, being told, beyond this the interplay between these temporalities and the links to broader sweeps of history, be it to wider cultural events, a life story, or the history of an organisation, subculture, people, or country. These temporalities are experienced simultaneously within the present temporal experience of telling and hearing the narrative itself. Narrative temporality creates a paradoxical space where the ‘now’ and the ‘then’ exist simultaneously (Matz, 2011).

### 3.4.2 Spatial aspects of narrative

As with the experience of time, human beings seek to make sense of and understand the phenomenon of physical space and locations. The experience of occupying space and interacting with specific locations in the world is fundamental to existence (Jammer, 1969). “Knowledge of place”, in a phenomenological sense, is therefore not gained through any “sophisticated thesis” it is “a simple fact of existence” (Lukermann, 1964, p. 168). The literature is inconsistent in the use of the terms ‘space’, ‘place’, and ‘location’. Within the social sciences there is contention about definitions of the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ (Curtis, 2010). Some geographers, working at the macro societal or cultural level, are interested in exploring the “socially constructed connections” and “nodes of networks” which people and cultures construct in building shared understandings of certain spaces and places, and their definitions of ‘space’ and ‘place’ reflect these interests (Curtis, 2010, p. 10). This research is focused at the level of the person and seeks to understand how the men in
this study understand and make meaning around certain locations in their environment. This research, therefore, limits its definitions of ‘space’ and ‘place’ to those that are experienced or understood at the level of the person.

For the purpose of this research, ‘space’ refers to the total physical environment. ‘Location’ is used to describe a specific geographically bounded area of space, which may be natural like mountains, forests, or rivers, or constructed like houses, towns, roads, or nations. ‘Place’ is seen to be a specific location that has become “imbued with meaning” (Vanclay, 2008, p. 3). Places are, in other words, locations which are phenomenologically understood through their relationship with the person and are thus meaningful (as described in Section 3.1.3).

Narrative interacts with space, location, and place in a number of ways. Through emplotment narratives establish where the events or experiences depicted happened (Bruner, 1986, Polkinghorne, 1995). Narratives are also means through which people come to understand and express the meaning which a particular place holds for them. Narratives also create their own interacting spatialities within them. Narrative orders and structures space, location, and place in ways that are analogous to how it arranges time and temporality. Emplotment is the process of fixing narratives in time and space (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narratives create a narrative spatiality, a complex interplay between the locations and places where various stories are set within the narrative, and the current location where the narrative is being told. Narrative spatialities link ‘here’ with ‘there’, as narrative temporalities link ‘now’ to ‘then’.

Narrative is one way in which people come to understand a place as meaningful.

Storytelling is a way in which any place [location] becomes ‘our place’ or ‘our patch’, where we assert some authority, or ownership, or at least connection to a place. Storytelling, of course, is not an individual activity. For a story to be told there must be an audience. And an audience provides feedback, validation and affirming the experience. So the symbolic meaning of place comes out of the discourse even if it has individual meaning.

(Vanclay, 2008, pp. 5-6)

Through narrative, we develop a sense of the places we inhabit. This “sense of place” is strongest for places which we feel the greatest connection for; places that we both inhabit

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I have coined the term narrative spatiality as an analogy of Matz’s “narrative temporality” (2011). It is my assertion that narratives organise space, spatiality, location, and place, as experienced by the narrator and the listener, in much the same ways that they organise time. Narratives, therefore, allow for multiple simultaneous experiences of place as well as time (as discussed in Section 3.4.1).
and “belong” to, “both as an individual and as a member of a community”. This sense of place, of belonging and inhabiting, is an “important source of identity” (Relph, 1976, pp. 65-66). Some people face a crisis of sorts when they can no longer maintain a continuous relationship with special places. The relationship with place may be ruptured through no longer having regular or any contact with the location, which can happen when someone moves house for example, or through the place itself changing, say as a result of development or urban renewal (Relph, 1976). In such circumstances narrative has the potential to preserve a positive sense of identity by establishing and maintaining a link, through story, to the place as it is remembered, an issue particularly relevant to the present study.

3.4.3 Relational aspects of narrative

In everyday conversations, narratives are, self-evidently, a means of interacting discursively with other people. Yet narratives also include other people as ‘characters’ who inhabit stories. The interaction of these characters with the narrator, within narrative space, situates the narrator and their identities “within a matrix of changing relationships” (Mishler, 1999, pp. 111-112). The role that such matrices play in identity formation is described in Section 3.9.

These ever changing relational matrices document not only the people with whom the narrator interacts, they give some indication of the quality of these relationships. Through narrative, people demonstrate their social position in relation with others. Narrators align, contrast, or oppose themselves with or against others in their narratives. As meaning is constructed when people understand their encounters with other entities, in this case other people, in relation to themselves, the situating of themselves within these relational matrices constructs meaning around these encounters. Listening to these narratives also gives insight into these meanings of the narrator’s encounters with others (Mishler, 1999).

3.4.4 Social aspects of narrative

Gadamer believed that we are constantly engaged in an ongoing hermeneutic conversation with history and tradition. For Gadamer this conversation is not a metaphoric one, but “a genuine conversation, a conversation in which the one who is encountering the word plays an active role” (Gadamer, 2001, p. 51). A conversation which also shapes and influences the understandings we have of the world and our being-in-the-world.
Conversations with history and tradition have narrative elements, and the narratives within wider historical and social discourses influence often permeate individual narratives (Riessman, 1993, p. 65). It is often through these broader societal discourses that people construct meaning, and it is against these wider discourses and “shared cultural background and historical period” that people make meaning of their lives (Kaufman, 1986, pp. 126-127). A discussion with men about work, retirement and community participation could therefore be expected to be influenced by, and contain some reference to, these wider historical and social discourses around these topics. The various discourses around men, gender, work, and retirement, which these men interact with, can also be assumed to influence their understanding of the world, and their being-in-the-world as a retired man.

The men’s narratives revealed much about their social worlds:

By analysing the complex process of narration in specific instances, we learn about the kinds of narratives that are possible for certain groups of people, and we learn about the cultural world that makes their particular narratives possible – and problematic – in certain ways.

(Chase, 2003, p. 290)

Conversations with the wider culture occur at a number of sites, the most obvious being with people in one’s immediate sphere. We interact with ideas and wider cultural narratives through the mass media, books, and, increasingly, the internet. Subcultures, such as those fostered by enthusiasts, also have their own narratives and mores. These subcultural narrative and mores influence enthusiasts interaction with each other. The subculture is also influenced and reproduced by these ‘official’ publications as well as through shared attitudes, values, and traditions.

3.4.5 Summary

The creation of narratives takes place within the temporal, spatial, relational, and social contexts of the narrator. Analysis of narratives will, therefore, reveal something of these contexts. Narrators draw on the “cultural and discursive resources and constraints” which are not always evident to the researcher in advance (Chase, 2003, p. 290). This has certainly been the case in this study.
3.5 Cultural Narratives: Structure and Meaning

Personal narratives are also influenced by wider cultural stories. This is consistent with Gadamer’s concept that we are engaged in conversations with history and tradition (2001, p. 51). This conversation often takes the form of particular ‘cultural narratives’ that people within a particular culture or tradition share. These cultural narratives convey shared meanings, values, and attitudes which help people make sense of their lives within their shared culture (Polkinghorne, 1991), as well as proscribing the culture’s normative expectations (Bruner, 1987; A. Phoenix, 2008). Wider narratives circulating within cultures influence both the content and structure of personal narratives, and both content and structure are used to produce a shared meaning between narrator and audience.

These wider cultural narratives are part of the “cultural resources” which people draw upon to create identities and narratives by which to perform these identities (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; C. Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009; Somers, 1994). Some use the term ‘cultural narratives’ to refer just to narratives and stories within popular culture, such as what is found in novels, movies, and television shows (C. P. Wilson, 2000). My use of the term ‘cultural narratives’ certainly includes narratives within popular culture but it is more aligned with Somers’ concept of “public narratives”, which are “those narratives attached to cultural institutional formulations larger than the single individual, to inter subjective networks of institutions, however local or grand” (Somers, 1994, p. 619). The ‘institutions’ at work here can be as ‘local’ as the family, workplace, and enthusiast club, or as ‘grand’ as nations, multinational corporations, or national and international communities of enthusiasts.

Cultural narratives are then narratives which circulate widely within a culture or subculture’s cultural institutions. They are ‘real’ not metaphorical stories that can be formed and reformulated to fit different people or groups within the moral framework of the culture or subculture in question. Using the ‘dead in a year’ cultural narrative, discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.9.2, as an example, it is easy to see that the concept it encapsulates, that men retire and then die within a year, is a simple narrative with sequence and consequence.

 Cultures share both recognisable stories and recognisable types of stories. The negative cultural expectations around male retirement, as discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.9.2, are examples of specific cultural stories. There are also within the culture other types of ‘genres’ or kinds of narrative, which often share a similar structure, as well as similar content and themes. These genres are familiar to most people within the same culture or subculture and include such things as farce, tragedy, and romance. Genre acts to assist in the comprehension
of the narrative, as both the narrator and audience have a shared cultural understanding of both the general plot and the moral meaning of each particular genre. Genre is therefore “a way of comprehending narrative” (Bruner, 1991, p. 14).

Genre is comprehended both through the content of individual narratives as well by their plot and structure. The way that a story is told, both how it is structured (emplotted) and the style in which it is told, are cultural clues to genre being employed (Bruner, 1991, 2002). The ways narratives are structured allow people to construct a certain identity out of a shared experience, as Cain (1991) shows in her work on Alcoholics Anonymous. Subcultures, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, have certain genres that reflect the common experiences of members of that subculture, such as problems associated with misuse of alcohol. Through adherence to the proscribed genres and structures of the stories told, the telling of the common experiences creates and reinforces an identity of being a member of that group, which for AA is being an alcoholic (Cain, 1991). Alcoholics Anonymous has an ‘authorised’ version of the alcoholic story, as well as proscribed times and ways to tell personal stories, with the expressed aim of getting people to identify as alcoholics. The enthusiast subcultures investigated in this research have certain shared narratives and genres which act to create and reinforce the men’s enthusiast sub-identities. These genres are not as proscribed or policed as Alcoholics Anonymous but they are present and shared through informal discussions between members as well as through books, magazines, and internet sites.

Identity is thus built up, at least in part, through the continuous interpreting and reinterpreting of these wider narratives, from the culture or subcultures we inhabit. This is not to say that cultural narratives and other cultural resources create uniform identities. While shared cultural experiences, events, and narratives all impact on personal identity, this identity is mitigated through personal values and one’s own sense of self. Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology asserts that we perceive a sense of ourselves which continues (Husserl, 1977), his continuing self makes sense of experiences and events using, in part, the cultural resources available to us and, in part, through one’s own personal resources including values and attitudes (Kaufman, 1986). Thus different people can use and perpetuate the same cultural resources and narratives, but draw different meanings and identities from them as they are mitigated through personal experiences, values, and attitudes. This again, links to Antonovsky’s concept of salutogenesis as the intersection of the cultural and personal gives rise to different people drawing different meanings, identities, and even health outcomes from experiencing the same event (1979, 1984).
This is part of the process of what Paul Ricoeur refers to as the process of learning “to become the narrator and hero of our own stories” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 32, original emphasis).

### 3.6 Gender, Age, and Narrative

This section explores some of the literature around men and women’s communication as well as discussing the supposed gender differences in how men and women construct narratives. There is an apparent contradiction in the current literature around gender, communication, and narratives. The academic literature disagrees on the extent to which men and women communicate differently, while the literature found on narrative indicates that there are gender differences in men and women’s narratives.

#### 3.6.1 Gendered communication

The idea that men and women produce different types of narratives implies some differences in male and female ways of communication. The assumption that men and women do communicate differently has formed the basis of many popular books, such as *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus* (Gray, 1993) and *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps* (Barbara Pease & Pease, 2001); as well as being the basis for many of socio-biology’s claims about gender differences, as discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.1.2.1.

The proposition that men and women communicate in different ways is contested. Galasiński, for example, offers a critique of the literature around women and men’s supposed different use of language (Galasiński, 2004, p. 11). He defines masculinity as a composite of the dynamic of how men perform masculinity (which by definition only men can do) and partly as how society constructs the local ideology of what being a man is. With such an understanding of masculinity, men and women’s use of language becomes difficult to define as it would mean fixing gender to a particular linguistic structure, in which a man or a woman is understood to be that gender because of the way they speak. Galasiński can find no compelling evidence that such a point of reference exists. It therefore becomes difficult, in Galasiński’s view, to fix particular styles of narrative to one gender or the other, without accepting gender as a fixed position (Galasiński, 2004, pp. 10-11).

Cameron (2007) also questions the popular, so called ‘common-sense’, proposition that men and women communicate in vastly different ways. Citing various linguist and social studies she concludes that while there are examples of difference between the genders, these are not as delineated as is sometimes claimed. The widespread belief that such differences exist spawn such clichés as “men never listen” and “women find it easier to talk about their
feelings” (Cameron, 2007, p. 3). Such clichés reinforce misandrist and misogynist notions in both popular culture and, of more concern, reinforce men and women’s own negative beliefs about themselves and so unfounded sexist clichés such as ‘men don’t talk about their feelings’ and ‘women are illogical’ become integrated into the narratives men and women tell about themselves in their everyday lives (Cameron, 2007). These everyday narratives, with their gendered and ageist assumptions, are part of the way in which we make sense of our lives and shape our beliefs and actions.

The integration of such erroneous beliefs about gender and communication into older men’s understandings is evident in research by C. Hall, et al. (2007). Older Australian men in focus groups lamented what they saw as men’s poor communication practices, as the following quotes from participants in this study show:

Women [have] the quick ability … to talk to each other and so forth. I mean if you could get men to do that you can make men more like women …

Men won’t go out of their way to talk to other men.

(C. Hall, et al., 2007, p. 12)

Yet the men’s observed actions throughout the focus group were at odds with these statements, as they “demonstrated a capacity to communicate openly and frankly” with each other, despite their contention that older men did not do this well (C. Hall, et al., 2007, p. 15). It is my contention, as a co-researcher and co-author of this 2007 research, that the men had internalised misandric beliefs about how men communicate, beliefs which are at odds with their own actual abilities and styles of communicating. It is worth noting that the men in the 2007 project are contemporaries of the men in this current research.

3.6.2 Gender and narrative

There is some evidence that men and women use and construct narratives in different ways. In “Storylines”, a study of how craftartists construct their identities through their narratives, Elliot Mishler (1999) claims that men and women use and structure narratives in different ways. Using two of his respondents, Beth R and Adam D, as exemplars, Mishler demonstrates how he believes men and women often construct different narratives. They have apparently similar life stories, both report having artistic and supportive parents, who

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9 The term ‘craftartist’ in Mishler’s work refers to those people working in the arts and crafts who claim an identity as both crafts person and artist. They are not “craft workers” who learned their trade as apprentices, they [are] craftartists with advanced degrees from art colleges and graduate craft programs” (Mishler 1999, pp. 5-6, original emphasis).
encouraged them in their artistic endeavours. Both had a drive or a love for the arts, which they saw as sustaining them during the challenges they faced and overcame in becoming successful craftartists (Mishler 1999, pp. 25-44).

For Mishler the narratives told by these two protagonists represent the different ways men and women position themselves in relation to other key characters within their own narratives. This difference in positioning of others, in particular family members, are key to Mishler’s proposal that men and women construct narratives differently. In Mishler’s interpretation, Beth R is constantly positioning herself as a daughter, wife and mother with her narratives highlighting these roles and competing expectations. These roles and expectations are often a source of conflict for Beth that she must negotiate. This is contrasted to Adam D’s narratives, where his familial ties and expectations are not reported as a source of conflict. Adam recalls supportive and artistic parents, who disappear from his stories after childhood. Mishler contends that “maleness is the unmarked cultural category” and so narratives of men’s “identity trajectory” do not need to explicitly mention gender, as they can draw from the normative “cultural repertoire of stories about male development” (1999, p. 44). Throughout his narratives Adam does not refer to his roles as a son, husband or father, indeed “gender is absent from his account as family” (Mishler 1999, p. 44). Mishler suggests that gender tends to be absent in men’s narratives, while gender and gender roles are evident and often a source of conflict in women’s narratives. This shows differences in the ways men and women construct meaning around their experiences, which is presumably linked to men and women experiencing gender (being male or female) differently, where women are more likely to experience conflict around gendered expectations than men.

The craftartists Mishler interviewed were all in mid-career when he interviewed them in 1986-87 (2011, p.vii), unlike the men in this study who were older and retired. As the men in the two studies are in different life stages it is reasonable to assume that their familial roles would also differ.

Apart from differences in meaning arising from different experiences, there are also supposed differences in the way men and women construct and structure their narratives. In a study of age, gender, and social class in Glasgow, Ronald Macaulay found that women do appear more likely than men to employ narrative in their everyday speech, although this is also linked to class, with middle-class men more likely to use narrative than men of lower socio-economic status. Macaulay also found that men are less likely than women to refer to other people in their reported speech and narratives, yet they are more likely to refer to places (Macaulay, 2005, p. pp. 29-30). When they do use narrative, men are less likely than women to use reported dialogue than women. Care must, of course, be taken when
comparing the results of one study, to people in different cultures, ages, and contexts. One of the significant differences in Macaulay’s study and this one, is that Macaulay was analysing people’s conversations in a variety of settings, including recording ‘everyday’ speech between participants. This study used one on one interviews, as discussed in Section 3.17, and deliberately encouraged the participants to structure their responses as narratives, using techniques described in Section 3.17.3.

3.6.3 Summary

The gendered nature of narrative presents a paradox around men and women’s communication. The evidence would suggest that there is little significant difference between men and women’s communication styles, with much of the alleged differences being prejudiced clichés. Yet, it is clear that there are differences in how men and women use and structure narrative, and how they position themselves and others within their narratives, particularly around the concept of gender itself.

Given the impact that wider cultural narratives have on personal narrative and identity, one could expect that the various and ongoing historical and social discourses about gender would impact on the way people construct their gender identities and the way these identities are narratively performed. These wider societal narratives might be expected to impact differently on the content, form, and function of men and women’s individual narratives.

3.7 Narrative and Formalistic Thinking

Narrative inquiry breaks down “formalist” thinking (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Concepts such as culture, race, class, gender, and power are “formalist inquiry terms” which give valuable insight into how society is structured (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 43-45). Yet, such inquiry terms can also lead to erroneous assumptions about certain aspects of a person’s attitudes and behaviours based on researchers’ own understandings of these terms. Knowing a person’s gender, race, and class and having an understanding of their culture is not sufficient information to know or understand that person or their life context. People’s narratives do not always accord with the theoretical understandings of these formalistic inquiry terms. Narrative inquiry allows for the nuances of a person’s own experiences, attitudes and life story to be told, perhaps agreeing with, perhaps challenging, received theoretical understandings of these terms (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry, therefore, holds the subjective experiences and narratives of people, alongside the theoretical understandings of culture, gender, race, class and power. Maintaining the ambiguities and contributions between individual men and theoretical understandings of men and
masculinities will contribute to a more subtle understanding of the men in the study, than the theoretical understandings offered through current theories of men and masculinity.

### 3.8 Subjectivity

This research is interested in older men’s subjective experiences of retirement, work, and involvement in community activities. There is insufficient research into the experience of ageing and despite increased understanding of medical and empirical approaches to understanding ageing “the quality of our understanding about the subjectivity of aging the feel of it on the inside, the experience of our memories, of our story – remains curiously thin” (Randall, 2008, p. 169). Subjectivity, is therefore, understood to be the ‘feel on the inside’ of experiencing. Such a definition of subjectivity is consistent with both narrative and social-gerontology’s understandings of the term (Randall, 2008; Roper, 2005; Salmon, 2004). Such a definition differs though from social constructionist approaches which tend to view subjectivity not so much what a person ‘feels on the inside’ but as the multiple “subject positions” that a person occupies through interaction with various discourses (Burr, 1995, p. 145). Connell, in her social theory of gender, takes the social constructionist view of subjectivity arguing that masculine subjectivity is the subject position that men take up within the gender discourse (Connell, 2005), as discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.1.3.

There are some who believe that the notion of subjectivity can accommodate both the “feel” of experiences “on the inside” (Randall, 2008, p. 169) and the holding of multiple subject positions within various discourses. Yet different social constructionists do not explain the mechanisms by which particular people take up certain subject positions within discourses and why these subject positions vary from those taken by others (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). While some theorists see these different views of subjectivity as incompatible, I accept that people do take up positions in discourse which partly influence the way in which they experience life events and that these experiences, in turn, influence both discourse and subsequent positions people take within discourse. I reject however an overly constructionist view of subjectivity which discounts the experiential in preference to the influence of discourse. This view of subjectivity allows for the influence of discourse, while still allowing the person to remain an “active, agentic person” (Burr, 1995, p. 145).

This research, therefore, seeks to explore the subjectivity of older retired men. As discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.6.3, older men’s subjectivities are rarely researched (Randall, 2008; Roper, 2005; Russell, 2007). Like the clinicians in Salmon’s exploration of effective
therapeutic relationships, the narrative researcher seeks to allow participants “to express their own subjectivity, to speak of their own experience as it actually is” (Salmon, 2004, p. 80).

3.9 Identity

Identity is seen, at least in part, as the understanding or ‘sense’ that a person has of themselves (Liebersohn, 1999, p. 413). Erikson sees Ego identity as the self-image “that integrates our ideas of what we are and what we want to be” (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 512). This sense of self is, in Erikson’s view, developed through a series of defined and relatively predictable stages, which are more or less complete by adolescence, save for the last two stages which occur in “the latter stages of the life cycle” (Erikson, 1968, p. 135). This life stage theory of identity formation implies that identity development is mostly frozen between adolescence and late middle-age.

3.9.1 Sub-identities

Ideas of self appear to be more fluid and adaptable than Erikson first postulated. A single relatively stable adult identity does not seem to correlate with many people’s life experiences and with a growing number of studies. Feminist researchers, interested in women’s multiple roles, assert that identity is made up of ‘multiple selves’ determined by different situations and contexts. Josselson’s investigation into women’s identity “from college to midlife”, the time in which Erickson predicts little identity development, demonstrates that during this life stage woman are engaged in multiple roles and experience many challenges and changes. Josselson concludes from this that “we are not the same in all regions of our lives”, and that we have different sub-identities in different situations and contexts (1996, p. 30). It is reasonable to assume that men also have and experience multiple roles, challenges, and sub-identities, although of course these roles, challenges and sub-identities would not necessarily be the same as those for women. These multiple ‘regional’ roles represent different vantage points from which we view our being-in-the-world; the different views mean that we form different understandings and hence different meanings around who we are. These understandings and meanings are not fixed and “may change across situations or over time” (Josselson, 1996, p. 30). With ‘multiple selves’ giving rise to multiple meanings, identity then is what “integrates our own diversity” through relating these different ‘selves’ to one another (Josselson, 1996). Identity becomes a “collective term” of the various sub-identities and their dynamic interaction with each other (Mishler, 1999, p. 8).

These context dependent sub-identities are formed and expressed discursively with others. Narratives are a discursive means through which this occurs. The ever changing relational
matrices, discussed in Section 3.4.3, document not only the people with whom the narrator interacts; they also give insight into the process of identity formation. Through narrative, people demonstrate their social position in relation to others. Narratives give insight into how people align, contrast or oppose themselves with others, and thus give insight into their “identity claims on the basis of their social position” (Mishler, 1999, p. 112).

The interaction and integration of one’s various sub-identities is not always a smooth process. The plurality of sub-identities “conflict or align with each other” and while some sub-identities may be supporting and complementary of each other, others may be ambiguous and the source of internal conflict (Mishler, 1999, p. 8). This interaction, is for Mishler, “the dialectic of negative and positive identities” (1999, p. 144). The term ‘identity formation’ is used to describe these ongoing, active, constructive processes, in preference to ‘identity development’ with its links to stage theory and implications that one reaches and ‘achieves’ a point where identity work is complete (Mishler, 1992, p. 36).

### 3.9.2 Historical and social aspect of identity

Identity is therefore experienced within the historical, social, temporal, and spatial contexts of people’s lives. The development of sub-identities at different times in a person’s life develops and is played out at different places and within different relationships. These sub-identities align with different and changing relationships, places, roles and life stages. Sub-identities, and hence identity, becomes fluid and situational. Narrative is one way in which these temporal, spatial and relational changes are ordered and made sense of (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995), as discussed in Section 3.3.4. Through establishing order and sense around experience, narrative also serves to construct meaning and a sense of self. Ideas of self are seen as being more fluid and adaptable and are “constructed and performed in and through discourse” (Mishler, 1999, p. 111) and narrative (Riessman, 2003, p. 7). Through narrative one brings these seemingly disparate sub-identifies together into a unified and coherent life story, as discussed in Section 3.10.

### 3.9.3 Activity, work, and identity

Both Erikson (2000b) and Mishler (1999) link identity to activities or occupations. There are both social and personal pressures to equate aspects of identity with activity, “When we meet a new person, we usually want to know what he does” (Erikson, 2000b, p. 386). Identity is, therefore, “grounded in activities” (Erikson, 2000b, p. 386); as competence in certain activities both reinforces a sense of identity for oneself and presents an identity to others.
For Erikson, the demonstration of competency arises in a healthy person during school age, as part of growing independence. A healthy sense of self

… will be very much attached to an intimate mastery of a set of skills dictated by the state of science and technology as well as the arts, and no attempt to ‘humanize’ life should belittle or bedevil this mastery itself.

(Erikson, 2000b, pp. 386-387)

In other words, the skills and by implication the occupations that people will integrate into a healthy identity are those which are in part important to the person, and in part those which are provided and deemed of value by the broader culture. The men developed skills during their productive years of working and childrearing, for some retirement was a time to refine these skills whereas for others it was an opportunity to learn new ones. This is consistent with Mishler’s (1999) theory of identity formation which asserts that there is a causal link between a person’s work and occupations and their developing sense of who they are.

3.9.4 Summary

The discussion with the men in this study suggests that this mechanism of developing healthy identities continues beyond adolescence and into middle-adulthood, in line with Mishler’s concept of identity formation and in contradiction to the theory of identity development as postulated by Erikson. Accepting a relationship orientated, contextual definition of identity means also accepting “the range and source of variation in how identities are constructed; at the same time, similarities between individuals directed us to features of their shared sociocultural contexts” (Mishler, 1999, p. 135). A case-centred approach will, therefore, be used to maintain, as much as possible, the contexts in which the participants in this research construct their identities. Such an approach is discussed in Section 3.21.

Narrative inquiry is therefore an appropriate methodology for investigating identity as it focuses “on the sequential ordering and patterning of events” in people’s lives, thus offering “a more appropriate and stronger methodology for studying life history narratives than standard variable centred approaches” (Mishler 1999, p. 81). The discussion with the men in this study suggests that this mechanism of developing healthy identities continues beyond adolescence and into middle-adulthood.
3.10 Life Story and Narrative Coherence

People wish to understand and present their life, in its entirety, as something that makes sense as a coherent whole. This internal desire for overall meaning is reinforced by similar external social demands that people’s lives make sense to others (Linde, 1993). Yet these internal and external demands for coherence are threatened by a person’s various sub-identities, as discussed in Section 3.9, and the related disparate narratives from different parts and times of their lives. People seek unity from these potentially disparate aspects of their life, through the creation of a life story, which acts as “internalized and evolving narrative of the self” that provide “a life with unity and purpose” (McAdams, 2009, p. 8). A person’s life story consists of all the stories and related “discourse units” told by a person during the course of their lifetime that “have as their primary evaluation a point about the speaker, not a general point about how the world is”, and are “told and retold over the course of a long period of time” (Linde, 1993, p. 21).

Life stories seek coherence on a number of levels. According to Linde, coherence is established firstly through structuring a life story that makes sense in itself, secondly by demonstrating adequate causality and continuity, and finally through adherence to wider social “coherence systems” (Linde, 1993, pp. 220-222). The first level of coherence is achieved by constructing a comprehensible life story structured in a temporal order that makes sense. This structuring is an extension of the narrative structuring and emplotment that happens on the level of individual narratives, as discussed in Sections 3.3.4 and 3.4.1. At this level life stories need to also demonstrate evaluative elements justifying or explaining certain elements. Again this is similar to the evaluative elements of individual narratives, yet on the level of a life story, they demonstrate the meaning, be it positive or negative, that the narrator gives to different elements of their life, such as work, marriage, or retirement.

Life stories also have to demonstrate adequate causality and continuity. Listeners need to accept that the “chain of events” narrated in a life story provides a good enough reason to explain certain life choices or why things are the way they are. There are certain culturally accepted elements that are expected to be included and adequately explained in a coherent life story, for example in contemporary Anglophone cultures one would expect an explanation around one’s choice of profession and working life. Likewise, listeners are reassured when various parts of a life story, told over time, reinforce and support each other. Life stories in which different aspects contradict or are disharmonious with other elements confound listeners and can cause confusion, even suspicion, about the narrator (Linde, 1993).
Life stories not only need to cohere to certain social expectations, they need to fit within certain wider cultural systems. Such systems may be pervasive throughout the culture, to the level where it is perceived as “common sense” or a “set of beliefs and relations between beliefs that speakers may assume are known and shared by all competent members of the culture” (Linde, 1993, p. 222). There are of course other coherence systems that people may order their life stories around; these could be professional, faith based, or theoretical systems, or even beliefs held by certain subcultures or groups, like those found within certain communities of enthusiasts.

Life stories seek coherence in order to create and demonstrate that one’s life has meaning. It is important, therefore, that negative or unexpected life events, that risk being understood as random or meaningless, receive some sort of ‘narrative management’. This is particularly true for those involving “discontinuities between careers, [and] career stages”, which presumably includes retirement (Linde, 1993, p. 222). The narratives which make up a life story are “told and retold over the course of a long period of time” (Linde, 1993, p. 21) in order to demonstrate “unity and purpose” (McAdams, 2009, p. 8). Rehearsing stories through their retelling creates not only coherent narratives, it also ensures a “coherent identity” for the narrator “across separate interactions and contexts” (Taylor, 2006, p. 94).

Life stories and the component stories which make them up, often have an evaluative or moral element. The speaker wishes to demonstrate through their narratives that they are a certain type of person who demonstrates particular virtues or beliefs. In such narratives there is an implicit or explicit point being made to the listener that “I am such and such a kind of person, since I acted in such and such a way” (Linde, 1993, p. 21). These moral aspects of life story are not only performances of one’s own moral code and beliefs about the world; they also act to negotiate one’s belonging to certain groups. Life stories are used to “claim or negotiate group membership and to demonstrate that we are worthy members of these groups, properly following (or at least understanding) their moral standards” (Linde, 1993, p. 219).

**3.11 Limits of Narrative and Life-Stories**

While narratives form an important part of much human discourse it is important to remember that not all talk is narrative. Language and narratives are but one way in which understanding and meaning are formed. Action and activities can also be meaning making hermeneutic processes, through gestures, dance, or sport (Best, 1978) or for societies and
cultures through rituals, festivals and the like (Connerton, 1989). Narratives are not the only ways that human beings understand and make meaning of their life, it is though perhaps one of the most accessible ways for researchers. This thesis focuses on texts derived from interviews as the data for this research; actions and activities were only minimally and incidentally observed and so will not feature as prominently in the analysis.

Life stories are told and retold over the course of a person’s life. The internal desire for a coherent life story is by definition unknowable to anyone else and it is, therefore, unrealistic to assume that this research can offer any more than a glimpse into certain limited aspects of the participants’ lives. The data gathered in this research is primarily concerned with aspects of the men’s lives, namely work, retirement, and their involvement in their hobbies and enthusiasms. As important as these aspects are to the men and their sense of self they are by no means the only aspects of their lives. The narratives gathered during the interviews in no way represent a complete life story of any of the men. They are at best an insight into the parts of their life-stories that deal with work, retirement, and their enthusiasms. Of course, insights were gained into other aspects of the men’s lives and life-stories, yet these insights were slight and by no means approached the men’s life-stories in their entirety. It is not the intention of this research to map the entirety of the men’s life-stories, and if this is possible other methods and means of analysis would need to be employed to do so.

3.12 Summary of Methodology

This study is an investigation into the meaning retired men give to their involvement in various community based enthusiast clubs. Hermeneutic phenomenology has thus been selected as a methodology because of its proficiency in explaining some of the processes through which human beings construct meaning and a sense of identity. These meanings and identities are conveyed through language and are structured and ordered through the narratives that people tell of their experiences. Analysis of everyday narratives therefore reveals much of the meaningful relationships people have with other people, places, objects and times.

This project collected and analysed narratives that retired men told of their experiences of work, retirement, and their enthusiasms. Part B of this chapter describes the strategies and methods developed and utilised to obtain and analyse such narratives. The chapter ends with a discussion on the case-centred approach used in later chapters to present and explore the men’s narratives.
Part B METHODS

Hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative theory inform this research. In order to elicit and record narratives from retired men techniques and methods have been reviewed and adopted from narrative scholars and other methodologists, as well as from other narrative based research. The ethical concerns and rights of the men involved in this research are of primary concern to me and ethical considerations also informed the development of the methods used.

This research recruited men currently involved in community based enthusiast organisations, using purposeful sampling techniques. Identified participants then met with me for one or two face-to-face interviews. The style of the interviews and the field notes generated during them were informed by other existing narrative work, as well as the long history of interviewing in the qualitative research tradition. Once gathered, the transcribed interviews and field notes formed the texts which were subjected to narrative analysis.

A case centred approach is used in order to maintain, as much as possible, the voices of the men. The advantages of such an approach are explored below in some detail. Case-based approaches are consistent with much existing narrative research and have been selected as a way of preserving as much of the original words and narratives of the men as possible.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

The well-being and rights of the research participants were of prime consideration during the development and implementation of the methods used in this study. The methods chosen are consistent with techniques used in other rigorous qualitative research projects; they are also designed to ensure the protection of the research participants. Before entering the field, the methods set out below were assessed and approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Committee (ethics approval number 06/034). An information sheet (Appendix A) and an informed consent form (Appendix B) were developed to communicate the objectives and processes of the research to the participants.

All of the potential participants who had self-selected to be involved with the study telephoned me. A location and time was arranged for the interview, which was of mutual convenience to both of us. An information letter was posted to participants (Appendix C), together with the information sheet (Appendix A), and informed consent form (Appendix B).
All participants were provided with detailed explanations about the study and the procedures used before consent was sought and the interview commenced. During the initial telephone conversation and in person before each interview I discussed consent with the potential participants, making it clear that involvement in the research is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time should they so choose. The participants then signed an informed consent form and the interview commenced.

The enthusiast community is relatively small and some of the men interviewed belong to small organizations. A number of steps have been taken in order to minimise the risk of the study participants being identified. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the thesis and the names of specific locations have been excised from quoted transcripts. Generic terms have been applied to the type of the organisation rather than naming specific organisations. People are, for example, referred to as belonging to a “woodturners’ association”, of which there are several in Sydney, rather than the name of the specific group.

Throughout the study interview audio files and transcripts were kept secure. Audio files of the interviews are saved as password protected files. I am the only person with access to the audio files and transcripts, although of course they have been shared with my supervisors as necessary. These data will be kept secure for a further five years at which time they will be destroyed.

In their review of ethical considerations when researching older people (Quine & Browning, 2007) note that older people often appreciate the “personal contact afforded by face-to-face interviews” (2007, p. 139). I believe that the participants in this study did indeed appreciate the interview experience, which was, for the most part, an opportunity to share their passions and enthusiasms with an equally enthusiastic audience. This sharing was an opportunity to engage in generative culture-tending (Gutmann, 1987), which many of the men took up eagerly, with some explicitly talking about the research process and wishing me well in my endeavours. The research process as a generative experience is something that Fleming also observed (2001).

### 3.14 Purposeful Sampling of Participants

Purposeful sampling techniques were used to select the men to interview. Men who have been retired for at least two years were invited to participate in the research. A period of two years was chosen to ensure that participants would have moved through both the ‘honeymoon’ and potential ‘crisis’ phases of retirement (Atchley, 1976). This also allows
participants some emotional and temporal ‘distance’ from their working life and the circumstances of their retirement. Such metaphorical ‘distance’ should allow the men to be able to reflect on and talk about what helped or hindered them during these times. It was further considered that interviewing men who have been retired longer than two years will also minimise the likelihood of causing distress to participants by attempting to ensure the men interviewed are less likely to be currently experiencing any crisis associated with retirement (Atchley, 1976; Gall, Evans, & Howard, 1997; Greene, 2003; Reitzes & Mutran, 2004b).

3.15 Sample Size

A total of nine men were interviewed. Other doctoral theses which used phenomenological methods to explore men’s experience interviewed samples of 13 or 14 men before reaching saturation of data (D. P. Crawford, 2001; A. A. Fleming, 2001; Simonsen, 2004). Sandelowski’s recommends that the size of the sample in qualitative research be determined, ultimately by the researcher’s “judgement and experience”. A sample size that is too small may not be able to claim achieving “informational redundancy or theoretical saturation”, while larger sample sizes run the risk of being “too large to permit the deep, case-oriented analysis that is the raison d’être of qualitative inquiry” (Sandelowski, 1995). Sampling ceased at nine as it was considered that enough data had been gathered to give insight into the meaning these men give retirement. This size is consistent with other narrative studies and indeed proved too large to allow all the men’s life stories to be presented in equal detail.

The role of narrative analysis, as discussed above, is to identify and bring to the fore people’s unique subjectivities, experiences, and contexts. Given this understanding of narrative analysis I sought in this study to interview enough participants to reveal both a breadth of experiences and still be open to observe common themes across the men’s narratives and life stories. Informational redundancy or theoretical saturation in narrative studies differs from the concept of ‘saturation of data’, as understood by grounded theorists. Common themes and general principles were found by comparing people’s subjectivities, experiences, and contexts yet it is naive and contradictory to assume that an interest in the unique will yield a conglomeration of sameness. I stopped collecting data when I felt a balance had been achieved between collecting enough personal stories to be able to discern meaningful patterns, while at the same time having sufficient information to describe part of the rich spectrum of human experiences within the area studied.
The methodological design of this research has been heavily influenced by Elliot Mishler’s pioneering text around the role narrative plays in identity formation *Storylines: Craftartists' narratives of identity*. In *Storylines* Mishler (1999) delivers a well argued, theoretically strong, model of identity formation around livelihoods based around creative activities. The data on which Mishler’s insights and theoretically strong arguments are interviews with six participants. The nine men interviewed in this research, a 50% increase of Mishler’s, demonstrated a breadth of experiences around work, retirement, and involvement in hobbies and enthusiasms. Within this breadth of experiences it is possible to discern general patterns around identity formation in retirement.

### 3.16 Recruitment

Retired men were recruited for the study from hobbyist and enthusiast groups in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains regions of NSW. These geographic areas were chosen as they are easily accessible by me. A list of hobbyist and enthusiast groups were compiled from sources in the public domain, namely leaflets on community notice boards in local public libraries, brochures distributed during community events and local festivals, and the internet.

Once identified, these organisations were sent a letter informing them of the research and asking organisations to forward an invitation to participate in the research to any of their members or volunteers (Appendix D). In order to ensure minimum disruption to the day to day running of these groups, the suggested wording of an invitation to potential participants (Appendix E) was included with the initial letter to organisations. The letter to the organisation suggested that should the organisation decide to pass the invitation onto members it could simply be attached to a notice board, included in a newsletter, or tabled at a relevant meeting. The invitation to potential participants again described the research and its aim, gave my contact details and invited interested participants to contact me directly.

These methods successfully engaged and recruited men who were active members of various enthusiast groups. An unintended artefact of the recruitment methods was the unexpected homogeneity of the sample. The men interviewed were all more similar to each other than originally hoped, all were married, all but one were born in Australia, they were mostly from Anglo-Australian backgrounds, as well as having been either self-employed or professionals in their working careers. I suspect that the methods used biased sample selection towards a more educated group of men and also a group of men who were very actively involved in their enthusiasm, as the majority of men interviewed held positions of responsibility in their
respective organisations. The homogeneity of the sample obviously limits the applicability of
the study’s findings to other retired male sub-populations but it does, conversely, make it
more likely that the findings are applicable to other men in similar circumstances.

3.17 Interviews

Texts (data) were gathered through a series of in-depth interviews with retired men who are
already members of enthusiast groups (either as volunteers or active members). The
literature recommends in-depth interviews as the way to best uncover these men’s ideas,
values and experience, as suggested by Fontona and Frey (1994). West (1996) recommends
Dexter’s (1970) technique of elite and specialist interviewing as being well suited for
interviewing men. The technique was designed for situations where the people being
interviewed have more expertise and knowledge in a given field than the researcher. It
allows the respondent to have more control of the interview, while also acknowledging that
the respondent has more knowledge in the area than the interviewer (Dexter, 1970). It is
suitable and easily adapted to interviewing older men as it allows for respectful
acknowledgement of a lifetime of achievements, skills, and knowledge that the men bring to
the interview. As the purpose of the interview is also to generate narratives, techniques of
narrative interviewing have also been incorporated into the interviews (Riessman 1993 p. 55,
2004). This section defines and summarises the methods and techniques employed during the
research interviews.

