



INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POST-INJURY
OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE AND PERSISTENT OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY

A mixed methodological study combining quantitative analysis of a
survey of adult Australians with qualitative analysis of interviews
with Truck Drivers who have experienced occupational change.

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ABSTRACT

The literature regarding occupational change indicates that identification with one occupation can present a barrier to making the change to another. Rehabilitation Counsellors are often given the responsibility of assisting individuals to make that change, usually through vocational counselling. The principles which underpin the conduct of vocational counselling commonly do not include consideration of the effect of persistent occupational identity on occupational change. While the concept of occupational identity has been the topic of extensive research for several decades there is no consensus regarding its definition, or how it is different from related concepts and very limited research into how it may influence the outcome of attempted occupational change after injury. Consequently, this study had three aims. Clarification of what occupational identity is; an examination of the experience of occupational identity; and an exploration of its influence on post-injury experiences of occupational change. A mixed methodological approach was adopted consisting of a quantitative analysis of survey data, and qualitative analyses of the experience of occupational identity and post-injury attempts at returning to a more suitable occupation. The survey involved 336 participants who provided demographic details relevant to their working life and an assessment of the level of their occupational identity. Analyses of chi-squared tests indicated that gender, level of educational qualification, employment status and occupational type were influential on the level of occupational identity. As a result of these analyses, recommendations are presented for how occupational identity might be defined and differentiated from related concepts. The qualitative analyses consisted of semi-structured interviews with 11 Truck Drivers who had experience of career disruption due to injury. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method was used to identify themes connecting the experience of both occupational identity and attempts at occupational change. Several themes relevant to occupational identity were identified, including the involvement of a specific agent in its genesis, and a sense of power associated with its maintenance. Themes relevant to occupational change confirmed that a persistent occupational identity presented a substantial barrier to a successful change to a more suitable occupation. As a result of these analyses, recommendations are made for the enhancement of vocational counselling strategies. The implications of a persistent occupational identity on the negotiation of other biographical disruptions are raised as it has the potential to be prevent changes of occupation occasioned by a range of other life changing events.

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I would like to extend a special acknowledgement to the Truck Drivers who shared their stories with me. This is their thesis, I just did the typing.

CERTIFICATION

I, Ross Girdler, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the conferral of the degree Doctor of Philosophy (Integrated), from the University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Ross Girdler

2nd May 2023

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Article describing research topic in 'Big Rigs' truck magazine, February 2019
<https://www.bigrigs.com.au/news/university-research-aims-to-help-injured-truckies-/3638971/>
- Winner, Safework NSW Centre for Work Health and Safety Colloquium poster presentation. Aug 2019
- Winner, Global Challenges Travel Scholarship Video Challenge 2019
(<https://vimeo.com/369434963>)
- Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Australia, NSW Branch Professional Development presentation August 2022 **“Translating Evidence into Practice - Human Factors Challenges and Design of Work”**

PUBLICATIONS (UNDER REVIEW/ IN PREPARATION)

Papers based on the analysis of qualitative interviews are planned and will be prepared for submission in late 2023. Potential titles include “An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Occupational Identity in Australian Truck Drivers” and “An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Attempted Occupational Change Amongst Australian Truck Drivers”.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO)

Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC)

Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC)

Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities (HWCA)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Rehabilitation Counsellors Association of Australasia (RCAA)

Glossary of Terms

Occupation

As defined in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Statistics New Zealand 2013, p. 51; Rubin & Roessler 2016).

An 'occupation' is defined as a set of jobs that require the performance of similar or identical sets of tasks. As it is rare for two actual jobs to have identical sets of tasks, in practical terms, an 'occupation' is a set of jobs whose main tasks are characterised by a high degree of similarity.

Occupational Change

A change in occupation which is enacted either voluntarily or through force of circumstance, including injury.

Rehabilitation Counsellor

“A Rehabilitation Counsellor is an Allied Health and Human Services Professional who works with individuals experiencing injury, disability and/or social disadvantage to achieve occupational, personal and social goals.” (Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia 2011, p. 3)

Vocational Counselling

Usually conducted as part of the vocational assessment process which attempts to identify suitable and sustainable vocational options and present strategies to address barriers which prevent realising those options. Vocational counselling involves assisting the worker to achieve a change in occupation and adjust to their new circumstances (Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities Australia & New Zealand 2015).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Positionality Statement of the Researcher

Since 1996 I have worked as a Rehabilitation Counsellor and have deliberately focused my professional efforts on vocational counselling and assessment, initially with the aim of assisting injured workers to find suitable employment in a new occupation, and since 2005 as a Consultant Forensic Vocational Capacity Assessor, assisting courts to understand the vocational implications of injuries and illnesses as an expert witness. As part of my current role, I have conducted over 1,000 vocational assessments and when doing so I am often asked to review the vocational assessments of others. In my experience, where once vocational assessment may have resulted in recommendations for rehabilitation counselling to address identified difficulties with adjustment or adaptation to disability, for at least the past decade those recommendations have gradually become less frequent and are now almost entirely absent. There are likely to be several reasons for this omission, some of which are systemic. One reason however, which seems probable to me, is that the sponsors of such interventions do not value them and are consequently less likely to approve funding for them. If rehabilitation counselling is not valued because it is perceived to be ineffective, the relevance of the profession Rehabilitation Counsellor is diminished, and the needs of injured workers are potentially ignored.

One possible means of increasing the effectiveness of rehabilitation counselling occurred to me some years ago during a vocational counselling session, and it inspired me to commence my research journey. The worker I was counselling was a Truck Driver unable to return to driving due to a work-related injury. Collaboratively, the worker and I examined their vocational interests, existing qualifications, transferable skills, aptitudes, training needs and labour market barriers to identify, eventually, viable occupations to which they could commit themselves. At the end of this process, I asked the worker to consider the options generated and indicate to me which one they favoured most. They looked at the shortlist and replied, “none of them”. Confused, I asked the worker to explain their response. They looked at me and replied with finality, “I’m a Truck Driver”.

This statement caused a realisation in me that the worker so strongly identified with their occupation that they could not contemplate work in any other. By saying “I am a Truck Driver”, I believed that the worker was clearly indicating that their occupation formed a substantial part of their self-identity, and that this identification was so strong that they could not conceive of themselves ‘as’ anything else. I was not assisting them to change their occupation, I was asking them to change who they were.

I did not recall encountering such a concept during my studies and engaged in an informal literature review. I found that Erik Erikson, among others, had described the development of an occupational identity, but proposed that it involved identification as a youth with a future career, not specifically an occupation, and not later in life. I believed what I had noticed was simply not considered in any model of vocational counselling, and that a greater understanding of this concept could potentially lead to better return-to-work outcomes.

1.2 Background to the Project

In Australia, there are more than half a million work-related injuries and illnesses each year (Social Research Centre 2022) and approximately a quarter of a million injuries resulting from motor vehicle accidents (Economic Connections 2017). In general, paid employment is beneficial for physical and mental health and well-being (Waddell & Burton 2006). Long term work absence has negative physical and mental health impacts which worsen over time and, In 2012/2013 work-related injury and illness cost Australia \$61 billion which represented 4.1% of Gross Domestic Product.

Mitigating the effects of injuries sometimes involves allied health attempts at restoring, or partially restoring, pre-injury employment status through occupational rehabilitation (Allied Health Professions Australia 2022). However, Australian workers compensation statistics indicate that, of those whose work-related injury or illness resulted in at least one day off work, and who were subsequently able to return to work, almost 20% were not in employment when surveyed (Social Research Centre 2022). This does not compare well with the unemployment rate of 10.3% for all people with a disability who participate in the labour force, or even the 12.7% unemployment rate of participating people with a profound or severe limitation (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). While there are doubtless many reasons for these results, the focus of the research described in this thesis concerns the potentially significant role that occupational identity plays in influencing return-to-work outcomes, specifically when a return to a pre-injury occupation is no longer a viable option.