3.17.1 The craft of interviews

Much of the literature suggests that interviewing be more a guided discussion than a series of
“rat-a-tat-tat” questions (Dexter, 1970, p. 56). Gadamer (2001) emphasise the importance of
listening as an essential aspect of any hermeneutic conversation, as discussed in Section
3.2.1. To enhance the hermeneutic conversation, that is the research interview, it therefore
behoves the interviewer to “listen more, talk less”, (Seidman, 1998, pp. 63-78). The use of
less structured approaches such as open-ended questions, the use of story, and to go with the
“ebbs and flows” of the interview also enhance the hermeneutic conversation. The responses
from the participants should also determine the line of questioning and discussion that occurs
within the interview. There is of course a need to be semi-directive in the discussion, in order
to keep the men focused on the topics pertinent to the interview (Seidman, 1998, p. 72) and
to move on from some topics and begin exploring new topics within the time limitations of
the interview. An interview guide was developed to help guide the interview, while
maintaining a conversational approach, as discussed in Section 3.17.2.
Sennett refers more poetically to the “craft” of interviews (2003, pp. 37-45). While there is obviously a need for researchers to have a level of technical and intellectual expertise and understanding of the subject matters, methodologies, and methods used in the study, there also needs to be an intuitive understanding of people and social dynamics. At their heart interviews are conversations and the interviewer needs to be able to connect on a human and emotional level not just with their interlocutor as a ‘subject’ from a defined social group but as another human being. In other words researchers need to use and be aware of both their ‘paradigmatic’ and ‘narrative’ reasoning during interviews (Polkinghorne, 1995). Yet such an approach risks over sympathising with research participants and projecting one’s own values, feelings, and prejudices onto research participants with whom one has worked to establish a connection with. Balancing this tension is the essence of the ‘craft’ of interviews which “consists in calibrating social distances” between interviewer and research participant “without making the subject feel like an insect under the microscope” (Sennett, 2003, pp. 43-44).

I suspect that research using hermeneutic phenomenological methodologies, such as this, are in particular danger of over sympathising with the participants in their research. Hermeneutic phenomenology encourages researchers to use and be aware of their extant understandings and knowledge when making meaning from the participants’ experiences and narratives. These extant understandings are what Heidegger calls “forestructures” of knowledge (1962) and Gadamer refers to as “prejudices” (1979). Inherent in this process is the risk of emphasising the researcher’s own ideas and prejudices onto the research participants, instead of coming to an understanding of the participants’ experiences through the researcher’s forestructures and prejudices. Sennett encourages researchers, through the ‘craft’ of interviewing to navigate this challenge by being aware that interviewers need to “stand both within and outside” the research relationship (2003, p. 38).

3.17.2 Interview guide

An interview guide was developed that facilitated both discursive conversational interviews and ensured that all key areas were covered. This interview guide listed the topics to be covered during the interview and also suggested probes and prompts to follow-up, clarify and elicit greater detail from the participants, consistent with N. King’s recommendations about such guides (2004).
The key aims of this research, as identified above, are to gain insight into:

- the men’s experiences and meanings of being an enthusiast and belonging to an enthusiast group,
- their experiences of paid work, and the current meanings they have of work,
- their experiences and meanings of retirement and being retired, and
- the relationships of these aims to each other.

The following interview guide (Figure 3.1) was developed, using these aims as a starting point. It was also informed by the current literature (as discussed in Chapter Two) and my own knowledge and experience, as recommended by N. King (2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Potential questions</th>
<th>Potential probes and prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Experience and meaning of community engagement | What brought you to this organisation? | What is it like?  
What do you enjoy/dislike about being part of the organisation? |
| Experience and meaning of paid work         | Tell me about your work?                 | Where was it?  
What did you do?  
What was it like? |
| Experience and meaning of retirement       | Tell me about being retired.             | Why did you leave work when you did?  
What led you to leave work when you did?  
What were the first few months of retirement like?  
What happened during your first few months of retirement? |

**Figure 3.1 Initial Interview Guide**

This guide is relatively simple and unstructured, as recommended for phenomenological investigations (N. King, 2004, p. 15). The interview guide was taken to each interview. The guide was not shown to participants rather it served as a reminder to me of the broad points of inquiry (work, retirement, and current community work). Each interview started with the question “what brought you to this organisation?” although it was not always asked verbatim. This question is an adaption of the question Mishler used to start his interviews by inviting the participants to tell him “how they got into the work” thereby encouraging them to “begin at the beginning” in telling both the story of their craft or enthusiasm and their life story (1999, p. 53). After this the interviews took on a life of their own and issues were explored as they arose. The order in which questions were asked was not prescriptive, each
The interview covered the full range of the topics listed in the interview guide but were adapted and rearranged in response to each particular interview.

The interview guide should be developed and modified as the research develops (N. King, 2004). The guide was constantly reworked during the course of the interviews. After the initial four pilot interviews, it became clear that the relationship with their partner (always a wife in this case) was important. Wives were invariably supportive of their husband’s interest and involvement in the club and also appeared to be busy in the community, with many family and volunteer commitments. While this is consistent with existing literature about women’s involvement in community, it also suggests a pattern that men involved in such groups tended to have partners who also had busy lives and were involved in different community organisations.

In order to explore further the men’s perceptions of their relationship and the extent to which they felt supported, or not, in their interest by their wife, the following question was added to the interview guide:

What does your wife think of your involvement with the club/organisation?

During the interviews most of the men talked about reading, and in some cases writing for, enthusiast magazines, the internet was also identified as a means to both find out information about their enthusiasm and to connect and communicate with other enthusiasts. The role of magazines and the internet are discussed in more details in Chapters Four and Five. During the interviews the research began to suspect that magazines and the internet play a part in the shaping of the men’s identities as enthusiasts and also in the performance of this identity. The following question was added to the research guide to remind me to ask the men explicitly about enthusiast magazines and their use of the internet:

Do you use the internet and/or magazines to find out more about your enthusiasm?

Of course these questions were rarely asked verbatim. The research used the question as an aide-memoire as reminders to follow up on these topics. Additional prompts and probes were modified during the course of interviews to elicit narrative responses to questions, for example “can you tell me about a time when you found the internet really useful?” or “have you ever made anything suggested in an enthusiast magazine?”
This discussion on interviews belies the reality of interviews as being somewhat ‘messy’ in nature. While techniques such as developing an interview guide and phrasing questions in certain ways certainly assist in generating narrated responses, they can give the impression that conducting an interview is something that can be easily reduced to a formula. In reality interviews are a discussion, a back and forth between the interviewer and participant, where the interviewer is constantly at risk of being ‘seduced’ by topics that are of genuine interest but are off topic to the research. In keeping with Sennett’s advice to “stand both within and outside” (Sennett, 2003, p. 38) I was conscious of working to keep the interview “on track” while maintaining an informal conversational style. While the prompts and probes discussed above were very useful in keeping the interview on track and eliciting more information, there were also occasions when listening to the recordings and reading transcripts of the interviews where I feel that much richer narratives would have been gained had I had probed further or asked different questions. It is often as a result of the reflexive processes of journaling when such regrets come to the fore, which are of course part of the, usually unrecorded, qualitative research process.

Adapting Riessman’s process of asking participants to reflect on the interview process “as an experience … thinking about all you’ve been through” (Riessman 2003, p. 13), each interview was concluded with a request to participants to review and add to what had been discussed. The exact wording varied but in essence each participant was reminded of the range of topics that had been covered in the interview, with reference to the field notes, and were asked ‘is there anything about work, retirement, or your current enthusiasm that we haven’t discussed that you feel I should know about?’ This open ended question, inviting a reflective response, generated rich detailed replies.

3.17.3 Prompts, probes and giving something of oneself

There were times during the interviews when more detailed answers were required from participants, particularly during the early stage of interviews when building rapport. There are generally three different types of prompts and probes, the first is used to explicitly ask for more information about the topic at hand, the second is to encourage answers in the form of narrative, and the third is used to build rapport with the research participant through sharing something of oneself (Rapley, 2007). There were also times when a participant gives a vague or short answer about a topic. Requests for more information were often as straightforward as asking directly “can you tell more about that?” or “what do you mean when you say …?” Such questions gave the participants the opportunity to reveal more information.
The first four pilot interviews generated much useful data and many narratives. There were times when answers to questions initiated partial responses, incomplete or short narratives, or non-narrative answers. Riessman (2004) recommends using prompts and probes in such situations that encourage narrative responses, questions like “and what happened next?” were used to encourage further narration of partial narratives. When more general non-narrative responses were given prompts were used to invite more specific narratives, for example “do you remember a particular time when…?”, “what happened that made you remember that particular moment…?” or “can you tell me about the last time that happened…?” Asking what happened next or requesting specific examples nearly always resulted in storied responses.

In order to elicit more detailed information from participants the interviewer has to “give something [away] of himself or herself in order to merit an open response” (Sennett, 2003, p. 37). For Sennett this ‘giving’ of oneself is part of the mutual respect one should create in interviews, it also has the benefit of generating richer responses. I found that sharing information about myself with participants did indeed build rapport, respect, and resulted in more open and comprehensive answers. By way of example, I told Arthur one of the participants who restores and exhibits old farm equipment how much I enjoyed these demonstrations at country shows. Arthur and I also discussed our mutual admiration for the design of old electronic equipment. This sharing elicited further discussion with Arthur on these issues and resulted in a very rich conversation about such equipment giving greater insight into Arthur’s aesthetic values.

3.17.4 Summary and implications for this research

The ‘messiness’ of interviews is a reflection of the rich fabric of human discourse. Feeling comfortable with the dynamic complexity of interviews is surely part of the mastering the ‘craft’ of interviews. Sennett cautions against trying to formalise this ‘craft’ (2003), advice I readily agree with. Keeping the balance between being ‘in’ and ‘outside’ the interview, as well as keeping the interviews on track while maintaining a conversation style, is a craft that is dependant as much on the interviewer’s intuition as it is their intellect.

3.18 Field Notes

The spoken word forms only part of the data available for narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). Narratives are influenced by the physical settings where the interview occurs, as well as the proximity of other people, and certain objects in the immediate space, as discussed in Section 3.4.2. During the interview certain points are emphasised by gestures and actions,
the interview’s impressions, feelings, and reactions also influence the co-creation of narratives and their interpretation. Audio recording adequately captures the words and non-verbal utterances of the speakers, yet other methods are required to record the non-audio elements of the interview.

Many researchers, from a variety of disciplines, create field texts to capture the context of their experiences in the field. Anthropological, ethnographic, and feminist research methodologies create and use field texts (Allen & Walker, 1992; Emerson, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Gilgun, 1992; Warren & Karner, 2005), yet only a small number of the narrative studies reviewed explicitly report creating and using field texts (Cain, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1989, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) were the only narrative literature reviewed which explicitly consider the importance of field texts in narrative inquiries.

Field notes were taken during the interviews themselves and immediately after each interview in which I recorded my impressions, feelings, and notes of interesting aspects of the physical environment of the interview. Such notes record both the “existential, outward events” that happen in the interview and my more reflective “inner responses” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 86). The “outward events” include such things as the physical setting of the interview and how the participant and interviewer interacted with this setting, non-audio gestures or actions not recorded on audio files which emphasise or contradict a particular aspect of the interview. A journal was also kept during this research as a way to encourage my own reflexivity and record my reflexive thoughts as the research progressed. The “inner responses” are more reflexive looking at the experience of the interview, for both me and the participant, while being conscious of the theory and literature that informs the research. These field notes “slide back and forth” between being “records of the experience under study and records of oneself as researcher experiencing the research” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 87).

3.18.1 Summary and implications for this research

Keeping field notes was invaluable for this research. The field notes give a valuable insight into the research context; while the reflexive journaling allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the interviews and to develop the themes as they emerged from the analysis. They were also invaluable tools in gaining a better appreciation of the nuances required as a researcher, to be both ‘inside’ the research and the field experience and
‘outside’ contextualising the data with the broader theory and literature. They were of course invaluable to record and document some of the initial interpretations I had of each interview.

**3.19 Transcription**

Transcribing interviews from audio recording to text is an act of interpretation in itself (Judith Green, Franquiz, & Dixon, 1997; Mishler, 2003/1991; Ochs, 1979; Roberts, 1997). The first four interviews (with Arthur, Bill, Jim and Alf) were recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed by me. By transcribing the interviews I expected to become more familiar with the data than if someone else did the transcription. This process proved to be more onerous than anticipated and after discussion with my supervisors I engaged a professional to transcribe the interviews. The accuracy of all these later transcriptions was checked by listening and re-listening to the entire interview while reading the transcription. Once identified, all the narratives from interview transcripts used in this thesis were listened to again several times, to ensure as much as precision as possible between what is recorded here and what was said in the interview. Is not only ensures the accuracy of what was said it is also shows respect for the men in the study by ensuring that what is transcribed reflects as accurately as possible what was actually said. Producing as accurate a transcript as possible also reflects one of the original aims of this research, to give voice to a group of older men, who are unrepresented in most of the discourse about ageing, retirement, and men’s health.

The process by which texts were transcribed and narratives identified is set out below. Transcript 3.1 (below) is a section from an original transcript from Arthur’s interview.

*Transcript 3.1 - Arthur*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15</th>
<th>Anthony: ok and what is about the um club that you like? What keeps you coming back?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1:54: Arthur: [long pause] ar I just er feel committed to trying to um ar trying to make it function for the benefit of members ah like my role is a... more a um a bookish role, if you like, minutes secretary, that means I, take minutes of meetings and er then type them up er distribute them, predominantly by email, I prefer to use modern means.. methods, but um er at the same time I like to try and steer it to a degree, without being intrusive, ar in the direction I think it should go um.. y’know like paying attention to advertising and ar ar being careful in the selection of dates of events and things like...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that, sometimes people um er don’t necessarily think things through and perhaps I’m uh think I might be a bit better at that sometimes..

[laughs – chuckle]

As is apparent some selective editing has already taken place. This transcript does not have detailed information on much of the non-verbal communication. Sociolinguists and conversation analysts tend to make much more detailed transcripts, recording such factors as emphasis, the lengthening or shortening of an utterance, changes in pitch and intonation, the manner and place of articulation (see for example Linde, 1993; Stirling, 2007). The transcripts in this research did not record such details as it is doubtful that including this amount of information in the transcript would yield significantly more information about the speakers’ understanding of the experiences discussed. Narrative analysis is primarily concerned with the structure and content of narratives and less with the “non-linguistic features of speech such as pauses, false starts, or repetitions that are of special interest to other discourses researchers and Conversation Analysts” (Mishler 1999, p. 169).

Sociolinguistics and conversational analysis have informed this research, yet this remains primarily a work of narrative analysis. The transcripts created for this research are therefore consistent with other narrative inquiries concerned with people’s construction of meaning and only have a minimum of non-linguistic elements of speech recorded (for example Riessman, 1990, 2002, 2003; Gee, 1991; and Mishler, 1999).

Transcript 3.2 - Arthur

[52] Anthony: and when was this? When .. that was towards the end of..
11:48 Arthur: Oh I reckon ’98 so it’s in the later.. later few years of that we had a very, a very impressive set-up, unfortunately it all culminated at a time when production of .. of ah .. communication equipment in Australia was suddenly phased out and er went to China like everything [pause] else couldn’t compete on cost, *right* but .. but we had a um ah ah a phenomenal system I was very proud of it of course *mmh – agreement* oh our managing director bought Prime Ministers through to have a look at over, they were really .. to look at the CAD systems they they that was really impressive in the late ’80s early 90s

A: it sounds very exciting .. and um you .. you mentioned that about the time you left, um you know, a lot of this technology was going offshore was that part of the reason why you retired, when you did, or it was it your decision..

Arthur: (overlaps) no.. no it wasn’t at all actually I planned my retirement for 40 years service... interview continues

In this transcript the statements and non-verbal elements of both interlocutors has been retained as a way to demonstrate the co-constructed nature of the interviews. Distinct questions and responses have been represented as paragraphs, with me and the research participant taking it in turn to speak and there were often interjections during the conversation, which have been represented within existing paragraphs by asterisks, for example “*right*” paragraph 53 in Transcript 3.2. Including these within the paragraphs represents utterances of the other person which did not result in a change of turns to speak. These interjections tend to be minimal responses, linguistic devices used by listeners in
conversations, which may signal attention or agreement (Swann, Deumert, Lillis, & Mesthrie, 2004, p. 206). In the case above the minimal responses are all used to signify agreement, what sociolinguists call “back channel responses” (Swann, et al., 2004, p. 24).

Ochs encourages researchers to be aware of the biases that are brought into the spatial organisation of the transcription on the page (Ochs, 1979, pp. 45-48). Recording the conversation in the traditional top to bottom format (as above) maps the history of the discourse from top to bottom, in which utterances towards the top of the page happened before utterances towards the bottom of the page. Ochs suggests that there is a tendency to assume from this format that an utterance is relevant and contingent on what has gone before, particularly the utterance immediately above, this is not always the case (Ochs 1979, p. 46). While Ochs voiced this concern about Adult – Child conversations, the same concern holds true, though to a lesser extent, for Adult – Adult conversations. Transcript 3.2 illustrates this as the shift from paragraph 54 to 55 can be read as a logical progression. During the interview, however, the progression was not as ordered or logical as the transcript presents. Further listening reveals that at this point Arthur spoke over me, starting his response before the question had been completed.

3.19.1 Reporting speech into stanzas

Gee (1991) organised transcriptions of narratives around the structure of the stories as said. Gee advocates grouping the text into lines and stanzas. Each line and stanza is determined using the pauses, changes in pitch, and other punctuations in the speech of the narrator (Riessman, 1993, p. 19). Each line thus represents an “idea unit”, which are then grouped into larger stanzas about a single topic. Each stanza then represents a “particular ‘take’ on a character, action, event, claim, or piece of information” (Gee, 1991, p. 23). Gee believes that “stanzas are a universal part of the human language production system for extended pieces of language” (1991, p. 25).

The following narrative (transcript 3.3) from Arthur describes his involvement in his current club, and his long-time interest in old machinery:
Initially it arose from the fact that I had become interested in the restoration of vintage machinery, and when I learned that a club was being formed or had been formed I joined [p] attended a meeting. This was about the 4th meeting. I had been until my retirement a relative low key member just attending meetings and coming to some of the rallies. Since retirement I’ve become more involved and that’s also corresponded my letting go of some previous commitments to other voluntary organisations, and this is a function of family and time available and all sorts of things umm kids growing up and all that as well.

By representing the transcript in stanzas, as recommended by Gee (1991), the transcript becomes:

Transcript 3.4

**Initial interest**

1. Initially it arose
2. from the fact that
3. I had become interested
4. in the restoration of vintage machinery

**Joining the Club**

5. And when I learned
6. that a club was being formed
7. or had been formed
8. I joined
9. ... attended a meeting
10. This was about the fourth meeting

**Involvement before retirement**

11. I had been
12. until my retirement
13. a relative low key member
14. just attending meetings
15. and coming to some of the rallies
**Involvement After Retirement**

16. Since retirement I’ve become more involved
17. and that’s also corresponded [to] my letting go of
18. some previous commitments to other voluntary organisations

*Evaluation of why things changed*

19. And this is a function of family
20. and time available
21. and all sorts of things umm
22. kids growing up

*Conclusion, closing the ‘narrative space’*

23. And all that as well

The italicised text is my interpretation of what each stanza is about or the function it plays. Presenting the transcription as such departs slightly from Gee’s original approach by labelling the last two stanzas ‘evaluation’ and ‘conclusion’ respectively, to report the *function* of these two stanzas clauses, as opposed to their content. This is an adaptation of the narrative elements of Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) formalist schema for simple narratives. Following from this, I have presented the men’s speech as stanzas when identifying the functional structural elements of their narratives, during Chapters Four and Five.

The narratives and the ‘idea units’ within them were numbered in a way consistent with both Riessman (1992, 2008) and Gee’s (1991) usage. Longer transcripts and those which are referred to multiple times are numbered in the order in which they are presented in each chapter and each ‘idea unit’ is numbered within each transcript. In order to facilitate easier cross-referencing to a particular clause, references to specific clauses and idea units in the transcripts that follow are given within square brackets [ ], so as to distinguish these from the round brackets ( ) used for literature references. Shorter transcripts tend not to be numbered to aid in reading.

### 3.20 Narrative Analysis

There is no consensus among narrative scholars of one way to organise and analyse narratives once collected. This is to be expected given the diversity of definitions and theoretical understandings of narratives from different disciplines, as discussed in Section 3.3.1.
Two general categories of approach to narrative inquiry have been proposed, based on Bruner’s (1986) paradigmatic and narrative types of cognition, as discussed in Section 3.3.4. Polkinghorne contends that most qualitative research is written within a paradigmatic framework of logio-scientific methods, which use pre-existing concepts to understand narratives. While acknowledging the advantages of such reasoning, Polkinghorne also advocates for more research using narrative ways of knowing, while maintaining the importance and value of paradigmatic reasoning. Conceptualising narrative research in such a way remains useful, even though Bruner has, abandoned such a binary understanding (2002). Bruner’s original ideas and Polkinghorne’s recommendations for researchers have been used in this thesis as heuristic guidelines for the writing of this research. I am using the concept of a ‘paradigmatic framework’ to help identify particular aspects of individual men’s narratives and then use these as “instances of general notions or concepts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13). Bruner’s original, if incomplete, concept of paradigmatic ‘scientific’ reasoning remains useful as it allows for an, “imaginative application of the paradigmatic mode leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, sound argument, and empirical discovery guided by reason” (1986, p. 13), which is surely as good and as rigorous a basis for research as any from the ‘hard’ sciences.

Chapter Four begins with a series of longer narratives from one research participant. These narratives have been chosen and synthesised by me to build up selected aspects of the participant’s life story. The narratives presented retain the richness, texture and contexts of the original narratives. These narratives, thus presented, allow for a narrative analysis using narrative reasoning, and aspects of the structural, thematic and discourse analytic methods described below.

The understandings thus built up through narrative reasoning were then compared to the findings of similar analysis of the other participants’ narratives. These comparisons build up meta-themes with some claims to generalizability and the development of “general notions or concepts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13). It is at this point that difficulties using this binary approach to understanding narratives become apparent. It is not possible to use one such mode exclusively as narratives are constructed and understood using processes that are not so easily defined or delineated. It is not possible to exclusively apply only paradigmatic or narrative reason to any one of the processes involved in the initial synthesis and analysis of narratives. Preparing the original longer narratives for investigation was as much a process of paradigmatic reasoning as it was a process of narrative reasoning. A logical process was, naturally enough, used to build up the narratives that demonstrated the aims of the research, yet the narrative strength of individual stories also influenced the selecting of rich complex
stories which gave insight into the emotional life and meaning of the men. Likewise, the comparison between the different men’s story involved the construction of a general overarching narrative about retirement and the men’s enthusiasms.

There is no consensus among narrative scholars of one way to organise and analyse narratives once collected. This is to be expected given the diversity of definitions and theoretical understandings of narratives from different disciplines, as discussed in Section 3.3.1.

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The case centred approach this research uses allows for aspects of both narrative and paradigmatic analysis. Each of the following results chapters begins with a series of longer narratives from one research participant. These narratives have been chosen and synthesised by me to build up selected aspects of the participant’s life story. The narratives presented retain the richness, texture and contexts of the original narratives. These narratives, thus presented, allow for a narrative analysis using narrative reasoning, and aspects of the structural, thematic and discourse analytic methods described below.

The understandings thus built up through narrative reasoning were then compared to the findings of similar analysis of the other participants’ narratives. These comparisons build up meta-themes with some claims to generalizability and the development of “general notions or concepts”. The development of “general notions or concepts” is consistent with what Polkinghorne sees as the aims of paradigmatic analysis (1995, p. 13). It would be incorrect to assume though that narrative modes of analysis have been exclusively applied to the initial
synthesis and analysis of narratives, while only paradigmatic modes of analysis were used for the comparison across the different men’s stories. Synthesising the original longer narratives for investigation was as much a process of paradigmatic reasoning as it was a process of narrative reasoning. Paradigmatic reasoning was used in the logical process of building up narratives that demonstrated aims of the research, based on my reading and understandings; whereas narrative reasoning was used in selecting rich complex stories which gave insight into the emotional life and meaning of the men. Likewise, the comparison between the different men’s story involved the construction of a general overarching narrative about retirement and the men’s enthusiasms.

3.20.1 Selecting narratives for analysis

As for the truth of my story, I think I can say that I have exaggerated nothing except in so far as all writers exaggerate by selecting.

George Orwell (1938/1971, p. 138)

The context of the interviews was examined using a narrative and life story perspective, as discussed in Section 3.3. This perspective requires analysis of relatively large sections of text from interviews that Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) refer to as “big gulps of text” (2004). The initial analysis of these “big gulps of text” is informed by methods developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998, pp. 62), Riessman (1990, 1993, 2001, 2004, 2008), and Mishler (1992, 1999). The entire transcribed interviews were read and re-read, narrative elements identified and initial impressions, themes and discrepancies noted and recorded. Narratives were selected which could serve as examples of the emerging patterns and themes. The original audio files of these chosen narratives were repeatedly listened to in order to ensure that the transcription was accurate. These narratives were then subjected to the more formal structural analysis described below. The original field notes were re-read to ensure a better understanding of the context of the interview. The findings of the structural analysis of individual narratives were compared to the complete transcript to determine themes. The field notes taken during the interviews were also referred to and reflected on during this process, as discussed in Section 3.17.4.

3.20.2 Structural analysis of narratives

The narratives thus chosen were then subjected to a structural analysis. Structural analyses of narratives are concerned with how narrators organise the content of their narratives (Riessman, 2008, pp. 100-101). This analysis is concerned with both how narrators organise
the content of individual narratives within the interview and where and how each narrative interacts with other narratives within the interview as a whole.

The form that each analysis took was dependent on the form of the narrative in question. Basic narratives were identified that conformed to Labov and Waletzky’s definition of describing a discrete event in the narrator’s experience and had two or more clauses temporally organised. Such narratives were analysed using the linguistic formalist techniques developed by Labov and Waletzky (Labov, 1982; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). The various functional clauses, as defined above, were identified within each basic narrative. Once identified these functional clauses assisted in understanding not only how the narratives were constructed but the meaning the narrative gave to each story.

More complex narratives were also identified which did not neatly fit Labov and Waletzky’s definition of narrative. These narratives were extended accounts of certain aspects of people’s life and life-contexts and were made up of several interlinked narratives; often related to other narratives told at different times during the interview. These narratives were also subjected to a structural analysis, that looked at how individual sub-narratives are structured and the place and relationship of each sub-narrative to each other and to the interview as a whole. This process identified various people, places and times that were important to the participants and opened up the “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space”, as defined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, pp. 49-50). This “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” is made up of the intersection of interaction, the personal and social aspects of the narrative; continuity, past present and future; and situation, place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 49-50). It is within this three-dimensional narrative inquiry place that I began to understand these interplays and through them gain insight into the identity of the narrators.

Narratives create “identity spaces” where the narrator situates themselves “within a matrix of changing relationships” (Mishler, 1999, pp. 111-112). These relationships are not only relationships to other people, but also to places, times, situations and contexts. Aspects of these factors are identified and mapped, the interconnections of these factors gives insight into these identity spaces and through them to the meaning that the narrators give to people, events and experiences.
3.20.3 Thematic analysis of narratives

The understandings drawn out of the structural narrative analyses were then subjected to thematic analysis. The findings of the structural analyses of individual men’s narratives and life-stories were compared and contrasted with the themes that emerged from analyses of the narratives of all the men interviewed. This approach has been used in many narrative investigations, including Riessman’s seminal narrative analysis of men’s and women’s experience of divorce (1990), Mishler’s study of craftartists’ sense of identity (1999), and Ewick and Silbey’s research into lay people’s experience of the law (2003).

This thematic analysis showed the commonalities, contradictions and contrasts between the men’s understanding of their various relationships and experiences. While it is possible to gain insight into broad social processes through a single case study (Chase, 2003; Flyvberg, 2004), this research’s comparison of similarities and contrasts between the emerging themes of the men’s narratives strengthened the evidence of generalizability as many of these trends could be seen across a number of the men’s narratives and life stories.

This is consistent with the approach taken by Mishler (1999) and described in detail in Riessman (2001); yet it differs from what Riessman later called “thematic narrative analysis” (2008, p. 74). Thematic narrative analysis compares the themes that emerge from analysis of individual narratives with each other, while the thematic analysis undertaken in this research is more aligned with ‘traditional’ thematic analysis, in that it is organised around the themes (category-centred) rather than around the men or their life-stories (case-centred).

3.20.4 Dialogic/performance analysis

Narratives are produced through interaction between speakers. This dialogical interaction occurs within and is influenced by social, physical, and relational contexts. Most obviously, in the case of this research, the context is that of one person, the research participant, interacting with another person, me as researcher, at a particular time at a particular place to produce narratives. The person of the researcher, the setting of the interview, and the relative social circumstances of the interlocutors influence “the production and interpretation of narrative” (Riessman, 2008, p. 105).

The ‘performance’ of identity occurs within a particular context, in a particular time and place. The narrative performance of identity is “plurivocal”, produced from multiple voices and points of view (Riessman, 2008, p. 107). For not only do the audience and the narrator
co-construct individual narratives, the ‘voices’ of wider societal narratives and contemporary discourses also influence how and why narratives are put together.

The context that produced the participants’ narratives and life stories are examined, this includes not only the immediate setting, literally where the interview took place, it also looks at the certain influences and debates happening in Australia at the time. Some of this analysis of context draws, modestly, on the work of Erving (Goffman, 1968, 1981, 2005) and the performative aspects of symbolic interaction theory. In particular Goffman’s notion of “face”, the socially approved “positive social value a person effectively claims for himself” (2005, p. 5). Riessman calls such explorations of these narrative performances of identity, the dialogic interactions that produce them, and the context in which they occur “dialogic/performance analyses” of narrative (2008, p. 105).

Stories are social artefacts, telling us as much about society and culture as they do about a person or group. How do these contexts enter into story telling? How is a story coproduced in a complex choreography – in spaces between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader, and history and culture? Dialogic/performance analysis attempts to deal with these questions, applied here to ethnographic and interview data about identities.

(Riessman, 2008, p. 105)

The context and performative elements of the men’s narrative are examined throughout this research. Chapter Six examines the context of the men’s narratives, in part through dialogic/performance analyses, however such analyses are not confined to Chapter Six. Insights and findings into the context and performative elements of the men’s identities are presented alongside and as part of the structural and thematic analyses of Chapters Four and Five. Incorporating discussion on the contextual and performative elements of the narratives and life stories in this way allows some of the rich interrelated complexities of people’s experiences and life contexts to be maintained. The preserving of such complex interrelationships is one of the strengths of narrative analysis.

### 3.21 Bias of Attribution

Research participants are known to be selective in what they reveal about themselves to researchers (Kihlstrom, 1995). Participants present elements of themselves that they consider relate to the researcher’s interests and to be less forthcoming with elements they consider to be irrelevant to the research (Norenzayan & Schwarz, 1999, 2006). Research participants
focus on those aspects of themselves that they consider of most interest and relevance to the research and they are not so much “trying to tell the researcher what he or she ‘wants to hear’, but rather what he or she ‘wants to know” (Norenzayan & Schwarz, 1999, p. 1018).

The men gave answers around work, retirement, and their enthusiasms as expected. Some men gave wide ranging answers, while others did not ‘stray’ too far from the defined topics. Given the potential bias of attribution this is perhaps to be expected and should not be attributed to supposed masculine reluctance to talk about other personal or family based topics. Norenzayan and Schwarz (1999) show that test subjects modify their answers to align with what they perceive are the biases and understandings of the researchers. The men, and the organisations they are affiliated with, had all previously received information about the research outlining my interest in work, retirement and their current enthusiasm, consistent with University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Committee requirements. It is clear from the men that some of them had thought about and talked to others about these topics before the interviews, so it is not surprising that they had something to say about the topics questioned and perhaps had not ‘prepared’ or ‘rehearsed’ anything on what seemed to them unrelated topics. Likewise in keeping with the standard practice of such interviews, I constantly ‘steered’ the conversation towards these topics and away from others I thought were less relevant.

3.22 Case-Centred Approach

A case-centred approach has been used in Chapter Four as a way to retain the “particularities of events/actions and their contexts” (Katz & Mishler, 2003, p. 36). I am using the term ‘case-centred approaches’ to refer to the body of qualitative work that is concerned with investigating a ‘unit’ of “human activity embedded in the real world” and the contexts of these ‘units’ (Gillham, 2000, p. 1). The ‘unit’ of this research being each man interviewed. In this sense case-centred approach refers to traditional case studies but also to other narrative analyses that present a number of ‘cases’ and then draws out commonalities, contrasts, and contradictions from across them all (Cain, 1991; Kotre, 1984; Mishler, 1999; Randall, 2008; Riessman, 2002, 2003; G. Williams, 1984).

People and their experiences exist contextually within their environments. It is through these contexts that people make meaning from their experiences, as discussed in Chapter Three, Sections 3.1 and 3.4. The relationship between people, their experiences, and contexts are dynamic and complex. People and their social contexts are so intertwined that “precise boundaries are difficult to draw” and using cases is a way to keep much of these
complexities intact (Gillham, 2000, p. 1). Cases can be seen as analogous to an archaeologist removing artefacts from a dig not one by one in the field but encased within the original block of soil they were found in. This builds up an understanding not just of a single artefact, be a coin or a narrative, but also of the person who used it and the culture that produced it. In this way cases are well suited for questions that “require an extensive and ‘in-depth’ description of some social phenomenon”, while preserving “the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2009, p. 4).

Case studies are often presented as narratives. Presenting a single or limited number of cases in some detail retains dynamics of the narratives themselves as well as the complex and contradictory experience of the participants’ lives and life contexts. Maintaining ‘thick’ narratives that are otherwise difficult to summarise indicate that “the study has uncovered a particularly rich problematic” (Flyvberg, 2004, p. 400). Presenting detailed ‘thick’ narratives allows for deeper, more layered understanding of the problematic at hand. Case studies using long narratives allow researchers and readers alike to use their own narrative reasoning to make narrative sense of the experience, to understand its nuances, particularities, and contexts. The analyses of narratives in the following chapters, particularly the structural analyses in Chapter Four, use a more ‘scientific’ paradigmatic approach, complemented by narrative approaches in Chapters Five and Six which attempt to maintain the narratives’ understandings of the complex dynamics of the men’s lives and narratives. The use of both narrative and paradigmatic reasoning complement each other, leading to a deeper understanding of the men’s narratives and life contexts.

Even the most enthusiastic supporters of case studies advise caution about the generalizability of learnings from single cases. While certain case studies have been paradigm changing most add a modest understanding of certain aspects of the men’s social worlds and “contribute to the cumulative development of knowledge” (Flyvberg, 2004, pp. 401-402). Analysis of a case or cases reveal the general “cultural and discursive resources and constraints” that the narrator draws on, in other words through examining cases we come to know the “the general only through its embodiments” (Chase, 2003, p. 290). While not making generalised claims about all older people, or even all older men, this study does claim some insight into the cultural world of older men involved in enthusiast clubs and groups.
3.23 Summary of Methods

The methods used in this study flow from and are consistent with the methodological approaches of hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative analysis which inform the research (Section A). The techniques used in the field to gather data are a balance of both the pragmatic and practical aspects of gathering data for later analysis and a process of balancing my own experience of being both within and outside of the research experience.

This research aims to explore the meaning that retired men give to their experiences of work, retirement, and involvement in community enthusiast groups. The analytic methods of narrative analysis and the presentation of the findings use both case-centred and category-centred approaches, in Chapters Four and Five respectively. The use of a case-centred approach maintains, as much as possible, the integrity of the narratives and, most importantly, the voice of some of the men themselves; whereas a category-centred approach reveals similarities, interconnections, and differences of the various themes.
4 Structural Analyses of Narratives

In this process, story still guides the work. I hope the result has something of art, something of life, and great deal of communicable truth.

(Kotre, 1984, p. 31, original emphasis)

“Do you remember when you were boys that you would see a guy retire from work and he’d sit out on the front verandah of his house in his rocking chair and just sit there and wait to die?” ...
that’s not in front of Bill ...
“I can hardly wait”

Bill – study participant

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the narratives and life contexts of two of the study’s participants. Using a case-centred approach this analysis documents some of the key findings and themes to emerge from the participants’ interviews, as well as demonstrating the analytic tools used. These findings and themes were uncovered initially through structural analyses of the men’s narratives and then through the thematic analyses of Chapter Five. These analyses give insight into some of the complex dynamic interactions between the men and other people, places, and times. Detailed analyses of the narratives of two of the participants are presented in this chapter and the insights gained compared with other men in the study in Chapters Five and Six. This approach of developing and examining extended accounts of narrative, through a case-centred approach, is consistent with the methods used in other narrative based research (Chase, 2003; Ewick & Silbey, 2003; Flyvberg, 2004; Kotre, 1984; Mishler, 1999; Riessman, 2008). These methods are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, Section 3.21.

Narrative methodologies bring people’s voices to the fore. One of the aims of this study is to give voice to older men, in order to challenge their invisibility in gerontological and men’s health discourses (Beales & Peterson, 2000; A. A. Fleming, 1999; Kaye, et al., 2008;
Presenting a number of long narratives will, literally, allow the ‘voice’ of at least these two men to be presented. These ‘voices’ and the associated narratives also gives an introduction, albeit a limited one, to some of the men, their life stories, and their life contexts.

The narratives were firstly subjected to a structural analysis. This analysis revealed much about the men and their understandings of their experiences and was particularly useful when describing and understanding the rich tapestry of meanings and relationships that each man builds up in their narratives.

The transcripts in this chapter show sections of Bill and Arthur’s life stories that are concerned with work, retirement, and their various hobbies and enthusiasms. These narratives have been deliberately chosen, synthesised, and arranged to build up these selected themes, as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.20. The selection and ordering of the following transcripts have been arranged to build up my interpretation of these sections of the men’s life stories. The transcripts are arranged in chronological sequence, which may differ from the order in which they were narrated, so as to tell the stories of Bill and Arthur’s working life, retirement, and involvement in their respective enthusiast groups.

These two men were chosen as exemplars for many reasons. Both constructed rich and detailed relational matrices within their narratives, yet they also have very different styles or ways of telling their narratives. It is unfortunately not possible, due to space restrictions, to present the narratives of all of the men interviewed in this degree of detail. Instead Arthur and Bill have been chosen as their narratives show the rich interconnectedness of the key findings of this research. Findings, such as the importance of generativity, identity continuation, and recreation of a work-like sub-identity are to be found in their narratives.

Bill and Arthur also tell their stories in very different ways and they represent the extremes of observed storytelling styles. They were also on opposite ends of the continuum of how well, or not, the men interviewed had integrated their experiences of leaving work into a coherent life story. This narrative coherence is explored further in Chapter Six.

4.1.1 Case-centred approaches

Only Bill and Arthur’s narratives are presented in this level of detail. Using a large number of participants would, by necessity, reduce the length and detail of individual narratives presented. Presenting more cases would also obscure some of the analytic methods used to arrive at the findings. These detailed, rich, understandings of Bill and Arthur’s narratives
also give an awareness of their social world and the social worlds of other retired men who are members of enthusiast groups. Such a case-based approach also reveals insights into broader social processes, as evidenced by Chase (2003) and Flyvberg (2004). The generalizability of these insights to other retired men is examined through the subsequent thematic analysis in Chapter Five, where the insights from Bill and Arthur’s narratives are compared and contrasted to that of the other men in the study.

### 4.1.2 Representing narratives

In order to facilitate this analysis the narratives below are represented using Gee’s methods of defining an ‘idea units’ per line and then grouping lines into stanzas (Gee, 1991). The extracts below have been organised into a series of interrelated sub-narratives. While the order of these sub-narratives remains the same as occurred in the interview, some of the linking non-narrative elements have been removed and replaced with explanatory notes in italics.

The narratives in this chapter have been numbered in order to facilitate referencing to specific clauses. The numbering system used is consistent with Gee (1991) and Riessman’s (1992, 2008) numbering of transcripts and ‘idea units’. The numbering of the lines within these transcripts is ordered to show their relative position within the original interview.

### 4.1.3 Narrative matrices: Structural analysis of narrative

The narratives presented in this chapter have been selected as exemplars to introduce the key findings and themes of the study. These narratives were selected using the processes described in Chapter Three, Section 3.20.1. The findings and themes were revealed, in part, through identifying and mapping the dynamic complex interrelationships of people, times and places built up in the narratives and reveal the “matrix of changing relationships” in which the narrator situates themselves (Mishler, 1999, pp. 111-112).