1.3 Rehabilitation Counsellors, Vocational Counselling and Assessment and Occupational Identity

In Australia, a Rehabilitation Counsellor is an allied health professional who has expertise in, among other things, vocational counselling and assessment, and who uses that expertise to assist people who experience injury, disability or other social disadvantage to achieve their occupational goals (Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia 2011). The purpose of vocational counselling and assessment is to identify those goals, and recommend strategies to achieve employment in

them by analysing the individual's work profile and matching that profile with the characteristics of potentially suitable occupations (Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities Australia & New Zealand 2015). It is used in workers compensation, compulsory third party and personal injury settings and should include consideration of the individual's functional capacity; education and qualifications; transferable skills; literacy and numeracy; vocational interests; and an assessment of their personality (Fedoric 2022).

Career identity (Fedoric 2022) and vocational identity (The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors 2015) are recommended as considerations for Rehabilitation Counsellors however these concepts are defined as the individual's ability to make decisions regarding career change. The concept of occupational identity is not currently a part of the lexicon of Rehabilitation Counsellors and this is evidenced by its absence from the core competencies expected of them which focus more broadly on assisting in the process of psychosocial adjustment and adaptation to disability (Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia 2011; The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors 2015). The concept of psychosocial adjustment and adaptation to disability consequently has the advantage of widespread recognition amongst Rehabilitation Counsellors, whereas, despite several decades of research, the concept of occupational identity is either unknown or disregarded.

First introduced by Psychotherapist Erik Erikson (Erikson 1968) and Sociologists Howard Becker and James Carper (Becker & Carper 1956), occupational identity has been examined by researchers from a range of perspectives including developmental psychology (Erikson 1995; Fadjukoff et al. 2010), social psychology (Stryker & Burke 2000), personality psychology (Wille & De Fruyt 2014), sociology (Becker & Carper 1956) career guidance (Brown 2015; Holland 1997), human resource management (Kira & Balkin 2014; Welbourne & Paterson 2017), occupational science (Bryson-Campbell et al. 2016; Kielhofner 2008), occupational therapy (Hansson et al. 2022) and occupational rehabilitation (Saunders & Nedelec 2014; Walder & Molineux 2017). Despite, or perhaps because of, the variety of research approaches, there has been limited consensus in how occupational identity might best be conceptualised.

Evidence of this can be found in the diversity of terminology used to describe the relationship between identity and work. Should the term occupational identity (Braveman et al. 2006; Unruh 2004), vocational identity (Holland et al. 1980; Waterman & Waterman 1976) or work identity (Miscenko & Day 2016) be used? Or is organisational identity (Gioia 2013), professional identity

(Bayerl et al. 2018; Trede et al. 2012) or vocational self-concept (Super 1951) preferable? Are occupational identity and vocational callings (Hirschi 2012) different? Are the terms 'occupational identity' and 'vocational identity' interchangeable (Brown et al. 2007; Grotevant & Thorbecke 1982), or should the use of any specific terminology at all be avoided (Christiansen 1999)? Does the concept apply to identification with a career in general (Erikson 1995), or a specific occupation (Leidner 2016; Styhre 2012)? Do occupations include only those performed for paid employment, or should other activities, such as gardening, be included (Nizzero et al. 2017; Unruh 2004)? In the face of such conceptual diffusion, it is understandable that some allied health professionals may have a lack of familiarity with it. Without a clear understanding of what occupational identity is, and is not, it is difficult to assign significance to it, or to understand how it might affect a person's ability to return to work in a new occupation after injury.

Explorations of the role of occupational identity on injury-induced occupational change was not the focus of early research activity, which was more concerned with the development of occupational identity in adolescence, predominantly influenced by Erikson's conceptualisation (see for example Marcia 1966). Later research, particularly that taken from a sociological or occupational science perspective (Hall 1971; Styhre 2012), broadened this focus to include mid-life occupational change, however studies which included occupational change as a result of injury are limited, and almost exclusively describe situations in which occupational identity has been extinguished after injury or illness (Braveman et al. 2006; Bryson-Campbell et al. 2016; Cotton 2012). References to the potentially negative effect of persistent occupational identity are even more limited (Bimrose et al. 2008).

1.4 Research Question

To understand the influence of occupational identity on post-injury attempts at occupational change, three areas require investigation. Firstly, the concept of occupational identity must be clarified, and differentiated from similar concepts. Once this is achieved, occupational identity can then be examined specifically and comprehended more fully. Finally, equipped with this knowledge, the effect of occupational identity on post-injury attempts at changing occupations to more viable alternatives can be explored. Thus, there are three research questions. How is occupational identity defined and differentiated from similar concepts; what is the experience of occupational identity; and how does occupational identity influence occupational change?

1.5 Project Aims and Objectives

The aims of the research project are to investigate the relationship between occupational identity and occupational change; and to discuss the implications of a persistent occupational identity on the practice of vocational counselling. The objectives associated with those aims are firstly to investigate the occupational identity of adult Australians through the administration of an anonymous on-line survey. Following statistical analysis of that survey, the second objective is to propose definitions for the variety of terms used to describe the ways we identify with work. Based on those definitions, the next objective is to use semi-structured interviews to provide data relevant for analyses of the experience of occupational identity and occupational change amongst the members of one specific occupation (Truck Drivers). Once achieved, that analysis will then assist with the next objective of identifying the role of a persistent occupational identity in presenting a barrier to occupational change. The final objective, presenting the implications of the research conclusions for improvement in the effectiveness of Rehabilitation Counsellors, can then be achieved.

Addressing these aims and objectives involved a series of inter-related stages (refer to Figure 1).

Stage 1 is comprised of a comprehensive review of the literature and a statistical analysis of the results of the survey. Stage 2 is a phenomenological analysis of the semi-structured interviews with Truck Drivers. Stage 3 is the discussion and presentation of the implications of Stages 1 and 2 for Rehabilitation Counsellors and vocational counselling.

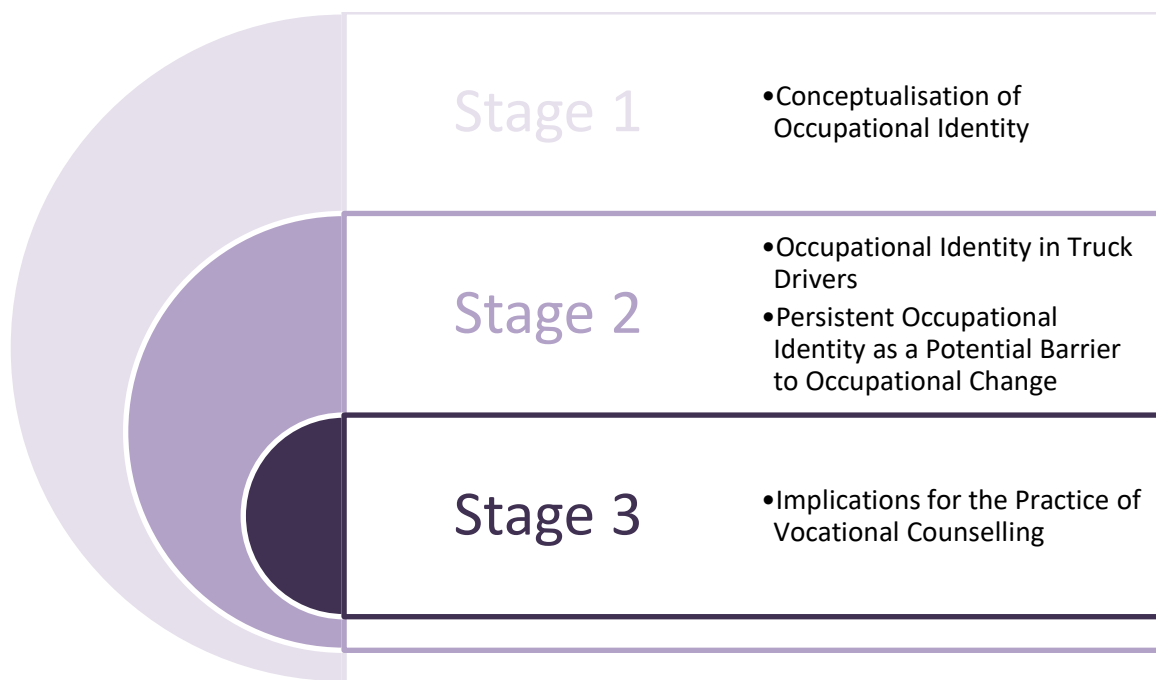


Figure 1.1. Diagram of the research project.