The men’s relational matrices and identity spaces were first identified through structural narrative analyses. The structural narrative analysis paid particular attention to individual narratives and their place and context within the entire interview and the men’s overarching life stories, revealing a rich and varied array of relationships and meanings (Linde, 1993; Mishler, 1999; Riessman, 2008; G. Williams, 1984). It is beyond the scale of this research to present the results of the structural analysis of all the men’s narratives. Bill and Arthur’s narratives are presented in some detail, to maintain as much as possible the rich, interconnected, complexity of their lives, experiences, and narratives. This brings to the fore some of the “lived realities” of these older men’s lives, while maintaining an understanding of the wider context of their lives, as advocated by Russell (2007, p. 114).
4.2 The Participants

The participants in this study are members of enthusiast and hobby clubs in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains of NSW. The men were recruited to the study through these groups using the techniques discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.16. All the men had been retired from fulltime work for at least two years, in order to reduce the risk of interviewing anyone still in what Atchley (1976) describes as the ‘honeymoon’ phase of retirement. The men ranged in ages from 66 to 75 years old (average age 68.7 years) and had been retired from between 6 and 16 years (average 10.1 years, this average was calculated from the eight men who gave this information), Table 4.1 summarises the men’s involvement with these enthusiast groups.
Table 4.1 Participants, retirement, and enthusiast groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Retired</th>
<th>Enthusiast Club / Group 1,2</th>
<th>Years of membership 3</th>
<th>No. of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Antique machinery club*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Friends’ of local parklands</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local historical society</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lilium Society†</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rural Fire Service*</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local Ham Radio Club*</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wireless Association of Australia</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Railway museum</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alf</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Railway museum*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Fire Service</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Model Train Society</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Model flying club*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Woodturners</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ornamental turners</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fishing club†</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Woodturners*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gardening club</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Woodturners*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gemstone association</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Woodturners*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Old tools collectors</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Holds or has held an executive or other official position within the group.
† Is no longer a member.

1. The first club named is the group participants were recruited through, membership of subsequent groups were revealed during the interviews. This list may not therefore be a complete list of all the groups the participants are involved with.
2. The enthusiasm that the club or group is involved with. The names of the groups are not given as many of these organisations are small and naming the club risks identifying some of the research participants.
3. Data was only collected on the years with the first club identified, years of membership with subsequent clubs were only revealed sometimes during interviews.
4.3 Bill

At the time of the interview Bill was 67 years old and had been retired for six years. The interview took place in Bill’s house, at his kitchen table. Bill had come to the study through his involvement in a local Rural Fire Service brigade. During the interview Bill revealed that he was also a ham radio\textsuperscript{10} enthusiast and a member of a number of radio clubs and organisations. I decided to focus on this particular enthusiasm during the interview, rather than his volunteer bush fire fighting service as originally planned. Being a ‘ham’ pre-dated his involvement and underpinned much of Bill’s subsequent voluntary activities. During the interview Bill spoke about his life, paid work, and retirement, as well as his interest in ham radios, radio societies, and the links between operating radios and the Rural Fire Service. Much of this discussion was, as expected, in the form of narratives.

Bill’s narratives give insight into some of the meaningful relationships in his life. These relationships are not just between Bill and other people; they include Bill’s interactions with and understanding of: electronics, ham radios, and the ham subculture, as well as places, times, and the wider culture. The factors are intertwined with each other in dynamic and complex ways. Through his narratives Bill situates himself within a complex ever-changing matrix made up of all these relationships.

\textsuperscript{10} “Ham” or “Amateur Radio” operators use personal, often home-made, radio equipment to speak to other “hams” around the world.
### 4.3.1 Structural analysis of Bill’s narratives

The following extract is part of Bill’s response to a question on his current membership of various enthusiast and volunteer groups.

**Transcript 4.1  Bill and being a ham**

*Anthony:* How did your interest in radio turn into you getting involved in the various [amateur radio] groups?

*B Bill:* Short discussion explaining recent changes in the organisation

*and Bill’s current role as Education Officer for the local radio association*

**Sub-narrative 1: helping a girl gain her radio licence**

01 In fact I ran, er

02 or overviewed

03 some er assessments last weekend

04 where we had seven people

05 and one was a 10 year old girl

06 who was, she was marvellous

07 got 100 percent

08 but she didn’t understand some of the words

09 and so what happened was that I took her aside

10 I’m authorised to [do] this

11 and I would tell her an alternative word

12 and I got it down to where

13 I could pitch it at her level

14 and she could give me the answered required

15 anyway it was all multi-choice

16 and so anyhow she was successful

17 I was so pleased

*Further discussion on the need for new members to the radio club*

*and regulatory changes which will affect the club...*
**Sub-narrative 2: making and fixing radios as a child**

18 So yeah that’s how I got into the radio side of things
19 but it was an interest from a little kid
20 um about 12 or so making crystal sets
21 And people would give me old wirelesses
22 I’d fix those and so there it went

**Sub-narrative 3: meeting his mentor**

23 but I’ve always wanted to be a ham
24 as they call them
25 and I remember going down to this fellow’s place
26 ah see his big aerial up so I knew
27 I was only about 16 or something
28 I knocked on his back door
29 you know gruff voice “who’s there” [*in a gruff voice*]
30 and I said “ah.. Bill”
31 “What do you want” [*gruff voice*]
32 I said “I want to be [a] ham”
33 “oh” he said
34 “come in son”
35 like the spider to the fly

Anthony: [*laughs*]

36 and he was my mentor
37 he was terrific

**Sub-narrative 4: growing mastery**

38 and I’d make up receivers
39 and all this sort of stuff
40 and then he’d tell me
41 and virtually design what I was going to make
42 because I had no idea
43 and where to go to buy the bits
down to a place called National Radio in [suburb]
all army disposal stuff
to buy a valve off the local radio shop was say
one pound 10 shillings
or 30 bob
ah for a pound I could get eight valves
because they were military disposal
and of course they were all I wanted

Sub-narrative 5: first radio shed on parents’ verandah
Anyhow I just build up all these things and
I built my own little shed
on the back verandah of my parents’ house at [suburb]
and that was my little workshop
I’d get home from work
and they’d drag me out to have something for dinner,
and I’d run back in there again and
you know leave about 10 o’clock that night to go to bed

Evaluation and Coda
so that
playing around with all this stuff
it’s been a lifetime interest
and electronics I just lived and breathed them

There are at least five sub-narratives in Transcript 4.1. These sub-narratives are linked by a common theme of training, learning and mentorship. The first narrative concerns Bill assisting a young girl to gain her ham radio licence [Transcript 4.1: 01-17], the next is a short account of Bill building and fixing radios as a boy [Transcript 4.1: 18-22], then meeting his mentor as a young man [Transcript 4.1: 25-37], followed by a growing mastery of electronics [Transcript 4.1: 38-51], and finally his first workshop on his parents’ back verandah [Transcript 4.1: 52-59]. These sub-narratives can be seen as sharing a common theme.
These sub-narratives form a larger narrative unit, in which each of the sub-narrative is linked by these common themes of training, learning, and mentorship. Sub-narrative 1 serves to introduce the theme and then Sub-narratives 2 to 5 give a sequential account of the role of teaching and mentoring in the development of Bill’s interest in radios. Although they are related thematically each story has a different structure and serves a different purpose in reference to the whole. These thematically connected sub-narratives form a section of Bill’s life story, the overarching narrative of one’s life that demonstrates a life of “unity and purpose” (McAdams, 2009, p. 8).

Bill’s first narrative, of the young girl [Transcript 4.1: 01-17], is a straightforward ‘simple’ narrative which moves chronologically through time reporting on specific past events. Such narratives are well suited to the linguistic formalism of Labov and Waletzky (Labov, 1982; Labov & Waletzky, 1967), who contend that such narratives have a series of standard elements. These elements are reproduced below and described in more detail in Chapter Three, Section 3.3.1.

**Abstract (AB)** a clause or two summarising the whole story.

**Orientation (OR)** a series of clauses filling in background information.

**Complicating Action (CA)** a series of clauses, each of which describes an event in a temporal sequence of events.

**Evaluation (EV)** where the narrator comments on the action from outside the story world; indicating the point or reason of the story.

**Resolution (RE)** the termination of the series of events in the complicating action, and

**Coda (CO)** a section that shifts the present time-reference to bridge the gap between story time and present, signal the finish and possibly restate the meaning or moral of the story.

Labov (1982), Labov & Waletzky (1967) coding as adapted by Riessman (2008,).

The sub-narrative that introduces the theme of teaching and mentoring is reproduced below showing these structural elements.
In fact I ran, or overviewed, some assessments last weekend, where we had seven people and one was a 10 year old girl who was, she was marvellous, got 100 percent but she didn’t understand some of the words, and so what happened was that I took her aside, I’m authorised to do this, and I would tell her an alternative word, and I got it down to where I could pitch it at her level and she could give me the answered required, anyway it was all multi-choice, and so anyhow she was successful I was so pleased.

There is little that actually happens in this narrative. There are only two clauses of Complicating Actions which move the narrative forward [Transcript 4.2: 09 and 11]. These together with part of the Abstract, Orientation, and Resolution give a basic narrative of:

04-05. We had ... a 10 year old girl
09. and so what happened was that I took her aside,
11. and I would tell her an alternative word,
16. And ... she was successful.

It is the evaluative elements of this narrative unit [Transcript 4.2: 06, 07 and 17] that demonstrate the purpose and the point of the narrative, which is the importance Bill places on the girl’s success and his role in it. Bill thinks the girl is “marvellous” [Transcript 4.2: 06] and he “was so pleased” [Transcript 4.2: 17] at her success. Throughout the interview Bill referred to his former work as a teacher and educator. He is currently the Education Officer for his radio club. Such generativity, an interest in helping younger people (Erikson, 1963, 1968; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998), was a recurrent theme.
throughout the interview. Erikson, who coined the term, refined his definition of generativity to a “man’s love for his works and ideas as well as for his children, and the necessary self-verification which adult man’s ego receives, and must receive, from his labour’s challenge” (Erikson, 2000a, p. 204, original emphasis). The evaluative elements of this sub-narrative, revealed through this formal Labovian analysis, show the importance that Bill places on such activity.

Unlike many ‘simple’ narratives, this particular sub-narrative has no Coda. Coda’s are a section at the end of narratives which function to both signal the end of the story and return the listener to the present moment (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Bill does not want to lead his audience, me, back to the ‘here and now’ at this point in the narrative instead he wants the audience to remain in the narrative space he has created in order that the stories can continue. This narrative space is in effect Clandinin and Connelly’s “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (2000, pp. 54-62), as described above in Section 3.4. The narrative space, like the narratives themselves, is something co-constructed and held open by both the teller and the audience. Bill indicates his wish to keep the narrative space open that I consent to through silence and by continuing to listen. Holding the narrative space open allows Bill to build up his generative themes through additional narratives.

As Education Officer Bill demonstrates what Kotre (1984) calls technical generativity, the passing on of skills and technical knowledge about the hobby to new enthusiasts. The passing on of skills and technical knowledge is self-evident in the title of Bill’s role and certainly in his story about the young girl. The above set of stories show not only Bill’s own experiences of learning and teaching but also his journey from novice, to acquiring both the technical and cultural proficiency to be a teacher of the technical aspects of the hobby, to finally becoming a mentor himself who passes on culture of the enthusiasm.

4.3.2 Special relationships with people, time and place

Subsequent sub-narratives in Transcript 4.1 are broader in nature dealing not so much with specific events but with biographical details that happened over time. The brief narrative about making and fixing radios [Transcript 4.1: 18-22] is an example of this. It is not always relevant or even possible to apply Labov and Waletzky’s techniques directly to such narratives; in this case the approach developed by Riessman has been adopted and Labov’s elements have been applied to the reading of the function of various clauses within this section of thematically linked narratives (Riessman, 2008, p. 89). This sub-narrative [Transcript 4.1:18-22] acts as an orientating and evaluating element in the entire transcript,
to reinforce Bill’s lifelong interest in radios and to prepare the audience for longer more
important narratives on this theme. This theme of lifelong involvement with electronics is
evoked again at the end of this section of linked narratives [Transcript 4.1: 60-63], where it
acts as a final coda for the whole section of linked narratives, evaluating and summarising
this important theme, as discussed in Chapter Five below. This narrative of fixing radios as a
child (Sub-narrative 3) represents a sudden jump back in time, moving from “last weekend”
[Transcript 4.1: 03] to when Bill was 12, a jump backwards of some 50 or 60 years. This
jump reorientates the narrative in Bill’s childhood and prepares the audience for the next
temporal move a few years forward to Bill’s young adulthood and the subsequent narrative
about meeting his mentor.

The next sub-narrative about meeting his mentor [Transcript 4.1: lines 23-37] is both
revealing and entertaining. The theatricality of the telling of the story is an important aspect
of the tale. Bill used a different pitch and tone of voice when quoting his mentor, this
changed from a low, ‘gruff’ voice when asking why Bill has come to see him [Transcript
4.1: lines 29, 31], to a more friendly, less ‘menacing’ tone when he welcomes Bill in with the
words “oh … come in son” [Transcript 4.1: 33-34]. The change of tone is a theatrical touch
which adds humour to the telling of the story and underlines the change in his mentor’s
attitude to Bill, after Bill reveals he wants to be a ham. Taking on different ‘voices for
different ‘characters’ is a theatrical device Bill used to enhance his storytelling. Such
theatrically did successfully engage me as an interested audience. The field notes, written
immediately after this interview, show that I felt (and still feel) that Bill told a compelling
story and enjoyed giving this interview.

Bill’s mentor’s house is charged with symbolic meaning. The “big aerial” [Transcript 4.1:
26] is as much a sign of his mentor’s knowledge and status as a ham, as it is an object in the
landscape. It marks this as the home of a ham, and as such becomes symbolic of the
knowledge contained ‘inside’ the house which Bill wanted access to. This metaphor is
extended when Bill knocks on the door and, like the hero in a traditional quest, he is stopped
at the threshold and asked a question, to which only the correct answer will allow Bill entry
to the house and the knowledge therein. Being ushered into the back door, with the words
“come in son” [Transcript 4.1: 34] suggests the beginning of a close relationship with his
mentor. Bill’s sotto voce aside “like the spider to the fly” is an ironic and humorous
reference that he is entering a slightly dangerous place, where he will begin to learn the
arcane ways of the ham.
This ironic and theatrical metaphor linking radios and wireless to the mysterious and fantastic is referenced in various places throughout the interview. Before talking about meeting his mentor Bill spoke about how, as a young man, he took classes in electronics at night school or more specifically “to learn about this mysterious wireless.” Bill has turned these narratives of meeting his mentor and himself in turn becoming a mentor into a mini-hero’s journey, with him as the hero. Such hero’s journeys, as identified by Joseph Campbell, involve a set narrative structure where:

a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

(Campbell, 1949, p. 30)

The structure of Bill’s narratives certainly fit with what Campbell identified as the “monomyth” (p. 30). While the hero’s journey and the monomyth’s claim to universality have fallen out of favour with many scholars (Byrne, 2001; Northup, 2006), it does offer some insight into understanding how Bill uses established narrative structures and genres to organise this aspect of his life story. Recasting one’s self as the hero also serves to create narrative coherence within a life story (Linde, 1993) through adherence and conformity to wider cultural systems as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.10. In this case, adherence to an accepted narrative structure allows Bill to cast himself as a ‘hero’, a role understood by his audience who presumably share this cultural understanding.

After this meeting with his mentor Bill created his “own little shed on the back verandah of [his] parents’ house” [Transcript 4.1: 53-54]. It is clear that Bill loved to be in his “little shed” and that he spent as much time there as he could, building and operating radios. The “little shed on the back verandah” had become ‘his’ place, imbued with much personal meaning.

4.3.3 Being a mentor and having a shed

Later in the interview Bill pointed out the shed in his backyard which houses his current radio, we could see the shed from his kitchen table where the interview was conducted. It is obviously a place that he has put a lot of time, effort and thought into:
Bill: so I've got my shed all done
    carpets up the wall, see
    cartons on the roof and all this sort of stuff
    it's like a little studio

This shed is not just the place where Bill operated his radio; it is also where Bill now mentors people wanting to become hams:

Bill: and so people with the same sort of [interest] in radio...
    who want to learn more
    that's where I say
    “come with me son
    let me teach you all about this”

Bill’s shed has become the symbolic storehouse of his own knowledge as a ham. It is Bill, now as a mentor, who welcomes the neophytes to learn about becoming a ham. This is the completion of the “hero’s journey” as after completing the ‘quest’ the hero is expected to “translate his newfound knowledge and skills into action” (Henderson, 1997, p. 91). Bill’s quote “come with me son” is a direct reference back to his own mentor’s original welcome to him “come in son” [Transcript 4.1: 34]. The narrative with Bill talking about his own current shed, occurred much later in the interview than the discussion about his mentor’s shed. There are some 14 pages of transcript between these narratives, indicating a strong and deliberate linking by Bill to the symbolic generative nature of both his mentor’s house and his current shed. Through these narratives, Bill not only links the phrases “come with me son” and “come in son”, he links his mentor with the young people he is currently mentoring, people who have presumably never met in real life.

These series of narratives link people, places, and times in complex meaning making ways. Bill’s old mentor is linked with Bill’s current protégés. Bill’s mentor’s house, his “shed on the verandah” of his parents’ house, and his own current shed are all linked through a continuity of meaning. These rich meaning making experiences are an example of the processes by which people create meaning narratively through bringing together the relational, spatial, temporal, and cultural, aspects of experience, as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.3. This is an instance of “narrative temporality” (Matz, 2011, p. 291) and “narrative spatiality”, where Bill has linked different time and places, including the here and now, within the ‘narrative space’. 

140.
Repeating the phrase “come in son” also suggests that these stories and the symbolic importance of them have been previously ‘rehearsed’. This also suggests that this story, indeed this whole collection of related narratives (transcript 4.1), forms part of Bill’s overall life story. They are narratives which are “told and retold over the course of a long period of time” (Linde, 1993, p. 21) in order to demonstrate ‘unity and purpose’ (McAdams, 2009, p. 8). ‘Rehearsing’ stories in this way creates coherent narratives across tellings, ensuring that the person, in this case Bill, presents a consistent and “coherent identity across separate interactions and contexts” (Taylor, 2006, p. 94).

What is maintained in the different tellings of these narratives is the importance that Bill places on learning and mentoring. Bill returns to these themes later in the interview and they seem to form part of his “generativity script”, which specify his legacy and generative plans for the future (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1005). It is highly likely, therefore, that these stories have been told many times, perhaps to other enthusiasts and protégés, over the years as a way to reinforce and demonstrate these ideals and values. This is how we create and re-create identity, by embedding certain stories into our lives, as discussed in Chapter Three, Sections 3.3 and 3.9.

In creating his various sheds over the years and investing meaning into them, Bill is also drawing on a wider cultural narrative from the ham subculture. Ham radio operators colloquially refer to the room or shed that houses their radio equipment as their ‘shack’, although Bill did not use the term during our interview. The importance of establishing a shack as “its own territory” is something recommended and reinforced by the ham subculture (Haring, 2007, p. 136).

Bill’s language in talking about the newcomers to ham radio is obviously gendered. The use of the word “son” in both narratives could imply an expectation that the protégés are, or should be, male. However, Bill made it clear in his first narrative [Transcript 4.1: 01-17] that he also mentors and trains girls and young women. The use of the word “son” in this context is less a sexist assumption than the deliberate linking to his own experience with his first mentor. More importantly and most obviously the word “son” indicates a link between one’s own children and novices to the enthusiasm. It is a verbal linking of Kotre’s notion of parental and cultural generativity (1984) by which the mentor becomes a metaphorical parent to the novice. A discussion of gender in the men’s narratives can be found in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.
4.3.4 Constructing a good retirement

The following transcript (4.3) occurs in the final minutes of the interview, and is a response to the question if there was anything else Bill wanted to tell me about retirement, work, and community involvement. This elicited a very long response, only part of which is reproduced below (Transcript 4.3). Bill introduced this final discussion by speaking about four of his “very good friends and they’re terrific company”. The five of them meet regularly for “a cup of coffee and a yarn”, where they “discuss the world’s problems and how we’re going to fix them.”

Transcript 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill: Rocking Chair on the Verandah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 I just said to the guys this morning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 I said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102 “do you remember when you were boys,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103 that you would see a guy retire from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104 and he’d sit out on the front verandah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105 of his house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106 in his rocking chair,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107 and just sit there and wait to die?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rejecting the Rocking Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>108 and I said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109 “that’s not in front of Bill”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110 and I said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111 “I can hardly wait”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dad retiring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>112 like my dad,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113 he retired early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114 so he could go and play bowls,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115 he finished with work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116 he went to the [workplace] doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117 and he said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118 “I’ve found a terminal disease”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119 and he said</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“oh, what’s that”
“old age” [laughs]
so he retired
and he played bowls
and all the rest of it
and he’s 93
still going like a train

Life is worth living
I feel that I can live quite a while yet
and life is worth living,
I’m still wanted,
I feel good when I do things
I have good friends
I have a good wife
good kids
all [of who] achieved more than I’ve achieved
[I] don’t owe anybody any money
[I] do what I want to do.
What more can I ask?

Anthony:  [It] sounds pretty good
Bill:
so, yeah,
so my philosophy in life has helped me out
as I say
if anyone wants a hand
and I can I will
it’s as easy as that.

Coda
I hope you’ve got some info out that,
Anthony:  I think I have, thank you very much.
Bill:
[it’s a] pleasure,
I hope you do well with your doctorate.
The introductory clause “I just said to the guys this morning” [Transcript 4.3: 100] acts primarily to orientate the narrative in time and to form a relational link between me, as the listener, and Bill’s friends “the guys”. This clause also shows that, as suspected in Section 4.3.3, Bill has been ‘rehearsing’ his narratives with different audiences, in this case “the guys” and me. By presenting the same narrative Bill is maintaining a coherent narrative and a coherent identity, to both audiences: ‘the guys’ and me. ‘Rehearsing’ narratives in such a way is not to imply that the narratives are false or a type of playacting, rather they are repeated and restated in different situations in order to build consistence and thus create coherence across the life story (Taylor, 2006).

This section of transcript shows Bill positioning himself within another matrix of relationships, all of which he sees as important to maintaining meaning in retirement. It is through such a matrix of relationships that Mishler (1999) understands identity to be constructed. Reviewing Transcript 4.3 we see a variety of people who Bill is interacting with. Firstly his friends, “the guys” [Transcript 4.3: 100] who he spoke to this morning, these peers have already been established by Bill as supportive and important to him. The next relationship mentioned is the negative example of the new retiree “on the front verandah of his house in his rocking chair” waiting to die. Bill explicitly rejects this option for himself in retirement “‘that’s not in front of Bill’”. He then contrasts the negative example with the positive example of his father, who in retirement and at age 93 is “still going like a train” [Transcript 4.3: 127]. Bill had spoken of his father earlier in the interview:

Transcript 4.4

```
Bill:
70 I look at my dad,
71 who’s still alive,
72 he’s 93
73 he was a very a good bowler
74 very good bowls umpire
75 and the likes of that
76 I’ve gone down the same road
77 I think because it’s the norm and that
78 in the family
79 and so he won’t suffer from old timers’ disease
```
Bill mentions his father’s age [Transcript 4.3: 72] and his proficiency at bowls [Transcript 4.3: 73], which he repeats in his longer closing narrative [Transcript 4.3: 126 and 124]. This repetition reinforces his father’s activity and skill, something Bill aims to emulate [Transcript 4.3: 76]. By mentioning his father immediately after the negative image of the retiree sitting on his rocking chair waiting to die, Bill is actively positioning himself against the negative image of the retiree on his rocking chair and aligning himself and his retirement with his father’s positive example.

Positive relationships are also brought to the fore in the rest of the narrative. Bill reflects on the good relationships he has with his friends, wife, and children [Transcript 4.3: 131-133]. His good financial circumstances are also described in terms of relationships with others; instead of describing himself as having no debts, Bill states that he “don’t owe anybody any money” [Transcript 4.3: 136]. By describing his financial situation in relational terms Bill again affirms his positive relationships, through the absence of negative relationships.

4.3.5 Generativity

These stories represent Bill’s movement from novice to mentor, one who now passes on both the technical and cultural knowledge around the enthusiasm, as discussed about in Section 4.3.3.

Throughout the interview Bill talked about his work teaching younger people, be it in his former paid employment or as the Education Officer for his radio club. The field notes written at the conclusion of the interview recorded that at one point when Bill spoke about helping younger people “he would hold his arm in a gesture of embrace, as if to say/demonstrate that he was literally taking the young person ‘under his wing’.” Towards the end of the interview I was becoming aware of this pattern of generative in Bill’s stories, and I asked him to reflect on this explicitly (see transcript 4.5). In response Bill spoke about his enjoyment in helping younger people:
Bill:  *Enjoys spending time with young people and seeing them achieve things*

80  I do enjoy seeing people achieve things
81  Especially young people
82  I feel young people keep me young
83  I try and keep an open mind
84  I try and think young [p]
85  As you know
86  Old people don’t like change
87  and I try and look a certain way [p]
88  so I try and not be a grumpy old person.

Anthony:  That’s certainly not the impression you’re creating [laughs]

Bill:
89  ... I try and have a sense of humour too.

Anthony:  It sounds like education and supporting young people ... both in your paid work and your voluntary work is a bit of a theme that runs through things.

Bill:  *Pleasure out of teaching*

90  well I um.. yeah
91  first of all if I didn’t get any pleasure out of it I wouldn’t do it
92  and I get a lot of pleasure [out of it]
93  as I said, seeing young people, and old per.. any person
94  achieve their goals,

*Preparing them for future work*

95  and er.. especially these young kids doing their introductory licence
96
97  I think they’re terrific
   because it points them in a .. in a direction of engineering

*Bill concluded this with further narrative about assisting his son prepare for his first job interview.*
This reflective piece of dialogue reveals Bill’s self-awareness around and acknowledgment of his own enjoyment in helping young people achieve their goals. The initial evaluative non-narrative response [Transcript 4.5: 80-88] demonstrates Bill’s belief that “young people keep me young” [Transcript 4.5: 82] and prevent him from becoming a “grumpy old person” [Transcript 45: 88]. The following stanzas, which I have themed “Pleasure out of teaching” [Transcript 4.5: 90-94] and “Preparing young people for future work” [Transcript 4.5: 95-97] serve an evaluative purpose. In these stanzas Bill agrees and reflects on the possibility that educating and supporting younger people is important to him. There is the danger that this answer could be interpreted as Bill responding to my question and giving an answer that he believes I want to hear, the so-called bias of attribution (Norenzayan & Schwarz, 1999). Bill is indeed agreeing with my suggestion, he does, however, follow this evaluative non-narrative answer with two narratives that demonstrate his support of younger people, suggesting an ontologically, meaning making, linkage.

Within this section of dialogue Bill also aligns himself with young people and generativity, while at the same time distancing himself from what he sees as ‘grumpy’ old age. Bill presents an image of older people who are, or are in danger of becoming, closed minded, grumpy, and not liking change. Such stereotyping of older people is at odds with Bill’s own life and life story, where in retirement he has been open to all sorts of changes and developments, including technological developments around radios and communication technology. Bill’s positioning of himself against these stereotypes is one of active resistance to the ageist expectations of becoming a “grumpy old person” [Transcript 4.5: 88], through engaging with young people. This position within the discourse allows Bill to also demonstrate generativity. In this way Bill’s personal value of generativity is playing a role in the mechanism of positioning Bill within discourse. This active positioning of oneself against ageist stereotypes of retirement was observed often amongst the men interviewed. I believe this deleteriously affects the men and their sense of self and is something I will return to in Chapter Six, Section 5.2.1.

I believe this generativity was also directed at me, as a student, during the interview. Bill’s farewell to me at the end of the interview was “I hope you do well with you doctorate” [Transcript 4.3: 147]. Apart from what I believe were genuine well wishes, this could also be a fleeting example of his role as a teacher and mentor. My field notes also show that after the tape had been switched off Bill has said that “he was happy to be involved, and had been looking forward to it; as he saw it as a way that he could make a contribution, to help a younger person”. This reflects, to a lesser degree, the cultural generativity Fleming also observed towards him as a doctoral student interviewing older men (2001).
### 4.4 Arthur

Arthur was 66 years old at the time of the interview and is an active member of an antique machine restoration club. Arthur restores old farm equipment at home and joins with the other members of this club in displaying the restored machinery at agricultural shows and local festivals. Arthur had been retired for eight years at the time of the interview. Arthur’ narratives will now be used as the exemplars to introduce the findings around the meaning that the men interviewed make of work, retirement, and their involvement in community based hobby and enthusiast groups.

Arthur’s narratives show rich interconnections between Arthur and other people, places, times, and wider social narratives. Like Bill, Arthur created rich and intricate relational matrices, in which he actively positions himself in the context of these important aspects of his life and experiences. The above selection of Bill’s narratives were chosen to show the importance of people and places, whereas I chose these particular narratives of Arthur’s to demonstrate what I believe are his meaningful relationships with work, retirement, and his enthusiasm as a restorer of antique tractors and machines.

#### 4.4.1 Arthur’s life story

Arthur provided the following abridged life history, which briefly describes his early life, preparing for work, and starting work, Transcript 4.6. This summarised life history consists of five short sub-narratives which form part of his overall life story. Life stories are the collection of stories that we tell and retell about our life (Linde, 1993). These stories form an overarching narrative of our lives which demonstrate that one’s life has “unity and purpose” (McAdams, 2009, p. 8), as described in Chapter Three, Section 3.10. Each of these sub-narratives covers a number of years and only rarely refers to specific incidents; such as not doing as well as he had hoped in his Leaving Certificate. These interrelated sub-narratives are related through the shared theme of preparing for work. This whole narrative unit was subjected firstly to a structural and then a thematic analysis, in the same way that Bill’s narratives were.
Anthony: When you say your background is farming do you mean you grew up on the land?

Arthur: **Sub-narrative 1: Early life**

51 I was born in [town]
52 which is in the [region]
53 and ah went to school there

**Sub-narrative 2: No interest in family business**

54 At age 17, I had no interest in continuing on an orchard
55 ahh I was the eldest of three
56 but I had no interest in continuing on the orchard

**Sub-narrative 3: Following interest in electronics**

57 and I had developed a very strong interest in electronics
58 and so I came to Sydney er
59 when I left [p] when I finished high school
60 and commenced, commenced employment and in the electronics industry

61 **Sub-narrative 4: Set-back**

62 although not in quite the field that I may have ar wished
63 ah say when I was around 15 or 16
64 simple because I didn’t achieve the academic ah [p]
65 excellence in my HSC equivalent
66 we used to call the Leaving Certificate um I [p] that would have given me university entrance

67 **Sub-narrative 5: Starting Work**

68 so I [p] so I ended up with an apprenticeship
69 but nevertheless I um [p]
70 during the course of the apprenticeship I graduated into drafting and [p]
71 and model making and so on
72 in a company that was involved in a wide range of electronics and communications type equipment

73 **Sub-narrative 6: Progressing through Working Life**

74 and ah.. er I just worked my way progressively through
75 without anything startling er
This section of inter-related narratives function to introduce the section of Arthur’s life story that deals with his time in paid employment. Such an introductory group of narratives serves the same function as the Abstract Clauses do for ‘simple’ narratives (Labov & Waletzky, 1967), as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.3.1.

In many ways Transcript 4.6 presents a classic narrative structure. Arthur depicts himself as the protagonist moving through a sequence of events, which are presented in chronological order. This narrative is also the story of Arthur’s movement in space over a period of some 60 years, starting with his home town and the family orchard, a move to Sydney, and then to the company he worked for. The family orchard is clearly framed here as a place where he did not wish to stay. Arthur’s deliberate mention of his position in the family, “I was the eldest of three” [Transcript 4.6: 54-56], is drawing on the cultural, and perhaps familial, expectations that as the eldest son he would take over the orchard, something he had “no interest” in doing [Transcript 4.6: 54 and 56]. There is, perhaps, a gendered element to such cultural and familial expectations which is explored further in Chapter Five, Section 5.3.

Arthur appears to be ordering this aspect of his life story around culturally known narrative structures. Like Bill in Section 4.3.2, Arthur seems to have adopted the hero’s journey (Campbell, 1949) as the cultural template from which he frames and structures his own narratives. Through this narrative Arthur presents himself as a ‘heroic’ figure, leaving his childhood home [Transcript 4.6: 54-56] and overcoming the setback of a poor result in his end of school exams [Transcript 4.6: 62-66]. Arthur’s narrative of overcoming adversity, in this case poor exam results, lacks some of the dramatic flair and performativity which marked Bill’s stories (Section 4.3.2); this difference in performative style is discussed in more detail below. Arthur’s use of the hero’s journey as an organising framework is not as complete as Bill’s, as it does not then link back to the hero’s return aspect of the narrative. Again, this is not intended to ascribe some universality to the hero’s journey, just to say that the hero’s journey is a culturally recognised narrative structure and is the structure that Arthur is using to convey meaning.
These narratives reveal very few details about Arthur’s childhood. Instead Arthur took the listener on a journey exploring how he came to be involved in his work. There is a danger of interpreting such a change of focus as masculine reluctance to talk about anything too personal. I do not, however, believe this to be the case as later in the interview Arthur did indeed discuss aspects of his childhood, early life, and the relationship between him, his parents and siblings. This discussion [Transcript 4.6] took place very early in the interview, while rapport between Arthur and I was still being built. The importance of which is discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.17.3. Such a deflection can also be explained by the bias of attribution, in which participants respond to researchers’ questions with answers that they think are most relevant to the research interests of the researcher (Norenzayan & Schwarz, 2006), as discussed above in Chapter Three, Section 3.21. This would mean that participants would consider a discussion on work to be more relevant to this research than a discussion on childhood.

The following five sub-narratives, as found in Transcripts 4.7 and 4.8, are concerned with Arthur’s working life. These narratives occurred at different times in the interview and in a different sequence. I have selected and ordered them to show the chronology of what occurred during the “40 and a half years” of Arthur’s working life.

Transcript 4.7 Early Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arthur: Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>320 I have witnessed in my working career the evolution of computing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub-narrative 7: Starting out

| 321 When I first started as an apprentice |
| 322 and I was an electrical fitter apprentice, |
| 323 one of my early jobs |
| 324 in the first few months of my being at the company |
| 325 was stamping holes in metal chasses for the SILLIAC\textsuperscript{11} computer |
| 326 at Sydney University |
| 327 that was the pioneering computer |
| 328 well of the few pioneering computers in the world |
| 329 but certainly in Australia |
| 330 and of course that rooms full of valves |

\textsuperscript{11} The first automatic computer constructed in Australia (Branagan & Holland, 1985).
these were rows and rows of little triad valves
which are just switches you know
that’s all they are switches
and ah you-know the days [before] transistors
They [switches and valves] perform the same task

Anthony: So in your career you went through from valves to transistors to circuit boards

Arthur spent some time discussing the developments he had been involved in, in particular the manufacturing of certain specialised computer components. What follows is a section of talk demonstrating the technical and personal highlights of his career.

Transcript 4.8 Achievements in Manufacturing

Anthony: it sounds like you were involved in [developing and designing this technology] right at the start

Arthur:
100 absolutely,
101 I say we would have applied the very first computation in Australia to manufacture or assembly [this technology]

Innovation
There followed a discussion about the company’s innovative use and adaption of existing technology to aid in the design and manufacture of their product.

Sub-narrative 8: Achievement - building their own new system
113 so ah one of the things that we achieved,
114 this is off the track you know,
115 but one of the things we achieved was um
116 a very high level of design for manufacturability
117 in our, in our design approach
118 so, so we could prove um [that] the software systems

12 This area of computer manufacturing has been de-identified as Arthur was involved in such a specialised area of manufacturing that naming the area could risk identifying him.
that the product could be made on the factory floor before it got there … and this is in the mid to late ‘90s

**Sub-narrative 9: Art of Manufacture**

when I finished up, we had [product] design down to such an art, ah we were designing [equipment] as complex as any in the world and we could complete the design today and have it manufactured in an enormous automated manufacturing plant, [the] following day

*Arthur then narrated another short narrative about these developments, which has been omitted here.*

**Arthur:**  
so it’s in the later [p] later few years of that we had a very impressive set-up

**Sub-narrative 10: End of Manufacturing in Australia**

unfortunately it all culminated at a time when production of communication equipment in Australia was suddenly phased out and went to China like everything else couldn’t compete on cost

**Sub-narrative 11: VIPs, Pride and Innovation**

but we had a phenomenal system I was very proud of it of course oh our managing director brought Prime Ministers through to have a look over, to look at the CAD [Computer Aided Design] systems, they [p] that was really impressive in the late ‘80s early ‘90s.

This transcript demonstrates Arthur’s obvious pride in having been involved in the development of such cutting edge technology. Arthur explicitly mentions his feelings of pride [Transcript 4.8: 144], his hesitation and change of words is also revealing. Arthur begins at line 147 with the word “they”, meaning the Prime Ministers “brought … through to
have a look … at the CAD systems” [Transcript 4.8: 145-146], however after a pause he
starts again, saying “that was really impressive”. Arthur was, presumably, going to say that
the Prime Ministers were impressed with the system, when on reflection he makes that the
statement that the systems themselves were “really impressive” [Transcript 4.8: 148]. This
hesitation and change suggests that it was not enough for Arthur to say just that the
distinguished visitors were impressed by the system; Arthur wanted to make the point that
the systems were impressive in their own right. This suggests to me, that Arthur was proud
both of the “phenomenal system” itself and that the system was able to ‘impress’ visiting
dignitaries.

I now decided to steer the conversation towards a discussion on retirement, as set out in
Transcript 4.9.

Transcript 4.9  Arthur’s Retirement

Anthony: You mentioned that about the time you left, a lot of this technology was
going offshore. Was that part of the reason why you retired when you
did?

Arthur: Sub-narrative 12: Planning Retirement I
149 no it wasn’t at all actually
150 I planned my retirement for 40 years’ service.
151 I said to myself if I’m financial capable,
152 And was very iffy to be honest
153 I would say that 40 years was enough

Sub-narrative 13: Have a better retirement than other colleagues
154 I wanted to retire young enough to do some other things
155 and not to stick it out like many colleagues to age 65
156 and leave this world within 12 months
157 and also I had plenty of other things to do,

Sub-narrative 14: Never Missed Going to Work
158 it was a totally seamless thing I never missed
159 I drove into work every day of the week,
160 I never missed not driving in the following day,
161 I tell you [laughs]
Sub-narrative 15: Planning Retirement II

162 I planned it
163 and in the last five years or so
164 on my kind of annual performance review
165 when they ask you “[what] do wish to do in one, two or five years?”
166 “Retirement!” [both laugh]

The pride evident in Arthur’s reflection about work [Transcript 4.9] was again evident when later in the interview he was invited to reflect on his working life. Arthur is also actively positioning himself against the idea that men retire and die within a year [Transcript 4.10: 156], in much the same way as Bill is dialectally positioning himself against becoming a “grumpy older person” [Transcript 4.5: 88]. This theme of positioning oneself against ageist cultural narratives of male retirement is something I shall return to and elaborate on in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.1.

Transcript 4.10 A Golden Era

Anthony: So how do you think of that time now, of that work [you did] now?
Arthur:
300 I think it was a golden era.
301 I left at exactly the right time
302 from my point of view

These three lines [Transcript 4.10] play an evaluative role in the section of Arthur’s life story about work and retirement. These lines serve the same basic function as Labov and Waletzky’s evaluative clauses for simple narrative (Labov, 1982; Labov & Waletzky, 1967), in that they summarise for the listener the purpose of these narratives, namely that Arthur sees himself as having witnessed and worked in a very special time, “a golden era” no less. Even though he enjoyed and is proud of this period of his life, he believes he “left at exactly the right time”. This leaving at the right time confirms Arthur as an agentic person, with foresight and understanding, who left when things were in decline. It also links Arthur to the other men’s stories of leaving work. All the men interviewed, no matter the circumstances of their leaving work, report that in retrospect they believe that their retirement occurred ‘at the right time’. This is examined in more detail in Chapter Six, Section 6.3.4.
4.4.2 Parallel histories

Throughout these narratives Arthur positions himself as an active participant in the events of his own personal history as well as a witness to the broader history of computing in Australia. Through the above narratives Arthur has carefully positioned himself and the developments he was part of within his own broader understanding of the history of computer manufacturing in Australia. In this context what is important is Arthur’s understanding of the wider history of computers, which may well differ from other people’s understandings and recollections. This thesis is about the meanings men construct around their experiences and not a historical exploration of dates and events. To quote Plutarch “my design is not to write history, but lives” (1956, pp. 540-541), so what follows is a mapping of Arthur’s telling of the history of computer manufacturing in Australia.

Using a wider historical framework to guide and map one’s own history is important for this research, not so much for uncovering previously unknown aspects of the history of computer manufacturing, but to map out how wider historical events are used to position people within these events. Arthur’s positioning of himself and his working life within the context of this history, as a way to make meaning out of a connection to something wider and beyond himself and his own efforts. This is a real life example of people engaging in conversations with history and show, as Gadamer asserted, that such conversations are genuine engagements with history and tradition and not merely metaphorical (2001), as discussed above in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.4.

The historical nature of this conversation is enhanced by Arthur’s choice of words with historical overtones. As mentioned above, this whole interaction with history was introduced by Arthur’s claim of witnessing the ‘evolution’ of computing [Transcript 4.7: 320], a theme which he returned to at another point in the interview:

Arthur: I saw this whole evolutionary thing
Right from truly nuts and bolts
to the highest level of integration.

Arthur’s career in computing began as an apprentice working on the ‘pioneering computer’ in Australia [Transcript 4.7: 327-328]. This neatly links Arthur’s starting work with the start of computers in Australia, leaving the listener to draw the conclusion that Arthur too was a pioneer. Of course the phrase that brings this all together is Arthur’s reflection that his working life was “a golden era” [Transcript 4.11: 300]. This choice of words not only links
his time at work with the historical ‘era’ of computer manufacturing in Australia, through this mythical analogy Arthur emotively evokes as a happy, prosperous time. This allusion to a golden era or age is effective in conveying the importance that Arthur places on this time but it is not as effective or evocative as the language Bill used to create meaning around particular places, in particular his mentor’s house [Transcript 4.1]. The aspects of these parallel histories are set out graphically in Figure 4.1.