1.6 Thesis Overview

As detailed in Figure 2, this thesis is structured such that each chapter builds on the last enabling the project aims and objectives, detailed in section 1.5, to be addressed in a logical sequence, culminating in recommendations with the potential to improve the effectiveness of Rehabilitation Counsellors and leading to better outcomes for individuals attempting occupational change.

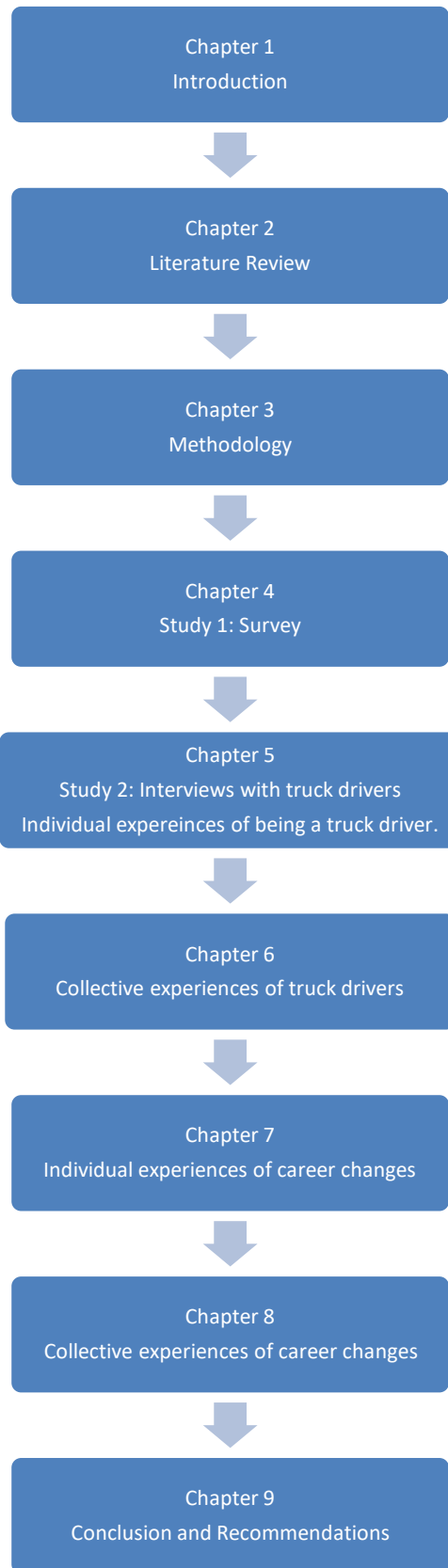


Figure 1.2. Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature relevant to the research project. Commencing with an examination of the development of theories of identity, occupational identity and related concepts were investigated with a focus on the effect of occupational identity on occupational change. The chapter concludes with a review of the research evidence base specific to the role of Rehabilitation Counsellors and, in particular, the practice of vocational counselling. This literature review identified a lack of conceptual consensus regarding occupational identity. Research evidence regarding the effect of occupational identity on occupational change was found to lack exploration of the effect of a persistent occupational identity. Of significant concern is the limited evidence of consideration of the effects of occupational identity within the practice of vocational counselling by Rehabilitation Counsellors

Chapter 3 presents the methodology applied within the project. The ontological and epistemological considerations which form the foundations the research project, and the methodological ramifications of those considerations, are detailed. Discussion of the mixed methodological approach provides justification for that choice with reference to the research questions and the literature reviewed. The quantitative and qualitative methodologies which are integrated in the research project are described and the research design is detailed.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of an anonymous online survey administered to Australian adults of working age (Study 1). This study sought to address the lack of conceptual consensus identified in the literature review (Chapter 2) through analysis of quantitative data from an anonymous online survey. The survey consisted of a questionnaire which included items designed to assess the extent of occupational identity amongst adult Australians, and to explore whether demographic variables relevant to employment may be influential on the prevalence and strength of that identification. The analysis provides the basis for recommendations regarding a clarification of the conceptual confusion found in the literature, which in turn forms a framework for analyses of qualitative data detailed in subsequent chapters.

Having quantitatively established in chapter 4 a framework which clarifies the variety of conceptualisations of occupational identity identified in chapter 2 by applying a methodology in accordance with chapter 3, the research project extends the methodology and enters the qualitative phase in Chapters 5 to 8 (inclusive). The aim of the qualitative component of the research project is to gain a greater understanding of the experience of occupational identity, and to examine how, if it

persists, it can influence the outcome of occupational change. These chapters comprise an analysis of data obtained from the experiences of 11 Truck Drivers through semi-structured interviews.

The choice of Truck Drivers as participants was essentially arbitrary, and any occupation, or combination of occupations, from the almost one thousand which have been identified in the Australian and New Zealand labour market (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Statistics New Zealand 2013) could have been selected. Chapter 5 includes the reasoning behind this approach however some context regarding the nature of truck driving may be helpful. The National Skills Commission (2016) records that there are 137,200 Truck Drivers in the Australian labour market, 87% of whom work full time for an average of 50 hours per week. Their average age is 48 years, which is higher than the average for all occupations (40 years). Females comprise 3% of the workforce. Educationally, 42% of Truck Drivers have Year 10 qualifications or below. It is a comparatively dangerous occupation with the fatality rate amongst Machine Operators and Drivers being the highest in Australia (8.4 per 100,000 workers) and more than double the rate of the next highest group (Labourers, 3.5 per 100,000). Serious injury claims by Machine Operators and Truck Drivers represent 14% of the total for the Australian workforce (Safe Work Australia 2021). In 2020, 31 heavy truck occupants were killed in motor vehicle accidents. In 2018, 510 were hospitalised (Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics 2020).

While those statistics reveal quantitatively something about that occupation, Chapter 5 examines qualitatively the 11 individual experiences of 'being' a Truck Driver. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method is employed to identify themes from an iterative, line-by-line analysis of each participant's interview transcript. Chapter 6 then details the comparison of those individual analyses to identify patterns and generate collective themes, again in accordance with the IPA method.

All the participants experienced the prospect of occupational change. Their experiences of attempting those changes were again subject to IPA interpretation, and those individual experiences, and the themes that emerged from them, are detailed in chapter 7. Chapter 8 compares those individual themes and groups them into collective themes, as in chapter 6.

The result of the qualitative analyses of the participant interviews in chapters 5 to 8 (inclusive) is confirmation of the nature of occupational identity as experienced by the participants, and that a

persistent occupational identity can potentially present a substantial barrier to achieving occupational change.

Combining the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses included in Chapters 4 to 8 (inclusive), Chapter 9 discusses those results with reference to the work of Rehabilitation Counsellors and the principles which currently underpin that work. Specifically, the currently existing focus on vocational counselling for psychosocial adjustment and adaptation is questioned, and the importance of including a consideration of the influence of persistent occupational identity is emphasised. Chapter 9 then presents recommendations for changes to vocational counselling strategies to incorporate this emphasis, and the broader implications of the conclusions of this thesis for other areas in which a persistent occupational identity might be relevant are raised.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Purpose and Scope of the Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter was to present a review of existing literature relevant to the effect of a persistent occupational identity on occupational change, with particular reference to the work of Rehabilitation Counsellors in addressing that effect. Hart (2018) distinguishes between Interventionist (Systematic) and Scholastic (Traditional) literature reviews. The purpose of the former is to review all available evidence to decide on practical matters relating for example to medical, social or economic interventions. The purpose of a Scholastic literature review is to analyse and challenge conceptual propositions on a topic, resolve contradictions and acquire higher levels of understanding. The scholastic reviewer seeks to understand and interpret the different conceptual contributions that have been made. While the ultimate aim of this research project is to make recommendations for improvements to vocational counselling, achieving that aim requires gaining an understanding of the concept of occupational identity, and related concepts. Consequently, a Scholastic literature review was indicated. Barnett-Page and Thomas (2009) noted that, while quantitative research syntheses are commonly divided into either meta-analyses or narrative syntheses, there is a profusion of terms which can be applied to qualitative research synthesis. Of the nine methods they identified, the Meta-Narrative Review method developed by Greenhalgh et al. (2005) most closely described the context of the research review conducted for this research project as it involves identifying seminal works from different fields, noting tension between the different paradigms with the aim of resolving contradictions. While there are contextual similarities, the first stage of the Meta-Narrative Review method is to assemble a multi-disciplinary panel, a process which was beyond the scope of this research project. According to Smith et al. (2009), the aim of literature reviews in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, described in Chapter 3) is to educate the reader about the key contributions to the field with reference to their merits, and to present an argument for why the research project is useful. They recommend that the literature review be “quite short” (p43). The IPA method was used in Part B of this project and, while its recommended literature review aims are concordant with the aims of the research project, a ‘short’ review was considered insufficient given the long history of research into occupational identity, and the number of conceptualisations encountered, which demanded a more extensive review.