![Figure 4.1. Parallel Histories](image)

This aspect of Arthur’s life story is a neatly formed and ordered narrative that dovetails into Arthur’s understanding of the history of computer manufacturing in Australia, as shown in Figure 4.1. This larger cultural story, shared presumably amongst the computer manufacturing community, is what Linde refers to as a wider social “coherence system” (1993, pp. 220-222), as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.10. The interweaving of these joint simultaneous histories allows Arthur to tap into a wider narrative of computer manufacturing to provide the ‘narrative scaffolding’ for his own personal narratives and life story. This narrative scaffolding provides both structure and meaning to Arthur’s personal
narratives and life story. The linear historical progression from the first computer built in Australia to computer manufacturing going offshore, provides the structure of Arthur’s own life story, mirrored by the bookends of Arthur’s own working life, being an apprentice and then retirement. The wider narrative also allows Arthur to attach meaning to being part of a narrative beyond himself. The meaning Arthur attaches to his involvement in this wider narrative is undoubtedly a positive one, judging from his numerous references to feeling proud of the achievements he witnessed and was part of. This positive sense of meaning is in itself salutogenic (i.e. health enhancing) as is the experience of doing something of value and being valued (Macdonald, 2005). I suspect that Arthur’s sense of being involved in something that he values so highly and was in turn valued by others still provides him with health and identity benefits in retirement. These are not, of course, the only mechanisms that Arthur employs to establish a positive sense of self and identity in retirement, as Section 4.4.4 explores.

Arthur also creates a sense of meaning and coherence through constructing a life story in parallel to this wider history. Linde (1993) proposes three ways in which life stories demonstrate coherence, the first being that it makes sense in itself, the second through demonstrating causality and continuity, and finally through adherence to wider social “coherence systems” (pp. 220-222). Arthur’s life story, or at least this part of his life story concerning with his working life, achieves all three. The 18 or so sub-narratives identified above are firstly internal coherent narratives in their own right and each makes sense as an individual narrative. Secondly the narratives as a whole form a coherent unit with one sub-narrative logically leading to the next (causality) and proceed one after the other (continuity). Finally, the narratives and life story adhere to the wider “coherence system” of the history of Australian computer manufacturing, as described above. The linear history mapped out in the history of computer manufacturing, as Arthur understands it, outlined in Figure 4.1, is used as a template to structure the continuity of his own career over the years. This interrelatedness of the structure and content of the wider history of computer manufacturing is used as a wider social “coherence system” which supports Arthur’s own life story. This coherent life story or more accurately the coherence achieved around this aspect of his life story, suggests a work sub-identity which is integrated so as to affirm Arthur’s overall sense.

I use the term ‘narrative scaffolding’ to distinguish this concept from the use of the word ‘scaffold’ in other disciplines. Narrative scaffolding describes how personal narratives can be ‘built’ using the framework and structures of other cultural resources, in this case a certain historical narrative. The term ‘scaffolding’ in this context differs from its use in sociolinguistics where it refers to the processes by which adults assist children learning through controlling certain difficult elements of a task (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Narrative scaffolding is similar to but distinct from the ‘scaffolding’ of extended mind theory, where the term refers to the processes by which external resources (people or objects) are used to build memory (Barnier, 2010). The links between extended mind theory and narrative concepts of the co-construction of narratives warrant further investigation and theoretical consideration but are beyond the scope of this thesis.
of self. In a further link to the importance of these historical times Arthur expressed a desire to see some of the earlier computer technology he worked with preserved in a museum.

*Transcript 4.12 Beautiful things*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anthony:</th>
<th>So in your career you went through from valves to transistors to circuit boards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur:</td>
<td>337 and the products our company made were using valves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>338 and, and I <em>loved</em> those things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>339 I only <em>wish</em> I knew where there was a museum of that stuff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>340 I’d love to look at it again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>341 I bet it’s all been trashed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>342 because you-know [company name]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>343 I don’t think they’ve got any historical vision at all,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>344 but there’s some beautiful old stuff the way it was made,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>345 the way it looked, you know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony:</td>
<td>The design aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur:</td>
<td>346 yes, oh, beautiful things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony:</td>
<td>some of those things, which were just functional things,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>like those old valves, just look wonderful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur:</td>
<td>347 the valves themselves,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>348 but all the coils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>349 and the way they were interconnected with aerial wires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>350 that were fashioned by hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>351 all this sort of stuff,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>352 oh I just, I could just visualise the rows of ladies all doing that stuff,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>353 I remember it all,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>354 it was lovely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This narrative reinforces the historical importance of Arthur’s own work showing that he, unlike the company he worked for, has an appreciation of the historical and aesthetic value
of the equipment they designed. Arthur values these electronic artefacts as much for their aesthetic quality as their historical importance. His wish for a museum [Transcript 4.12: 339] shows a generative desire to maintain these “beautiful things” for future generations. The relationship between generativity and involvement in enthusiasms is considered in more details in Chapter Six, Section 5.1.

4.4.3 Shared values within the enthusiast community

There is congruence between the themes of many of Arthur’s narratives and some of the values and ideas expressed within the community of people who restore antique farm machinery. Arthur appreciates and is interested in preserving technological history. Arthur sees his own work with computers as being of some historical importance, as the previous section shows. This interest in history is also part of what motivates him in his current enthusiasm for restoring old machinery.

Transcript 4.13 Enthusiasm for Antique Machines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anthony:</th>
<th>And what do you think is it about antique machinery, in particular, that you’re drawn to?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur:</td>
<td>Relative Simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>Ah its relative simplicity I suppose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251</td>
<td>It’s the fact that you can usually see everything happening,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>252</td>
<td>You-know it’s great thing to show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>253</td>
<td>because you can see fathers trying to explain to little kids,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254</td>
<td>what that thing is what’s turning around,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255</td>
<td>because in the modern motor car or something,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256</td>
<td>modern lawn mower engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>you can’t see engine you can’t see anything,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258</td>
<td>you can’t see anything,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>259</td>
<td>whereas on those machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>you can see all the works,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261</td>
<td>and you-know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262</td>
<td>and if someone’s inclined or asks the questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>263</td>
<td>you explain in some detail, exactly how it works,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>264</td>
<td>which hasn’t changed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>265</td>
<td>although it was invented in the 1880’s or something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arthur revealed a great interest in history throughout the interview. He is part of local group working to maintain a local park where he is restoring an old tractor. Arthur and his wife are also members of a local historical society and both have an interest in family history. Towards the conclusion of the interview I invited Arthur to reflect on the historical nature of much of what he does.

*Transcript 4.14*

*Anthony:* It seems that a lot of the activities you’re involved with have a historical and heritage sort of theme.

*Arthur:*

200 Yeah probably
201 Yes um er I guess that’s true
202 I have y’know a strong view that we should preserve our past, and maintain it for posterity.
204 I probably, certainly [have] done a been bit myself
205 I’ve got a couple of rare tractors and things like that [p]
206 and a truck.

This desire to preserve ‘the past’ “for posterity” has a strong generative element and is coherent with other narratives from Arthur’s life story, as discussed above. This desire to maintain industrial history is, not surprisingly, a common element of some of the enthusiast literature around restoring old machinery. Ian Johnston, in his wonderfully titled *The Magic of Old Tractors*, develops the theme of the historical importance of restoring old machinery and explains the importance of restoring old tractors. In Johnston’s view, “wittingly or unwittingly, genuine tractor collectors perform a service to their country – they are doing their bit to safeguard items of national heritage” (Johnston, 2004, p. 12). The congruency of this theme from the broader enthusiast literature, hints that such literature plays a role in the formation and maintaining of an enthusiast sub-identity. This is similar to what has been observed in the ham radio community, where enthusiast magazines play a role in
maintaining the shared values of the ‘ham’ community (Haring, 2007). Similar examples of congruency were observed between statements from other participants and discussion in the literature of their particular enthusiasm. While the observed congruency between Arthur’s sentiments and statements in the antique restoration literature is in line with the findings of Haring’s (2007) work with ham radio operators, a more rigorous review of the literature of each enthusiasm is required before a more definitive claim can be made that this is the case in other enthusiasms.

4.4.4 Re-creating meaning in retirement as an expert-specialist

Arthur’s working life gave him a strong sense of meaning around being involved with historically and technologically important developments. Arthur refers openly to his sense of pride in having developed significant computer technology during his working life, as discussed in Section 4.4.2, and now in retirement he is involved in restoring and exhibiting old machinery. The importance of these two activities to Arthur is not just that both involve technology; there is also a generativity element in creating a legacy through creating and maintaining technology “for posterity”, as well as using this activity to re-establish a meaningful identity in retirement.

Arthur’s involvement as a restorer of antique machines includes work on particular farm machinery:

Arthur: then I’ve got an engine I acquired,  
Two engines I acquired,  
comparatively recently  
one is of great interest to me  
because I have a particular love for [company name] products  
which are an Australian made product and  
and there are very few collectors of them,  
there are only half a dozen  
significant collectors in Australia,  
and there’s quite a few about but  
there’s only a few who might deem themselves to have any expertise  
and I suppose I’m one of those

---

14 The company has been de-identified as the restoration of these particular machines is such a specialised area that naming the manufacturer could identify Arthur.
Arthur’s particular expertise is something that has been driven both by his own strong interest and also his deliberate pursuit of being a specialist:

Arthur: ... I have personally wanted to excel in a field and I’ve always considered that it’s much easier to excel in a very narrow field than in a broad field you define your own field you can achieve excellence

This approach seems to define Arthur’s working life and his current enthusiasm. Arthur now understands himself to be one of only “half a dozen significant collectors in Australia” of this particular machine. In his narratives of both his working life and his current enthusiasm Arthur is presenting an identity as an ‘expert specialist’. Through working with the particular brand of Australian machines Arthur has maintained both a connection to Australian manufacturing, but more importantly he has maintained a sense of identity as an expert specialist. Such an identity clearly demonstrates not only the importance of mastery of particular skills and achievement in establishing one’s identity (Erikson, 2000b) as well as maintaining a direct link with the past. Such a link allows Arthur to symbolically connect his current activities with the meaningful past experiences of his working life.

4.4.5 Depictions of other ‘characters’ in Arthur’s narratives

Arthur reports only limited interactions with other people in his narratives. Comparing Arthur’s style with Bill’s from Section 4.3 reveals that Arthur’s narratives are much more pared down compared to Bill’s rich descriptions of his interactions with others. The people in Arthur’s narratives, be they family friends, workmates, or fellow enthusiasts, are not the interactive ‘characters’ of Bill’s narratives. Arthur does not tend to report conversations with others, whereas Bill uses conversations and the reported speech of others as ways to both move his narratives forward and to add to his performativity of his telling. Reported speech also adds to the credibility of the story as it “pulls the listener into the narrative moment” (Riessman, 2008, p. 112).

Such honed down narratives may reflect the fact that it took more time to build rapport with Arthur than with Bill. Perhaps more trust needed to be established between Arthur and myself before he could construct more involved narratives. I do not think this is the case, however, as later in the interview more people came into Arthur’s narratives, although they
do remain somewhat remote, with little if any reported dialogue. Throughout the whole of the interview the people in Arthur’s stories are not the dynamic characters of Bill’s narratives. I suspect, however, that this is nothing more than differences in personality and individual style. A wider variety of styles of storytelling was observed across the men interviewed, which is discussed further in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1.

Judging from the content of Arthur’s interview it seems he has a strong network of family, friends, and co-enthusiasts to more or less the same degree as Bill, as discussed in Section 4.3. What is striking, however, is the different ways the two men refer to other people in their lives in the course of the narratives. Other people inhabit Bill’s narratives much like the characters in a play. There is some detail about interaction, lots of reported speech, both from the other characters and from Bill himself. There are lively accounts of discursive interaction between these ‘characters’ and Bill throughout his stories. Arthur however creates a narrative space in which interaction is reported at a distance, the interaction between Arthur and the characters in his narratives is minimal, with very little reported dialogue from the other people.

There is an interesting paradox with how Arthur talks about his former colleagues. Despite the relative distancing of himself from the other ‘characters’ in his narratives, when Arthur spoke about his former work colleagues and their work, he almost always used the first-person plural (“we” or “us”); an example can be seen in Transcript 4.8 and it continued in other discussions about his working life. In other narratives about his early life or his current life in retirement he used the first-person singular (“I” or “me”), as can be seen in Transcripts 4.6 and 4.7. Arthur was the only man interviewed whose use of personal pronouns changed so completely depending on context and only when he was talking about work. This could represent a desire to be inclusive of his co-workers or, as seems more likely to me, an attempt to maintain a shared identity with his former colleagues. This change of personal pronoun usage and any possible link to identity, perhaps even to a group or collective identity is something worthy of further investigation in the future.

4.5 Discussion on Structural Analyses and Relationship Matrixes

This chapter presented a selection of Bill’s and Arthur’s narratives and the relational matrices which emerge from them. These richly, constructed, complex, dynamic relational matrices form as a result of the narrative positioning of self with and against other people, places, times, and cultural narratives. While only two of the men’s narratives are presented in
this detail *all* the men interviewed positioned themselves narratively within their own personal dynamic matrixes of relationships. Of course the exact nature of these matrices differs from man to man and from telling to telling, but the importance of family, friends, work, and their own enthusiasm is constant throughout all interviews.

Focusing on the men’s relationships with other people, the relational matrices of the men interviewed reveal a number of positive connections with others. Situating one’s self at the centre of such a positive network of relationships suggests relatively high levels of social integration. The importance of family and friends to older men is consistent with other studies (C. Hall, et al., 2007; Riggs, 1997). Membership of an enthusiastic groups allows men to retain in retirement a sense of self which is positively reinforced by the respect and connection with other members of the group. Strong positive social ties such as these, together with the resulting sense of trust and affirmation of one’s efforts, have well documented benefits, both for the health of the person involved and for the communities they are part of (Marmot, 2004; Putnam, 2000).

The importance of generativity and the striving to construct and continue positive sub-identities in retirement are examined in more detail in Chapter Five. Creating and maintaining a positive sense of self, as revealed in the above structural analyses, especially positive connections to special people and places, are discussed. Persisting negative cultural narratives and expectations of male retirement, which appear from the above structural analyses to be a major threat to maintaining a positive retirement identity, are also explored in the following chapter.
5 Thematic Analysis of Narratives

This chapter explores some of the themes identified in the structural analyses of Chapter Four, specifically those themes concerned with social relationships and connections. The understandings drawn out of these structural narrative analyses were then subjected to thematic analysis, which involved comparing the findings of structural analyses of each of the men’s interviews. This thematic analysis revealed the commonalities, contradictions, and contrasts between the men’s understandings of their various experiences and the meaning they had made from these experiences. This study’s comparison of similarities and contrasts between the emerging themes of the men’s narratives strengthened the evidence that there are common themes and trends that are seen across many men’s life stories (Chase, 2003; Flyvberg, 2004).

Chapter Four was organised around a case-centred approach that used Bill and Arthur’s personal narratives and life-stories. This chapter presents, by contrast, a category-centred analysis as it is organised around the different themes (categories) that emerged in Chapter Four. Using a category-centred thematic analyses is consistent with the approach taken in other narrative analyses (Mishler, 1999; Riessman, 2002). Other narrative analyses have used what Riessman later identified as “narrative themetic analysis” that retain a case-centred approach comparing themes from accross cases (2008, p.74).

The structural analyses of Chapter Four demonstrate where people position themselves within the complex interconnected narrative matrices of people, places, times, and spaces. This relative positioning of the self within these dynamic relationships reveals factors which support or inhibit the research participants’ positive sense of self in retirement. Factors which support a positive retirement identity include generativity and relationships with special people and places. This chapter explores the variety of expression of these factors across all the men interviewed, in addition to a small discussion on the importance of certain objects in identity formation, which was not mentioned by Arthur or Bill, in Chapter Four, but was important for other men interviewed. In addition to these factors which enhance and maintain a positive retirement identity, the challenge of maintaining such an identity in the midst of pervasive negative cultural narratives of male retirement is also explored.

This chapter also introduces the voices and experiences of all of the research participants, to varying degrees. There is of course an inherent contradiction in this approach, in that highlighting only two people’s experiences and narratives in detail means that the other men in the study are not as prominent and risk becoming decontextualised, yet it is beyond the
confines of this thesis to present all of the men’s narratives in the detail dedicated to Bill and Arthur. The voices of the other men interviewed are introduced in this chapter, and although none of these men’s stories are presented in the same detail of Arthur’s and Bill’s, they do give some insight into the meanings these men have constructed around work, retirement, and their involvement in their particular enthusiasm. The men’s insights also demonstrate the range of responses and meanings around the themes identified.

While this chapter explores the themes uncovered in the above structural analysis, it is not a purely thematic analysis as such. As each theme is explored attention is also paid to the context that produced these narratives. Such a dialogic/performance analysis, as discussed in Chapter Three Section 3.20.4, involves examining and attempting to understand, amongst other things, the “influence of the investigator, setting, and social circumstances on the production and interpretation of narrative” (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). The contextual elements which produced the particular narratives are introduced in this chapter alongside discussions of the various themes; in effect the structural, thematic, and contextual merge in the production of narrative and life story. Likewise, narratives are understood, both in formal analysis and in lay understandings, from their structural, thematic, and contextual aspects. It is somewhat artificial, therefore, to claim that any analysis of narrative can be a ‘purely’ structural, thematic, or dialogic/performance and so the thematic and dialogical elements of narrative have not been clearly separated out in many of the discussions below.

One of the strengths of narrative analysis is its ability to maintain the interrelated complexities of people’s experiences and contexts. These complexities are partly maintained throughout this chapter through the mutual examination of certain themes and the context that created the narrative.

### 5.1 Generativity

Generativity refers to the concern adults in mid to later life have for the next generation and for their own legacy (Erikson, 1963; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998). Generativity emerged as a theme from the structural analyses of Bill and Arthur’s narratives. This section examines generativity across the range of men interviewed, as discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.

#### 5.1.1 Concern for younger generations

Part of the motivation for generativity comes from a concern for the next generation (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998). It was apparent from the
interviews that there was a great deal of concern and interest in younger generations. This was often for younger generations of the men’s own family, children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren and younger people more generally. Their concern and interaction with their family is examined in the discussion on family in Section 5.2.1. This current section records the more generalised concern the men expressed for younger people.

This generative concern was expressed, by some of the men, through contrasting their understanding of what it is currently like to work and raise a family, with their own remembered experience. This can be seen in the following narratives where both Jim and Alf express these concerns through comparing their own experiences with the difficulties they perceive younger people have around managing money and issues of job security.

Transcript 5.1 “Us older people have seen the best”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JIM:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>I think in one aspect us older people have seen the best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>you can be out of a job tomorrow,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>you can more or less step into a job the next day,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>now a lot of the jobs are disappearing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>a lot of the apprenticeships for the kids are disappearing too …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>I don’t know how some of the people are going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>after last Wednesday’s interest [rate] hike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>it would be affecting some people paying off a mortgage y’know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>admittedly we battled too but um,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I don’t know,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I think a lot of kids today,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>have [got to have] new sort of new stuff more than we would …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>we would sort of buy something a bit at a time sort of y’know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>but now-a-days it seems as though they want a new car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>and a new fridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>and a new house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>and new this and a new that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of course the “kids” Jim is referring to are people currently aged in their 30s, 40s and 50s. Jim believes that his attitude to money, thrift, and credit was formed during his childhood. He goes on to relate a narrative where, as a child he would receive “a tiny toy for Christmas” if he was “lucky” as it was all his “parents could afford”. Such attitudes are well documented among other people of Jim’s generation (Mackay, 1997) and there are numerous memoires of Jim’s contemporaries which reveal similar stories of growing up in the 1930s and receiving one modest present at Christmas (Anglican Retirement Villages, 2011; Carroll, 1982; Mackenzie Bonett, 2011). I suspect that the particular story is not just a recounting of a particular event or experience nor even just to convey to the listener that the narrator experienced poverty as a child, such stories are also a culturally recognisable way to establish that the narrator has certain recognisable values. In this particular case, the story is being used to convey the values of thrift and being grateful for what one has. The importance of cultural narratives in both conveying additional narrative meaning and constructing personal understandings and identity is a key aspect of this research.

Alf, another research participant, holds great concerns for the current generation of working people. Alf related his particular concern for the changed culture of workplaces and what he saw as the lack of job security. He particularly lamented the loss of the ‘job for life’ culture and the security that went with it.

Transcript 5.2 “It was permanent”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALF:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>ah when I first went into the [government department]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>one of the attractions for going in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>was that it was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>you were permanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>it was permanent job y’know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>and you weren’t worried about getting sacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>because the boss didn’t like you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alf was concerned about what he described as the arbitrary way in which people can now be dismissed from work [Transcript 5.2: 109-113], something he felt he and his cohort were in some ways protected from. To Alf such permanence implied job stability which he feared younger people today do not have. The above quotes are from a longer narrative of Alf’s around this theme, towards the end of this narrative, in what could be considered an evaluative section of the narrative, he returned to this theme:

**ALF:**

| 115 | that was one of the big attractions of a government jobs then |
| 116 | it was permanent ... |
| 120 | permanency was a big thing. |

Such a narrative clearly shows Alf’s concern for the younger generation, who he perceived as being constantly anxious about the security of their jobs. Which in some ways mirror Jim’s concern that “now a lot of jobs are disappearing” [Transcript 5.1: 04].

Both Jim and Alf’s narratives deliberately compared their own past experiences to that of younger people now. This not only shows their generative concern for younger people, it positions them and their experiences in a way that demonstrates the point Jim made in his introduction to his narrative, that “us older people have seen the best” [Transcript 5.1: 01]. Positioning themselves in such a way not only emphasises the men’s own personal good fortune, it is also legitimates their position of generative concern. Establishing a position where one has experienced and seen “the best” allows one the authority to make comparisons and judgements about current situations.

It is clear from Jim and Alf’s narratives that their concern is for younger generations generally, not just their own children. This generalised concern for the next generation, which in this case is expressed as anxiety but could equally be expressed more optimistically, is obviously generative in origin. Concern for the next generation, in whatever form, is a motivation for generative thoughts and actions (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998).
These two particular narratives were also influenced by wider social, economic, and political narratives occurring at the time of the interviews; namely the global financial crisis and an Australian election campaign, in which issues of industrial relations, job security, and economic difficulties for ‘everyday’ Australians were prominent: this is explored in the discussion about wider societal narrative in Chapter Six, Section 6.4. That is not to say that issues of job security are limited to this particular time and only exist within the cultural discourse. The loss of job security in the Australian economy has been a matter of concern to some economists and academics for a number of years (Solondz, 1995; Stilwell, 1995). What is significant here is that Jim and Alf’s narratives were produced during a time when these concerns were discussed more than usual in the media and by politicians, which somewhat skewed the public discourse at that particular time.

5.1.2 Generative behaviour

McAdams and colleagues’ model of generativity postulates that generativity is expressed through actions and behaviour (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998). All of the men’s narratives made reference to some generative behaviour and I also observed such behaviour towards me in my own interaction with the men. For McAdams and colleagues, generative behaviours involve “creating, maintaining, and offering to others”. Generative behaviours include the creative production of objects and things, as well as the “conservation, restoration, preservation, cultivation, nurturance, or maintenance of that which is deemed worthy of such behavior” (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1004). A final aspect of generative behaviour is that which has been created or maintained, is offered to “next generation as a gift, granting the gift its own autonomy and freedom” (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1006).

There is a creative element in all of the enthusiasms surveyed in their research. The most obvious being woodturning, which creates turned wooden objects. Other restoration based hobbies incorporate a creative element, whereas ham radio operator and control line plane enthusiasts make their own radios and model planes, where innovation is appreciated and discussed amongst enthusiasts. All enthusiasms have creative and innovative elements to them. The machine and railway restorers, for example, sometimes had to create new pieces of equipment or adapt existing equipment to achieve their restoration, and the model plane enthusiasts are constantly trying to improve the design of their models to increase speed or manoeuvrability.
Jack, Dave, and George are all woodturners who were interviewed in their homes. I observed examples of their woodwork displayed in all of their houses, Jack and Dave invited me to see their workshops where they created these pieces. George also took me for a tour of his workshop, when, at the conclusion of our interview, I asked if I could see it. Of course the wooden artefacts that Jack, Dave, and George make have meaning beyond the generative act of creating. These artefacts are tangible proof of the men’s mastery of specific techniques; they may also have sentimental value and meaning attached. Some of the men had enthusiasms which were specifically organised around the “conservation, restoration, preservation, cultivation, nurturance, or maintenance” of certain objects (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1004). The enthusiasms of restoring and displaying antique machinery and the railway museum were specifically set up with conservation and preservation of these artefacts in mind. Arthur’s own involvement in such work is documented in Chapter Four; the generative attitude to such work is perhaps best summed up in Arthur’s own words:

Arthur: I have y’know a strong view that we should preserve our past, and maintain it for posterity.

[Transcript 4.14: 202-203]

The day I met him at the Railway Museum, Jim was part of a team involved in restoring some of the museum’s old buildings. When I asked him why he had volunteered for this restoration work he gave the following answer which reveals the generative understanding Jim has of the task. It also shows that for Jim restoring these buildings is part of his sense of generatively ‘offering’ the buildings to future generations.

Jim: it is important because you’re doing something aren’t you, you’re creating something you’re rebuilding something and people will come in years to come and say ‘jeese that’s a nice building’ or ‘that one over here’s a nice building’ and ‘that one’s a nice building’ And when you can sorta hear things like being said Well yeah buttons fly off your shirt y’know
[at this point Jim puffed out his chest and mimed buttons flying off his shirt – a visual metaphor for him swelling with pride – both Jim and I laughed at this performance]

Jim: but that gives you a lot of pleasure
like Tuesday afternoon we’re waiting on [railway] station to go home
and the Indian-Pacific\(^{15}\) come through
and there’s a wagon there with cars on
and this little boy
about so high
he couldn’t get over these cars being on this wagon on the train
he was as happy as anything this little boy
the smile on his face
the way his talking to his mum y’know
[about] the cars.
It might sound funny it just sort of gives me a real lift.

This story shows the interconnected of McAdam’s generative elements and how, through narrative, generative motivations blend with thoughts and plans, and actions. It also shows the power of narrative in bringing these elements together. This section of narrative links two elements of McAdam’s concept of ‘generative behaviour’, that of maintaining and preserving something with the offering of it to the next generation, while at the same time showing Jim’s concern for the next generation, in the interest taken in the little boy transfixed by the train. Jim’s sense of pleasure and pride in his work is obvious in this section of narrative.

Telling one’s story is both “a cognitive and an emotional achievement” (González Monteagudo, 2011, p. 299). Jim’s use of emotion in this narrative, serves to highlight the generative meaning he is trying to convey, as the emotion of happiness is used to link the little boy’s sense of wonder with Jim’s own feelings of pride and achievement, as well as to create an emotional link with the listener.

\(^{15}\) The Indian-Pacific is an iconic Australian passenger train that runs the 4,000km trip between Sydney on the east coast and Perth on the west coast.

173.
Jim was not the only man to report a sense of satisfaction and pride in seeing others, particularly children, take an interest in their enthusiasm. Arthur also felt that “it’s a great thing to show” restored and operating old machinery to children

*Arthur:* ...because you can see fathers trying to explain [machinery] to little kids, what that thing is what’s turning around,

[Transcript 4.13: 252-254]

For some men generative behaviour involved sharing their experiences, knowledge, and skills with younger generations. This form of generative ‘offering’ was seen through teaching and mentoring younger enthusiasts. Bill’s teaching and his current position of training new ham radio enthusiasts to get their licence is explored in Bill’s life story in Chapter Four above. Other men reported taking younger enthusiasts under their wing, either formally or informally. Chris also helps train and mentor junior flyers who join the fixed line model club.

*Chris:* occasionally we’ll get a junior flyer up here who rode his bike past stopped and looked and said he’d like to do that and I’ve been the one that’s taken probably half of the juniors we’ve had

Chris, who was also a former teacher and lecturer, enjoys teaching the junior members of his club and, like Bill, is pleased when they achieve success.

*Chris:* And I’m teaching a bit there [at the club] I have a good rapport with them [the junior members] and I’m very pleased for them with what I’ve been able to help them achieve I’m trying to remember if one of them became a national champion but certainly at least three of them became state champions while they were working with me. They’ve all drifted away now as soon as they’re old enough to get a car, that’s it they’ve gone. But we have some good times before that happens.
In this context the training that both Chris and Bill give to younger enthusiast can be seen as a form of ‘offering’ of their experience, skills, and knowledge directly to the next generation.

5.1.3 Generativity to peers

Generativity is of course not only confined to passing information on to the next generation. Older men involved in various hobbies and enthusiasms also demonstrate technical and cultural generativity, through passing on both the technical skills and cultural aspects of their particular enthusiasm or as Gutmann explains is older men culture-tending (Gutmann, 1987). While for some, such as Bill and Chris, this has meant explicitly taking on teaching and mentoring roles with younger enthusiasts, for others it has meant taking on leadership and training roles with their peers. Such leadership and training roles can be seen as ways that these men are ‘tending’ the subculture of their particular enthusiasm.

Barry, for example, had been part of demonstrations with other woodturners. He helped organise demonstrations by internationally renowned turners and has in turn demonstrating his own skills to others. He has also written occasional review articles in an Australian woodturning magazine. Writing for these magazines helps situate Barry within positive relationship matrices, as discussed above. These writings give Barry some status and recognition within the woodturning subculture, as well as validating his skills with people outside the woodturning community. Barry reports that when his first piece was published

Barry: I took photocopies of that page and sent it to my family in [town]
       I was as pleased as Punch [laughs]
       I was

Support for peers also come through interaction with specialist magazines and internet sites. Arthur’s use of the internet to communicate with other enthusiasts, particularly around his specialised interest in the restoration of certain brands of Australian tractors as discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.4, is an example of this.

5.1.4 Involvement in this study as generative behaviour

For some men, I suspect most, involvement in this study was also generative behaviour. Being a participant in this study involved spending time with a younger person, me, and gave these men the opportunity to make a direct connection with the younger generation and, more particularly, could be seen as an example of ‘offering’ their experiences and knowledge to the next generation as a gift. Bill drew the interview to a close by saying that
he hopes I “got something out of that [the interview]” and by wishing me good luck with my
doctorate (Transcript 4.3 lines 145 and 117). The field notes, written immediately after the
leaving Bill’s house, note that at the conclusion of the interview Bill said

that he was happy to be involved [as a research participant], and had been looking
forward to it [the interview], as he saw it as a way that he could make a contribution
to help a younger person [i.e. me].
A number of men concluded the interview by wishing me well in my studies. This varied
from the sincere but incidental well wishes of Jim, who concluded his interview with

Jim: I hope it helps with your thesis

to more explicit generative statements. Chris, for example, told me that he was happy to be
involved in the study because as a former teacher and lecturer he understands the
“importance of research”. This generative interest was expressed in varying degree by a
number of the men interviewed and is similar to the culture-tending activities Fleming
(2001) observed in his own research. I do believe that the generative interest the men
expressed to me was genuine, it was however modest and incidental.

5.1.5 Summary

There is a risk that in presenting the generative elements above separately that they can
appear to be discrete from each other. These elements of McAdams’ and colleagues’
generative model are in a dynamic relationship with each other, the impact one element has
on another is not a smooth systemic progression but more a constant interplay back and forth
(McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998). Like all conceptual models, this
is a useful guide but there is the risk that it over simplifies the rich interconnectedness of
meaning that is built up narratively between the different elements. This is perhaps best seen
in the meaning men make of certain generative behaviour, which is ‘conserving’ while at the
same time intended as an ‘offering’ to the next generation. Aspects of this rich
interconnection are preserved by presenting excerpts of the men’s narratives, again showing
narrative analysis’s ability to reveal and maintain some of the complex interconnectedness
and context of experience and meaning.

5.2 Social Connections

The social networks and narrative matrices exposed through the structural analyses of
Chapter Four reveal the complex social networks that the men are enmeshed in. The
relational matrices constructed in Chapter Four from Bill and Arthur’s narratives show them both to be at the centre of social networks consisting of family, friends, and fellow enthusiasts. Similar complex relational matrices were observed in the narratives of other men in the study. The importance of positive social relationships to one’s health and sense of self are well established (Antonucci, et al., 2002; De Leo, et al., 2001; Iwasaki, et al., 2002; Seeman, et al., 1987; Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003; Zunzunegui, et al., 2004).

5.2.1 Family

Men discussed their family: from their parents, grandparents, and siblings when they were young, to their current relationships with wives, children, and grandchildren. Discussion about children and grandchildren often focused on the practical support they are giving, in some case quite substantial support, with two of the men involved in renovating or building houses for a child or grandchild.

Barry: My grandson bought himself a house now
and my wife in her generosity said
“Oh, poppy will fix it up for you” [laugh]
So I’m in the throes of doing that now
But I enjoy doing stuff.
My wife reckons [p]
she still reckons she’d like to see me go back to work
she reckons she might see more of me
I’m lovin’ it and enjoying it.

George is also helping his daughter renovate her house, which involved George and his wife regularly travelling interstate.

Other men also reported providing practical support to family members. George is regularly called on to help both his mother-in-law and his son

George: I do spend a lot of time
fixing things for people
y’know
down at my mother-in-law’s
or at our son’s in Sydney with his family
and he never seems to have enough time
George’s interaction with both his mother-in-law and son is presented as being based around the practical help George can offer. He does not talk about visiting his mother-in-law, son, or grandchildren for purely social reasons. It is helping through doing. This is consistent with other research around how older men perceive their interaction with family, which tends to focus on practical assistance (Macdonald, et al., 2001). The gendered nature of George’s narratives of family assistance is discussed in Section 5.3.

5.2.1.1 Parents and siblings

A number of the men shared information about their early family life. This topic was not the primary focus of the investigation and the interview guide, see Chapter Three, Section 3.17.2, was not designed to investigate the men’s early life and no specific questions were planned or asked about the topic. There were times when I asked for clarification and more information about aspects of their life story, which built up a clearer picture of when they first got involved in their enthusiasm. When talking about themselves and their hobbies a number of men felt it necessary to build up a picture that included references to their early life.

Most of the men became interested in their particular hobby or enthusiasm in childhood and those who discussed their parents often depicted them as encouraging of their hobby. Sometimes no mention was made of their parents’ attitudes towards their enthusiasm but parental support, or at least tolerance, of their son’s hobby can often be inferred from the narratives. Bill’s first radio is a case in point, it was housed in “his own little shed on the back verandah of my parents’ house” [Transcript 4.1: 53-54]. Bill does not mention what his parents thought of his shed occupying their back verandah; I can only imagine that this could happen with their consent and support. The absence of narratives of parental opposition to their hobbies may be partly explained by parents, especially mothers, in the post-war period being encouraged, through popular magazines and advertising, to support their sons’ technical hobbies as worthwhile and even educational pursuits (Haring, 2007). Of course boys whose parents were not supportive of their hobbies may not have continued with them and therefore would not be still involved with them today. George was the only man who reported a shared interested, woodwork, with his father. The impact of this shared interest is discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.1.1.
Barry’s narrative of leaving school was the only narrative of conflict between parents and sons.

Barry:  
[I] always played with wood ever since I was a kid  
I wanted to get an apprenticeship in cabinet making  
joinery  
and I had one year of high school to go and  
dear old dad pulled me out a year early  
“You’re not good enough to go on,  
so I’ve got you a job”  
Bang, bang,  
that was it  
no questions asked

This conflict is not so much around Barry’s interest in woodwork, but his ability to gain an apprenticeship as a cabinet maker. With hindsight Barry is forgiving of his father’s actions and motives for taking him out of school.

Barry:  
...I’m actually grateful  
I was struggling  
but I was getting there  
I only wanted one more year  
but I didn’t hold any animosity towards him  
I was a bit put out to start with  
but I got over it fairly quickly.

Barry’s narratives often have references to his relationships with various family members, with themes of difficulties and resolutions coming up often. He spoke at some length about the difficult relationship he has had with one his brothers and how in recent years they have reconciled.

Barry:  
I could have been very, very bitter about him if I so let myself  
Very bitter,  
but we’re pretty good mates now.  
He lives up at [town],  
And is into woodturning
Barry spoke about his brother’s interest in woodturning and an instance where his brother asked Barry for advice.

Barry: He’ll be doing a lot more of it now.
   I think what might have started him [asking Barry for advice] was the fact that I was handing round pieces that I done to the family, and he took a liking to it.

It is clear from this that Barry regards woodworking as helping to mend what had been a difficult relationship. There is also a generative motif in this particular narrative. Barry’s sharing of the pieces he had made with his family became the conduit for a positive relationship with his brother, a relationship based, in part, on sharing his expertise and knowledge. Barry sees this sharing of experience and knowledge around a common enthusiasm as, in part, the reason for re-establishing good relations with his brother. Increased number of positive social relationships has a positive effect on one’s health and wellbeing (Marmot, 2004).

Male relatives, especially fathers, brothers, and brothers-in-law were also mentioned by some men as exemplars of male retirement. These relatives were assessed, by the men, as being either positive or negative examples of male retirement which the men narratively positioned themselves with or against accordingly. This is explored in more detail in Section 5.3 below, as part of the discussion on cultural expectations of male retirement.

5.2.1.2 Wives

All the men in this study reported being in intact long-term marriages. This reflects the high proportion of married men in this age group, as 70.6% of men aged 65 and over are married, compared to only 46.4% of women (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012c). So it was expected that a similar proportion of men in this study would be partnered. Marital status was not something actively selected for; while it was anticipated that the majority of participants would be married the absence of divorced, widowed or never married men was unexpected. Given the documented importance of marriage and relationships to men’s health and social connections (Askham, 1995; S. L. Brown, et al., 2005; Phillipson, 1997; Scott & Wenger, 1995) it was originally hoped that comparisons could be made between men of different marital statuses.
Wives were invariably reported as supportive of their husband’s interest and involvement in the club, wives also appeared to be busy in the community, with many family and volunteer commitments. Many of the men also report that their wives are also active in a number of community and volunteer groups. Arthur and Alf, for example, both reported that their wives are involved in various volunteer activities

\[\text{Arthur:}\] ... my wife is involved in quite a few activities she’s in some other organisations herself and also she does a little bit of work for a private school supervising exams ...

right now is a busy time yes

Arthur and his wife organise their day to day life around each other’s activities

\[\text{Arthur:}\] there’s demands on the car so she has to drive to that [activity] well I drive her and drop her off and go and pick her up again but you know it’s all logistics and planning and all that sort of stuff.

As well as their holidays and trips away which are all “a question of time” dependant not just on Arthur’s own interest and commitments but also on competing

\[\text{Arthur:}\] ... family commitments,

and activities that my wife’s involved in

Arthur and his wife also share an interest in genealogy, are members of a local historical society, and both volunteer to help maintain a local park. This suggests not just shared interests but shared generative values around the importance of history and maintaining important objects for future generations.

Alf and his wife also lead busy lives. Alf was telling me about trying to coordinate a time when they both had a free week to go away to visit their daughter

\[\text{Alf:}\] ... it’s not as easy as it sounds when you retire.

\[\text{Anthony:}\] it sounds like you’ve got to coordinate with your wife’s calendar as well?
Alf: yeah you’ve got to watch out

While this is consistent with existing literature about women’s involvement with family community, it also suggests a pattern that perhaps men involved in such groups tended to have partners who also have busy lives and were involved in different community organisations. This is consistent with what Roberto, Blieszner, and Allen (2006) have observed with older women, who lead lives “independent and intertwined” with those of their husbands (Roberto, 2012).

Only one participant, Bill, mentioned experiences of marital difficulty. He and his wife were separated at the time he retired and this added to the difficulty he experienced around leaving work, Bill was facing many difficulties at the time, a period he now refers to as a “mid-life crisis”

Bill: I left home my mid-life crisis involved the domestic scene as well as and I just had to go and set up camp [elsewhere] and try and sort myself out and so I was away from here [home] about five years

Bill mentioned these marital difficulties as part of his narratives of leaving work, which was a particularly difficult time for him. These stories are set out in Chapter Six, Section 6.3.1. I believe he mentioned these difficulties as a way to help me, as the listener, better understand what was happening in his life at the time. Although aspects of his retirement story are in flux this aspect of the story, that he was having a difficult time, remains stable, which suggests to me that this is a necessary component of Bill’s life story and is used to orientate the listener to better understand the difficulties he faced at this time and the marital stability he now experiences.

5.2.1.3 Being a grandfather and great-grandfather

There were many, many examples of men providing practical support to adult children and grandchildren. Interestingly none of the men explicitly mentioned child-minding, yet most had provided some practical support for family members. Jim “fixed-up” his mother-in-law’s house in his first couple of years of retirement, Barry is helping his grandson renovate a
house, George is helping his daughter build a house interstate and Arthur spent two years working for his son ‘helping out’ when he first ‘retired’.

The men also spoke fondly of being a father and grandfather. Again there are a variety of ways in which men talk about and interact with their children and grandchildren, many of whom are young adults. The different degrees of involvement with children and grandchildren is again consistent with what has been observed in older women, as is the differing and changing sense of self that these relationships engender (Roberto, Allen, & Blieszner, 1999).