This extensive review of the literature informed the project by adopting a broad approach to the literature search. Adopting a broad literature search necessitated stringent filtering of results to ensure that only the most relevant of sources was included. The result is an exclusive cross-section of the literature presenting key references directly relevant to the topics covered.

The methodology applied in this general review of the literature comprised searches of the following electronic databases:

- APH Psychinfo and Psycharticles
- Cinahl+ with full text
- EBSCO host
- Google Scholar
- Medline
- Proquest
- University of Wollongong library catalogue

Additionally, cited reference searches were undertaken through use of specific Journals, books or ebooks, reference lists were reviewed, and relevant grey literature identified. The latter included government statistical data and Australian and international peak body publications.

Sources consulted were all limited to those written in English. Research studies included quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods designs. The variety of designs reflected the diversity of disciplines within which the relevant topics have been explored, from those which embrace a realist ontology to post-modern/post-structural and narrative approaches.

The key search terms applied to the identification of research and opinion based publications were 'identity' 'occupational identity', 'work identity', 'vocational identity', 'professional identity' and 'vocational counselling'. These search terms generated several thousand potentially relevant publications each of which were subject to a filtering process to exclude unrelated topics such as, for example, gender, sexual, racial and national identity. Many of the remaining search results were discarded as they were only tangentially relevant and the primary filter was the relevance of the topic to identification with established and specific occupations. For example, most of the results generated by the search term 'vocational identity' were specific to the development of career identities in adolescents. Similarly, there were many hundreds of results generated by the search terms which were specific to 'professional identity', mostly related to the health and education professions and only some of which had broader implications for other occupations. As 'professional identity' and 'occupational identity' were considered different concepts and the development of a professional identity seemed to follow a specific path (refer to Chapter 4), most research into identification as a professional was excluded. The search terms also generated results which used a broader definition of 'occupation' and included identification with activities such as knitting. Most of those results were

also excluded. Despite careful filtering, over 200 relevant results were obtained, and their contents read and reviewed for possible inclusion.

The review first analysed the concept of identity. An historical overview was provided and some of the major schools of thought, beginning with the works of Freud and Mead, were summarised. In Section 2.3, the focus of the literature review narrowed to include publications concerned with the association between work and identity. It is in this section that the variety of conceptualisations, terminologies and definitions was revealed and described. Section 2.4 narrowed the review further to the small number of studies which considered identity, work and injury. The lack of research into the potential effects of a persistent occupational identity was noted. Section 2.5 introduced the literature specific to the role of Rehabilitation Counsellors and, specifically, how vocational counselling is traditionally used to address adjustment and adaptation to disability without reference to occupational identity.

2.2 Overview

While there is a considerable body of literature available to assist us in answering our research question, its potential is limited in two main ways. Firstly, understanding the impact of occupational identity on occupational change after injury begins with establishing an understanding of what is meant by some of the terms used in that statement. What is identity? What do we mean by occupation? What part, if any, do our occupations play in forming our identities, and what happens if we are unable to work in our occupations? The literature includes some answers to those questions, but they are various, with a notable lack of agreement. Secondly, the literature describes research into the concepts of identity, occupational identity, and the effect of injury on occupational identity, but examinations of the effect of an occupational identity which persists are rare and are usually not specific to biographical disruption due to injury. Thirdly, the literature relevant to the practice of Rehabilitation Counsellors is notably lacking any discussion of identification with specific occupations and current vocational counselling guidelines do not specifically broach this topic. The following literature review provided a summary of the main research conducted to date and highlights the need for further research into those three gaps which is the purpose of this research project.

2.3 Identity

The first, and perhaps the most challenging task was addressing the many different ideas of what is meant by 'identity'. The answers to this fundamental question are many and varied, with much of this variation occurring along disciplinary (psychological vs sociological) and sub-disciplinary (developmental psychology, social psychology, symbolic interactionism, cultural studies, pedagogical

studies) lines (Buckingham 2008; Holland et al. 1998). Within these camps, opinions differ about the centrality of influences including developmental stage, social interaction and culture. A detailed discussion of these differences is beyond the scope of this review, however the following represents an indicative summary.

Most authors cited either Sigmund Freud, George Mead and/or Lev Vygotsky as the inspiration for their theory of identity. For developmental psychologists (Erikson 1974; Erikson 1995), interest in identity begins with Freud's theorisations on self-definition, which he proposed was developed from the interplay between parental influences and the superego during the early years of development. Freud used the term 'identification' to describe the assimilation of external influences by an infant and it became an important part of early Freudian explanations for how children become socialised (Gleason 1983). Importantly, Freud considered that this identification remained largely unaltered during the individual's subsequent youth and adulthood (Schwartz 2009). For many social psychologists, sociologists and educationalists (Jarvis 2012; Stets & Burke 2003; Stryker & Burke 2000), Mead's symbolic interactionism and the concept of the self as being a product of the mind's patterned interaction with social structures, facilitated by language which reflexively conveys meaning in the form of symbols, was influential. For others, Vygotsky's marriage of mental processes and social activities was the starting point, sometimes combined with either Erikson (Penuel & Wertsch 1995) or Mead (Holland et al. 1998). A Phenomenological understanding of identity rejects the existence of an inner self and instead proposes that we are defined by our pursuits, activities and passions (Ashworth 2016). Postmodernist/poststructuralist and narrative identity authors reject the concept of a stable identity and consider it to be under constant transformation (Frie 2011; Savickas 2019a), although others find reason to combine this approach with Erikson's (Schachter 2005; Wurgaft 1995).

Erikson was credited with being the theorist most responsible for first shining the light onto the concept of identity for social scientists (Cieciuch & Topolewska 2017; Gleason 1983; Schwartz 2009). His book 'Childhood and Society' (Erikson 1995, first published in 1950) builds on the idea that identity is a product of human development by tracing psychosocial development throughout the lifespan of ego-identity. During the life cycle individuals experience either identity achievement or identity diffusion when forced to contend with a series of eight psychosocial developmental crises; trust vs mistrust; autonomy vs shame/doubt; initiative vs doubt; industry vs inferiority; identity vs role confusion; intimacy vs isolation; generativity vs stagnation; and integrity vs despair. In later works ['Identity and the Life Cycle' (Erikson & Rapaport 1959) and 'Identity Youth and Crisis' (Erikson 1968)], Erikson differentiates the ego from the 'I' and the 'Selves', explaining that the 'I' is a conscious entity

which makes our pre-conscious 'Selves' conscious when the ego agrees to make them so. The 'I' reflects on its body, personality and the roles it plays to create the many 'Selves' which make up the self. The ego is then an unconscious "inner agency" (p218), which differs from our 'I' by being an actor within us, rather than a part of us. Ego identity is the awareness of the "sameness and continuity" (p50) of this agency, whereas personal identity is based on the combined perceptions of the "selfsameness and continuity of one's existence in time and space" (p50) and the recognition by others of this sameness and continuity. Erikson's inclusion of a perception of the recognition of others foreshadows more recent definitions of identity which stress the centrality of its social determinants. For Erikson, however, identity formation is mostly an internal process linked through social interaction with the individual's milieu which is a creation of history, culture and the social world (Gleason 1983), but separate from them.

While Erikson's theory was not empirically developed, Marcia (1966) examined Erikson's theory empirically and subsequently operationalised it. Marcia defined identity as an internal, self-constructed and dynamic organisation combining "drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (Marcia 1980, p. 109) seemingly ignoring factors external to the individual. Whereas Erikson considered, to an uncertain extent, wider social and environmental factors, Marcia gives these little regard (Penuel & Wertsch 1995). To Erikson's identity achievement and identity diffusion statuses, Marcia added the statuses of identity moratorium and identity foreclosure. Marcia's work led to the development of different models of identity styles by several other authors, none of which combine to synthesise the concept of identity formation (Cieciuch & Topolewska 2017).