Barry was telling me about his children and grandchildren, when he said:

Barry: We’ve got our first great-grandchild

Anthony: Wow!

Barry: And I’m still pissed off with it.
I’m just at the age where I’ve just got to accept being a grandfather
I’m not old enough to be a great-grandfather [laugh]
That’s my joke!

This statement about Barry being “pissed off” is humorous and ironic. His laughter and happy tone of his voice indicates his pleasure at being a great-grandfather. This is a reference, albeit a humorous and perhaps ironic one, to a conflict around not being “old enough to be a great-grandfather”. While there is a dearth of research on grandfathering, it does appear that becoming a grandfather represents another point of transition in a man’s life, when his identity and sense of masculine self are reassessed (Tarrant, 2012), in a similar way perhaps to retirement. It is clear that there are number of ways in which men meet this transition into grandfatherhood, and presumably great-grandfatherhood.

This research aims to better understand men’s experience of retirement. As such, it has only focused tangentially on men’s experiences of being a grandfather or even a great-grandfather. Yet it is clear from Barry’s discussion above and the other men’s involvement with their children and grandchildren, that positive relationships and involvement with family are important elements of their retirement experiences. More work is obviously needed in understanding the experience of being a grandfather (Arber & Timonen, 2012). As
would be expected there was a range of attitudes to family expressed, while some men expressed frustration how busy this made them others appeared delighted to do this work. None of the men mentioned any ill feelings about their children or grandchildren; I suspect that this may have changed had I asked more questions about this aspect of their retirement. Just as grandmothers have reported ambiguous feelings to child-minding (Arber & Timonen, 2012), older men may also have conflicting feelings around the ‘practical’ support they feel is expected of them from their children and grandchildren. The experience of being a grandfather has received little attention or research (Arber & Timonen, 2012; Tarrant, 2012) and further investigation into men’s experience of grandfatherhood is indeed needed to determine the extent to which any such ambiguous or contrasting feelings to men’s roles as grandfathers exist.

5.2.2 Friendships

Male friends were also mentioned within the relational matrices created narratively by the retired men. Friendship with other men was observed as an important element which, once more, is consistent with other research into older men’s friendships (Scott & Wenger, 1995).

Friendships with people who were not enthusiasts were mentioned far less than relationships with family and their friendships with fellow enthusiasts. This is not evidence, however, that men place more or less importance on friendships with fellow enthusiasts. This research focuses on men, retirement, and enthusiasms, so it is not surprising that both my questions and participants answers would focus on these aspects, and so that they would speak more about their relationships with fellow enthusiasts than their friendships with others.

5.2.3 Fellow enthusiasts

The men in this study were selected from organised enthusiast groups. Such groups are, by definition, organised around a particular hobby or enthusiasm. It is not surprising therefore that friendships have developed amongst member of the group, around the common interest of their shared enthusiasm. Such friendships were indeed reported amongst the men interviewed. Bill has a group of four friends, all amateur radio operators like himself, who meet regularly and call themselves the “Gentlemen’s Morning Tea Club”

Bill: and we discuss the world’s problems and how we’re going to fix them
Meeting people with similar interests was a motivating factor for some of the men to join an enthusiast organisation. Jack is a member of a gardening club and reported his experience of joining the club:

\textit{Jack:} I’ve been a gardener for I suppose since I must have been about 20 [years old] and that was the one interest that I had and one of the fellows I worked with was always on about y’know “come and join the garden club” “come and join the garden club” and I did. I went along and I went twice to the garden club and I said “Yes okay we can come here and we can talk to people”

Jack’s motivation for joining the club was clearly not just to discuss gardening. His connection with an existing member of the club is what drew him in the first place but it was the realisation that he can go there and “talk to people” that is the main motivation for staying. This is consistent with other research that shows one of the reasons why men seek social networks is to find “like minded” people to share and discuss common interests with (C. Hall, et al., 2007).

Jim spoke with much feeling about his fellow railway enthusiasts. As the following excerpts, taken from different parts of his interview, show:

\textit{Jim:} they’re a mixture of blokes from all walks of life

\textit{Jim:} a terrific mob of blokes y’know come in here

\textit{Jim:} it’s a terrific mob of blokes, Hell of a lot of nice blokes they are do anything for you
When asked to reflect on the interview and what he considered important Jim returned to the experience of companionship

Jim: companionship is the main, is one of the main, things, the group of blokes, happy-go-lucky sort of group of blokes, excellent!

The theme of companionship and camaraderie was also taken up by other men.

Alf: that’s why we come up here [to the museum] I think, because it’s good camaraderie, you can sit down, well you saw us at the morning tea table.

Alf is referring to the fact that before our interview I had, at Alf’s invitation, shared morning tea with him and other members of the railway club. I observed good natured banter between club members, as well as sharing of information and resources such as DVDs and magazines, about trains and railways around the world. At the conclusion of the interview I recorded the following reflections on the experience in my field notes.

I arrived at lunch time and shared a sandwich with the blokes … Lunch was great an obvious display of good humour camaraderie, which reflects what Jim also told me.

I also observed such friendly interactions amongst the woodturners interviewed. Barry brought photographs of numerous aspects of his enthusiasm to the interview, as mentioned in Section 5.5. Amongst these photographs were images of members of the woodturners working together in their new premises, as well as showing some working together gathering and processing larger logs for the woodturning club

Barry: I get the log and make it into timber I’ve got a couple of mates that are tree loppers and we collect the log ...

Barry then told a story about collecting some local trees and how he and his friends had cut the timber with their specialised equipment.
Anthony:  I’d like to have a look [at the photo]

Barry:  There’s pictures in there [photo album]
And if you got anything too big my mates [have] got a Lucas mill
which has got about a 5-foot bar on
runs on rails
driven by a big twin 20 horse power motor

There was more to many of the groups and organisations’ activities than just organising around their enthusiasms. The groups are a source of friendships and also of other social activities. The railway museum had recently organised an outing for members and their wives.

Jim:  I think it was last month,
us people in the group,
and we all went out to Lithgow
and went out to the workers club
and had a couple of jars [of beer] and a meal
I came up from Central [train station],
[another member] got on with his wife at Parramatta.
This is the first time [we did this]
but sounds like there could be the second,

This modest activity of coming together for a train trip and a meal is an example of men, through their enthusiasm, organising social interaction for themselves and their wives. This is a reversal of the situation, mentioned in much of the literature, that women are the instigators and organisers of their husband’s social interactions (Scott & Wenger, 1995). For Jim this activity was also another instance of the role the group plays in proving companionship.

Jim:  So that’s .. that’s the beauty of the y’know the company.
It was not just current groups that were the source of friendships. Some men had formed lasting friendships with members of clubs and groups they had previously belonged to. Barry was a member another woodworking group that pre-dated his involvement with the current group,

Barry: I’ve still got very good friends
with a lot of the members from the [previous organisations]

Being a member of their particular club or organisation also meant connection with, and a sense of belonging to, a worldwide network of enthusiasts. The most obvious is Bill’s attitude to ham radio, as connecting to other ‘hams’ in other countries is one of the purposes of organised amateur radio societies.

Bill: when I first got my licence
and I found out it was to my advantage to belong [to the institute]
because when you contact somebody overseas
you would send off what they call a QSL card
and it’s an acknowledgment or receipt of contact
having signal strength and names and where you were and all that
and to send those overseas in those days cost
about a dollar a card
whereas if you went through the [institute]
what they called the QSL bureau
an organisation run by the institute
that you would send say
couple of cards in and they would
send a pact of cards to America
a pack of cards to the UK
or Europe or whatever
and it cost you nothing …
and of course it was reciprocal on the way back

Chris had participated in the international control line flying championships. He had also trained junior club members who had become state and (possibly) national champions
Chris: And I’m teaching a bit there [at the club]
I have a good rapport with them [junior flyers]
and I’m very pleased for them
with what I’ve been able to help them achieve
um...
I’m trying to remember if one of them became a national champion
but certainly at least three of them became state champions
while they were working with me.

This narrative about teaching is certainly has generative elements.

Chris: There was one particular American designer
builder
flyer
called Harold de Bolt who was an idol of mine
I never met him
I only knew him through magazines
but anything
any article with de Bolt’s name
any magazine that had a picture of him on the cover
I’d buy it
read all about it
and memorise it

Other men established links with other enthusiasts through the internet, emails, and specialist hobbyist magazines. Arthur found parts for his specialised tractor restorations through email contact with interstate enthusiasts.

Arthur: ...he’s in South Australia and
he’s kindly prepared a set of sketches of this assembly
and it’s sufficient that I’m able to fabricate it

All of the men read specialist enthusiast magazines. Many had communicated with other specialists through the magazines or their websites. These communications build a sense of
personal connection with the wider enthusiast community. Barry had contributed an article to one of the local woodwork magazines. Barry reports that when his first piece was published:

Barry: I took photocopies of that page and sent it to my family in [town]
I was as pleased as Punch [laughs]
I was.

These writings give Barry some status and recognition within the woodturning subculture, as well as validating his skills with people outside the woodturning community.

These discussions reveal not only the men’s concern and interest for fellow enthusiasts they also show their strong connection to the history and culture of their enthusiasms. Reflecting that they have become mentors, who both ‘keep’ and pass on the culture of their enthusiasm (Kotre, 1984).

5.2.4 The importance of social connections

The men interviewed constructed narrative matrices which revealed networks of relationships with family, friends, and fellow enthusiasts. All of which are important to them. The narratives above reveal two important aspects of the men’s lives. Firstly, and most obviously, the importance that older men place on the role of family and friends in their lives, and secondly, they also demonstrate the variety of ways in which men talk about their relationships with others. This range of ways of talking about family is somewhat at odds with some of the literature about how men talk about familiar relationships (Mishler 1999).

The relationships described between the men and their families all exhibited generative aspects. Kotre’s typology of generativity was useful in interpreting this, although aspects of the typology seem limited in light of the generativity exhibited. Biological generativity, although not the focus of this research, is restricted to biological reproduction and is concerned with “begetting, bearing, and nursing offspring” (1984, p. 12). It is fundamentally about physically producing offspring and to a lesser extent to the “meanings attached” to these biological processes (p. 257). The meanings grandfathers, and grandmothers, have of being a progenitor of one’s biological grandchildren and great children is largely unexplored and was not touched upon at all in this research. Barry’s jocular reference to becoming a great-grandfather was the closest any of the discussions or narratives got to this and the ‘joke’ is more about Barry’s age, him being “too young” to be a great-father, than it is directly about him being the progenitor of his great-grandchild. Limiting biological
generativity just to parents and their biological offspring and overlooks any biological or sociological implications of older people as progenitors of younger generations.

Parental generative is exhibited, in Kotre’s typology, through practical expressions of care of parents for their children, it is the “feeding, clothing, sheltering” and of course “loving” of the next generation (1984, p. 11). Parents engage in such activities to, in part, “preserve the continuity of the family” (p. 11). The implication of Kotre’s original conception of parental generativity is that grandparents have no, or a very limited, role in providing support to their family. Yet it is clear from this study that grandfathers place much value and meaning in the practical support they provide to both these adult children and grandchildren. The extent of this support parallels the findings of other studies which show that support, especially financial support, is most likely to be from grandparents to their children or grandchildren (Arber & Timonen, 2012). The concept of parental generativity needs to be extended to incorporate the generative nature of the practical support that grandfathers, and grandmothers, give to younger generations.

The men interviewed for this research did not neatly conform to Mishler’s (1999) expectations of how men construct narratives. Some men, such as Arthur, did construct narratives in which their roles as son, husband, and father were absent or downplayed, as can be seen from his narratives in Chapter Four. Yet other men spoke at some length about their familial relationships. Mishler’s work with men and women in mid-career lead him to speculate that men do not explicitly mention gender in their narratives, or perhaps more accurately that women mention gender more than men as women experience conflict around gender roles, such as being a mother and maintaining a career. Any explicit mention of gender was indeed absent from the majority of the men’s narratives. This discussion on gender in the men’s narratives is picked up again in Section 5.3.

It is clear that involvement with enthusiast groups is not just a way to maintain an interest with that enthusiasm but also a source of friendship and valued social interaction. It is clear that involvement with these groups forms an important part of the men’s social networks. Involvement in the social networks and activities that the group provides seems to be as important to the members as the group’s purpose of furthering their particular hobby or enthusiasm. This is consistent with work that suggests men are seeking friendships and connection with other men, but they prefer to achieve this connection through involvement in some shared activity (C. Hall, et al., 2007). These findings also conform to research into men’s sheds in Australia, where men report “enjoyment from participation, camaraderie, socialisation and skill development” (N. J. Wilson & Cordier, 2013, p. 1).
I suspect, however, that the men are presenting an idealised view of their current relationships. Only one person, Bill, mentioned any marital difficulties and while others hinted at frustrations in their relationships and expected roles with their children and grandchildren there was no one explicit reported case of tension in these relationships. There is a difference between the narratives constructed in an interview situation and ‘real world’ conversations. I suspect men selected narratives of experiences which most matched their ideal of what family relationships should be. I am not saying the men lied; just that they presented their best ‘face’ as a family man to me.

This research aims to understand the meanings that older men have of their experiences of retirement. In order to understand meaning it is perhaps less important to document men’s experiences of possible poor family relationships, than it is to uncover idealised conceptions of family. Such idealised conceptions of family and retirement give valuable insight into what the men in this study value. Detailed ethnographic observation of the men ‘in situ’ in their enthusiast and familial environments together with in-depth interviews would be required to gain a better understanding of any discrepancies between the men’s ideal ‘face’ of retirement, presented in this research, and their narratives and identity making practices in the ‘real world’.

5.3 Gender in the Men’s Narratives

This section explores the theme of gender in the men’s narratives, something that was only rarely explicitly mentioned. According to Mishler (1999) men tend to downplay gender in discussions of familial interaction, whereas women are more likely to explicitly mention gender as problematic, especially around their familial roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Mishler’s explanations of the gendered nature of narrative are discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.6.2. Explicit comments on gender were indeed infrequent in the participants’ narratives, when gender was explicitly mentioned it was in one of two ways, firstly in reference to gendered stereotypes and expectations, and secondly in relation to the rare occurrence of one of the men experiencing gender conflict.

At another point Barry was telling about various equipment and tools he had collected over the years, to help with his woodturning:

Barry: ... and I’ve got a couple of [laughs]
decent chainsaws,
men’s saws.
This is a reference to the size and power of these saws. It also occurs in a section of narrative where Barry is relating a story of working with other woodworkers cutting up trees and large logs for the woodturners to use. By making it clear that such saws are the domain of men, Barry is also discursively reinforcing the theme of this particular narrative, that the men engaged in this activity are working together in a common cause. Barry also reflects on gender in a discussion about taking his youngest daughter fishing when she was a child. These fishing trips were special times for Barry and of all his children his daughter was the one that enjoyed fishing the most. On reflection Barry stated that:

Barry: I could not have had a better fishing mate, even if she hadda been a boy.

These two somewhat sexist statements are used in different ways to both reinforce and question traditional gender roles. In the first case, around the “men’s saws”, the gendered language is used to reinforce traditional gender roles, in particular around male friendships and activities with other men. Homosociability is the “seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex” (Lipman-Blumen, 1976, p. 16). Male homosociability has been problematised, as some believe that male friendships and male groups act in ways to reinforce traditional gender roles leading to exploitative sexual relations with women and homophobia (Flood, 2008; Kimmel, 1994). The first discussion about “men’s saws” does appear to be reinforcing traditional male roles, whereas the second is expressing conflict around these roles. It seems Barry is using this second narrative about fishing as a way to express his conflicting thoughts around his own gendered expectations that boys should enjoy fishing more than girls with his own pleasurable experience of fishing with his daughter.

Narratives are “stories of experience” (Squire, 2008, p. 41) so differences in gender in men and women’s narratives would reflect differences in how men and women experience being gendered beings in the world. Mishler’s (1999) assertion that women often mention gender in relation to conflict experienced around familiar expectations of being a daughter, sister, partner, wife, or mother and women’s own goals and roles outside the family. Men, on the other hand, rarely experience such conflict and so rarely talk about difficulties in their familial roles of sons, fathers, brothers, and husbands. This pattern was observed for most of the men, it was unusual for them to discuss gender role conflict. Narratives about family did include conflict but the men did not refer to this conflict in terms of the relationships with other family members. There were a couple of narratives of conflict or at least disagreement between the men and their parents. These both occurred when the men were leaving school.
The first is Arthur’s decision to leave the family orchard, as mentioned in Transcript 4.6:

**Arthur:** At age 17, I had no interest in continuing on an orchard

ahh I was the eldest of 3

but I had no interest in continuing on the orchard

Arthur does not mention gender at all in this narrative, yet I suspect, as discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.4.1, that Arthur was expected as the eldest son to stay and work on the family orchard. The other implicit discussion is around Barry’s leaving school when his “dear old dad” peremptorily took him out of school a year early and arranged a job for him “no questions asked”.

This story of familial conflict conforms to Mishler’s hypothesis, in that Barry does not see or report that gender plays any role in this decision. Gender is of course present and implied throughout the narrative, Barry as the eldest son is expect to work and the decision to take him out of school is made by his father. This reflects, presumably, an unspoken understanding that a father, rather than a mother, is the parent who is responsible for the career and schooling choices of his sons. Barry goes on to say that he now does not “hold any animosity” towards his father, which is perhaps a mature reflection on the realities of the time and some sort of tacit agreement with the perceived correctness of these gendered roles.

It is possible that my own familial experience of being the eldest son and not pursuing a career in the family business is influencing this interpretation of Arthur’s and Barry’s family experiences. I mention this as a possible example of the circular referencing of the listener’s (and researcher’s) understandings of the current narrative and its context, to their own existing forestructures and prejudices (Sass, 1988, p. 251); as mentioned in the discussion above about the Hermeneutic Circle in Chapter Three, Section 3.2.2.

Aspects of the men’s current interaction with members of their families are understood by the men as gendered. George provides practical help and support for his son and son’s family as well as for his mother-in-law. George’s son need’s George’s help with “doing jobs around the house” as “he [son] never seems to have enough time”

**George:** he’s got a busy job

he’s got three kids

his wife’s epileptic and can’t drive ...

he’s decided to go back and enrol in a Masters degree ...
and so he just never gets to painting the house
or anything like that
and anything like that needs to be done
it’s probably me who’s going to do it

George’s mother-in-law also needs help from him and his wife:

George: similarly with my mother-in-law
she’s living in the house by herself
she’s nearly 90
she’s on the ropes
she does have other children
but no boys around
and the other girls either live a long way away
or doesn’t have a husband
and so I’m it

George takes on these tasks and activities, or perhaps more accurately he understands and makes sense of helping his son and mother-in-law through a gendered lens. Women, according to Mishler (1999), talk about gender in relation to conflict between what is expected of them and what they want to do; George seems to be doing something similar here. It is clear that as the only man of his generation in the family, living near to his mother-in-law he is “it” when it comes to helping out with practical things. Likewise, for his son George is the only one in the family who can provide help with painting the house and the like. While happy to help in this way, George also seems to be expressing some frustration that, as a man, he is expected to take on these roles. This confirms other research which found that older men often seek roles where their interaction with family and female neighbours is around offering practical support and help (Macdonald, et al., 2001).

The enthusiasms and activities discussed so far are ones which, on the whole, conform to ‘acceptable’ masculine hobbies, interests, and activities. This ‘acceptability’ of activities is perhaps part of the reason why gender conflict was rarely mentioned in regard to the men’s involvement with these interests. Dave however had an interest in gemstones and jewellery at a time when it was much less common for men wear or appreciate jewellery.
Dave: And jewellery
it’s not highly regarded in Australia by most people.

At this point Dave seemed reluctant to continue with a discussion on jewellery and I suspected he was going to change the topic. In order to build rapport and continue the conversation, I agreed with him and mentioned my own modest knowledge of the subject.

Anthony: My grandparents actually used to own a jewellery shop a long time ago so I won’t call myself an expert, but I’m vaguely familiar...

Dave: You would know more than most people.
What’s most Australian men wear?
Mainly a wedding ring
y’know
but that’s it
They’re not very interested in jewellery men
Australian type men

Dave’s reluctant to elaborate on his interest in jewellery may be due to his concern about talking to another man about jewellery, concern I allayed by sharing my family connection as a prompt for him to continue. This explicit reference of gender reflects, I believe, Dave’s experience of conflict between what he enjoyed, gemstones and jewellery, and what he perceived as ‘acceptable’ interests of “Australian type men”. This discussion about gender is at odds with Mishler’s (1999) hypothesis of men and women’s narratives, as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.6.

Mishler (1999) based his discussion on gender and narrative around interviews with younger people mid-career, so it may be that older men are more likely to discuss gendered lives than younger men, or indeed that the masculine script has been subtly re-written since 1986-87 (the time of Mishler’s original interviews) to allow for a greater discussion of gender. These things, while undoubtedly contributing to the differences observed, seem unlikely to me to fully explain these results. I believe these narratives show that men do talk about gender and gender conflict when they experience it, which is rarely. In other words, gender is expressed narratively when men experience conflict or ruptures in their lives which deviate from the culturally expected ‘masculine’ life story.
5.4 Wider Cultural Narratives about Retirement

Wider cultural narratives influence the meanings people make of certain experiences. These stories that circulate within certain cultures or subcultures act as points of common understanding within that culture. People discursively align themselves with or against the wider cultural narratives and in doing so connect and construct their own narratives and identities. The content and structures of the cultural narratives are assumed to be understood by all members of the particular culture and are used as ways to convey a range of meanings and understandings beyond the content of the particular discussion. The three negative narratives of male retirement identified in the men’s own narratives have also been found circulating in the wider community and so are truly cultural narratives of male retirement, as identified in Chapter Two, Section 2.10. The impact of cultural narratives on identity formation is explored in more details in Chapter Three, Section 3.5.

Such an understanding of the role of wider narratives is not limited to the academy. People have their own lay understandings of the importance of wider discourses. It would seem that some people, like Jack, actively seek out such discourses to help in the transition to retirement.

Jack: The closer you get to retirement the more you listen to what people are saying um [p] what the medicos are saying about what happens to people’s health and so on and so forth because to go into retirement is a considerable social change because you don’t have this daily contact with people be it the same people you just don’t have that any more Y’know you’re sitting at home, and you have to keep busy and it’s obvious y’know if you haven’t got things to do to occupy your mind you probably end up with depression and y’know concentrate on a whole pile of other worries unnecessarily and so on. So [for me] it was always a case of [having] extra interests for your retirement
The above narrative also shows the way in which people use narrative to link their own experiences to particular themes. Here Jack brings together his experiences of being a gardener and a member of a gardener club, with his experience of listening to wider social discourse about retirement, in this case medical discourses. This section of narrative shows that Jack is making meaning out of his experience as a member of a garden club by linking it to the medical discourses about the importance of keeping occupied in retirement, as way to keep healthy and not “end up with depression”.

It also shows the influence of medical discourses on retirees. Jack, correctly, interprets the various medical and gerontological evidence that activity and social engagement in retirement has positive health effects. These discourses are being used by Jack to also legitimise his involvement in the gardening club and by extension his other enthusiast activities. As Ekerdt (1986) observed in his discussion on the busy ethic, such medical and gerontological discourses are used to reinforce the moral imperative to stay active in retirement. Jack does not explicitly mention the pleasure he presumably receives from gardening and being a member of the club. Pleasure alone does not seem to be a sufficient reason to justify Jack’s involvement in these activities, which he does undoubtedly enjoy, and so medical discourses are co-opted to legitimise his involvement.

5.4.1 Sitting on a rocking chair waiting to die

_Bill:_ do you remember when you were boys,
that you would see a guy retire from work
and he’d sit out on the front verandah
of his house
in his rocking chair
and just sit there and wait to die?

[Transcript 4.3: 102-107]

The ‘rocking chair on the verandah’ is a well-recognised metaphor for retirement (Ansello, 1976; P. A. Crawford, 2000; Downs & Patricia, 1981; Lloyd, 2009). This metaphor reinforces ageist assumptions of retirement as a time of decrepitude, inactivity and meaninglessness came up often in interviews with other men. These negative meanings are being symbolically attached to the metaphorical ‘place’ of the verandah. Here the verandah and rocking chair represent the decrepitude that supposedly comes with retirement. It is a place rich with meaning, even though the place may never have existed as a physical location and the meaning is a negative one.
Barry reported firsthand experience of the man on the verandah and when talking about why people should get involved with something before they retire he said

*Barry:* I’ve seen blokes bored
I can’t say ‘shitless’, can I?

*Anthony:* You can

*Barry:* bored absolutely shitless,
because y’know
they’ve got nothing to do.
There was a bloke at [suburb]
we used to drive past his place all the time,
didn’t matter what time of day or night it was
he’d be sitting out the front verandah watching cars go past.

George was another man who used the metaphor of the verandah:

*George:* I don’t think it’s right to sit on the verandah and do nothing

Barry and Dave mention the verandah here with no reference to a rocking chair but it is clear from this that they are rejecting inactivity as an option in retirement. Likewise, Alf who this time mentions neither the rocking chair nor the verandah but instead employs another metaphor for idleness, which he immediately distances himself from:

*Alf:* sitting in front of the telly all the time
I couldn’t have done that

Bill, Barry, Dave and Alf use the ‘rocking chair’, ‘verandah’ and ‘the telly’ as metaphors for laziness and inactivity. These metaphors are clearly understood as not just representing inactivity but the ‘giving in’ to inactivity. The men establish these ‘places’ as symbols of inactivity in retirement, while at the same time distancing themselves from these ‘places’ and the inactivity they represent. By distancing themselves from the ‘rocking chair’ or ‘the telly’ the men are actively and self-consciously positioning themselves in opposition to the cultural narratives around male retirement as passive and inactive. The men are making it clear that
they are active in retirement and are deliberately resisting the “enforced idleness” that retirement is depicted as in the wider culture (Zinn, 2002, p. 22).

5.4.2 Underfoot husband

In addition to the ‘rocking chair’ narrative of retirement as a time of idleness and decrepitude many of the men also actively positioned themselves as active busy members of the community. This was often achieved through positioning themselves against people, real or imagined, who they understand to having an idle unproductive time in retirement, linked to increased isolation.

Chris: There’s the story about a man who retires on Friday
wakes up Monday morning and thinks
“What the hell,
what am I going to do for the next 15 years now?”
And all of a sudden he’s got to talk to his wife
and she’s got to talk to him
tell him to lift his feet while she vacuums
and all of a sudden they realise they don’t get on terribly well any
more
when he’s got to be around.

In addition to the man on verandah watching the cars go by, Barry had an example closer to home:

Barry: ... like my brother-in-law
the one that’s just died y’know ...
He retired,
he had nothing,
he ended up just taking over the house,
and [my sister] was just pushed in the background
and she used to be cooking all the time
she’d be doing stuff
and she was...
she was evicted from her kitchen...
and it put some animosity in that house
It put real animosity in there
because he was under her feet all the time
He was there all the time

This narrative is a direct invocation of the wider cultural narrative of the ‘underfoot husband’, a retired man who is dependent on his wife for his social and emotional needs (Mackay, 2007). This stereotype assumes that men lose their sense of self-direction after retirement and attempt to spend more time with their wives, to the annoyance of both. The belief in the ‘underfoot’ retired husband and ‘put-upon’ wives is widespread in Australia, despite the fact that it seems such relationships are not commonplace (de Vaus & Wells, 2003).

5.4.3 “Dead in a year”

Arthur:  
I wanted to retire young enough to do some other things  
and not to stick it out like many colleagues to age 65  
and leave this world within 12 months

Throughout this research retired men use other characters in their narratives as a way to position themselves with or against various attitudes or values. Arthur, in the above quote, mentioned colleagues of his who have retired and died within a year. These men are mentioned so Arthur can clearly distance himself from them. Arthur was the only man who explicitly drew on the ‘dead in a year’ narrative. I expected more men to draw on this myth as this particular, groundless, cultural narrative about male retirement is very wide spread, as discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.10.3. It also surprised me because in my own experience during the years of researching and writing this thesis many people have mentioned this particular cultural narrative in casual conversation around this project.

While the story of being ‘dead in a year’ was only rarely mentioned the men interviewed did speak of other men retiring and becoming unwell soon after. Dave offered his brother’s experience as a cautionary tale:

Dave:  
I think the biggest thing  
what people have got to remember is  
if you don’t know what to do after retirement  
you’re going to go downhill very quickly  
I’ve seen it happen and I’ve got a brother who’s in that position.
Anthony: What happened to him?

Dave: ... he’s worked for the company all his life
he’s older than me and
he left the company about a year and a half
2 years ago
and he just hasn’t got any interests besides reading
and he’s starting to get Alzheimer’s
y’know some form of memory problems

Dave attributes these memory problems to his brother’s lack of interests outside of work and an inability to accept that he is now retired

Dave: he still thinks about the company as his ... and it just doesn’t sink in [that he has left the company]

Dave sees the way to keep healthy in retirement is to accept that you have left work and to “move on and do things”, those who cannot accept these changes will just “sit down on their butt and do nothing”, leading to inactivity and poor health. Dave contrasts his brother-in-law with other retirees he knows who are having a better time in their retirement

Dave: I know a couple of people I worked with
they’ve accepted the fact that they are [retired]
they’ve crossed that bridge
now we’ve got to move on and do things here
but some people who don’t prepare for it don’t seem to do that.

In order to reinforce this point Dave then compares his brother’s situation with that of a former boss. Dave’s boss had a difficult time adjusting to retirement:

Dave: he was basically bored stiff...
he ended up coming back to work
he [had been] the boss
and he ended up coming and doing the helper’s hand sort of just doing very menial work
And he got over the fact [that he was retired] and he got an interest

At this point Dave’s boss was able to leave and enjoy his retirement, in Dave’s words he had ‘accepted’ that he was retired and had found an interest to keep him occupied and, it could be said, give him meaning. For Dave, retirees without interests or activates are at risk of poor health.

Dave: I think the big thing is that I’ve always had an interest in something and so long as you have an interest you’re right

Once you slow down that’s a problem.

It is clear from this story that Dave believes not having an interest slows one down which hastens illness. Being involved in purposeful activity, on the other hand, staves off any such decline.

5.4.4 The busy ethic: Being flat out

Many of the men interviewed mentioned that retirement was, for them, a time of much activity and busyness. This is consistent with Ekerdt’s observations that “one cannot talk to retirees for very long without hearing the rhetoric of busyness” (1986, p. 243). Ekerdt formulated the concept of the ‘busy ethic’ as a way that retirees can maintain a meaningful identity for themselves and others, in a society that values productivity and maintaining the ‘work ethic’, which is the set of cultural and personal values that conceptualise paid work as virtuous in its own right (Ekerdt, 1986).

Savinshinsky (2000) and Weiss (2005) both observed variation in how retirees presented themselves as ‘busy’. Some of the retirees, men and women, in these investigations presented themselves as being very busy and active while others did not. No such range was observed in this current study, with all the men reporting being busy and active. This is perhaps not so, surprising as the study deliberately recruited men who are actively involved in their enthusiast or hobbyist organisations. Given this deliberate selection of active retirees, the ubiquitous presentation of the ‘busy ethic’ in every interview, and the fact that this is consistent with the previously mentioned research, only a small selection of the numerous references the men interviewed made to being busy are presented below.

While all of the men provided examples of being busy and involved in certain activities a few commented more generally on the busy nature of their retirement.
Jim: It makes you wonder where you found time to go to work
‘cause there’s always something to do

Barry made it very clear his retirement is a very busy one.

Barry: I don’t recommend retirement to anyone
you’re that flat out you don’t have time to scratch [laughs]

Barry, using what I now see as his typical ironic humour, at first appears to distance himself from retirement, when in fact he is making the point that it is a very busy time for him. It was important for many of the men not just to be busy, but that they activity distance themselves from being inactive. Some men were dismayed at the very idea of inactivity:

George: I have pretty-well a bit of a workaholic ethic
I suppose
I don’t think it’s right to sit on the verandah and do nothing

Alf: sitting in front of the telly all the time
I couldn’t have done that

For Chris it is important to always have something to do. Even activities, such as reading, that might not be perceived as being busy are deliberately conceptualised as doing something.

Chris: there’s never a day
when I don’t have something to do.
Sometimes it’s reading
I quite enjoy reading.
And sometimes I will say
right tomorrow is a day to read that book
and some people might say
you’re not doing much today
you’re just reading
but to me it’s something that I wanted to do

---

16 ‘Flat out’ is Australian slang for being busy – hence “Flat out like a lizard drinking.”
but
I never have a day when I walk around the house thinking
“what am I going to do?” y’know
there’s never
in that 10 or 11 years that I’ve been retired
there’s never been a single day like that.

Chris is very clearly positioning himself in this narrative always *doing* something. He purposefully constructs reading as *doing*, this allows Chris to present his identity as a busy active person. The very thought of not *doing* anything seems repugnant to Chris, to the extent where days spent reading, which could be interpreted as days spent doing nothing, are portrayed as days when Chris has *done* something. It was very important to Chris that I know that he has never experienced a day in his retirement where he felt the need to ask ‘what am I going to do today?’

The men interviewed present themselves as busy and by doing so are distancing themselves from the negative cultural narrative of male retirement as a time of inactivity. Chris goes one step further and not only rejects inactivity, he takes an activity that he fears could be perceived as inactivity and redefines it as something active and planned. This is one of the best examples of the ‘busy ethic’ identified in the research. This section of speech seems the embodiment of Ekerdt’s definition of the ‘busy ethic’, which is that retirement is viewed as something to be “morally managed and legitimated on a day-to-day basis in part by an ethic that esteems leisure that is earnest, occupied and filled with activity” (1986, p. 239).

*Alf:* but y’know I never really greatly missed work that much,
I never got the opportunity to sit down and think
‘Oh what am I going to do today?’

All these men are resisting “the spectre of uselessness” (Sennett, 2006, p. 86) and the perception of retirement as a time of “enforced idleness” (Zinn, 2002, p. 22) through these narratives of being busy, active, productive. 

Even in the first couple of years after Jim left work, when he was looking for other employment, he made the point of letting me that know that he was productively engaged, in his own words he was
Jim: Busy doing things with the kids and that
an’ y’know sort of kept busy.
It wasn’t flat out sort of business but y’know
just plodding along and
y’know did things

This particular narrative brings together aspects of generative and the ‘busy ethic’. By “doing things with the kids” Jim is able to present himself as someone who is both busy and involved in generative behaviour with his children.

While the retired men often reported being busy in ways consistent with the “busy ethic” (Ekerdt, 1986), this is not to suggest that the men are being duplicitous in ‘presenting’ a busy ‘face’ to the world, while not being active. The majority of the men are busy people with many commitments, as was evident to me in the difficulty in arranging times to interview them, my field notes record difficulties in meeting with some of the men, it was common for us to have a wait a matter of weeks, in one case a couple of months, to find a mutually convenient time. The ‘busy ethic’ requires that retirees not only be busy but be seen to be busy. The amount of times references to busyness occurred in the interviews shows that there is a perceived need by the men interviewed to constantly present themselves as being busy and active. Corresponding to these presentations of themselves as busy are narratives of themselves as resisting the sexist, ageist stereotypes of male retirement as a time of decline and inactivity. This resistance is explored in more detail in Chapter Six, Section 6.3.

While most of the men distanced themselves from negative examples of male retirement, there were some who gave examples of men they knew who had or are having a good retirement. The clearest example of this was Bill, who explicitly aligned himself with his father. This has been discussed in some detail Chapter Four, Section 4.3.4, as the following extracts from Transcripts 4.3 and 4.4 show:

Bill: ...like my dad
he retired early
so he could go and play bowls
he finished with work ...
so he retired
and he played bowls
and all the rest of it
and he’s 93
still going like a train ...
I look at my dad
who’s still alive
he’s 93
he was a very a good bowler
very good bowls umpire
and the likes of that
I’ve gone down the same road
I think because it’s the norm and that
in the family
and so he won’t suffer from old timers’ disease

Bill is presenting his father’s experience as a counter-narrative to the dominant cultural narratives of male retirement as a time of decline. It is clear here that Bill is not only aligning himself and his retirement with his father’s experience, as discussed in Chapter Four, but he is also aligning himself with the values and attitudes of the ‘busy ethic’ and claiming busyness and activities as a way to a fulfilling retirement.

5.4.5 Summary

It is clear that the men in this study derive much positive meaning and sense of identity from their family, friends and involvement in their enthusiasms and other activities. It is concerning, however, that this group of relatively privileged white, middle-class, reasonably affluent men all frame their experience of retirement around pervasive negative cultural attitudes of retirement, despite this not being their own experience. It seems that these negative cultural stories are so ubiquitous that retirees, even active retirees, expect retirement to be a time of idleness and decline, as such they constantly refer to these beliefs as the cultural touchstone by which to describe their own retirement.

The negative cultural stories of male retirement and the absence of positive ones is a way of perpetuating certain cultural values around productivity and busyness. These negative cultural stories are so prevalent that even the active, healthy, and happily retired men in this study have to constantly distance themselves from them. This, in effect, demeans retirement and retirees, as it creates the expectation in others that retired men are idle, underfoot, and unwell. Presenting a ‘face’ to the world of happy, positive, involved male retirement is an act of resistance to such notions about what it means to be retired. In the absence of culturally
recognised positive stories around male retirement these negative stories are the only narrative scaffolding available to build culturally shared understandings of male retirement on. The rejection, distancing, and resistance to these narratives are also, I suspect attempts to discursively prevent the incorporation of these ageist ideas into one’s identity as a retired man.

5.5 Special Places

The importance of special places emerging as a theme was surprising to me. I was expecting themes that would be directly related to work, retirement, ageing, and enthusiasms to emerge. The importance to the men of the places where these things happened was unexpected and something my original review of the literature had not prepared me for. Bill’s discussions about his mentor’s house, in Chapter Four, Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, and the various sheds he built for his radio were the most developed discussions about the importance of certain places, amongst all the men interviewed. For many of the men it was clear that they had invested some special meaning in the premises where their organisation meets. For these men there was a certain affection for the clubhouse, museum, or shed were the group met, it had become a special ‘place’, where affection for the other members, camaraderie, and feelings that the place was worth preserving, combined to imbue this location with special meaning. Jim’s generative discussion that the museum would be a place that people will visit in “years to come”, reveals not only his generative feelings towards the next generation, as discussed in Section 5.1, it also shows his affection for the museum itself. I interviewed Chris at the club house of his model plane flying club. At the conclusion of our interview Chris took me outside to show me the flight circle, the smooth grassed area where enthusiasts fly the planes. In the centre of the circle is small concrete marker which commemorates one of the hobby’s pioneers, a man Chris greatly admires. Chapter Six, Section 6.1.1 includes a discussion of Chris’s affinity for the hobby and its history, in regard to the formation of an enthusiast sub-identity.

Of course this research only asked the men about their involvement with places where they carry out activities around their enthusiasms. It would be inaccurate to suggest that they have imbued special meaning only to locations with these connections. That the men have such places is clearly demonstrated in the following narrative from Bill. Bill also spoke of special places unrelated to his ham radio hobby, especially a sandstone rock in the bush near his house, where he likes to “sit and survey the view of the mountains and contemplate”. Bill has told his wife that should he
Bill: ... fall off the twig
don’t worry I’ve had a good life
give me the big barbeque [cremation]
and come down here
and throw me ashes over here down to the flannel flowers
but don’t do it when there’s a westerly wind blowing
because you’ll get me back

The laconic, ironic, humour belies a deep affection for this place, a place of natural beauty which is unconnected in any direct way with his enthusiasms or hobbies.

5.5.1 Hobbyist stores

Hobbyist stores, like magazines and the internet, contribute much to the discourse of each enthusiast subculture. Fuller found tension between modified car enthusiasts and entrepreneurs who sought to profit from the enthusiasm (2007). No such tension was observed with the men, partly because all of the hobbies and enthusiasms represented by the men interviewed, with the exception of train and antique machine restoration, require enthusiasts to regularly purchase equipment or machinery. The more technical hobbies in particular, such as ham radio and model planes, are dependent on such stores. Ham radio, in particular, grew as a result of specialised marketing by electronic manufactures and stores, with the aim of spreading the hobby and producing active consumers of their products (Haring, 2007). A review of the magazines and websites of fixed line model planes (Kidd, 2005a, 2005b) suggest that this is the case for this enthusiasm as well. These hobbies, in effect, grew out of industry marketing, rather than an enterprise growing out of an existing enthusiasm, as is the case with modified cars. The importance of these stores can be seen in Bill’s narrative of finding the “National Radio” store, which for him was symbolic of having achieved a certain mastery and insider knowledge, as he could purchase army surplus radio valves there cheaper than at the local electronic store [Transcript 4.1: lines 45-45].
5.6 Created Objects: Tangible Markers of Identity

This section explores the concept that certain physical objects, related to the men’s enthusiasms, hold special meanings for the men. This theme differs from the other themes discussed in this chapter, as it did not emerge from the structural analyses of Bill and Arthur’s narratives in Chapter Four. Arthur and Bill did refer to objects related to their enthusiasms, such as the particular machines that Arthur restored and the radios Bill had built. While some of these objects, no doubt, hold special meaning for Arthur and Bill this was not something explicitly mentioned in their interviews. However interviews with other men, in particular the woodturners who produce wooden artefacts, showed that certain objects hold special meaning, in much the same way that certain places do.