Social psychologists have, perhaps unsurprisingly, given greater emphasis to the role of social influences on the development of identity. Tajfel and Turner (1986) examined intergroup relations, and in particular identification with an in-group, focussing on unequal ethnic groups in conflict. They proposed that social groups allow members of that group to identify with the group in a relational way, different from members of other groups, either comparatively better or worse, a phenomenon they called social identity. Their Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits therefore that social identity is a self-image gained from a social category and may be positive or negative. Individuals strive for a positive social identity which is based on comparisons between the preferred in-group and a corresponding out-group. The emphasis on intergroup behaviour and on social identity is a departure from the personal identity on which Erikson and others had hitherto focussed. Tajfel and Turner (1986) partly justify this emphasis by pointing to the extremes of social behaviour, represented at one end by one-on-one interaction in which respective groups are not at all relevant, and at the other by

meetings between two or more group members, or groups, with no relevant interpersonal issues, noting that the first extreme occurs only rarely in real life. This distinction consequently largely ignores any role for interpersonal social influences on identity.

More recently, some social psychologists have joined sociologists and have broadened their understanding of how social interaction influences identity. Stryker (Stryker & Burke 2000) proposed an Identity Theory (IT) based on a structural addition to Mead's framework in which society is viewed as a relational interaction of a more or less organised array of groups crosscut by factors such as gender and class. Individuals live in social networks within these larger structures and have multiple identities as numerous as the social networks that they occupy. Identities are arranged hierarchically within an individual in accordance with their salience. Higher identity salience accords with a higher commitment to that identity. Burke (2004) proposed an Identity Control Theory (ICT) in which an individual's identity is confirmed when their self-definition as a person, role occupant or member of a group is compared with their perceptions of an identity standard in interactive situations. A successful match between self-definition and the perceived identity standard verifies the identity, a mismatch causes a re-evaluation and a move towards restoring that match. This represents a return to an inclusion of personal identity while still accommodating social identity. Culture is also implicated as influential in this theory through an acknowledgement that it is culture which names the roles and groups which make up social structures.

Research into identity has not been confined to psychologists. Occupational Therapists have also contributed to early discussions regarding definitions of the self and identity. One such perspective was provided by Christiansen (1999) who considered that the self begins with our awareness of our body, combined with our ability to make choices and act, resulting in direct feelings about thoughts, emotions and sensations. Personal identity was defined as the process of self-knowledge and Christiansen emphasised that identity itself exists entirely as a result of interpersonal relationships.

In the field of education, identity development is seen as the result of the struggle between biographies and social situations during which situated identities become integrated through processes which include transformative learning (Thunborg & Bron 2019). Illeris (2014) goes so far as to propose that "identity is created, developed and changed through learning" (p69).

The fluidity and impermanence of identity is emphasised in narrative identity theory and postmodern approaches. In common with SIT and IT, Career Construction Theory (CCT) acknowledges the role of

social structures in identity construction but extends it to include narrative identity processes. CCT posits the construction of career identities as occurring when people think of themselves in social roles in social contexts. Finding a niche in a social group solidifies identity and allows the person to be identified as part of a community. As identities are not stable, CCT suggests that identity changes are negotiated through autobiographical conversations which are microprocesses which provide bridges to new identities and supply consistent meanings available to the individual and others. Language plays a more central role in CCT, and culture is specifically noted as influential (Savickas 2019a). Narrating an answer to the question 'who am I' is a "privileged genre" (Bamberg 2011, p. 7) as it allows the narrator to perform acts of self-identification with reference to constantly changing factors such as context, space and time to express their uniqueness. Postmodern ideas of identity emphasise this fluidity and deny that there is a constancy of identity as cultural contexts are in a continual state of change, and with each change comes a change in identity. Accordingly, for many post modernists, the self and identity are illusory (Frie 2011). Munro (2004) rejects the notion of fluidity and suggests that, rather than fluid, the influences of time and context indicate that identity should be conceived as punctualised, defined as "the ability to 'cut' a particular figure when called to do so at a particular juncture in time" (p309).

Several authors have attempted to reconcile or unite different conceptualisations of identity. Ashforth (2001) integrated SIT and IT with the concept of role identities, socially constructed definitions of self-in-roles which ground self-conceptions in social domains. Penuel and Wertsch (1995) attempted to integrate Erikson's theory with the work of Vygotsky. Holland et al. (1998) combined Vygotsky's approach with the work of his contemporary and fellow Russian, Bakhtin, whose research involved socio-linguistics, and the social psychology of Mead. A reconciliation between postmodernist approaches and Erikson's theory has been attempted by Schachter (2005) and Wurgaft (1995). Vignoles et al. (2011) attempt to integrate differing meanings of identity by examining its contents and processes having regard to individual, relational, collective and material identities. In an ambitious attempt to unite a large number of these approaches, Kaplan and Garner (2017) proposed a highly complex Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity to provide a "meta theoretical framework" (p2048).

Section 2.3 has shown how different conceptualisations of identity have developed, and revealed the variety of those conceptualisations, and the lack of consensus of thought. Section 2.4 focussed on the literature concerned with the relationship between identity and work, and a similar level of difference was apparent.

2.4 Work and Identity

Given that the concept of identity is subject to so much diversity of thinking, it is perhaps to be expected that the literature which describes the association between identity and work is also characterised by differing interpretations, descriptions and inconsistent terminology. Some authors address 'work identity' (Miscenko & Day 2016), others 'occupational identity' (Braveman et al. 2006; Skorikov & Vondracek 2011; Unruh 2004), 'vocational identity' (Holland et al. 1980; Waterman & Waterman 1976), or 'professional identity' (Bayerl et al. 2018; Trede et al. 2012). Most authors consider identity in the context of unspecified occupations, and only a smaller number have examined identification with specific occupations or occupational groups (Leidner 2016; Styhre 2012). What constitutes an 'occupation' also differs as some authors include general activities such as gardening under that title (Unruh 2004), while for many others its meaning is restricted to paid work (see for example Ulfsdotter Eriksson & Linde 2014). Consequently, the following review of the literature specific to the association between identity and work again found no real consensus, a situation that this research project aims to address.

In addition to being a seminal figure for social scientists interested in identity, Erikson (1995) is also among the first to propose the concept of what he referred to as 'occupational identity'. During the fifth stage of his eight-stage psychosocial model of development, Erikson posited that adolescents meet the 'identity versus role confusion' crisis, during which the prospect of a career arises. Successful negotiation of this crisis results in the formation of an occupational identity. Failure to negotiate this stage results in role confusion. Erikson did not expand on, or explain, what he meant by 'occupational identity', and it is unclear whether he was referring to identification with the role of worker in general, or to a specific career, possibly because the focus of his interest was on the process of development. Some guidance can be obtained from Erikson's use of the term 'occupational identity' in a later work in which he describes Thomas Jefferson's "individual identity" (Erikson 1974, p. 52) as comprised of several elements, including as a natural aristocrat, with the potential to be specialised into an occupational identity instead of finding expression in a diversity of occupational roles. The separation of occupational identity from occupational roles in this passage indicates that the former refers to a career in general.

Erikson's contemporary, Donald Super, did not refer specifically to identity at all, preferring the term 'self-concept' when discussing vocational adjustment. Super considered that a young person's choice of an occupation, is an explicit declaration of their self-concept as it allows them to announce "I am

this or that kind of person” (Super 1951, p. 352). Super saw the role of career counselling as assisting the young person to reconcile the picture of who they are, with who they want to be. Choosing an occupation was likened to choosing a self-concept. It is clear Super was discussing identification with an occupation, rather than work in general.

Referencing neither Erikson nor Super, Becker and Carper (1956) appear to be the first Sociologists to make specific reference to occupational identity. They combined sociological thinking about career development with Mead’s conceptualisation of identity to explore changes in occupational identity amongst tertiary students from different disciplines. Using analyses of interviews, they identified mechanisms by which occupational identities develop, formed through association with peers, educators and learning processes. Thus, both social interaction and cultural context are incorporated. Significantly, the authors use the terms occupational identification and work identity without defining, or distinguishing between, them.