Many of the interviews took place in the men’s homes. All of the woodturners had examples of their work, such as turned wooden bowls and other objects, on display or in use throughout their house. Some of these pieces have strong meanings associated with them, both for the men themselves and their partners. Some of the pieces are displayed because of their ornamental appeal but many also have specific meanings attached to them by them, often as a tangible reminder of achieving certain competencies.

Barry was the only woodturner who I did not interview in his home. When I asked him if he recalled the first piece he made, this was his response:

\[\text{Barry:} \quad \text{The first real bowl that I made is still sitting on a cupboard at home}\]
\[\text{And no one will get it off my wife}\]

There are three obvious things here that Barry wanted me to know, that he still has the first “real bowl” he made, that it is on display his home, and that it is valued by his wife. This particular bowl then has a certain symbolic significance to Barry. So, just as a specific ‘location’ can be “imbued with meaning” and can become a special ‘place’ for someone (Vanclay, 2008, p. 3), so too an specific object, in this case the first bowl he made, can be become especially significant and imbued with its own meanings.

As mentioned above, Barry chose not to be interviewed at home and instead chose to come to my office at the university for his interview. Barry brought a photo album with him to the interview, which contained photos of some of the pieces he had made, together with images of activities organised by his woodturning club. Barry used these photos to show me specific pieces he had made, lathes and other machines he had adapted to particular purposes, and
various activities of the woodturning club. He was the only man who brought photographs to the interview. When I asked him why he brought the album he replied:

**Barry:** [I was] just skiting

**Anthony:** You were skiting!

**Barry:** Skiting! That’s right.

**Anthony:** Yeah?

**Barry:** Well we’d talked on the phone about the sort of things I was doing

**Anthony:** Yeah

**Barry:** and I thought well what better way of showing [what I’m doing] than in the photos I can’t bring the stuff in physically but I could bring photos

Barry had good reason to ‘skite’ (Australian slang for boasting) as the objects he had made and photographed were impressive. However there was more than mere boastfulness in bringing me these photos: we had spoken about his woodwork and involvement in the club during the pre-interview phone call as part of the recruitment process; see Chapter Three, Section 3.16. The photographs of his work then become not just “skiting” but a way to bring his woodturning to me, to aid my understanding. They became, as Barry intended, ways to illustrate his narratives and increase my understanding of his technical proficiency and his work with the various woodworking groups he is part of.

The narratives in this section have all been, so far, about the objects that the men made. Typically, men made a reference to a particular object, either by pointing it out in the room or, as in Barry’s example of his first “real bowl”, making reference to it in its absence. Jack however used one of the wooden bowls he made to create a different kind of narrative meaning. Jack was explaining to me how he had mastered a certain difficult woodturning technique and used one of the wooden bowls on display in his living room to demonstrate the point to me:
By giving me the bowl at this point in the narrative the bowl shifted from becoming a visual aid to literally becoming part of the narrative of the bowl’s creation. My seeing and touching the bowl allowed Jack to convey to me another level of understanding about the bowl and how he made it. The feel of its shape and the texture of the grain of the wood allowed me to understand the process of its creation at another non-verbal level, in a way that just hearing the story of the bowl’s creation could not. In phenomenological terms, the sight and touch of the bowl are visual and tactile phenomena, which in addition to the verbal narrative phenomena, added to my understanding of the bowl and the meanings that I can construct around this artefact. The addition of non-verbal sensory phenomena changes the relationship of the bowl to me, up until this point I had thought of this particular bowl in more abstract terms but the physical act of touching the bowl and feeling the wood turned the abstract bowl into ‘this’ bowl. This simple example illustrates some of the limits of both verbal communications and the phenomenological hermeneutics underpinning this research, as both rely on language as the means of creating understanding.

It is an unfortunate limitation of this research that the bringing of material objects and other non-verbal sensory phenomena into the narrative realm was not able to be investigated further. Auditory recordings and written field notes are not completely sufficient means of data collection to investigate this interplay of spoken narrative, object, non-verbal phenomena and meaning. The philosophical and methodological implications of this are, perhaps, something worthy of further investigation at a later date.

5.7 Discussion on Thematic Analysis of Narratives

The men interviewed discursively embed themselves within rich narratives. These narratives not only reveal the men’s experiences of being-in-the-world, they also give an insight into their relationships and interconnection with people, places, and objects. The meanings that the older men give these relationships are also, in part, understood through wider cultural narratives and expectations around gender, age, and retirement. There are special people, places and objects in their worlds which give their experiences special positive meanings, in particular families but also their fellow enthusiasts. The men can perform different aspects of their identities with different groups, from husband, to father, grandfather, and enthusiast. Special places and objects, apart from having positive meanings in themselves, often act to
link different aspects of their lives and identities, such as the well-crafted wooden objects that decorate the woodworkers’ homes which brings together aspects of their enthusiasm and familial identities. The men construct narratives which showed the positive sense of meaning which these particular relationships with people, places, and objects give them, yet not all the meanings within the narratives are positive ones.

The cultural narratives of male retirement, which the men referred to again and again in their narratives, invariably conveyed negative conceptions of retirement. These cultural narratives frame retirement as a time of idleness and decline as well as positioning retired men as being ‘underfoot’, in the way, and useless. These stories are so pervasive that even this group of relatively privileged white middle-class men, with all their material, intellectual, and linguistics resources, have to constantly position themselves against these negative stereotypes. Culturally recognised and shared stories are part of the narrative scaffolding we use to construct narratives and build shared understanding between story teller and listener. In the absence of culturally recognised positive narratives of male retirement the only narrative scaffolding available to the men is the negative stories of male retirement. As their lives and experiences are in opposition to the meanings of these negative cultural stories, shared meaning between story teller and listener is created through the men’s opposition and resistance to these cultural narratives. By opposing and resisting these cultural narratives retired men are able to also create and maintain a positive retirement identity as active and agentic.

The importance of generativity was also seen throughout all of the men’s narratives. Generativity towards not only younger people, which is perhaps an extension of Kotre’s parental generativity (1984) manifests as general concern for the next generation as a whole, not just one’s own children. Kotre’s typology of generativity again proved useful for interpreting the men’s interactions with family members, even if the original conceptualisation of biological and parental generativity is perhaps too limited to fully explain the generative interactions between the men and their family members.

Chapter Six explicitly looks at the formation of a positive male retirement identity. The dialogic/performance analyses of the men’s narratives and the context which produced the narratives are continued. There is a bringing together of aspects of the structural and thematic analyses of Chapters Four and Five to explicitly explore aspects of the men’s identities in retirement. This includes maintaining an identity as an enthusiast, being able to re-create aspects of one’s working identity, and the creation of meaningful, coherent narratives around leaving work.
6 Making and Maintaining Identity in Retirement

It was a funny sort of period really
In one respect
That um y’knew you wasn’t working
But then y’knew you wasn’t on holidays

Jim – study participant

I don’t recommend retirement
You don’t have enough time to do everything you want

Barry – study participant

[flying model planes has] been one of the passions of my life

Chris – study participant

This chapter examines how men make sense of the experience of leaving work and some of the processes that create and maintain positive identities in retirement. Examination of the social, relational, and cultural contexts that produced these narratives gives insight into how these men create and maintain a positive sense of self in retirement. This is achieved, in part, by maintaining an identity as an enthusiast, by re-creating aspects of one’s working identity, and through the creation of a positive sub-identity as a retiree. This chapter also examines the unexpected finding of the similarity of the structure all of the men’s narratives around leaving work. The structure is presented, in Section 6.3.4, as a potentially new cultural narrative around leaving work that is developing, or has developed, amongst retirees.
6.1 Life-long Identity as an Enthusiast

Alf: ... but no I’ve been a train enthusiast
or whatever you’d like to call it
um well since I was knee high to a grasshopper.

Barry: I got real job satisfaction out of doing stuff in the garage at home!
Going to work just paid the bills

Most of the men interviewed reported a lifelong involvement with their enthusiasm. The majority of the men took up their hobby or enthusiasm during their childhood or adolescence. They remained involved and passionate about this enthusiasm throughout their working life and many joined the various enthusiast clubs and organisations they belong to while they were working. Changing circumstances at different stages of life meant they could not always be as involved with their enthusiasm or as active in their enthusiast groups as they wanted to be. Despite their involvement waxing and waning, involvement with their enthusiasm provided a positive and comforting identity continuation and positive experiences during difficult times. Retirement has been an opportunity for many to devote more time to their beloved enthusiasm.

6.1.1 Becoming an enthusiast

The majority of the men reported being interested in their hobby or enthusiasm since childhood. Arthur and Bill, for example, both developed an interest in electronics as teenagers, which lead Arthur to work in computers and develop an interest in technology and Bill to an interest in ham radios. Most of the men reported experiences similar to Arthur and Bill in that they had developed their interest in childhood or adolescence. Barry, for example, recalled that he had been “playing with wood ever since I was a kid”, while Alf could not recall a time when his interest began, he had just “always liked trains”.

George was the only man who reported that his enthusiasm was something he shared with his father. George’s father also “dabbled” in woodwork and George recalls that it was his father’s involvement in woodwork that sparked George’s own interest in the hobby. George still has a wooden toy that his father made him:
George: I’ve got a boat he made me
when I was a toddler
and ah it’s a particularly nice thing

Anthony: Okay.

[George then left the room and came back with the boat]

George: So that’s handmade,
he just done this with a hand saw
a drill and whatever
not much else I would think
he didn’t have too much else
and he made me that probably in the forties
when I was three or 4
something like that

This toy boat has become imbued by George with special meaning; it is a link to George’s father and a reminder of their shared interest. George’s discussion about how his father made the boat, with the relatively simple tools at his disposal is both praise for his father’s skill, as well as contrasting George’s own workshop, which is considerably better equipped than his father’s “handsaw and drill”. This was the only special object discussed with me that had a connection to the men’s enthusiasm which had not been made by the man concerned. George’s son and son-in-law are also interested in woodwork and building and this intergenerational connection, was a minor theme throughout his interviews.

Stories of becoming involved with a hobby or enthusiasm are more than narratives of enjoyable events from childhood. These narratives form part of the men’s life stories, their overarching narrative understanding of their life experiences through which people make sense and meaning of their life (Linde, 1993; McAdams, 2006a). They are the founding stories of their interest in their enthusiasm and allow the men to construct an enthusiast sub-identity. Such an enthusiast sub-identity is one of the many ‘multiple selves’ or sub-identities that relate to people’s various roles and circumstances throughout life (Josselson, 1996).

Aspects of this enthusiast sub-identity are set out below for three of the men interviewed, Chris, Alf, and Barry. These interlinked narratives have been selected from different parts of
their interviews to show this aspect of their life stories. I acknowledge that the selecting and arranging of these narratives is constructed by me as part of my interpretations of the men’s narratives. Hermeneutic phenomenology shows that these constructions and interpretations are based on my own current experience and understandings. Other people, with their own experiences and understandings, could therefore develop other legitimate interpretations of these narratives, just as in time my own changing experiences and understandings may lead me other interpretations. Hermeneutic interpretation is not about ‘discovering’ patterns of human behaviour but about the hermeneutist constructing patterns which make sense of such behaviour (Meichenbaum, 1988).

### 6.1.2 Life-long enthusiast sub-identity

The men’s enthusiast sub-identities express themselves in many ways throughout their lives. Different aspects of this enthusiast sub-identity impacts on and interacts with many aspects of the men’s lives and is key to much of the meaning making that occurs around their important relationships with others. Aspects of this meaning making around enthusiasms has been discussed above in Chapters Four and Five, as has the importance of special places and objects. For many men these interactions with people, places and objects could be seen through piecing together aspects of their life stories.

Chris began the interview with the story of him as a boy flying model planes with friends. This narrative is reproduced below and introduces a series of inter-connected narratives about his hobby, which together make up part of that aspect of his life story to do with his enthusiasm. This particular narrative introduces and summarises his involvement in model planes, starting with flying planes with friends as a boy, changing involvement due to life circumstances, and coming back to the hobby in retirement.

*Anthony:* What got you involved in [model] planes in the first place?

*Chris:* When I was about 12
I guess
so many boys were flying model aeroplanes then
that it was a
y’know
a peer thing to do
and
I was just interested in planes and model planes and
been in and out of it all my life
out of it for periods
for family and study and so on
but always knew I would get back into it

This narrative is more than a story of Chris’s entry into the world of control line model planes, it also a summary of his lifelong involvement with model planes. Throughout the interview Chris referred to times when he was too busy to give as much attention to his hobby as he would have liked, however he always planned to return to it. This suggests that Chris maintained an identity as a fixed line model plane enthusiast even during the times in his life when circumstances meant he was unable to participate in the hobby. This pattern of engagement with their enthusiasm was common; many men become involved in childhood and had to dip ‘in and out’ of it due to competing interests of work, study, or family at different times of life, and return to it with renewed interest in their retirement.

This piece of narrative also shows the social aspects of this enthusiasm for Chris. It was the involvement of his friends in the hobby that first got him interested as “a peer thing”. Chris often positions himself with other enthusiasts in his stories of flying, suggesting that the communal aspect of flying and being part of a club are important and are part of the meaning Chris constructs around his involvement with the hobby. The importance of fellow enthusiasts to the men interviewed is discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.3. I encouraged Chris to continue his narratives about starting out in his enthusiasm by asking about his first plane, which resulted in the following narrative.

*Anthony:* Do you remember your first plane?

*Chris:* Oh yeah
I’m gonna build a replica [of it] later this year

*Anthony:* And when did you get your first plane?

*Chris:* Um probably about my first year of high school
so I was about 12
13
[I] worked about two weeks before Christmas
to buy an engine
and bought the plane and built it
but I can’t remember flying it very well
[I] remember flying it a little bit
but we were just teaching ourselves and things tended to crash
[both laugh]

These two related narratives are more than just a story about Chris’s first plane. They record his early experiences of the hobby with other enthusiasts. They use this plane as way to demonstrate Chris’s lifelong interest in flying by linking the past, present, and future. Narratives create a “narrative temporality” in which the teller and listener share multiple simultaneous experiences of time (Matz, 2011, p. 275), as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.4.1. In most cases this is usually limited to the now, the time in which the narrative is created, and the past, the time when the narrative is set. The plan to build a replica of his first plane creates a narrative temporality where past, present, and future come together and where both the original plane and future replica are symbols of Chris’s initial flying experiences and his continuing lifelong interest in the hobby. Chris again makes it clear that flying was not purely a solo activity for him, as is evident in the last line of the above transcript when Chris uses the word “we” to make it clear that he is flying and learning with other boys.

Throughout this thesis links have been drawn between wider cultural narratives and individual meaning making. These links may seem arcane but it is clear that people have their own lay understandings of such processes, as can be seen in the following reflection from Chris on the impact of post-war stories of flying aces and aviation and boys’ interest in model planes.

Chris: I think why so many boys got interested in it then it was not too long after the second world war and there were all those wonderful stories of the heroes of the air force Douglas Bader and the Dam Busters and a heap of others that I can’t remember but in those days aeroplanes were mechanical things flown by real people and so you could identify with them and when you flew your mechanical model ... it wasn’t a very big step to imagine that this was like the Dam Busters and so on
These excerpts come from a section of the interview that contained several related narratives about his early days flying model planes with his friends, the section concluded with the following evaluative lines revealing the meaning he places on this time and flying in general

Chris:

We used to fly yeah
No it was a passion
it’s been one of the passions of my life

This last line again shows the lifelong nature of his enthusiasm. These related narratives around Chris’s enthusiast sub-identity form part of his life story. Alf, likewise, told a series of interrelated narratives that acted as a summary of his life-experiences as a train enthusiast, which start with his experiences as a young boy and finish, neatly, with his current membership of the railway museum. Alf could not recall when his interest in trains began; it had just always been there.

Alf:

I always liked trains
you-know I can remember when I was a kid
a mate of mine
and we’d have a little toy train set
and we’d set it up
one of these ones you could pull to pieces
and you’d set it up and run it in through the house
we were living in [suburb]
and he’d come over and we’d run the train round in through the bedroom
under dad’s bed
and then dad’d go to have a sleep [on] Sunday afternoon
and they’d be bloody trains going round underneath him [both laugh]
we weren’t popular
but no I’ve been a train enthusiast
or whatever you’d like to call it
um well since I was knee high to a grasshopper
Interestingly, Alf was the only man who used the word ‘enthusiast’ to describe himself. The word is used throughout this thesis to describe the men, even though it is does not seem to have common parlance in the groups and hobbyist subcultures the men belong to. The term is used by Bishop and Hoggett who define an enthusiasm as any activity in which people freely partake and which “typically assumes the form of highly skilled and imaginative work, whilst remaining leisure and not employment” (1986, p. 1).

Alf wanted to work for the railways but was unsuccessful. The job he eventually got he saw as:

\[\text{Alf:}\]

... a secondary thing for me
‘cause I was set on
always set on going into the railways
but I never made it

Alf worked for that company for 43 years before being offered and taking a redundancy package. Alf was one of the founding members of the railway museum, which is housed in a former railway depot

\[\text{Alf:}\]

I was real happy when the museum came up
because I’d always would have liked to work here
[when it was a functioning railway depot]
because my mate
one of my mates
has got a job here
he worked here for years
he ended up a driver
but I never got the opportunity [to work here]
so now I do
I don’t get paid
but still it’s good to see its still here and still functioning

By establishing the location of the museum as “somewhere I’d always would have liked to work”, Alf creates a sense of inevitability around his involvement in the museum. His disappointment at not getting a railway job seems to be resolved through his current involvement with the museum. Creating such a narrative resolution adds to the sense of place
Alf has built up around the museum for both its current and former function. It also gives a sense of completion to this aspect of his life story.

Barry had been “playing with wood ever since I was a kid”. As a child he recalls making wooden cars and trucks to play with and then in his teens making slides for him and his friends to race down hills in winter. He enjoyed woodwork so much he wanted to be a cabinet maker and planned to start an apprenticeship on leaving school. Barry did not finish high school and so did not start his apprenticeship and even though he was “put out” at the time he still “messed with wood”. While he was working Barry bought pieces of furniture home to restore and polish, which gave him a lot of pride.

*Barry:* I’d bring old bedroom suites into the garage at home
strip ‘em down...
and I’d repolish ‘em all
put all the doors back on the hardware back on.
And it’d stand there
sit there looking at it
I’d look at it
I’d adjust the light on me
not on the door
I could comb me hair in it
boy did I get some satisfaction out of that!
I got real job satisfaction out of doing stuff in the garage at home!
Going to work just paid the bills

Once his own “kids started growing up” Barry acquired “a few tools” to the point where he now has “nearly enough to start a shop”. Barry spoke about the importance of woodturning in his life and for his own health. Barry’s perception of woodworking as something that benefits his wellbeing is discussed in more details in Section 6.1.3.

Jim was the only man interviewed who became involved with his enthusiast group after retirement, which is the same railway museum as Alf. It is not surprising, therefore, that the enthusiast aspect to his identity and life story differs from the other men interviewed. Jim was also the only man who reported that he joined the group not because of an inherent interest in trains but as a way to use his skills and knowledge from his former working life:
Jim:  
Well  
I was at a model train exhibition one day  
and heard some people talking about a boiler they had  
which had some cracks and that in it  
me being a boilermaker  
welder by trade  
I thought “hello”  
so I asked the people about it  
and went to down to [suburb] and joined the group

Jim then helped repair the boiler of the train that was being restored and this brought him into the world of train enthusiasts. Jim remains at the museum more for camaraderie and friendship of the other members and the activity it offers, than for an interest in trains per se. This made Jim unique amongst the men interviewed, as the enthusiasm itself does not appear to be his prime motivation for joining or staying with the group. Before joining the group Jim reported only a general interest in trains and he distances himself from some enthusiasts and members of the museum who he sees as extreme:

Jim:  
[my] interest was sort of there  
I wasn’t like some people  
they chase trains

Jim’s vague reference to his interest in trains being “sort of there” is the only discussion he offered about trains before his retirement. This suggests that Jim’s enthusiast sub-identity is perhaps much less developed and less important to him than is the case for the other men in the study. His connection to the group is through the social interactions and friendships formed, as well as being able to use his skills as a boilermaker. Jim is an anomaly in this study, an anomaly that reveals something of the rich range of experiences and identities of the men and their involvement with enthusiast groups. I suspect that the methods of recruiting participants, as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.16, biased this self-selected sample of men towards those who are most interested in their enthusiasm. Jim possibly represents another group of men who have not been enthusiasts in their working lives but make meaning of such involvement in retirement through feeling a stronger connection to fellow enthusiasts and the clubs and groups, than with the enthusiasms per se.
6.1.3 Stability during disruptions in one's life and life story

Being an enthusiast and maintaining an involvement with an enthusiast group gave the men a sense of continuity and stability during difficult times in their working or personal lives. For most of the men involvement with their enthusiasm began in childhood or adolescence, as discussed in Section 6.1.1. Forming an enthusiast sub-identify early in life allows it to continue to develop throughout the life course. This contrasts to other roles and identities that start, change, and end dramatically at various life stage, such as moving from student to worker to retired person; and likewise from son, to husband, to father, to grandfather, and even great-grandfather. (Josselson, 1996) maintains that personal identity consisting of multiple interrelating ‘selves’ who develop in response to the different experiences and contexts of our lives.

Involvement with an enthusiasm and being able to connect with their enthusiast-selves, was viewed by many of the men as something that helped them through difficult times in their lives. Bill’s interest in electronics as an adolescent lead to a lifelong enthusiasm for ham radio, as discussed in Chapter Four. Throughout the difficulties Bill experienced when leaving work, as outlined in Section 6.1, he remained involved in his ham radio groups. For Bill this involvement allowed him to maintain a sense of ‘normality’ in his life. For Bill such involvement in his enthusiasm and club was a way to get “back to [a] normal sort of thing for me”. In retirement Chris knew that he would be able get more involved in the activities he enjoyed,

Chris: For me all my activities were there waiting to be expanded

This theme of other commitments, especially work and young children, taking men away from their enthusiasm, only to return later was common. Barry was not able to spend as much time as he would have preferred working with wood when his children were young, however once his “kids started growing up” Barry acquired “a few tools” to the point where he now has “nearly enough to start a shop”. Barry, who as a worker in the emergency services in western Sydney, encountered some very traumatic incidences during his working life. He experienced a “breakdown” that he attributes to work related stress, which required counselling and medical intervention. Barry sees woodwork as having got him through that time, it was

Barry: an escape from everything that was there [at work] get up to me shed
bury myself in [wood] shavings
so it was great

He related the following story about a particularly stressful night at work:

*Barry:* I remember vividly one night
working at [suburb in western Sydney]
we had an absolute pig of a night
nothing but drunks and junkies
they all wanted to fight with me
I was going through a bad time as it was
and at breakfast I could have chewed on a table leg
I virtually growled at my wife
“I’m going down the back to spin a bit of wood!”
because it was night shift
and I had to be back [at work] again that night
I knew I should be in bed
I knew if I went to bed I’d be tossing and turning
I’d be useless the next night
[I] went down
stuck a piece of branch on [the lathe] and I woofed into it
it started to take some shape
and I ended up
with just a gentle touch
ended up with a really nice candlestick
I shut the shed
and I floated back down [to the house]
had a shower
went to bed and slept like a baby.
That’s what I mean by its stress relief.

For Barry working with wood is what got him through the stressful time around his poor health and leaving work.

While experiencing stress involved with his work and family situation, which in turn put stress on the identities assumed during this roles, Barry was able to use his woodwork as a
temporary way out. I contend that woodwork in this situation was more than just a physical outlet and a diversion from the stress of work and home; it also is a connection to a positive enthusiast sub-identity.

Barry, like many of the other men, spoke about their enthusiasm as something that had been with them all their life and how certain turning points in their lives meant a divergence away from their enthusiasm. For some this turning point was a major upheaval such as Barry being told by his father that he would not be finishing school nor starting an apprenticeship as he had hoped, as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.3. For other men the turning point itself was a more planned or anticipated part of their life course but it had the effect of leaving less time for the enthusiasm, like Arthur finding it difficult to find time to work on his restoration projects while he was working and when his kids were still at school. These turning points are similar to the “disruptions” Mishler documented in his study of craftartists, where life events made it difficult to pursue their craft yet they so strongly identified with the craft that they came to identify as craftartists and were able to return to their craft (1999, pp. 80-82). The men in this study did not, as Mishler’s participants had, return to their enthusiasm as a source of full time employment, instead many found that in retirement they had the time and resources to devote to their enthusiasm.

For both Bill and Barry involvement in their enthusiasms, ham radio and woodwork respectively, allows them some identity continuity during this hectic and stressful time of transition from work to retirement. Their enthusiasms allowed them to express and connect with their enthusiast sub-identities, identities which had formed during childhood and developed through their lives. This enthusiast sub-identity often pre-dates and remains somewhat separate from their identities and roles in their families and workplaces.

We all have multiple roles and multiple selves, or sub-identities, which relate to various circumstances and roles throughout life (Josselson, 1996). It has been speculated that women generally adjust to retirement better than men, despite women being more likely to experience poverty in retirement. One reason given for this is that the caring familiar roles, presumably the related sub-identities, that women occupy throughout life are more likely to continue into retirement (Ginn & Arber, 1996; Townsend, 1963). This would also appear to be true for men with enthusiasms, for whom these enthusiasms give them an identity beyond their work-identity, which will remain when after paid employment ceases. Maintaining a sub-identity as an enthusiast allows, therefore, for some continuity during times of change.
6.1.4 Importance of being involved before retirement

All of the men interviewed, except for Jim, had been members of their particular enthusiast group before they retired. Their ability to spend time on their enthusiasm and with the group varied across their life course yet all saw the benefit, to them, of this involvement as discussed in Section 6.1.2. Barry and Dave, both woodturners, recommend that people should get involved in a hobby or enthusiasm before they retire. For Barry there were practical reasons for this, whenever he meets someone who says they want to take up woodturning when they retire he advises them:

*Barry:* don’t wait till then
get into it now
while you’ve still got disposable income to get your machinery
and then you’ll know by the time you retire
whether you want to do it or not.

Barry has however observed many of his fellow club members started woodturning after they retired, indeed “the club’s full of them”

*Barry:* they retire and a lot of them are looking for something to do
and we invite them along
and they see what we’re doing
[they] have a bit of a go at it
and yeah they get hooked.

It is clear from Barry’s advice to men thinking about retirement that he feels it is better to be involved with woodturning before retirement. Here Barry is distancing himself from the retired men who are “looking for something to do”, in ways similar to that discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.1.3. More importantly, he is deliberately trying to draw other men into the group, as part of a generative desire to make retirement more meaningful for other men.

Chris was even more explicit about the benefits of being involved with his enthusiasms while still working. Chris had always been involved in a variety of activities and sports, including his control line flying club where I meet him. Chris views involvement in these activities pre-retirement as helpful in adjusting to retirement:
Chris: I would advocate people lead up to retirement by finding activities while they’re still working that way they can just expand into [them] when they do retire.

Chris then recounted the experiences of former work colleagues, who were made redundant at about the same time as Chris was.

Chris: And some of them I looked at them and wondered what they would do with their time they had no sports and hobbies not to the degree that I had and I said to one of my very good friends “What are you going to do?” “Oh you know probably take a few more guitar lessons” he used to strum his guitar in the church choir he’s involved in his local church and he said “oh um probably take a few guitar lessons maybe take up golf” And I felt and this is where it might sound patronising and I apologise I felt sorry for people who had to go and find some activity for me all my activities were there waiting to be expanded and I thought this was a much preferable position to be in than having to look around and find something you liked just because you now had all this time.

Chris is clearly distancing himself from his guitar playing friend, and the others who have “no sports or hobbies”. For Chris involvement with these activities, while working, is preferable not just for its own sake but as providing activities and interests in retirement.

Alf also saw that having hobbies, interests, and activities helped the transition to retirement. When asked what he thought life in retirement would be like, Alf replied that he thought his interests and activities would keep him pretty busy. Alf “wasn’t even contemplating retiring” when he was made redundant. Apart from the train museum Alf volunteers for the Rural Fire Service, is involved in a model railway society, and is an amateur photographer (of trains).
Like Chris, the end of paid employment allowed Alf more time for these hobby and voluntary activities and ensured that he was not going to be sitting in front of the telly all the time

Alf:

This small section of Alf’s narrative brings together two of the main themes of this thesis: that retired men’s active positioning of themselves against the negative stereotypes of ageing and the importance of generativity.

6.1.5 Metaphors for enthusiasm

Barry used the metaphors of addiction and infection to explain his passion for woodwork. He spoke of the joy of working on a piece of old wood, which starts off as a

Barry: ...crappy lookin’ old log that’s been laying out in the paddock
you put a chainsaw into it ...
you see the colours change [as the wood is cut and worked]
oh and you give a hoop and holler
I say “who needs heroin when you got this?” [laughs]
I get high on it!
Who needs heroin?

Barry extends this metaphor to new enthusiasts, who after trying woodturning “get hooked”, as discussed in Section 6.1.4. At another point Barry compares his enthusiasm to an infection:

Barry: woodturning is like a virus
If it gets in your blood
you can’t get rid of it

It is interesting that Barry’s metaphors of woodturning as an addiction and infection are medical ones. I suspect this stems, in part, from his previous work in the emergency services and the resulting interaction with medical services. The addiction metaphor is perhaps surprising, given the difficulties and stress Barry encountered in his working life dealing with “junkies and drunks”, as described in Section 6.1.4.
Barry was the only man interviewed who used such medical metaphors to describe his enthusiasm. Yet the metaphor of enthusiasm as infection appears to be something that is common amongst enthusiasts generally. Figure 6.1 is a copy of a sign I found on the wall of the ‘railway’ section of a second-hand bookshop in Newcastle NSW in October 2009.

![Figure 6.1. Model Railroad Disease](image)

While only one of the men, Alf, reported an interest in model railways, the sign shows that the metaphor of enthusiasm as an infectious disease has a wider usage beyond the men interviewed.

The sign is an advertisement for a hobbyist store and presents stereotypical behaviour of participating in the enthusiasm and purchasing related products as ‘symptoms’ of ‘model railroad disease’. The use of the term ‘adult male’ is an ironic reference to scientific and medical discourse, underscoring the humour of the sign, as well as signal to the gender and age expectations of who such enthusiasts are. The effect of which is to, in a humorous manner, normalise both the behaviours and purchasing. There is an aged and gendered expectation that enthusiasts are ‘adult males’ who get caught up in their enthusiasm at the expense of family interactions, as they are “sometimes deaf to kid and wife”. This view of familial disengagement is at odds with the actual experience of the men interviewed, as reported in Chapters Four and Five.
6.1.6 Summary

Most of the men constructed an enthusiast sub-identity during their boyhood or adolescence. This mostly positive and creative sense of self provides some continuity of identity during stressful and disruptive periods of the life course. Some men found involvement in their enthusiasm gave a sense of continuity and stability during stressful periods of their life, which included the transition from work to retirement. The enthusiast sub-identity provides a sense of stability during times of change yet it adapts and develops throughout the life course. Most of the men now feel a sense of proficiency and mastery in their enthusiasm that has developed over the years and is very different from their understandings of their earliest experiences with their enthusiasm.

6.2 Re-Creating Meaningful Identities in Retirement

Both Arthur and Bill demonstrated how they had re-created a work-like sub-identity in retirement. For Bill this was around being a teacher and mentor, Chapter Four, Section 4.3.5, while for Arthur this was as an expert-specialist, Chapter Four, Section 4.4.4. Other men, notably Alf and Chris had also done this with aspects of their involvement with an enthusiast group, while others had developed more tangible markers that allowed them to retain aspects of their work-identities.

Alf holds positions of responsibility within the railway museum. He organises the other volunteers and records the hours they work as part of the museum’s administrative requirements. This is a voluntary position but one that Alf understands as being akin to a manager. Alf narratively situates himself within a relational matrix that is organised around the concept of himself as a ‘good manager’ who has learned from both his former work experience and his current experiences at the museum.

\[
\text{Alf:} \quad \text{you can make or break a job by how you treat people} \\
\quad \text{if you’re a manager} \\
\quad \text{or how you respect people and things like that} \\
\quad \text{I think it goes a long way} \\
\quad \text{a lot of people seem to like to get power} \\
\quad \text{but they don’t think about how they’re affecting other people ...}
\]

Alf had a number of managerial positions throughout his working life. Through his involvement at the museum Alf has been able re-create a sub-identity for himself as a
manager, which extends and redefines the manager sub-identity formed during his working life.

Chris differed from other participants, in that continuity in retirement seemed to be around maintaining certain types of activities, rather than a certain identity. Chris reported that throughout his life he deliberately sought pursuits that have “a measure of adrenaline attached to them”. As a younger man Chris pursued activities such caving, rock-climbing, scuba diving, and canyonning for leisure and during his working life he was able to maintain these pursuits by developing and teaching training courses for sports and leisure instructors. Chris’s interest in control line flying might seem tamer than these much more physical pursuits yet within the group his speciality was speed racing. Speed racing is one of the many types of competitions within control line flying, which control line enthusiasts refer to just as ‘speed’. For these competitions control line flyers build and race specialised “model aircraft designed for absolute maximum speed” (Kidd, 2005b). When asked why he chose speed, Chris linked it back into providing him with ‘adrenaline’. In his own words it

Chris:  
... seemed like the most exciting branch of the sport  
nearly all my pursuits throughout my life  
have been things that have had a measure of adrenaline attached to them  
and it seemed to me  
that speed would be  
the most adrenaline filled branch of this sport

I originally thought that Chris was using the club to get his “adrenaline rush” and so preserve an identity as an ‘adventurer’. I maintain that this is broadly true but needs to be modified, in Chris’s case at least, in light of his reflective answer to the following question:

Anthony:  
How does being involved in the club compare with your [previous] work as a teacher or doesn’t it?

Chris:  
Very little  
2 ways at least  
and they’re very tenuous  
one because the branch of the sport that I’m in  
racing mainly
speed is a little bit exciting
and most of the work that I did was work that had an adrenaline
rush
so there’s one connection
it’s just part of the stimulation that I need
the other thing is
occasionally we’ll get a junior flyer up here
who rode his bike past
stopped and looked and said he’d like to do that

Chris then spoke of how he helps train and mentor junior flyers who join the club. Here, his experience and skills as a former teacher is being used in a similar way to Bill’s, in mentoring and training young people who join the enthusiasms.

In this reflective answer Chris makes it clear that he sees this link to his working life, teaching and maintaining a link to aspects of his former work, as real but tenuous. It would seem that the continuation of identity is perhaps for Chris secondary to the experience of having an ‘adrenaline rush’. The sub-identity of teaching is for Chris something that he actively seeks to maintain through his training of the up and coming young flyers, in a way similar to Bill’s training of the young hams.

6.2.1 Performing re-created work-like sub-identities

At the start of our interview Arthur presented me with his business card. The card has been made on a computer, no doubt by Arthur himself. It has, as would be expected, Arthur’s name and contact details, as well as the name of two of the brands of farm machinery that Arthur now specialises in restoring. In addition it also carries the logo of one of these, now defunct, brands of tractors as a red watermark. Business cards are identity markers they literally identify the person by name, as well as confirming the person’s profession. Possessing a business card at all in retirement is perhaps a way of continuing a social norm found within the paid workforce. If Arthur’s cards were created merely to serve the prosaic purpose of conveying his contact details then he would have only listed his name, phone number, and email address, the addition of the companies’ names and the logo must therefore serve another purpose. The most obvious purpose is to draw attention to the particular brands of machinery he specialises in restoring, brands which have long ceased to exist. I also believe that in addition to any practical purpose, Arthur’s business cards also function as an identity and status marker. A business card is a tangible link to the world of
employment and as such presents Arthur as a man involved in a ‘legitimate’ productive pursuit. Having a card is a continuation one of the social norms of professional people.

Only one other research participant gave me a card. Dave is a woodworker, jeweller, and leadlight maker, who sells some of his work at markets. I asked about his card when he gave it to me and he said it made his work at the markets easier and allowed people to contact him with commissions and extra work. Dave uses his card to carry on his business and so, while still an identity marker, serves a slightly different purpose from Arthur’s card.

Another participant, George, had prepared copies of his resume and his “job log” that he gave me at the start of our interview. He was the only participant who gave me a resume. George did not produce the resume especially for the interview, he had updated it when he left work when he thought there might be possibility of future work or consulting opportunities, only some of which eventuated.

George: When I went to go back to work after I’d retired and do that temporary work for [name of government department] I had to produce a resume of course so that’s a copy of it and I thought that might be useful [for the research] because it tells you what I did as a working [person]

I also suspect that George gave me the resume to demonstrate that he was and remains a professional person. A resume is after all an acceptable way for one professional to share information about oneself with other professionals, as are business cards. Having and sharing a resume also shows a professional approach to retirement and that he is treating the research interview as a professional encounter. I find George’s “job log” to be the most interesting and revealing of all the work-like documents given to me during the course of this research.

George explained his reasoning for developing such a tool:

George: I have pretty-well a bit of a workaholic ethic I suppose I don’t think it’s right to sit on the verandah and do nothing although I enjoy doing that at times
Um so when I retired I scratched out a little sort of form for myself
a line a day diary sort of thing
of what you’ve done
and I still do that

George then spent some time explaining formatting and design of the “job log”, which is omitted here. He concluded his narratives about the “job log” with some explanation and evaluation of the document:

George: ... and so I thought
that’ll keep me honest
I’ll be able to sit down and say
well you did do something [today]
or bugger it
you didn’t do anything
you gotta do better [laughs]

George, like other men in this research, uses ‘sitting on the verandah’ as a metaphor for an inactive retirement. In this instance, George use the metaphor to dialectically distance himself from uselessness, as discussed in Section 5.2.1. George explained at some length why the early “job logs” were so much more detailed than the most recent entries.

The earlier hand drawn and ruled “job logs” have more columns to record activities in than later computer created forms. George goes to some length to explain to me why this is the case:

George: I retired in December [year]
so that’s when I started
all bright eyed and bushy tailed
full of vim
gonna do it properly
but it didn’t last long!

...I still print this every month
and I just have a line a day
and I just write down if I did
what I did that is out of the ordinary
like
I want to refer to that later
or just as a record
or y’know
a woodwork job I’ve done
metalwork job
or helping me mother-in-law as we did the other day
or something like that

... that’s all I can manage to do
one line a day.

Anthony: Okay. That’s definitely impressive

George: Anyway.
I just thought that might give you a little inkling of [p]
how to get lazy
but also what one person does y’know

So ultimately for George his “job log” is understood by him as a record of him doing less and less with his time and becoming “lazy”. George’s perception of himself as “lazy” is at odds with the busy ‘face’ he presents to the world. Reading through both his “job log” and transcripts of the interview George presents as a very busy person, who is involved with an impressive number of projects and activities. In addition to his enthusiasms of woodwork, metal-work, and collecting antique tools, George is an active member of his woodturning club, he also spends time gardening and attending to household chores, as well as providing support to a number of members of his family, especially his mother-law-in and son, as mentioned in Chapter Five, Sections 5.2.1 and 5.3. George also has a small property some 200 km from his home which he maintains and where he and his family try to visit at least monthly, and he is helping his daughter and son-in-law renovate their house in another state.

Given this list, laziness does not appear to be one of George’s character flaws, yet he appears concerned about being lazy and being perceived as such. This is, of course, linked to notions of the ‘busy ethic’. Ekerdt maintained that the ‘busy ethic’ allows retirees to ‘infuse’ retirement with “aspects of work that are culturally esteemed” (1986, p. 241); George
appears to have gone beyond this by appropriating a workplace measurement of ‘busyness’ into his retirement routine. The apparent ‘objectivity’ of the “job log” allows him not to appear idle or inactive, to himself and to others, allowing George to dialectally position himself as an active busy person. This is another instance of a man continually positioning himself as being busy in retirement.

George’s paid employment was as a public servant. His last position before retirement was a Policy Officer with one of the state government bureaucracies. The “job log” is deliberately modelled on the industry practice of keeping track of work people do on different projects and activities over the course of a day. In a work setting such a tool is used to ascribe a monetary value to a unit of time, which can then be billed to a client. George is using it as a way to record and monitor his own activity and productivity. It is a tangible way of recording and evaluating what he has done and proving to himself that he retains a desirable level of activity and productivity. In retirement this shows that George remains active. As the above transcript shows George is keeping this for himself, this record will “keep me honest”, if there are not enough ‘worthwhile’ activities recorded George will know that he has “gotta do better”.

The business cards, resume and “job log” are objects the men created to help ‘perform’ certain aspects of their work-like sub-identity in retirement. They are all re-workings of tools used by professionals in the workplace. The adaption and use of these tools in retirement allow the men to re-create and perform their professional work-like sub-identities in retirement. Extending the theatrical analogy, these tools are ‘props’ that demonstrate to the men and others that they remain busy and engaged in serious work-like activities.

6.2.2 Summary

Maintaining continuity with one’s working life is not just an exercise in narrative coherence. It is also a continuation of the values and sense of identity these men derived from their work. As such, it is linked to Kaufman’s notion of the Ageless Self in that a person’s values remain consistent into later life and these values help shape identities and the meanings we give the world (Kaufman, 1986, p. 126-127). This continuation of values and re-working of previous sub-identities created around the men’s previous work. This, together with the tangible markers of professional identity, such as business cards, resumes, and “job logs” allow for the construction of a work-like sub-identity in retirement. Such a sub-identity retains the positive associations of professional identity found in the workplace, as well as reasserting, to the men themselves and to the world, that they remain busy, active, productive, and worthwhile members of society.
This work-like sub-identity also functions in retirement to maintain various skills and knowledge. Demonstrating a degree of mastery in these areas, be it as a specialist, a teacher, manager or the like, reinforces a positive sense of self. Erikson maintains that growing mastery in childhood and adolescence is linked to healthy identity development (Erikson, 2000b). Accepting Mishler’s (1992) concept of ‘identity development’ as a lifelong process (p. 36), as discussed in Chapter Three Section 3.9, it would seem that demonstrating mastery in late adulthood would also reinforce feelings of achievement and a positive sense of self.

A positive sense of self and feelings of mastery and control are also determinants of health (Macdonald, 2005; Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999; Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003). These qualities can be also be gained through organised volunteering and volunteering does confer certain health benefits (J. Wilson, 2000). It is possible that belonging to an enthusiast group confers similar benefits. The benefits of being a volunteer continue after volunteering ceases (J. Wilson & Musick, 1999) so perhaps there are health and other benefits for enthusiasts which also continue beyond one’s involvement in the enthusiasm. Further research is needed to established the health benefits or otherwise of being a member of an enthusiast club.

### 6.3 Creating Narrative Coherence around Leaving Work

People who share common goals, values, and expectations create and use wider cultural narratives as means to define and perpetuate the particular group or the subculture and its norms. The goals, values, and expectations which make up these norms make up the “coherence systems” by which the members of the group or subculture understand the subculture. Creating coherency in one’s life story requires, in part, adherence to such wider social “coherence systems” (Linde, 1993, pp. 220-222). The following sections examine the narrative mechanisms that build coherence and therefore meaning. This is done, firstly through a comparison of the narratives that Bill and Arthur tell about their leaving work, which leads into discussion about the other men’s experiences of the transition from work to retirement. Commonalities in the way the men talk about and structure their narratives of leaving work suggest that a new coherence system is perhaps being built amongst retired men as a way to create a shared positive meaning about retirement. This new coherence system takes the form of a narrative structure that can create a shared meaning about retirement while incorporating a wide range of both positive and negative experiences around leaving work.
6.3.1 Comparing Bill and Arthur's narratives of leaving work

This section examines the aspects of Bill and Arthur’s life stories which relate to leaving work, as a way to gain some insight into the meaning that each man has constructed around this time of transition. Narrative coherence is the process by which people make sense of their experiences through reference to an overarching life story, evidenced by Linde (1993) and discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.10. The narratives below have been chosen as examples of this meaning making process.

Leaving full time employment is, by its very nature, a disruption to a person’s life and life story. The transition from paid work to retirement can bring both positive and negative changes and many people report ambiguous feelings around leaving work, even when the event is planned and anticipated happily (Savishinsky, 2000; Weiss, 2005). Part of the reasons why Arthur and Bill were originally chosen as exemplars for examination, in Chapter Four, is because their narratives of leaving employment represented two extremes around achieving narrative coherence. Arthur seems to be able to construct a coherent and meaningful narrative about his leaving paid employment; while Bill appears to have difficulty creating meaningful narratives of what was for him a very stressful and demanding time.

Only two of the men interviewed, Arthur and Barry, reported leaving work at a time of their own choosing. Arthur had planned his retirement well in advance, as Transcript 4.9 in Chapter Four shows. Barry’s leaving was not the result of a redundancy or retrenchment but it was still earlier than he had originally hoped, as work-related difficulties and health concerns meant he decided to retire early. Barry’s leaving is discussed in more detail in Section 6.3.4. Arthur’s retirement was then the most planned and positively anticipated of any of the men interviewed. Arthur planned to leave work as he thought that 40 years in the job “was enough”. The following excerpts are from Transcript 4.10 above:

*Anthony:* when you did it [retired] was it your decision?

*Arthur:* I wanted to retire young enough to do some other things and not to stick it out like many colleagues to age 65 and leave this world within 12 months and also I had plenty of other things to do
Arthur was planning his retirement for years in advance and when asked by his employer during his annual performance reviews ‘where did he see himself in one, two and five years’ time?’ his answer was an emphatic “Retirement!” Arthur’s decision to retire when he did is due, in part, to his distancing himself from other colleagues who he had seen retire and “leave this world (i.e. die) within 12 months.” Like all the other men interviewed, Arthur is positioning himself against the negative cultural narratives about male retirement, this resistance to these negative expectations of male retirement is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, Section 5.4.

Arthur was unique amongst the participants interviewed in that he reported the transition from work to retirement to be “totally seamless”. As much as Arthur enjoyed and took pride in his career and the developments he witnessed, work was something he “never missed”.

Arthur:  
I drove into work every day of the week  
I never missed not driving in the following day  
I tell you [laughs]

Arthur’s narratives about leaving work do not represent a huge disruption in his life story. Arthur presents these events as something that was planned for and happened as planned and he is in control of when he leaves work. At different points in the interview Arthur mentions leaving work and there is consistency across these different tellings. The disruption in leaving work has been incorporated into a smooth, coherent narrative within his life story.

Bill, on the other hand, appears to still have difficulty in creating a coherent narrative about leaving work. This was a difficult time for Bill, with health concerns, difficulties at work, and being separated from his wife. Bill is still striving to make sense of these times and create a meaningful narrative that is coherent with his wider life story. Bill tells the tale of his leaving work on three separate occasions during the interview. There are changes and inconsistencies between each version of this story yet each telling appears to reveal different aspects of the events that led up to his leaving work.

Transcript 6.1  
Leaving Work – a thrice told tale

Sub-narrative 1

Bill: Expressed concern about “unsound” practices
101 The way they [management] wanted to run assessment
102 was educationally unsound ...
and I told them [management] so
and it got to the point where
it was like beating my head against a brick wall
and it was affecting my teaching performance...
And they asked me
“could I afford to retire?”
I said “Yes I can”,
And they said “Would you like to retire?”
[I answered] “you beaut!”
I had problems with sleep apnoea that the time,
so it all added up
to be a not very nice time of my life

Sub-narrative 2
Bill: Wasn’t happy or coping at work
I wasn’t happy at work
Because of what I thought were very poor practices
they were trying to implement
It got beyond what I could cope with,
and when they suggested that er
perhaps with problems with [my] health
I could retire,
I said “thanks very much”

Sub-narrative 3
Bill: Differences in management style
It was great to get away from work,
[my manager] was a Theory X person¹⁷
“You do what I say”

¹⁷ Theory X and Theory Y are different management styles proposed by Douglas McGregor in 1960. According to McGregor, Theory X managers assume human behaviour is reliant on external control and tend to achieve organisational goals through direct control, even manipulation, of their subordinates. Theory Y managers, on the other hand, assume that behaviour is self-directed and that organisation goals are best achieved by encouraging workers to be self-directing in their own efforts (McGregor, 1960). Theory X and Theory Y have been criticised for, amongst other things, relying on too simplistic an understanding of human behaviour (Drucker, 1994), yet they remain part of present-day management jargon and can be found in contemporary management journals and textbooks, such as Robbins (2010) and Sorensen & Minahan (2011). Indeed, the Journal of Management History published a special issue in 2011 entitled “Honoring Douglas McGregor and the human side of enterprise” (Yaeger, 2011). In the context of this research Theories X and Y can be seen as part of the cultural narratives and coherence systems of contemporary management.
I’m a Theory Y person, and of course I was a bit ratty then ...

“no I’m going on stress leave ...”

and anyhow they found a particular bit of paperwork that says I can retire ...

and I said “thank you very much”

[I] didn’t even have a cup of tea

I just left (p)

I got a sense of relief out of that

These three stories share the same evaluative assessment, that despite the circumstances, leaving work was seen as a good, even desirable, outcome. In Sub-narrative 1, when being offered the chance to retire Bill responded with the affirmative “you beaut!” [Transcript 6.1: 111]; after listening and re-listening to this section of the audio file I am certain that this is not meant ironically, Bill is expressing sincere relief at the chance to leave. This relief is expressed with more simple thanks in Sub-narratives 2 and 3, “thanks very much” [Transcript 6.1: 207] and “thank you very much” [Transcript 6.1: 312]. The evaluative clause at the end of Sub-narrative 3 sums up how Bill feels up about leaving “I got a sense of relief out of that” [Transcript 6.1: 315].

While these three narratives are similar they are enough unlike to suggest that Bill is yet to achieve narrative coherence and by implication certain meaning, whether positive or negative, around his leaving work. The three share a common theme of dissatisfaction with management. Despite the common theme this repeated and ‘rehearsed’ story has not yet crystallised in a consistent story, which tells and retells the same events within in a stable narrative structure. There is not even a consistent representation of the antagonist in this sub-narrative, in Sub-narratives 1 and 2 this dissatisfaction is with an abstract ‘management’ who are bringing in specific policies and practices Bill does not agree with, yet the conflict in Sub-narrative 3 is an actual person, Bill’s manager, who has a different management style than Bill. Likewise, there is a difference in the impact this antagonism is having on Bill. In Sub-narrative one it impacts on his “teaching performance” [Transcript 6.1: 106], his happiness and ability to cope in Sub-narrative 2 [Transcript 6.1: 200, 203], and in Sub-narrative 3 he requires “stress leaves” [Transcript 6.1: 3-7].
There are also inconsistencies around how Bill’s employers ‘suggest’ he retire. In the first tale his employers ask him if he can afford to retire, while in the second they suggest he should retire because of poor health, whereas the third narrative reveals a more bureaucratic interaction, with talk of “stress leave” and “paperwork” resulting in his being told his poor health makes him eligible for retirement. Within these narratives Bill is positioning himself against what he sees as the bad practices of ‘management’. In the first two narratives, against this abstract management, Bill resists what he sees as “unsound” practices and by doing so he reinforces an identity as a competent teacher with integrity. Such a stand takes its toll, as Bill becomes more and more unhappy. In the first two stories Bill is offered a way out by management. In these tellings Bill is placed in a passive position of responding to management’s suggestion that he leave. Interestingly this is reversed in the third narrative where Bill interacts with his manager one on one; Bill’s suggestion of “going on stress leave” is the ‘complication action’ that leads to his leaving work. This third narrative of leaving has no reference to Bill’s competency or integrity, what it does do is show, in a limited way, is Bill’s agency. He is no longer the passive character responding to events, his action of taking stress leaves initiates the events that leads to his leaving. This is, admittedly, not a particularly ‘heroic’ action to compel the story forward.

These three narratives are part of Bill’s changing and evolving life story. I speculate that his narratives about leaving work are in flux as Bill is trying to create meaning around these events which is coherent with his life story and sense of who he is. Once established it would be expected that elements of plot will become relatively stable with each retelling. Bill, like most narrators, is attempting to present himself in a social approved, positive way. Goffman contends that people dialectically present their best “face” to others, the socially approved “positive social value a person effectively claims for himself” (Goffman, 2005, p. 5). This best “face” is often one that presents the narrator as an “active, agentic person” (Burr, 1995, p. 145). I believe that three narratives recorded above are an attempt to present such a positive “face”. Bill is, however, currently presented in an ambiguous and narratively unsatisfying way. In the first two sub-narratives he is competent and shows integrity, while being somewhat passive and reactive to events. This ambiguity is not resolved in the third retelling, as here he has some, rather limited, agency. Bill seems to be having difficulty constructing both narrative coherence and “face”. I suspect Bill is attempting to construct a narrative that allows him to positioning himself in such a way that maintains his identity as competent and having integrity, while at the same time showing himself to be an active agent moving the narrative forward.
6.3.2 Culturally recognisable narrative structure and structural coherence

Another way narrators achieve coherence is through adherence to socially accepted and known narrative structures. This has been demonstrated in Chapter Four, with both Arthur and Bill using the structure of the hero’s journey to tell their stories [Transcript 4.1]. Burkert, in his study of the structure of certain classical myths, purposes a variation of the hero’s journey the ‘combat tale’. The ‘combat tale’ follows an ideal pattern in which the hero fights and eventually overcomes his antagonist (Burkert, 1979). This is not a claim that there is some universality about the ‘combat tale’ in itself. Instead it is proposed that, like the hero’s journey, the ‘combat tale’ provides a culturally recognised and accepted structure that people use to construct their own narratives and which has certain cultural shared meanings and values embedded within it.

The ‘ideal’ combat tale ends with victory for the protagonist, who is often portrayed as being the ‘weaker’ of the two adversaries, but who gains the upper hand and wins. In the lead up to the actually confrontation the two adversaries are presented as “opposites in every respect”, with the eventual victor being the most virtuous but also the smallest and apparently weakest (Burkert, 1979, p. 18). So Bill begins each of these sub-narratives in what seems to be the introduction to a ‘combat tale’, in that he first establishes his antagonist, be it the abstract ‘management’ or his manager, as his opposite. Management favours “unsound” methods, his manager is a Theory X person, while Bill is the opposite, someone with integrity interested in maintaining pedagogical standards, and a Theory Y person. By establishing these differences Bill is setting the stage for conflict, this is the same strategy and structure used in traditional ‘combat tales’. Such a beginning implies that this is a ‘combat tale’ and as such the listener now expects the narrative to follow the established structure of this genre and conclude with Bill being ‘victorious’. Bill’s leaving work is not, however, presented as a heroic ‘victory’ in the way the structure anticipates, leaving the listener’s expectations unsatisfied.

The narrative difficulty seems to arise in taking the accepted narrative structure of the ‘combat tale’ and not actually ‘winning’. These stories are, at best, about Bill walking away from a bad situation. This is a narratively unsatisfying conclusion to the ‘combat tale’ that Bill seems to be trying to construct, as at the conclusion of his stories the ‘enemy’ remains unsatisfied.

18 ‘Unsatisfying’ here refers to whether or not a narrative conforms to listeners’ expectations about how the narrative should unfold and not to more fundamental definitions of “satisfying narratives” as narratives with sufficient internal cohesion and coherence to make sense in their own right (Coggins, Friet, & Morgan, 1998).
undefeated. Perhaps it is too difficult to construct a convincing ‘combat tale’ out of this particular set of experiences. Bill’s difficulty in forming narrative coherence seems to be that the narrative structure he has chosen to hang his story on anticipates a ‘victory’ where there is none. The type of story that Bill apparently starts telling is not maintained; as events unfold the audience finds that the anticipated combat tale structure collapses. In some senses the narrative ‘fails’ at this point. The narrative itself remains coherent, with sequence and consequence, but it is not the acceptable structure needed to sustain a ‘combat tale’.

This chosen structural ‘template’, of the hero’s journey or the ‘combat tale’, are perhaps ill-suited to building these particular experiences into a coherent narrative. Bill has ‘chosen’ this narrative structure presumably as a way to convey that he remains a ‘hero’ and an agentic man; however unsuited the narrative template is to tell the story. To use Burket’s analogy, the template chosen offers a number of ‘slots’ that the components of the story can be ‘inserted’ to complete the expected structure. The narrative components of Bill’s story do not neatly fit these ‘slots’ and so the story is unable to be completed in line with the template chosen (1979). These empty ‘slots’ leave Bill, and his audience, without a recognisable satisfying story. Perhaps another narrative which showed walking away from a bad situation as ‘success’ would allow Bill to construct and maintain a narrative of leaving work that allows him to be agentic and maintain his integrity, while also creating narrative coherence within his overall life story.

6.3.3 Circumstances of leaving paid work

Only two men, Arthur and Barry, reported leaving work at the time of their own choosing. The rest of the men left work either because they were offered a voluntary redundancy package, with included favourable financial benefits, or they left because of factors outside of their control, such as being made redundant or due to poor health. Table 6.1 below lists all of the research participants and gives some indication of the similarities and differences in their circumstances of leaving paid employment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Former Career</th>
<th>Age Retired</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Planned or Unplanned</th>
<th>Circumstances for leaving paid work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>Computer engineer</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>Chose the day of his retirement and worked towards it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Not planned</td>
<td>Management ‘suggested’ retirement. At the time Bill was unhappy at work and in poor health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Boilermaker</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Voluntary redundancy</td>
<td>Not planned</td>
<td>Workplace offered him a position in an unsuitable rural location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alf</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Voluntary redundancy</td>
<td>Not planned</td>
<td>Financial benefits of redundancy offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Teacher Lecturer</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Retrenched</td>
<td>Not planned</td>
<td>Workplace restructure, low staff moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Front line emergency services</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Planned</td>
<td>“Time was right” and health concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Retrenched and returned as a short-term contractor</td>
<td>Part planned</td>
<td>Was financial secure and could retire, was not ready to leave until a workplace restructure “sort of phased my job out”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Technician Opal Cutter</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Voluntary redundancy</td>
<td>Not planned</td>
<td>Workplace offered him new position in another city. Although technically a voluntary redundancy Dave feels that he had no choice but to leave when he did, he sees this as a “forced redundancy”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Policy Officer</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Voluntary redundancy</td>
<td>Part planned</td>
<td>Negative changes in the workplace and financial benefits of redundancy offer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was great diversity in the amount of retirement planning reported. Arthur was the man who had done the most planning towards his retirement. His preparation included financial planning as well as five years’ worth of planning and discussions with his employer. At the other extreme was Jim who reported that while he was working he had only vague plans of retirement. Jim, like Arthur, thought that he would retire after 40 years’ service; this however seemed to be the extent of Jim’s planning.

_Anthony:_ And when you were working did you ever think about retirement?

Think what it might be like?

_Jim:_ no, no, not really,

nah ‘cause it didn’t actually enter me mind about retiring y’know ...

no I can’t remember even just thinking about it.

There was, in summary, some variation in the ways the men left work, in the amount of retirement planning amongst the men, and their experience of leaving work. Despite these differences experiences all the men seemed to construct very similar stories about leaving work, commonalities which are examined in the following section.

6.3.4 “I left at the right time”: Commonalities in narratives of leaving work

Creating coherency in one’s life story requires, in part, adherence to wider social “coherence systems” (Linde, 1993, pp. 220-222). Groups of people who share common goals, values, and expectations create and use these wider cultural narratives as means to define and perpetuate such “coherence systems”. These coherence systems provide members of the culture or subculture with the means to build personal meaning onto the narrative ‘scaffolding’ provided by the wider coherence systems and cultural narratives. Arthur can be seen to be doing this in Chapter Four, Section 4.4.2, where he constructs his personal meaning around his own working life using the ‘scaffolding’ of the parallel history of computer manufacturing in Australia.

The men interviewed represent a number of intersecting subcultures, which each have their own cultural narratives and coherence systems. These cultural narratives and coherence systems generate and maintain a system of shared values and meanings within each enthusiast community. Shared values and meanings are one way that subcultures act to provide their members with a sense of “security and identity” (Leuner, 1999, p. 837), as
discussed in Chapter Two Section 2.11.2. The influences of cultural narratives on the men’s identities have been examined throughout this thesis, including impact of both the structure and content of cultural narratives on personal meaning making and identity.

It is possible that a new cultural narrative has emerged or is emerging amongst retired men about leaving work. The majority of the men, seven of nine, left work due to retrenchment or redundancy. Of the two who left of their own volition only one, Arthur, did so at the time and in the manner he originally planned. A pattern emerges out of the different men’s stories of leaving work, a pattern that structures their narratives in such a way that allows a coherent life story. While the process of narrative coherence was expected the consistency of the overall structure across all the men’s stories of leaving work is surprising. The men have developed, what I call, the ‘left at the right time’ narrative about their leaving work. All the men interviewed told variations of the story that seem to fit this template. I suspect that the degree that this new narrative is integrated into their overall life stories indicates the extent to which narrative coherence, and thus internal meaning making about leaving work, has been achieved.

The story starts with the men describing a workplace they enjoyed working in, one which they had been part of for years or even decades. The workplace begins changing for the worse in the months or years before leaving, this change could be that work has become more managerial, bureaucratic, or politically correct, or a combination of these. The men make it clear they oppose or resent these changes and align themselves in their narratives against workplaces and managers that they see as no longer caring for them and their co-workers. At this point the men leave employment, either by their own choice or through redundancies or retrenchments. The narratives conclude with the reflection that, in retrospect, their leaving work was ultimately a good thing and that they left ‘at the right time’.
These elements of the ‘left at the right time’ narrative can be summarised as follows:

1. **Satisfaction**
   The man has been working very happily and productively in his job, for years if not decades.

2. **General Dissatisfaction**
   The workplace changes for the worse, usually gradually over time.

3. **Personal Dissatisfaction**
   The changes impact on the man personally, either frustration due to increased bureaucracy, poor treatment of themselves or other workers, or being asked to relocate. They may be in poor health at the time, which is attributed, fully or in part, to the changed workplace.

4. **Leaving**
   - The man retires as planned OR
   - The man is retrenched and leaves OR
   - The man is offered a voluntary redundancy, he realises that he will be better off financially and/or emotionally and he takes the redundancy package and leaves.

5. **Adjusting**
   A period elapses of adjusting to not being at work (with has both positive and negative aspects).

6. **‘Left at the right time’**
   The man, reflecting back, believes that left work at the right time, and that he is ‘better off’, financially and/or emotionally, having left than having stayed.

This narrative of adaption to retirement begins not around leaving work but months or years earlier. The introduction and orientation to this narrative occurs while things are going well in their workplaces, as a way to contrast the change that is coming. The narratives start before most of the men were planning retirement, at a time when everything seemed to be going well for them and their workplace. They continue to narrate a time of negative change in their workplace, which then impacts on them personally, culminating in them leaving work through their own choice or through retrenchment or redundancy. The evaluative coda to this aspect of the men’s life stories, is the reflection that they are ‘better off’ having retired.
At various stages in the narrative some men compared their own circumstances with that of a former colleague. The colleague was invariably in a worse situation than themselves and such comparisons worked as an example of how bad the workplace had become, while reinforcing their narrative’s theme that they ‘left at the right time’. Such comparisons also reinforce the notion of the workplace deteriorating; it is a way of saying ‘look at what happened to him’. It is also a way to distance oneself from such misfortune, it is saying that by chance or design ‘that did not happen to me’. Chris told of the tensions arising in his workplace after it was taken over by another education institution. In Chris’s narratives, the head of his unit was forced out of his position due the machinations of other staff and the ambitions of a senior manager. Chris remains angry at the treatment of his colleague, who he felt “deserved the dignity of retiring at his own choosing and in a way of his choosing”. By contrast Chris was offered a redundancy package some years after his colleague; Chris took the redundancy offered which allowed him to leave while maintaining his own dignity.

Jack also had reasons to leave as his workplace become busier, less interested in the needs of employees, and a place of conflict.

Anthony: You said there were a lot of changes in the workplace. I’m just curious to know what actually happened that made you just decide, well, this is the time to go?

Jack: Okay [p] Things in the work environment when you change your job you start putting a list up in your mind as to your reasons why I don’t want to do this any more and they could be because of personal conflict it’s getting too far too difficult to work your employer is not listening to you anymore about improving conditions or a multitude of reasons that you say “I don’t want to be here” … What am I going to do? Am I gonna still stay within the same field or am I gonna change track? Am I gonna do something else?
and you start looking around for ways

to ease the pressures that you’re finding yourself under.
You’re starting to squirm and you want to squeeze out.

Jack then told a story about how he was worked seven days a week for a number of weeks performing necessary maintenance on machines while the factory was shut over the Christmas period.

*Jack:* And I started to think to myself y’know
I don’t need to do this any more
I can retire.

Like many of the men, Barry recounts difficulties in the years before leaving work. Barry’s narratives of the time adhere more or less to the pattern described above. Barry was, however, a member of the emergency services and during his time at work he witnessed many traumatic incidents, which affected him. Barry experienced health issues related to his work, which he described as a ‘breakdown’. He recovered from this and had returned to work when:

*Barry:* … certain things were starting to happen at work
And I thought, “No, that’s it, I’m out”
I just set the date and boom [I left].
… and I said “right it’s time now”
I knew when the time was right
I didn’t force myself out,
I just went ‘till I realised the time was right.

These evaluative clauses from Barry’s narrative of leaving work position Barry as independently and autonomously making up his mind as to when he will leave work. Like other men in this study who report difficulties in the years before leaving work, Barry describes his workplace as having changed for the worse.

The degree to which Barry has achieved narrative coherence, a coherent internal story that fits into his larger life story, can be seen in the following complex narrative.
Barry: Now I was carrying a hell of a lot of baggage,
when I say baggage I mean in the background of the previous job ...
I was heading for another big breakdown
I didn’t realise at the time
but when I look back on it
I was heading for another [p]
but I walked
left the job
closed the door behind me.
Everything stayed in THERE
I was one of the very few [p]
fortunate people
I’ve seen so many people [from emergency services]
that have taken the baggage with them when they retired
and they’re a blubbery mess...
they just can’t function,
because of the baggage they carry

Barry goes on to talk about one ex-colleague from the emergency services who is not coping,
who needed psychiatric care and who “got this shattered brain” and “just can’t function anymore”. This presentation of self as coping and actively positioning himself against colleagues who are not, is more than the dynamic distancing of one’s self from negative perceptions of retirement as discussed above. It is also a narrative demonstration of Barry’s ability to cope and proof that he has left his ‘baggage’ behind him.

This apparent narrative coherence is at odds with other things said and behaviour observed during the interview. Just before the above story about his colleague, Barry made the comment:

Barry: if I start talking about specifics
emotions will come back up
yes

At this point Barry’s voice changed and I could detect increased emotion and sadness in his voice. I offered to pause or stop the interview but Barry wanted to continue. After this I did
not pursue questions about traumatic incidents in his working life, although I knew such questions would elicit narrative responses they would also cause distress.

This incident indicates a disparity between the coherent narrative about leaving work Barry is presenting and the fact that he still feels emotional about certain incidents. This can be partially explained by Barry wishing to present himself in a good light to me and the world. Barry is presenting a healthy and healed ‘face’ to the world, using Goffman’s concept of “face” as the socially approved “positive social value a person effectively claims for himself” (Goffman, 2005, p. 5). I suspect that the ‘face’ Barry is presenting is aligned to the narrative coherence he is attempting to build around his leaving work. Barry’s stories of leaving work are, unlike Bill’s, internally consistent. They fit neatly into the aspects of his life story I observed and also present him as healthy and healed.

Barry had received counselling around his breakdown, it is possible that his way of talking about work and retirement is a method learnt during counselling. Some therapies, such as cognitive behaviourally therapy and narrative therapy, encourage people to examine their own negative thoughts, behaviours, and narratives while encouraging them to actively and consciously construct more positive ones (Foreman & Pollard, 2011; White & Epston, 1990). This is of course speculative as I do not know the type of intervention Barry received. Barry also worked in the emergency services and would be familiar with all manner of medical interventions. Whatever the case, I believe Barry has constructed, consciously or unconsciously, his own narratives around leaving work that allows a coherent life story, even if the narrative does not yet align fully with his internal reality. It is clear that Barry is coping well in retirement, apparently better than other colleagues, but perhaps he is still carrying some of his “baggage” from work, but not enough to turn him into “a blubbering mess”.

The evaluative elements of the men’s narratives about leaving work give an insight into the amount of coherence that has been achieved in making meaning around this life transition. Many of the men now tell negative stories about the time immediately before they left work. How the culture of their workplace had changed, how increasing managerialism or economic conditions were making their workplaces more unpleasant. A common theme from most of the men in this situation was that they calculated that they had enough money to retire and that the workplace was unpleasant, so it was time to go.
Alf: I’m not sorry I went [left work] ...
I think when you retire
you miss the people you work with
but you don’t miss the job

While most men could explain what happened and had access to or understanding of the workings of management, others were left in the dark. Alf’s explanation of the reasons for him being offered a redundancy is unclear

Alf: ... they were trying to downsizing,
I think that’s the word or whatever you say,
they were offering redundancies and they wanted er [p]
certainly going [p]
certainly part of their restructuring
I suppose that they were downsizing
and getting people to errr cooperate
I don’t know
you never know what their reason all together

For Jim, who took a redundancy, leaving work was unpleasant and unsettling. Jim had made no definite plans about when he was going to retire; he only had a vague idea to leave work after 40 years of service. His redundancy meant he left two years before this anniversary. He was offered another position in another town but decided this would be too unsettling for him and his family, so he accepted the voluntary redundancy on offer. After leaving work he spent some time looking for other employment. Jim was not successful in finding new work and feels he was not offered anything because of his age. Jim sees this time as

Jim: ... a funny sort of period really,
In one respect,
That um y’knew you wasn’t working,
But then y’knew you wasn’t on holidays

The difficulties of mature aged unemployment are well documented; older men who lose full time employment are unlikely to regain full time employment (House of Representatives. Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations, 2000; Perry & NSW Committee on Ageing, 2001).
There are, of course, variations of this narrative structure. Some of the men interviewed who were given forced redundancies or retrenchments reported having no opportunity to consider their options at the time. Men in this situation still maintained though that they left work at the right time, again citing difficulties in the job and how their workplace had changed for the worse. I speculate that this narrative allows the men to construct a meaning around their leaving work, a meaning that is coherent with their wider life stories. Even the men who did not have a choice around when and how they left work appear to have constructed a positive meaning around the notion that they were in fact fortunate to leave when they did. Such a meaning allows them to construct themselves as fortunate, a positive socially acceptable position, which in some way may compensate for the lack of agency and choice experienced by being retrenched.

This structure allows men to present both the positive and negative aspects of their experience of leaving work, while also allowing for a positive retirement identity to be presented and maintained into the present. The structure allows men to hold the ambiguities of leaving work, whatever their experiences. Men who left work at the time and manner of their own choosing still discuss the negative aspects of leaving, in particular the time of adjusting to retirement. Conversely men with a negative experience of leaving work, who had little or no control of their retirement, can still express this while retaining positive meaning and sense of self. The commonalities in the different men’s narratives appear to serve a common purpose of allowing the men to retain a sense of autonomy and control over this transition in their lives, while paradoxically constructing a ‘group’ or ‘communal’ retirement identity, that men can identify with no matter their actual experience of leaving work.

Some of the commonalities in the structure of this shared narrative undoubtedly have to do with the common circumstances around being retrenched or made redundant. For anyone in such a situation, there was a time when they were working, a time when they were told they would be made redundant, and a time when they left. These experiences must be included in the narrative, but the commonalities of the ‘left at the right time’ narrative go further than just recording what is, unfortunately, becoming a relatively common occurrence. The commonalities in these narratives are more than recollections of similar events happening to different people, the commonalities are also around the common themes and meanings that the men appear to give these events. The common meaning is that wider circumstances were at best unfortunate and at worse immoral, and that the narrator is fortunate to have ‘escaped’ from this situation. So perhaps establishing a sense of moral propriety is a way of also maintaining a positive sense of self, in circumstances where one’s agency and choice are
thus reduced. The shared narratives are also a way of being able to express in culturally accepted terms, why their last few years of work were traumatic and allows them to be the hero of their own stories, coming through the trials of leaving work not unscathed but better than they would have been under different circumstances. This configuring of oneself as a ‘hero’ seems to confirm Ricoeur’s assertion that we seek to become both “the narrator and hero of our own stories” (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 32, original emphasis).

6.3.5 Negative self-identity and narrative coherence

This is not to suggest that narrative coherence is all that is needed to maintain a positive sense of self in retirement. There are of course material-determinants of wellbeing and having sufficient resources to sustain a pleasant comfortable life surely contributes to maintaining positive feelings of self. It is entirely plausible that people can establish narrative coherence that explains their life stories and life circumstances in negative ways. If someone is significantly materially and emotionally worse off in their retirement, than they were when they working, it is conceivable that they could construct a life story that achieves coherence through linking leaving work with the current worsened circumstances.

The men interviewed for this research have, on the whole, achieved some degree of narrative coherency through a life story that tells them (and us) that they left work at the right time, and that they are doing well for themselves in retirement. A man not enjoying his retirement could conceivably achieve narrative coherence, with a story that reinforced a negative sense of self and links his poorer circumstances now with his experience around leaving work.

6.3.6 Summary

As discussed in Chapter Three Section 3.11, people seek to create and maintain consistent and coherent life stories that make sense of their life and experiences. Coherence is built up in three ways, firstly by ensuring that each narrative within one’s greater life story makes sense in itself, secondly that each of these narratives demonstrate causality and continuity within the greater life story, and thirdly by adhering to wider social “coherence systems” (Linde, 1993, pp. 220-222). The narratives selected in this section demonstrate how these processes work in creating narrative coherence. All the narratives in this section make sense in themselves and so conform to the first aspect of achieving narrative coherence, it appears that the second and third aspects of achieving narrative coherence are more difficult to accomplish.
Arthur’s narratives around leaving work fit together to form a smooth continuous story, something that Bill is having difficulty achieving and thus is not fulfilling the second way in which narrative coherence is achieved. While Bill is having difficulty achieving this aspect of narrative coherence both Arthur and Bill, indeed all the men in the study, seem to be creating narrative coherence through the use of wider “coherence systems”.

Existing cultural narratives provide the narrative scaffolding on which people build their own life stories and meanings. These cultural stories provide both content and narrative structure which people use to create their own narratives and convey shared ideas and values. The men’s use of the content of such cultural narratives is the use of and resistance to prevalent negative cultural narratives about male retirement, as discussed in Chapter Five Section 5.4. This section also shows that men in this study also use the structure of shared cultural narratives to convey meaning and construct identity. The hero’s journey and the ‘combat tale’ are genres of story which some men used to convey their attempts to retain agency and integrity in difficult times. The men also appear to use a new or emerging narrative structure to explain their transition to retirement. The “I Left at the Right Time” narrative structure appears to be an attempt to create commonality of meaning from the varied experiences of leaving paid work. More investigation, with a greater number of retirees, is required to determine if this is indeed a new social narrative and the extent to which it is operating beyond the subcultures of men involved in enthusiast groups in the western suburbs of Sydney.

### 6.4 Influence of broader political and social narratives

It is worth noting that these interviews took place during the global financial crisis and during an Australian Federal election campaign, where issues of job security and economic difficulties for ‘everyday’ Australians were prominent (Jackman, 2008). The narratives of the men around generativity, particularly those concerned with the economic and job security of younger people, as mentioned in Chapter Five, Section 5.1.1, appear to be influenced by these wider events.

Cultural narratives influence our own understanding of being-in-the-world and our identities. The attitudes and values prevalent within a culture define the culture’s normative expectations of how a person should live their life, according to their gender, age, and life-stage (Bruner, 1987; A. Phoenix, 2008), as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.5. Political discourse similarly shapes and influences personal identity, as the narratives deliberately ‘constructed’ by politicians form part of these wider cultural narratives and in turn influence
people’s perceptions of the world. Such political narratives can function not only to “mislead” people (Riessman, 2008, p. 9) but also, and more insidiously, they can be purposeful attempts to influence personal identity, in ways that favour a particular political agenda.

In the past decade there has been interest by scholars in the construction of the political narratives around the current war in Iraq and the so-called ‘war on terrorism’ (Hodges, 2007; Hodges & Nilep, 2007; Riessman, 2008). The heliographic Inside Kevin 07 is a journalistic documentation of the Australian Labor Party’s 2007 federal election campaign; the book unwittingly reveals that many of the same techniques were used, by all sides of politics, to influence voters around domestic Australian political and economic issues (Jackman, 2008). This is not to suggest that the men in this study are dupes without agency in the face of such political machinations. The men interviewed are displaying a genuine generative concern for younger people and the way this concern is expressed in their own narratives is influenced, in no small part, by the wider political, social, and cultural narratives of that particular historical moment. If the interviews were conducted at a different time the generative aspect of being concerned for the next generation would be revealed in different ways that would reflect elements of the historical public and societal narratives of that particular time.

6.5 Discussion on Identity in Retirement

People seek to create narrative coherence and a positive sense of self after the disruptions of life transitions, such as retirement. One way to achieve this appears to be through maintaining, adapting, and creating sub-identities which reinforce positive aspects and create narrative coherence within one’s overall life story. The men in this study were observed to maintain aspects of their enthusiast sub-identity which existed pre-retirement, adapting important aspects of their previous work-identity to suit their current circumstances in retirement, and through making sense of the transition from work to retirement.

For many of the men their sense of themselves as an enthusiast was something that developed throughout their lives. For many of the men interviewed this started in childhood and youth with an affinity for certain activities or hobbies, which developed throughout their adult life as their proficiency and mastery in their chosen hobby grew and developed. Positive aspects of one’s working-identity also appear to be adapted and changed in retirement. The positive sense of self which mastery of certain skills gave some men during their careers has been maintained in retirement through applying the same skills to different aspects of life. This may be as a specialist as in the case of Arthur; or as a teacher for Bill
and Chris; or manager for Alf. Mastery of certain skills appears to be an element of both the enthusiast and work-like sub-identities. Erikson asserts that growing mastery is linked to healthy identity development during childhood and adolescence (Erikson, 2000b), which is clearly the case for the men who took up their hobbies early in life. The commonality of mastery in both the enthusiast and work-like sub-identity also suggests that demonstrating proficiency and mastery is also important for maintaining a positive and healthy identity in later life.

Of course not all retired men have hobbies or enthusiasms or, if they do, are as involved in them as the men interviewed. This research suggests that an enthusiast sub-identity continues into retirement but there are other male sub-identities that presumably also continue past the transition from paid work. Men’s familial roles, for example, change and adapt throughout the life course, as women’s do. As men age their roles as partners, husbands, fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers should surely be sources for continuity, adaption, and construction of various sub-identities. There is, however, a paucity of research into older men’s subjective experiences of family life (Arber & Timonen, 2012; Mann, 2007; Roy, 1989; Tarrant, 2012; Timonen & Arber, 2012). Further work and analysis is required to better understand and appreciate the changing or continuing familial identities of men post retirement.

This chapter also demonstrates the importance of shared stories and shared ways of telling stories to people’s ability to make meaning out of key events in their lives. Creating coherency in one’s life story requires, in part, adherence to wider social “coherence systems” (Linde, 1993, pp. 220-222). Groups of people who share common goals, values, and expectations create and use wider cultural narratives as means to define and perpetuate such “coherence systems”. The men in this study appear to be making sense of retirement and thus constructing and maintaining a positive retirement sub-identity through aligning themselves with one coherence system, while rejecting another. The men seem to be part of a subculture of retirees that is developing, or has developed, a cultural narrative of leaving work which validates their leaving work, the “I left at the right time” narrative as discussed in Section 6.3.4. While aligning themselves to this narrative, they are also rejecting and resisting the negative stories of male retirement which make up a wider social coherency system based on erroneous ideas of retirement as a time of decline and withdrawal, as discussed in Chapter Five Section 5.4. This dynamic positioning of self, using the narrative scaffolding of these two competing stories of retirement, acts to maintain a positive retirement sub-identity.
There is, of course, more to establishing a positive sense of self than feeling good about one’s enthusiasm and creating narrative coherence around leaving work. Work, retirement, and involvement in an enthusiasm are the foci of this particular study and it is fair to assume that other aspects of men’s lives and life contexts also impact, positively and negatively, on their identity post retirement.
7 Summary and Conclusions

My aim throughout this study has been to explore men’s subjective experiences of retirement and involvement in various hobbies and enthusiasms, with specific reference to the questions:

*What meanings and identities do retired men construct of their experiences of retirement and of leaving work?*

*In what ways does having an enthusiasm and being a member of an enthusiast group impact on men’s meaning and understanding of being retired?*

There has, in recent years, been increased interest in the intersection of ageing and gender. The majority of this interest still concerns older women, leaving older men largely neglected and overlooked in research and academic literature into both older people and men. Understandings of gender and ageing have, on the whole, overlooked the “level of individual experience” (Russell, 2007, p. 114). This neglect is particularly apparent in research into older men’s subjective experience of their being-in-the-world, where inquiries are limited both in number and in scope. The few studies identified tend to limit older men’s subjective experiences with the social constructivist view that subjectivity is merely the ‘subject positions’ that older men take up within various discourses, which these investigations further restrict to gender discourses. This research adds a more nuanced understanding of older men’s experiences using the richer concept of subjectivity as the ‘feel on the inside’ of the experiences in question (Randall, 2008). This understanding of subjectivities incorporates a person’s interaction with discourse but is not limited to this interaction.

Understandings of the men’s experiences were built up through qualitative, interpretive methodologies in particular hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative analysis. Hermeneutic phenomenology recognises that people understand and make meaning of their experiences through interpretation of their *Dasein*, their sense of being-in-the-world. This interpretive work uses both language and narrative to order and make sense of experience. Language and narrative are also part of the tools which people use to communicate the experience and its meanings with others. Narrative analysis, therefore, provides tools for exploring and interpreting the meanings embedded within personal narratives. This thesis used structural, thematic, and dialogic/performance analyses of the men’s narratives to reveal aspects of the narrative structures, themes, and life stories through which meaning and
identities are thus constructed. Narrative analysis has the additional benefit of allowing the men’s own ‘voices’, stories, and life contexts to remain relatively intact.

7.1 Summary and Discussion of Findings

7.1.1 Cultural narratives: stories of resistance and acceptance

7.1.1.1 Ubiquitous negative cultural narratives of male retirement

Cultural narratives form part of the “cultural resources” available to people to construct their own personal narratives and meanings (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). Cultural narratives create and maintain shared values and attitudes, which help people make sense of their lives within the culture or subculture in question (Polkinghorne, 1991), as well as prescribing the culture’s normative expectations of what is ‘acceptable’, based on a person’s age, gender, and life-stage (Bruner, 1987; A. Phoenix, 2008). The men in this study used the cultural resources available to them in ways that reflected their own values and meanings, they resisted dominant negative cultural narratives through their own personal narratives which accommodate the competing ambiguities and contradictions of their own experiences of being retired compared to the negative cultural narratives.