While Erikson, Super and Hirschi referred to occupations, other authors prefer the term ‘vocation’. Referencing both Erikson and Super, Galinsky and Fast (1966) referred specifically to identification with a vocation which, again, involved a public declaration of self-definition. Similarly, Hershenson (1967) and Munley (1975) both tested Erikson’s theory by examining young people’s level of identification with specific vocational choices. Holland et al. (1980) used the term ‘vocational identity’, defined as “the possession of a clear and stable picture of one’s goals, interests, and talents” (p 1191), and examined the relationship between vocational identity and young people’s difficulties with choosing a specific career. Using the terms ‘vocational identity’ and ‘occupational identity’ interchangeably, Grotevant and Thorbecke (1982) focused on sex-differences (sic) in occupational choice concluding that the “young men and women found clearly different paths to the achievement of that identity” (p403).

Generally, more recent studies of occupational identity have departed from a focus on initial career choice. Hall (1971) was one of the first authors to reference this change noting “there has been little mention in the psychological career literature of changes individuals experience after they begin their career work.” (p50). A more complex picture of an identity which develops throughout the lifespan emerges, particularly with the involvement of disciplines other than psychology. “Sociologists have contributed more to post career-entry development theory than have psychologists.” (p51). From a focus on providing career guidance to young people, a diversity of research disciplines has broadened

our understanding to incorporate career changes in later life stages. However, as noted by Skorikov and Vondracek (2011), further research is required.

Along with sociologists, Occupational Therapists have concerned themselves with examining occupational identity. Christiansen (1999) placed occupations, which include “daily occupations” (p556), in a highly significant position opining that they “are key not just to being a person, but to being a particular person, and thus creating and maintaining an identity” (p547). Unruh (2004) explored the concept of occupational identity describing it as “an emerging concept” (p290) about which “there is surprisingly little written in the occupational therapy or occupational science literature” (p291). Citing an earlier study Unruh (2004) provided a fulsome definition of occupational identity:

Occupational identity could be conceptualized as the expression of the physical, affective, cognitive, and spiritual aspects of human nature, in an interaction with the institutional, social, cultural and political dimensions of the environment across the time and space of a person’s life span, through occupations of self-care, productivity and leisure. (p. 291).

Kielhofner (2008) considered people’s lives are comprised of various types of occupational participation which eventually develops into occupational adaptation, which is comprised of occupational identity and competence.

In another study from an Occupational Therapy perspective, Phelan and Kinsella (2009) shared the opinion of Unruh (2004) that occupational identity is an emerging construct in occupational science and concluded that socially and culturally oriented frameworks are likely to generate more elaborate conceptualisations of occupational identity. Curiously, the authors identified Christiansen as “the first scholar to make an explicit connection between occupation and individual’s personal and social identity in the occupation-based literature” (p85), and Kielhofner (2008) as the author responsible for “coining the term occupational identity” (Phelan & Kinsella 2009, p. 85 emphasis in original), being apparently unaware of the work of Erikson or Becker and Carper.

Adding to the confusion of terminologies, Hirschi (2012) distinguished between a ‘calling’, meaning a passion for a particular career, and occupational identity, opining that a person can experience an occupational identity without necessarily feeling that it defines their life purpose. Despite making this distinction, his research confirmed a moderate correlation ($r=0.57$, $p<.001$) between calling and occupational identity and inferred a causal relationship concluding “callings have positive outcomes because they provide a sense of meaningfulness and identity at work.” (p483).

Miscenko and Day (2016) conducted a literature review from the perspective of organisational psychologists and considered over 600 published articles on the topic of 'work identity', defined as "the collection of meanings attached to the self by the individual and others in a work domain...based on unique individual characteristics, group membership, or social roles" (p216). Occupational identity was considered as a form of work identity which occurs at the collective level and is defined as "the extent to which an individual internalizes the occupation's identity as a valid definition of self". (p231). They structured their review along two dimensions, the level of identity inclusiveness, and static versus dynamic approaches in an attempt to provide consistency, ultimately finding only confusion amongst the literature.

Another area of research into the association between work and identity is concerned with the concept of 'professional identity'. In an early study of the effect of changes of professional identity, Schein (1978) defined this concept as a relatively stable and durable collection of personal abilities, beliefs and values used to self-define using a professional role. Other authors have decried the variety, and sometimes lack, of definition (Bayerl et al. 2018; Beijaard et al. 2004). Defining what constitutes a 'profession' is also uncertain from the literature. Evetts (2003) categorised professions as knowledge-based occupations usually obtained following tertiary education, training and experience but noted that it is no longer necessary strictly to delineate professions from other occupations. The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations groups 310 occupations as Professions but does not provide criteria for this grouping, other than a common skill level (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Statistics New Zealand 2013). Bebeau and Monson (2012) suggested that, due to commercial imperatives, the moral underpinnings of professions are under threat, with the result that some are in danger of 'de-professionalisation'. Thus, the professional status of those engaged in those roles is fluid.

In some studies, the concept of professional identity is associated with the concept of Role Identity, defined by Ashforth (2001) as "the goals, values, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons that are typically associated with a role" (p6). Other studies, particularly those with a management or human relations focus, associated professional identity with organisational identity. Gioia (2013) for example noted that the features of an organisation, which include the practices of those employed in it, combine to create "an organizational self-definition of 'who we are'" (p126).

While most authors were concerned with identification with occupations or work in general, a number have researched identification with specific occupations. Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014) for example conducted research into occupational identity amongst Swedes using a survey which asked participants to nominate whether, when disclosing their occupation, they used 'I am an (occupation)', or other phrases, the former deemed to indicate the presence of an occupational identity. They then examined the results with reference to the participants' gender, social class, level of education and occupational group. They concluded that their findings refute the suggestion that occupational identity is an outdated concept finding that it continues to be developed, particularly in occupational and educational settings strongly associated with the influences of socialisation. Leidner (2016) conducted interviews with Stage Actors and found that their occupational identity as Actors survived periods of unemployment, or employment in other occupations. Haute cuisine Chefs were the subject of research by Cooper et al. (2017) who found that their occupational identity was formed through social interaction and, in particular, the strenuous process of induction and associated development of an understanding of cultural norms and rules. In a novel interpretation of occupation, Erickson et al. (2021) researched the formation of occupational identity in illegal Methamphetamine 'cooks' and concluded that it occurred as a result of narratives which sought to avoid the social stigma of that work through an expression of the value users placed on their product, which provided a sense of pride and respect.

In summary, the literature concerned with our identity and its association with our work does not provide clear conceptualisation, and there is a plethora of definitions and differing terms for similar concepts to the extent that Brown et al. (2007) recommend that similar terms be used interchangeably. While that approach might be placatory, there is a clear need for conceptual or definitional consensus without which the role played by occupational identity in career redirection post-injury is difficult to establish. Section 2.5 focuses on a review of the literature concerned with the effect of injury (or illness) on occupational identity.

2.5 Identity, Work and Injury

The lack of conceptual or definitional consensus with respect to occupational identity and related concepts identified in Section 2.4 represents a significant barrier for any examination of the impact of occupational identity on occupational change, including occupational change following injury. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to do just that. In what appears to be one of the first attempts to address this question, Braveman et al. (2006) looked at attempts on the part of 12 males living with HIV/AIDS to return to work following the completion of a vocational rehabilitation

programme. Their study revealed that all the participants had experienced an initial decrease in occupational identity suggesting that whatever identity they had established was substantially diminished by their condition. It was further noted that the participants who recorded the lowest level of occupational identification were least likely to experience a subsequent improvement. In a study conducted with participants with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Cotton (2012) noted that previous attempts by psychologists and occupational therapists to explore this issue did not result in suggestions for practical applications of their theoretical constructs. Like Braveman et al. (2006), Cotton (2012) noted that a loss of occupational identity occurs post-injury, and that adaptation is a process of rebuilding that identity. Bryson-Campbell et al. (2016) linked a loss of occupational competence with post-TBI occupational identity and concluded that regaining competence was required prior to the redevelopment of occupational identity. In a study involving participants living with cancer, Taylor and Jones (2017) examined the meaningfulness to individuals of their occupational identity after this “biographical disruption” (p440) and developed a therapy tool in the form of a workbook designed to assist with the process of re-establishing this identity.