Three cultural narratives of male retirement were identified in the men’s personal narratives, which all depict retirement as a challenging time for men. ‘The Rocking Chair on the Verandah’ was the cultural narrative most frequently mentioned. This narrative presents retirement as a time of idleness in which older men, to use Bill’s words, “just sit there and wait to die”. ‘The Underfoot Husband’ narrative depicts retired men as dependent on their wives to the point where the marital relationship is threatened by wives’ frustrations with their inactive, socially disengaged, and ‘clingy’ spouses. The ‘Dead in a Year’ narrative states that men die within a year of retiring from work due to boredom and lack of purpose. While other cultural narratives of male retirement may well be circulating these three were specifically mentioned by the men interviewed as well as being identified within the wider Australian community by other researchers (de Vaus & Wells, 2003; Mackay, 2007).

The men interviewed all rejected these cultural narratives for themselves. They presented themselves as active retirees who are engaged with their families, communities, and enthusiasms. Yet they only have these cultural narratives available to discuss male retirement and build a shared understanding of retirement which conflicts with their own experiences. These negative cultural narratives are so ubiquitous that even this relatively privileged group
of older men can only describe their own positive experiences of retirement through both referencing and resisting these negative stories. Paradoxically the men did not reject these cultural narratives as totally inaccurate.

While the men interviewed actively resisted these cultural narratives as applying to them and their lives, they accepted them as true for some other retired men. Affirming these cultural narratives as true for others has the paradoxical effect of perpetuating the very narratives and ideas about retirement that they resist for themselves. The men all reported that in retirement they are involved in hobbies and enthusiasms which they enjoy, as well as positive experiences of their involvement with organised hobby groups and enthusiast communities. The similarity between the men’s narratives of their own retirements is surely due to the high degree of homogeneity of the men interviewed. While the men have comparable experiences, they also have access to similar cultural and personal resources with which to construct meaning and identity. These mostly healthy older men are surrounded by strong networks of wives, families, and communities of enthusiasts which appear to be largely supportive of the men’s busy lives and diverse interests. Men with less personal resources, including less material resources and poorer health, living in less affluent communities, face more challenges in being able to access and engage in meaningful activities in retirement. Such men’s experiences are more likely to be negative in retirement as presumably would the meanings, identities, and narratives they construct about being retired. Further investigation is needed with men and women from different socioeconomic backgrounds and locations to more fully appreciate the range of meanings and possible challenges to positive identity in retirement.

7.1.1.2 “I left at the right time”: A new cultural narrative?

A new cultural narrative about leaving work appears to be circulating, at least within some of the male enthusiast communities of Western Sydney. All of the men interviewed constructed similar narratives about leaving paid work which seem to conform to the same narrative structure, regardless of participants’ individual circumstances. The men’s narratives described how their workplace had deteriorated in recent years, followed by the details of their leaving work, and concluding on a reflective and evaluative note that, regardless of how they left work, they now feel that they ‘left at the right time’.

This cultural narrative appears to be helping men make the adjustment to being retired by providing a narrative structure that allows them to acknowledge both the relatively good experiences early in their careers and the more recent challenges they faced at the time of
their leaving work. This structure allows men to present both the positive and negative aspects of their experience of leaving work, while also allowing for a positive retirement identity to be presented and continued into the present. The structure allows men to maintain the ambiguities they may feel around leaving work, whatever their experiences. Men who left work at the time and manner of their own choosing, such as Arthur, are still able to discuss the negative aspects of leaving, in particular the time of adjusting to retirement. Conversely men with a negative experience of leaving work, who had little or no control of their retirement can still express this, while retaining positive meaning and sense of self. The commonalities in the different men’s narratives appear to serve a shared purpose, of allowing the men to retain a sense of autonomy and control over this transition in their lives, while paradoxically constructing a ‘group’ or ‘communal’ retirement identity regardless of their actual experience of leaving work.

The ‘I Left at the Right Time’ cultural narrative is a modest resistance to the men’s shared experiences of increased bureaucracy and managerialism in the workplace. It is by no means a radical critique of contemporary capitalist and management practice, yet this relatively privileged group of men have constructed a cultural narrative which allows for the contradiction of both contributing to and resisting these practices. The findings of this research also suggest that men who experience more stress, ill health, and poor treatment at the time of their leaving work have greater difficulty in achieving narrative coherence than men whose transition from work was less traumatic. Bill is a case in point, his difficulty in constructing and maintaining a consistent story of his departure from work reveals that at the time of being interviewed he has not yet achieved narrative coherence around this experience.

7.1.1.3 Genre and structure

The genre and structure of particular cultural narratives also contribute to the shared meanings constructed between narrators and audience. Different genres of stories have different structures and ways of constructing narratives that alerts the listener to the type of story being told. The beginning elements of some stories signals to the listener that a certain type of story has begun and having started in a certain way the listener then expects that the story will continue and conclude in ways consistent with the genre thus established. So a story that begins with the narrator leaving ‘home’ and seeking something new, such as Bill’s story of meeting his mentor in Chapter Four, suggests to the listener that this is the beginning of a ‘hero quest’. This sets up the expectation that the story will involve certain other set elements such as overcoming obstacles, completing the quest, and finally returning home. A
narrative that satisfies these expectations also leaves the listener with an understanding of the deeper meaning implicit in the genre, which for the hero’s journey is that the ‘adventures’ related resulted in personal growth for the narrator. Narrative coherence is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve if the narrative that unfolds does not meet the initial expectations hinted at when a particular genre is identified. The listener and I suspect the narrator are left confused as to the underlying meaning of the narrative and how it fits within into the narrator’s overall life story.

7.1.2  Identity in retirement

7.1.2.1  Enthusiast sub-identity

We all construct different ways of understanding ourselves and different ways of presenting these understandings of self to others, dependant on our changing situations, circumstances, and contexts throughout life (Josselson, 1996). Women, supposedly, negotiate the transition of leaving work better than men as women experience the continuation of socially expected roles around familial responsibilities and reproduction, which continues in retirement. Work is perceived as men’s most important social role so retirement is potentially more disruptive for male identity (Townsend, 1963). Feminist scholarship over recent decades has questioned the simple duality of this position (Gibson, 1998; Russell, 2007), yet the idea that the continuity of identity through periods of transition is protective against identity crises remains sound.

The majority of men in this study formed their enthusiast sub-identities in adolescence or childhood. These enthusiast sub-identities adapted and changed throughout their lives and in later life were the source of positive feelings of agency and mastery, which are linked to healthy identity development (Erikson, 2000b). Continuing an enthusiasm in retirement allowed for the continuation of agency and mastery, during a time when many report the opposite. Being an enthusiast in retirement means, self-evidently, that this sub-identity continues after paid employment ceases, this continued enthusiast sub-identity is often enhanced and strengthened in retirement as more time and effort can be devoted to it.

7.1.2.2  Changing and adapting work-like identities

Paid employment is a key source of identity for many men (Fudge, 1988; Gradman, 1994; Macdonald, et al., 2001; Zinn, 2002). In a culture that conceptualises work as a moral good and is wary of the “spectre of uselessness” (Sennett, 2006, p. 86) it is not surprising that retirement is viewed suspiciously by some men as a time of “enforced idleness” (Zinn, 2002,
The cultural narratives that circulate in contemporary Australia around male retirement reflect these suspicions and universally depict retirement as a time of dangerous inactivity, dependency, and morbidity for men.

Involvement in an enthusiasm also allowed some men to re-create a sub-identity around important aspects of previous working sub-identities. Being part of an enthusiast community allows some men to interact with others in ways reminiscent of certain relationships they had in their working lives. For some this was found inside their particular organisation, such as Bill and Chris who could again be teachers passing on knowledge and skills to younger members of the groups, and Alf who took on positions of responsibility which allowed him to maintain an identity as a manager. Other men reconstructed a work-like identity through their interactions with the wider community of enthusiasts; such as Arthur who through his contacts with other enthusiasts was able to once again be a specialist, as a collector and restorer of rare Australian brand tractors.

It is tempting to say that men simply took existing work-based skills and knowledge and merely applied them to their enthusiasms in retirement. Aspects of this may be true for former teachers Bill and George, who were able to train new enthusiasts, and Alf who took on certain managerial responsibilities in his club, yet Arthur’s recreation of a specialist sub-identity around restoring certain rare tractors shows that recreating work-like identities in retirement is more than just using existing skills and knowledge. These work-like identities provide in retirement a similar sense of self to that experienced in working life.

Creating a ‘work-like’ identity is one way retirees manage the transition from work to retirement. Weiss observed the “hanging onto part of what supported one’s identity can reduce the shock of total loss of the pre-retirement identity” (2005, p. 69). Weiss drew this conclusion from interviews with recently retired professionals who reported difficulty adjusting to retirement. The identities Weiss observed are identities in flux as people adjust to retirement, whereas this study has observed relatively more stable identities of people who have been retired for some time. The work-like identities observed in this study have been constructed as a way of maintaining a positive identity in retirement. The work-like identities observed in this study, are undoubtedly “hanging onto” part of a pre-retirement identity, yet it has been reconstructed to suit the circumstances and experience of being retired.

The development of ‘work-like’ identity in retirement is a logical extension of adopting the ‘busy ethic’. The ‘busy ethic’ helps people adjust to retirement and gives positive culturally sanctioned approval for involvement in which are “infused with aspects of work that are
culturally esteemed”, indeed retirement is validated, to some extent, by “activity that is analogous to work” (Ekerdt, 1986, p. 241). Identity formation is influenced by personal and cultural values, which people use to make meaning out of their current experiences (Kaufman, 1986; Mishler, 1999). So a work-like identity which emphasises certain ‘professional’ elements, such as being a teacher, specialist, or manager allows both the retention of certain aspects of pre-retirement identity. Such an identity also allows retirees to understand and present the activities they are engaged in as being “analogous to work” and thus of value.

7.1.3 Wives

This thesis has only briefly mentioned the importance the men placed on their relationships with their wives. All the men interviewed spoke highly of their relationships with their wives, who were universally seen as being supportive. Many of the men reported that their wives also had busy lives. Some husbands and wives had mutual interests and enthusiasms, such as Arthur and his wife both being members of the local gardening club and various historical clubs, while some men had parallel interests with their wives, which did not intersect. On the whole these men lead lives with their wives that were “independent and intertwined”, which reflects older women’s reported experience of their relationship with their husbands (Roberto, 2012).

The men often spoke of the importance of their wives throughout their narratives and life stories, yet the significance of this relationship is not reflected in the amount of space or discussion given to this relationship in this thesis. This is due to the remarkable consistency between the men’s reported relationships with their wives and the findings of many other studies (Askham, 1995; S. L. Brown, et al., 2005; Phillipson, 1997; Scott & Wenger, 1995). Given this consistency, more space has been given to other aspects of the men’s narratives and experiences. This was done not to downplay the importance of this relationship but to be able to explore in greater detail more novel findings and interpretations about the men’s lives and life contexts, such as their enthusiasms and relationships with their children and grandchildren.

The men’s wives were, in the main, busy people involved with their own community projects. Wives were largely supportive of their husbands’ involvement with their various enthusiasms and in some cases wives shared an enthusiasm, such as gardening or genealogy, and were members of the same group. I suspect that it would be difficult for men to be active in these enthusiasms without their wives’ support. It certainly would be difficult to
participate in these activities, which all require a financial commitment, as well as the allocation of sizable space within the home or yard, and which require time away from the spousal relationship. I imagine it would be difficult to negotiate involvement in such activities without spousal support. The absence of any men with wives who are indifferent or unsupportive would suggest this could be the case but more work is needed to uncover both husbands’ and wives’ attitudes to each other’s community engagement to answer this question with any certainty.

All the men interviewed were married so I can only speculate on the involvement of single men in enthusiasms and enthusiast groups. Involvement in a shared activity is one way older men make friends and maintain social connections (Scott & Wenger, 1995), so it would make sense that belonging to an enthusiast group would help connect single older men (never married, divorced, separated, or widowed) with other like minded people. Widowers tend to maintain and even sometimes increase their social networks after the death of their wife (Riggs, 1997), which suggests that widowers may be likely to continue to participate in any enthusiasms and enthusiast groups that they were already part of and may even join new ones. Divorced and separated men are, however, much less likely to have strong social networks in retirement, this combined with the diminished financial security which both divorced men and women experience in old age, suggests that involvement in such a group is less likely. Never married men are more likely to have even fewer close relationships and, unlike widowed and divorced men, do not tend seek close companionship (Arber., et al., 2003).

Older single men’s experience of enthusiasms remains unexplored. In the absence of any such investigations the extent to which single men’s involvement in hobbies and enthusiasms is a feasible means of engaging them in community activities remains speculative.

7.1.4 A generative retirement

These men interviewed can be seen, in many respects, to be having a ‘generative retirement’. The men derived much meaning from their generative interactions with others. At its most basic, generativity is a “concern for the next generation” (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; McAdams, et al., 1998). Kotre’s typology of generativity expands this concern into the categories of biological and parental generativity. The men interviewed showed a lot of care and support for their adult children and grandchildren. For some this support was quite substantial, as in the case of George who is helping supervise the renovation of his daughter’s house interstate, while at the same time supporting his son and mother-in-law

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with practical day to day assistance. This type of assistance does not fit neatly into Kotre’s categories of biological and parental generativity. These categories, although useful, perhaps need broadening to accommodate the type of generative support from grandfathers observed in this study.

In later life generativity can also be demonstrated through teaching and mentorship. Many of the men were involved in teaching aspects of their enthusiasm to novice enthusiasts and to peers their own age. This is perhaps most obvious with Bill and George, who are both former teachers, Bill is the education officer for his radio club and George teaches new model aeroplane enthusiasts the techniques and rules of speed racing. Teaching is not, however, limited to training new enthusiasts, as is the case for Barry who taught other enthusiasts certain woodturning techniques as well as designing new turning equipment which he shared with the group. This teaching of novices and peers are all displays of technical generativity, the passing on of knowledge and skills (Kotre, 1984). Yet these men went beyond technical generativity with their efforts to pass on other aspects of the enthusiasm. As seen in Bill’s mentorship of new ham radio enthusiasts, Arthur’s sharing with me his thoughts on the aesthetics of the design elements of some of the early electronic equipment, Chris’s interest in the history of control line flying and the dedication of the club’s flying circle to one of the pioneers of the hobby, as well as Barry’s writing for one of the local woodturning magazines. These are all attempts to contribute to the enthusiasm itself and pass on not just technical knowledge but ideas about the enthusiasm itself, its history and culture. When people move from sharing skills and knowledge to ideas about the culture they become ‘mentors’ and ‘keepers of meaning’ (Kotre, 1984, p. 15). The men in this study are ‘tending’ the subcultures of their enthusiasms and by doing so are holding, maintaining, and passing on important ideas and aspects of the hobbies. Tending culture then involves seeing oneself as belonging to a lineage of enthusiasts; it involves looking both forward into the future and teaching the next generation, while at the same time looking to the enthusiasm’s history and traditions.

7.1.5 Busy ethic, being active and generative

Being active and presenting an active generative ‘face’ to the world is one way that the men maintain a positive sense of identity in retirement. This presentation of self in retirement is a rejection of the negative cultural stereotypes and assumptions about male retirement as a time of idleness and decline. This rejection of this one set of stereotypes has the paradoxical effect of embracing another set of stereotypes as the men capitulate to the so-called ‘busy ethic’ (Ekerdt, 1986). Presenting oneself as busy in retirement allows the men to adapt
positively to retirement. The ‘busy ethic’ offers retirees a culturally approved counter-narrative to the narratives of negative disengaged male retirement, while being able to present themselves as being aligning with the moral imperative to be engaged in activities which are seen as ‘earnest’, worthwhile, and ‘work-like’. Given the cultural value and moral good associated with work and business it is not surprising that in retirement people seek to remain active and to present themselves as such, in order to overcome the “spectre of uselessness” which ‘haunts’ those not engaged in paid employment (Sennett, 2006).

Yet adopting the ‘busy ethic’ is problematic. Jack observed that “the closer you get to retirement the more you listen to what … the medicos are saying”. Jack seems to be justifying his involvement with the clubs and groups he belongs to through reference to various external discourses, in this case medical ones, that encourage retirees to remain active and socially connected. There is abundant evidence that remaining physically active and socially connected contributes to older people’s health, reduces morbidity, and increases longevity (Buchman, et al., 2012; Dishman, et al., 2012; Holt-Lunstad, et al., 2010; Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999; Michaud, et al., 2001; Ross & Mirowsky, 2002; Skladzien & O’Dwyer, 2010). Jack appears to place more emphasis on these medical discourses to explain his activities, over any personal preference, pleasure, or sense of achievement he gains from this involvement.

There were many stories of a lifetime’s involvement in their enthusiasm however enjoyment alone was never given as the reason for the men’s continued involvement. Inter-related cultural expectations and personal values around the ‘busy ethic’ are perhaps in play here to restrict acknowledgment of enjoyment as a worthwhile experience to construct shared meaning around. Existing cultural expectations esteem activities in retirement that are seen as ‘productive’ and ‘work-like’ (Ekerdt, 1986) and many of the organisations the men joined have organised themselves in ways that mirror formal work to a greater or lesser degree. This mirroring of work may be through genuine bureaucratic requirements, such as those dictated by legislation, government grants or insurance policies, or it may simply be through the informal practices of the organisations. Whatever the reasons, creating work-like conditions allows retirees to more easily conform to and perpetuate the ‘work ethic’.

Generativity, although generally thought of as virtuous in itself, also appears to be used as a way to validate the men’s activities in retirement. Of course the men get a sense of enjoyment out of being generative, despite occasional frustrations. Like being active, there are genuine psychological benefits from generative behaviour (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Kotre, 1984; McAdams, 2006b; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; Schoklitsch & Baumann, 2012).
The benefits from being active and generative have been co-opted by the ‘busy ethic’ to provide a *moral* justification for activity, above any sense of pleasure or personal accomplishment. The men are not denying that these activities give them pleasure, on the contrary: Jim told me he gets a “lot of pleasure” out of watching people appreciate the railway museum and Bill said “I feel good, I enjoy what I’m doing now” in relation to his involvement both with ham radios and in teaching younger people. It seems, however, that pleasure alone does not seem to be a good enough reason to explain involvement in these activities.

### 7.2 Responding to Unexpected Findings

Much of this project unfolded in a manner anticipated in the initial project design. Being open to the new and unexpected meant that on occasion I departed from my original research design and explored these new possibilities in response to the men and their narratives. This involved investigating and revisiting literature around unexpected themes but also a change in direction around enthusiasms, which was originally anticipated to be only an incidental aspect of the study.

#### 7.2.1 Investigating only men from enthusiast and hobby groups

My initial plan was to interview men involved in a variety of organised activities, which would include men who are members of enthusiast groups, as well as men who a part of community men’s sheds, service clubs (such as Rotary or Lions), and involved in formal volunteering. My first two interviews were, by chance, with men who were members of enthusiast groups and although I had a vague interest in their particular hobbies, I found their passion and enthusiasm infectious. Further examination of the men and masculinities, and gerontological literature showed that this was an unexplored area of investigation.

#### 7.2.2 Unexpected results

I had expected to observe some influence of wider cultural narratives in the men’s personal narratives. I was surprised and shocked by the extent to which these personal narratives were influenced by the negative cultural narratives of male retirement. These negative cultural stories are so prevalent that even active, healthy, and happy retired men must constantly distance themselves from these cultural expectations. Presenting a ‘face’ to the world of happy, positive, involved male retirement is an act of *resistance* to such notions about what it means to be retired. In the absence of culturally recognised *positive* stories around male retirement these negative stories are the only narrative scaffolding available to build shared understandings of male retirement on. I suspect that the rejection, distancing, and resistance
to these negative narratives of male retirement are also attempts to discursively prevent the incorporation of these ageist ideas into one’s identity as a retired man.

I had expected the men, at some point in the interviews, to refer to themselves as ‘ageless’; as not perceiving or defining themselves by their chronological age (Kaufman, 1986). Other phenomenological and narrative work with older men had revealed a sense of self not linked to the men’s chronological age, in particular Fleming’s work on older men who have survived a stroke (2001). The continuation of enthusiast and work-like sub-identities consistent with aspects Kaufman’s concept, is the way that the men used the values and attitudes developed throughout their life as the lens through which they made sense of their current circumstances. No sense of an ‘ageless’ self was however observed.

Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence and I suspect that if explicitly questioned a sense of ‘agelessness’ would have emerged. Fleming and Kaufman’s research were with stroke survivors and residents of nursing homes respectively, and the sense of one’s self as ‘ageless’ is perhaps brought more to the fore when people have to deal with the bodily compromises that come of chronic illness and disability, which perhaps daily challenges one’s sense of being ‘ageless’.

7.3 Implications for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

7.3.1 Some implications for practice

This is a group of retired men who through their participation and involvement with their entusiasts are connected with other people. They report strong relationships with family and friends and all find a positive source of meaning and sense of self through their membership of various enthusiast groups. The men represent positive examples of social inclusion and connectedness. This raises the question: is there anything about the men’s experiences of participation that can be applied to other groups of older people who experience isolation and disconnection?

Conceptualising that meaningful participation for older people needs to be more than just membership of organised social activities for older people, such as senior citizens’ clubs and centres. Such organised activities for seniors are underutilised by men (Gotsis, 1999; Zinn, 2002), while organisations such as enthusiast groups, that on the whole have no difficulty attracting men are overlooked as effected strategies to reengage men with activities that interest them.
The Australian Government’s *Intergenerational Report* is particularly focused on the ‘participation’ of older people (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010), yet this key policy report only refers to workforce participation. It contains analyses of the social, health, and economic benefits of workforce participation but no acknowledgement of the value of other forms of participation, such as membership of an enthusiast group, for older people and society in general. The UK report *A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People*, from the Social Exclusion unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister takes a broader view of participation and sees involvement in “local interest groups” as one means of combating social exclusion, although no specific strategies around involvement in such groups are identified (Social Exclusion Unit, 2006, p. 18).

### 7.3.2 Possibilities for future research

#### 7.3.2.1 Need for complementary research into men’s and women’s experiences

This thesis is a contribution to the growing but still largely overlooked body of work into the “lived male experience” (Kenedy, 2012, p. 4). This research has not considered the parallel lived experiences of older women around enthusiasms. There has been increased interest in recent years of the experience of women’s involvement in traditional crafts (Gandolfo & Grace, 2009; Grace, 2006; Grace & Gandolfo, 2011) and while there appears to be superficial similarities between women’s experience of craft and men’s experience of hobbies and enthusiasms, especially around the generative nature of these activities, further exploration and comparison is needed. The experience of men and women engaged in ‘non-traditional’ leisure activities, such as men who embroider and women who restore machinery, would also provide valuable insights into the gendered nature and understandings of these pursuits.

The other significant group of women whose perspective is unknown are the wives and family members of male enthusiasts. The men interviewed spoke of their wives as both supportive of their enthusiasms and also being busy with their own pursuits and interests. Further study into wives and partners’ experiences is needed to develop an understanding of female perspectives of male enthusiasms, and wives’ experiences of their own and their husbands’ retirement. The husbands and wives in this, and other research, lead lives that are “independent and intertwined” (Roberto, 2012). Cultural diversity

The homogeneity of this sample makes it difficult to apply the study’s findings to other sub-populations of older men. Eight of the nine men were born in Australia and from an Anglo-Australian background, the one man born elsewhere came from an Anglo-European – South
African background and had worked in Australia for decades. Beneficial interventions have been developed which bring older men from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds together (Fildes, Cass, Wallner, & Owen, 2010). Given the diversity of what is considered as gender appropriate involvement in activities in old age across different cultures, research is needed into the cultural appropriateness of involvement in enthusiasms for men from different ethnicities and cultures, as well as the types of enthusiasms available to these groups of men. Involvement in enthusiasms involves identity continuity, so any such investigation needs to take into account hobbies and enthusiasms men have participated in early in their lives, which for many would be in their country of origin.

Given the absence of statistical data about men’s involvement in enthusiasms it is impossible to determine the relative number of men from different cultural backgrounds in the various enthusiasms. Investigations into the participation of men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds would be helpful to determine specific barriers that men from these backgrounds encounter, as well as ways to overcome any such barriers.

7.3.3 Understandings of Everyday Narrative

Some of the narrative constructs used by the men were outside of the narrative literature reviewed. These narrative constructions offer potential new insights into some of the ways narrative is used to create meaning in everyday life. Specifically: the ways that narratives bring different locations together within the metaphorical ‘narrative space’; the use of other cultural resources, in particular broader cultural or historical narratives, as narrative scaffolding to build personal narratives on; as well as, the incorporation of sensory phenomena, beyond the verbal, into narratives as way to create shared meaning.

7.3.3.1 ‘Narrative spatiality’

Matz’s concept of ‘narrative temporality’ explores the ways that narrative intersects the past, present, and future within the ‘narrative space’ that opens between the narrator and audience. Narratives allow a similar interrelationship to arise around space, with the ‘here’ and ‘there’ – the locations where the narrative occurs – coming together. I have coined the term narrative spatiality as an analogy of Matz’s “narrative temporality” (2011). It is my assertion that narratives organise space, location, and place, as experienced by the narrator and the listener, in much the same ways as they organise time (Matz, 2011). Narratives thus act in ways that bring the ‘then and there’ and the ‘here and now’ together discursively, in the metaphorical narrative space created between the narrator and listener.
7.3.3.2 Narrative meanings and non-verbal phenomena

Narrative meaning can be built, in part, through the addition of non-verbal sensory phenomena, such as touch. Jack invited me to touch the bowl he had made as a way for me to better understand the process he used to create it. The use of such tactile and other sensory incorporation of real world objects in everyday conversation is underexplored. People use non-verbal sensory phenomena (such as touch, taste, and smell) in this way in everyday conversations to enhance narratives. It may be the invitation to feel an article of clothing to experience the feel of the material or being offered a taste of an enjoyable meal. I have not, however, been able to identify any reference to such behaviour in the narrative literature. People are more than stories and stories are more than language. Some contemporary narratologists are exploring the importance of the visual in constructing narratives; these developments, however, focus on deliberately constructed images that are created by the researcher or research participants for the specific purpose of the research project (Riessman, 2008). Such new methodologies are valid and valuable contributions to our understanding of narrative; they do not, however, focus on non-verbal phenomena be it visual, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory in everyday conversation and story making. A conceptualisation of narrative meaning making that incorporates such non-verbal stimuli would be a valuable contribution to and extension of current understandings of narrative.

7.3.3.3 Narrative scaffolding

The structure that personal narratives use also helps create narrative coherence. It is not just that narratives need to be ordered in certain ways to make sense; narrators use the form of accepted cultural narratives to structure their own personal narratives. These cultural narratives are part of the narrative scaffolding that we use to build our own narratives and life stories on. Of course, cultural narratives are not the only cultural resource available to construct and structure personal narratives and life stories around. The aspect of Arthur’s life story that concerns his own work in computer manufacturing uses the parallel history of computer manufacturing in Australia as the narrative scaffolding on which the story of his own working life can be built around.

This process of narrative scaffolding appears similar in some ways to the ‘scaffolding’ of extended mind theory. Proponents of extended mind theory postulate that external resources of other people or objects can be used as ‘scaffolding’ to build and reconstruct individual memories around (Barnier, 2010). In this way there is a link between individual memory and group or collective memory, mediated through these external resources. Further investigation into the role external people, objects, and narratives play in building individual memory and
narratives is warranted and perhaps external mind theory has something to offer understandings of narrative and vice versa.

7.4 Limitations

7.4.1 Selection bias and the Homogeneity of the Sample

Recruitment unwittingly biased the sample towards middle-class men who were very actively involved in their enthusiasm. The over-representation of middle-class participants could be due, in part, to selection being based purely on written communication between me and the various enthusiast groups. Further qualitative and quantitative investigations are needed to determine the class, cultural, and language mix of men involved in these enthusiasms. I suspect that these organisations attract and maintain more middle-class participants, as a reasonable amount of personal, financial and skills based resources are needed to participate in most of the enthusiasms investigated.

The self-selecting nature of recruitment may have also biased the sample towards men who are most interested in their enthusiasm. The majority of men interviewed held some position of responsibility in their enthusiast clubs and I suspect they were the ones most likely to have opened my original letter seeking participants. A more diverse base of enthusiasms, with a focus on those that require little or no additional resources, may have resulted in a greater mix of men from different cultural and class backgrounds. Likewise, snowball methods of recreating, through those already interviewed, may have resulted in greater diversity in research participants.

The homogeneity of the men interviewed makes it difficult to apply these findings to other sub-populations of retired men with any degree of certainty. This is particularly true for the finding of the seemingly new ‘I left at the right time’ cultural narrative. I can find no reference to this narrative in other academic or popular literature and a wider investigation of retired people’s narratives about retirement is needed to determine if this narrative exists outside of the circle of married men involved in enthusiast groups in western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

The homogeneity of the sample does not however limit the importance of the finding that these men use negative cultural narratives of male retirement as a way to reinforce their own positive experiences of being retired. Negative cultural narratives of male retirement are widespread in the community (Biddulph, 1995; P. A. Crawford, 2000; Mackay, 2007) and it
is not surprising that these men also refer to them as a way to create shared meaning with their listener. That all of the men interviewed used these negative cultural narratives indicates that even this group of relatively privileged middle class men have internalised these negative stories and narratives.

The homogeneity of the sample does allow for greater certainty of the extent to which these findings can be applied to this particular sub-population of retired men, namely married middle-class men involved in an enthusiasm. This has also brought together a group of men who report having a mostly happy and meaningful retirement. Such a sample allows for analysis of the positive attributes and environmental factors that contribute to a ‘good’ retirement.

7.4.1.1 Collective and Shared Identities

Arthur used the first-person plural pronoun (“we” or “us”) whenever he spoke about his former work colleagues but he used first-person singular (“I” or “me”) when talking about other times in his life. This intriguing change of pronoun was only observed in Arthur’s narratives and perhaps represents a sort of collective identity with his former colleagues. Perhaps a sociolinguistic exploration into the use of first-person singular and plural pronouns in personal narratives would reveal more about the construction and presentation of such collective identities.

7.5 Overall Significance of the Study

Men who have the opportunity to continue to be involved with their enthusiasms through their lives are able to sustain positive meaning and sense of self through this continued involvement with the hobbies and enthusiasms they love. It would seem that in contemporary Australian society these men are unable to share these positive experiences and meanings without reference to negative cultural narratives about male retirement. There are no cultural resources or narratives within the general culture to describe positive aspects of male retirement. Retirees are, however, within their own communities and subcultures forming new narratives, which allow them to share their common experiences around leaving work.

It is regrettable that, as a culture, we can only conceptualise retirement as a time of decline, withdrawal, and dependency to the point where even this group of relatively privileged white, middle-class, reasonably affluent men all frame their experience of retirement around and against the pervasive negative cultural attitudes of retirement, despite this not being their
own experience. This, in effect, demeans retirement and retirees, as it perpetuates the attitudes that retired men are idle, underfoot, and unwell without offering any positive counter narratives.

Exploring experience and life context, as revealed by the men’s narratives, has allowed this research to take a rational and compassionate approach to older men. The men’s narratives reveal some of the complexities of their lives, relationships, and social and physical environments. A fuller and richer understanding of the contradictions and ambiguities of the men’s lives was built up through narrative analysis, which in turn uncovered aspects of both the men’s strengths and the contributions they continue to make to their families, communities, and enthusiasms, as well as the challenges they face. This fuller, more rational understanding of older men’s lives builds up a more nuanced compassionate appreciation of men and men’s lives, as recommended by Macdonald and Brown (2011), in order to build a better understanding of the “lived male experience” across the life span (Kenedy, 2012, p. 4).

Positive cultural shifts are however possible and perhaps the change in cultural expectations and development of new cultural narratives around fathers provides hope for retired men. In recent decades the discussion around becoming a father has changed. Cultural expectations and narratives around fathers have changed from fathers not being present at birth or involved with the care of infants, to societal expectations of involved fathers. This shift in cultural narratives about fathers reflects changes in men’s experiences of becoming fathers as well as societal expectations. The changing narratives around fatherhood have made it easier for fathers to discuss their positive emotional experiences of becoming and being fathers in ways not previously available to men (Fletcher, 2011). The experience of grandfathering has likewise changed in recent decades, with men constructing identities of being a grandfather around these changing experiences (Tarrant, 2013). While men themselves talk of these experiences I do not think it has reached the wider culture to the extent that the changing roles of fathers has. Similar change is needed around male retirement – to give retirees language and cultural resources that reflect their positive experiences. Such a change in cultural expectations and language would have an additional benefit for those still working as it will create positive expectations around retirement.

The discussion on generativity and legacy makes one think, naturally enough, about my own legacy. This thesis, a reflection on others’ work and legacies, is now paradoxically part of my own legacy. It is my sincere wish that this thesis and my interpretations of the men’s lives and legacy, has done justice to the trust they placed in me by sharing their stories.
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Appendix A  Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title:  An Investigation into Retired and Retrenched Men’s Community Participation.

Who is carrying out the study?
You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Anthony Brown, Centre for Social Justice and Social Change, University of Western Sydney.

The research will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Professor John Macdonald, Foundation Chair of Primary Health.

What is the study about?
The purpose is to investigate the types of organisations men join in retirement and what men think and feel about these organisations. The research is also looking to see if there is any connection with the community groups and organisation men get involved with in retirement and their previous paid work.

What does the study involve?
The study involves two interviews of between 60 and 90 minutes each. The interviews will be conducted in a mutually agreed place, and this place should be a safe environment for both you and the researcher. During the interviews you will be asked about your involvement with community and voluntary organisations, as well as questions about retirement and your previous paid work. Each interview will be recorded on audio tape for later transcription. You will also be asked to complete a short questionnaire about your involvement in the organisation and other personal information.

How much time will the study take?
Each interview will take between 60 and 90 minutes, with a period of up to 4 weeks between interviews. The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes to complete.

Will the study benefit me?
The study will have little direct benefit to you. The study will find out more about what motivates retired men to join community and enthusiast organisations. This knowledge will be used to help these organisations better plan how to recruit retired men, and will also be used to help ensure that men have better and happier retirements, by having more relevant choices available to them.
Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
It is very unlikely that this study will cause you any discomfort. If in the course of the interview you feel uncomfortable or distressed the interview can be suspended. For help, or for a discussion about where you can find help, you can contact the counselling Intake Workers at Hawkesbury Community Health on (02) 4560 5714. Lifeline also offers free telephone counselling and support 24 hours a day on 13 11 14.

How is this study being paid for?
The study is being paid for in part by support from the University of Western Sydney, through their student support schemes, and in part by the researcher.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication and presentations may also be made at conferences based on the results of the research. Individual participants will not be identified in such reports or presentations.
At the completion of the research a brief summary of the results will be sent to all participants.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator's contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Anthony Brown will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Prof. John Macdonald, Anthony's supervisor and Professor of Primary Health, on (02) 4570 1123.

What if I have a complaint?
This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is HREC 06/034.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0063 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix B  Participant Informed Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators.

Note: If not all of the text in the row is visible please ‘click your cursor’ anywhere on the page to expand the row. To view guidance on what is required in each section ‘hover your cursor’ over the bold text.

Project Title: An Investigation into Retired and Retrenched Men's Community Participation.

I, __________________________, consent to participate in the research project titled "An Investigation into Retired and Retrenched Men's Community Participation".

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or where appropriate, ‘have had read to me’] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher(s).

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to being interviewed twice by Anthony Brown and to completing the questionnaire. I understand that each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) now or in the future.

Signed: __________________________

Name: __________________________

Date: __________________________
Appendix C  Letter to Participants

RESEARCH INTO RETIRED MEN AND THEIR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Dear [Participant’s name],

I would like to invite you to part of the research I am conducting into retired men’s community involvement, as part of my PhD at the University of Western Sydney.

The research aims to develop a better understanding of the types of organisations men join in retirement and what men think and feel about these organisations. The research is also looking to see if there is any connection with the community groups and organisations men get involved with in retirement and their previous paid work.

Being part of this research involves one interview of between 60 and 90 minutes, the interview will be conducted in a mutually agreed place, and this place should be safe environment for the researcher. During the interview I will ask you about your involvement with [Name of Organisation], as well as questions about retirement and your previous paid work. I will also ask you to complete a short questionnaire about your involvement in the organisation and other personal information.

The results from this research will be used in research papers for academic journals and for presentations at conferences. It will also be used to design training and information for people working with men and older people to encourage a better understanding of what retirement and community involvement is like for men. This could lead to more opportunities for men to get involved with interesting and relevant activities in retirement. If the organisation you belong to so wishes you I can also give a special presentation on the results of this research at the conclusion of the study.

No person information about you will be used in any of these reports, trainings or presentations. Your name and other personal details will be changed so you can not be identified.

Some men have found that talking about work and retirement can make them uncomfortable or distressed. If in the course of the interview you feel uncomfortable or distressed the interview can be suspended. You can also contact Mr. Micheal Woods who is a Registered Psychologist on (02) 4570 1550. LifeLine also offers telephone counselling and support 24 hours a day on 13 11 14.
You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without providing an explanation.

This research is being supervised by Prof. John Macdonald. If you have any questions about the research or your participation they can be directed to me on (02) 4570 1712 or Prof. Macdonald on 0404 008 760 or (02) 4570-1123.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Anthony Brown

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee or Panel (indicate Committee or Panel). The Approval Number is 06/034. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee/Panel through the Research Ethics Officers (tel.: 02 4736 0883 or 4736 0884). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix D  Letter to Organisations

29 April 2013

The Secretary
[Organisation Name]
[Address]

Dear Secretary,

RE: RESEARCH INTO RETIRED MEN AND THEIR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Western Sydney, researching retired men and the organisations they join.

My research is looking at what retired men think and feel about being a volunteer or member of a community organisation. It is also investigating any relationship between how men think about this volunteering or membership, and their previous paid employment.

The Sydney Antique Machinery Club Inc. is an organisation that gives retired men such an opportunity and I believe there is much that members of the Sydney Antique Machinery Club can inform this research. The Sydney Antique Machinery Club was chosen at random from a list of organisations who work with men. The list was put together from me from publicly available information such as phone books, internet and fliers left in public places such as libraries or community centres.

I would like to interview 4 or 5 of your active members or volunteers who have been retired from paid work for at least 2 years. I would be very grateful if you could let members / volunteers know about this invitation. I have attached a flier with invitation about the research and inviting men to be involved, if you could place this on a notice board, add it to a newsletter or table it at an appropriate meeting I would be very grateful.

The research will be used to help organisations have a better understanding of what men are interested in and better ways to recruit and retain retired men. I also plan to present the final research at various men’s health and older people conferences, as well as publishing the results in academic journals and magazines. The publications and presentation will not identify individuals or organisations. I will change the names of any men and organisations who participate so they are not able to be identified.

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.../2
There is no obligation to be involved in this research, and should you decide not to pass this message onto members or volunteers there will be no negative consequences for the [organisation name]. Likewise should any members or volunteers of the [organisation name] decline to be interviewed there will be no negative consequences.

Should you like more information then please fell free to contact me on (02) 4570 1713 or mobile 0414 190 198, or by email anthony.brown@uws.edu.au. My supervisor in this research is Professor John Macdonald who you can also contact for more information. Prof Macdonald can be contacted on (02) 4570 1123. I am also happy to visit your organisation for more information about the research, I am happy to come along to any meeting or get together and give information to everyone, or meet with you individually.

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee or Panel (indicate Committee or Panel). The Approval Number is HREC 06/034. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 4736 0883 or 4736 0884). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Brown
Appendix E  Suggested Notice for Newsletters

RESEARCH INTO RETIRED MEN AND THEIR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

UWS RESEARCHER WOULD LIKE TO INTERVIEW MEN WHO HAVE BEEN RETIRED FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS.

Anthony Brown is conducting research into retired men and community involvement, as part of doctoral research at the University of Western Sydney (UWS).

The project is looking at retired men’s involvement, as a volunteer or member, of various community groups and organisations. Anthony is interested in what retired men think and feel about their involvement and if there are links between current community involvement and previous paid work.

The results of this research will be used to educate people and organisations working with retired men about better ways to recruit and retain men in their groups and organisations. It is hoped that by better understanding what retirement and community involvement is like for men more opportunities will be created for men to get involved with interesting and relevant activities in retirement.

Anthony would like to interview members of the [organisation name] about this. Each interview lasts between 60-90 minutes and takes place at a time and place of mutual convenience.

If you have been retired from paid work for at least 2 years, and are interested in being part of this study then please contact Anthony at UWS during office hours on (02) 4570 1713, or on his mobile 0414 190 198, or by email anthony.brown@uws.edu.au. After you contact Anthony you will be sent more information about the research.

Contacting Anthony does not in any way obligate you to be interviewed, and you are free to leave the process at any time without explanation, with no negative consequences for you or [organisation name].

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee or Panel (Indicate Committee or Panel). The Approval Number is HREC 06/034. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 4736 0883 or 4736 0884). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

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