There are several authors who have engaged in literature reviews and scoping studies relevant to occupational identity, injury and occupational change. Saunders and Nedelec (2014) examined what work means to people with a disability finding strong links between identity and work, and noting that for some participants that identity had been replaced by a disability identity which formed a barrier to a return to work. In a scoping study of articles relevant to occupational disruption, Nizzero et al. (2017) concluded that there was consensus that a link between occupation and identity exists and that the association is strong. They noted that the loss of a specific occupation, such as Farmer or Musician and the subsequent adaptation to a new identity as an observer or a patient is difficult, without comment on how the previously established identity influenced this adaptation. In a similar study, Walder and Molineux (2017) considered the range of conceptualisations of occupational adjustment after illness or injury. They found that, while the adjustment process was different for each individual, a core theme of adapting to changed occupational demands and reconstructing occupational identity existed. It should be noted that these studies all assume that biographical disruption results in a loss of occupational identity and none addresses the situation in which occupational identity persists post-injury, the question central to this research project.

2.6 Persistent Occupational Identity and Occupational Change

While the effect of a persistent occupational identity does not appear to have been specifically researched, from the field of career guidance comes one short consideration of a potentially negative

influence. Brown and Bimrose (2015) note "...a strong commitment to work can sometimes also act as a chain, holding a person in a particular role until it becomes more difficult to realize (sic) a change, especially if the individual has neglected to update his or her skills, or to consider possible career changes" (p242).

Other studies addressed this topic tangentially. Asbring (2001) conducted research into participants diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or Fibromyalgia which caused occupational change and found that the result was different degrees of partial changes in work identity. Vrkljan and Polgar (2007) explored the effect of the loss of drivers' licences on occupational participation and the consequent loss of occupational identity. Included in this study was a participant called 'Rick' who continued to drive in the knowledge that it was dangerous to do so. Sherwood and O'Donnell (2018) conducted research into the professional identities of Australian Journalists who had experienced job loss. They asked participants to rate their professional identity as intact, fading or weak. The proportion of participants who described their identities as intact was the same between those who had returned to work as Journalists and those who had not. In a study of military personnel facing career change due to injury Kulkarni (2020) described a liminal state in which participants were suspended between identities. They concluded that the previous occupational identity was not deleted but was rather edited to maintain continuity. Interestingly, this study included a participant named 'Brad' who attempted to re-enlist in the military despite his physical inability to do so. Strub et al. (2021) found that changes in occupational roles as employees due to Chronic Pain Syndrome were resisted by participants who attempted to adapt by changing their work arrangements, taking more rest breaks and seeking ergonomic workstations. Shepherd and Williams (2018) posited that it was necessary for people experiencing job loss to hit "rock bottom" (p29) before successful identity changes could be made. They contended that once that situation had been reached, some people used identity play to achieve a positive new occupational identity, whereas others adopted avoidance techniques to achieve numbness and relief which resulted in cognitive deconstruction and an inability to progress. In the context of adult education, Thunborg and Bron (2019) describe changes in identity as involving a period of 'floating' while an individual is struggling with a change in identity, followed by an 'anchoring' when that change is achieved. While all those studies included some mention of persistent occupational identity and its effects, none attributed it specifically as a barrier. Section 2.7 will address the role of Rehabilitation Counsellors in assisting people to overcome those barriers.

2.7 Occupational Identity, Rehabilitation Counsellors and Vocational Counselling

In Australia, New Zealand and North America, Rehabilitation Counsellors are employed to provide assistance to people experiencing disability arising from injury or illness by facilitating achievement of vocational or training goals. In Australia, this usually means working within the compensable injury system under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth or State governments. While Rehabilitation Counsellors are engaged to provide case management services for any injured worker, their specialisation is to assist the worker to secure and sustain employment with an employer different to the employer with whom they were employed when injured. This often involves the worker being assisted through the process of occupational change when their pre-injury occupation becomes unsuitable due to their physical and/or psychological impairment (Allied Health Professions Australia 2022; Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification 2022; Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities Australia & New Zealand 2015). The effectiveness of their intervention is difficult to assess accurately as published statistics do not distinguish between the success of attempts to return injured workers to the same employer or to different employers. However, the national Current Return to Work Rate (which measures the proportion of workers who required time away from work, returned to work and who were still at work at the time of the survey) for 2021 was 81.3%. This rate has remained stable for the past seven years (The Social Research Centre 2022). If almost 20% of injured workers who returned to work were unable to sustain that work, there seems to be considerable scope for the effectiveness of rehabilitation professionals, including Rehabilitation Counsellors, to improve.

The process of identifying a more suitable post-injury occupation is centred around a vocational assessment which is an evaluation of the injured person's individual circumstances, gained through an interview during which vocational counselling is conducted. Vocational counselling provides information to the worker regarding the vocational implications of the vocational assessment; presents occupational areas likely to be concordant with the findings of the vocational assessment; and identifies any barriers that are likely to be encountered. The outcome of the vocational assessment and counselling process is a collaboratively developed plan to achieve the vocational goal selected. Vocational counselling applies a range of counselling techniques aimed at engaging the worker in the assessment process and its outcomes. Where the worker displays indications that they are experiencing difficulty with the process of adjustment to disability, recommendations can be made to address that barrier (Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities Australia & New Zealand 2015; Rubin & Roessler 2016; The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors 2015). While vocational identity and career identity both appear in the Australian published literature regarding the role of Rehabilitation Counselling, these terms are used to describe the readiness of a worker to make

decisions regarding their vocational future. They do not refer to the worker's past, current or future identification with a specific occupation (Fedoric 2022; Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia 2011; The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors 2015). The aim of vocational counselling has consequently been underpinned by theories of psychosocial adjustment or adaptation to disability (see for example Ibarra 1999; Livneh 2021; Parker et al. 2003; Sveen et al. 2016).

While psychosocial theories of adjustment or adaptation to disability have changed over time, beginning with a conceptualisation involving a linear progression through stages similar to those encountered while grieving a loss, consideration of the effect of identification with a specific occupation appears to continue to be absent. Most recently, Livneh (2021) has presented a model consisting of three building blocks - antecedents, process and outcomes. During a description of the process of psychosocial adjustment to disability, the author notes the existence of concepts including personal identity, illness identity and disability identity, but no direct reference is made to occupational identity. Thus, this literature review confirmed that Rehabilitation Counsellors are not expected to have an awareness of occupational identity, or its potential to effect return-to-work outcomes, and it is not a part of their usual practice.

2.8 Summary

This review of the literature relevant to our identification with our work describes a large body of research over a considerable period, conducted by researchers from a variety of disciplines. Despite the extent of this work, or perhaps because of it, the concept of occupational identity, and related concepts, remains ill-defined. While there has been research into the effect of injury or illness on occupational identity, a post-injury loss, or partial loss, of occupational identity has been assumed, and there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding situations in which an occupational identity survives attempts to achieve occupational change post-injury. For Rehabilitation Counsellors this gap is evident in the absence of any consideration given to occupational identity in their main role, assisting injured or ill workers to change their occupation.

This literature review highlighted the need firstly for the initiation of a movement towards agreement on the relevant concepts. Chapter 4 describes and analyses the result a quantitative study into occupational identity amongst Australians which presents recommendations for delineating those concepts. A need to explore occupational identity further to more fully understand how it is experienced has also been established by this review, and Chapters 5 and 6 address that need through a qualitative analysis of the experiences of members of one occupation, Truck Drivers. The role of a

persistent occupational identity in post-injury attempts at occupational change, largely absent in the literature is explored in Chapters 7 and 8 through analysis of the experiences of those Truck Drivers. Chapter 9 discusses the implications for rehabilitation counselling practice, and includes recommendations for improvements to those practices. Chapter 3 follows and describes the methodology used to arrive at those objectives.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter describes the methodology used in the research project. It commences with a discussion in Section 3.2 of the ontological and epistemological considerations which underpin that methodology, followed in Section 3.3 by an outline of the research project's design. Achieving the aims and objectives which arise from the research questions necessitated a mixed methodological approach, which is described in Section 3.4.

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

The literature review described in Chapter 2 confirmed that there are gaps in that literature which need to be filled if we are to achieve our ultimate goal of improving the return-to-work assistance provided to injured workers through increasing the effectiveness of Rehabilitation Counsellors. The review found that there is a confusion of conceptualisations and terminologies regarding occupational identity and related concepts. Resolution of that situation is required to provide a framework from which to explore the other gap identified by the literature review - the effect of a persistent occupational identity on post-injury attempts at occupational change. That gap can best be filled by gaining an appreciation of the experiences of occupational identity, and attempts to change the occupation with which the identity is associated. The data used to resolve the conceptual and terminological confusion was gained through an online quantitative survey, while the interviews conducted to explore the experience of occupational identity and occupational change form qualitative data. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies are commonly assumed to be based on different ontologies and epistemologies (Morgan 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009). Quantitative research is usually based on a realist ontology and scientific methodologies (Chalmers 1999; Moon & Blackman 2014), and qualitative research depends on a relativist ontology, recognising that realities are understood as multiple, socially and experientially based mental constructions or interpretations the knowledge of which arises in multiple ways from interactions between researchers and participants (Liamputtong 2013; Moon & Blackman 2014; Racher & Robinson 2003).

More recently, attempts have been made to combine these methodologies taking either a situationalist view that either quantitative or qualitative methodologies can be used, or a pragmatic view combining both (Cameron 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009). The pragmatic approach has been variously called mixed methods, multi-strategy, multi-methods or mixed methodology (Bryman 2006). Rather than combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies, phenomenology either straddles

the barrier between them, being applicable to both (Dowling 2007), or dissolves them to form a continuum (Racher & Robinson 2003). Phenomenology provides the philosophical framework for the bulk of this research project however, Moustakas (1994) noted that the first challenge for a phenomenological research project is to state the research question clearly, including concrete key words that have been “defined, discussed and clarified so that the intent and purpose of the investigation are evident.” (p 104). That challenge is met using a quantitative method which forms the first part of the project. Consequently, this study design is best described as a pragmatic, mixed methodological approach.

Phenomenology as a philosophy is diverse but it is always concerned with an interest in describing or interpreting what the experience of being human in the world is like. Amongst the principle phenomenological philosophers are Edmund Husserl, who is credited as the founder, his student, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Paul Sartre. While Husserl was concerned with restricting phenomenology to a descriptive and transcendental philosophy, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty stressed the importance of taking an interpretative stance and Sartre extended that stance to incorporate an existential emphasis. These latter phenomenologists focus on understanding what it is like to be human at one with the world of objects, relationships, passions, actions, language and culture. In practical terms, the difference between Husserl’s approach and that of the later philosophers is an insistence by Husserl on phenomenologists bracketing that which they take for granted to separate it from that which is being perceived in order to gain access to the essence of the experience of a given phenomenon (Smith et al. 2009). Heidegger departed from Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology by turning his focus to an interpretative approach. For Heidegger, lived experience was an interpretive process, and our consciousness is not separate from our existence but is part of our being-in-the-world. Heidegger proposed that we are fundamentally related to the objects around us and we are able to communicate and make sense of that world with others through the process of intersubjectivity (Dowling 2007; Smith et al. 2009; Tuffour 2017).

3.3 Research Design

A research design was developed to address the research questions specified in Section 1.4. What is occupational identity; how is it experienced; and what influence does it have on post-injury attempts at occupational change. In order to address those questions, the research needs to achieve a number of objectives, the first of which is to investigate the occupational identity of Australians through the administration of an anonymous on-line survey and to analyse the results with the aim of proposing definitions to describe the variety of ways we identify with work. Once the meaning of these variations

is established, the experience of occupational identity, as defined, is investigated through semi-structured interviews with members of one occupation which in this study is Truck Drivers. Those participants are also a source of data with regard to occupational change, and to the effect of a persistent occupational identity on their experiences of that change. The final objective is to apply the conclusions reached in those analyses to identify their implications for how Rehabilitation Counsellors can assist in that process.

These objectives informed the project's design which is comprised of two main parts. Part A is the investigation of the concept of occupational identity and the clarification of the definitional issues through the statistical analysis of a survey involving adult Australians. With the definition established in Part A, Part B involves semi-structured interviews with Truck Drivers to analyse their experience of occupational identity, and of subsequent attempts to change their occupations to examine the effect of persistent occupational identity on those attempts.

It was initially proposed that a separate study (i.e. Part C) would be required to investigate the experiences of Truck Drivers who are unable to return to their occupation due to injury or illness. However, during data collection for Part B it was apparent that all of the participants interviewed regarding their experience of occupational identity had also attempted occupational change. Further in-depth interviews regarding the impact of work-related injury were consequently not required. Part C was therefore not undertaken separately but interwoven into the data collection for Part B.

3.4 Methodology

This research project included both quantitative (Part A) and qualitative components (Part B) and is best described as a mixed-methodological approach. The methodology adopted for Part A of this research project was the collection and statistical analysis of quantitative data to assist in the clarification of the concept of occupational identity and related concepts. The method used to achieve this aim was the administration of an online survey which collected both demographic data and responses to questions designed to assess the level of the participant's identification with their occupation. This study is presented in Chapter 4.

The methodology chosen for Part B (Chapters 5 - 8) of this research project was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA has its roots in attempts by Jonathan Smith to marry qualitative methodologies with mainstream psychological research by combining the experiential with the experimental. IPA draws principally on hermeneutic phenomenology and hermeneutics but combines them with an idiographic commitment by exploring in detail the experiences of a small number of

participants (Smith et al. 2009; Tuffour 2017). Data was collected from 11 participants using the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. Those interviews provided access to the participant's experiences of being a Truck Driver, and of having that identity threatened by biographical disruption. These experiences were interpreted using the IPA guidelines outlined by Smith et al. (2009). The steps involved in this process commence with a close re-reading of the interview transcript to become immersed in the raw data. Following this immersion, the researcher is encouraged to take copious notes of any interesting aspect, without departing from the explicit meaning given by the participant. Descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments are then sequentially entered by the researcher which results in a data set which is larger than the original transcript. The volume of the data set is reduced, but its complexity is maintained, by identifying emergent themes, and a synergistic, cyclical process of description and interpretation develops. Once this has been accomplished, the identified themes are mapped to examine how they fit together, and to identify any patterns. These steps are then repeated for each participant, with the final step being to identify patterns which occur across cases by the construction of a master table of themes. These themes are then compared with higher level concepts so similarities and contradictions can be identified and resolved. The authors stress that the researcher should not feel constrained during the interpretation process and should avoid the temptation merely to describe what has been divulged (Smith et al. 2009). Chapter 5 describes the experiential statements and personal experiential themes arising from the individual experiences of occupational identity of the participants. Chapter 6 collects those themes and presents them in a master table. Chapter 7 includes the experiential statements and personal experiential themes generated by the participants' experiences of biographical disruption and occupational change. Chapter 8 collects and tabulates those experiences. Chapter 9 includes a comparison between the themes and higher order concepts with a discussion of their differences. The findings of the research project are presented with recommendations for more effective intervention by Rehabilitation Counsellors.

CHAPTER 4
STUDY 1: SURVEY

4.1 Overview

Chapter 4 presents research that examines the prevalence of occupational identity amongst a sample of Australian participants. Factors which may influence its development are explored and recommendations regarding concept definitions are proposed.

When first conceptualised, occupational identity was considered a necessary step along the path to human development, with the inference that it is, eventually, an inevitable acquisition for most people (Erikson 1995). Following this, several authors have identified variables, including personality characteristics, personal values and background, vocational maturity, and motivational styles, which may modify our occupational identities (Hershenson 1967; Marcia 1966; Munley 1975; Waterman & Waterman 1976). Other variables such as gender, age and economic conditions have also been examined (Blustein et al. 1989; Fadjukoff et al. 2010; Grotevant & Thorbecke 1982). Laliberte-Rudman and Dennhardt (2008) question whether conceptualisations of occupational identity apply at all to non-Western cultures. Few studies (see for example Cooper et al. 2017; Leidner 2016; Ulfsdotter Eriksson & Linde 2014) have examined variations in occupational identity with reference to specific occupations.

One study which has examined the variability in the prevalence of occupational identity with reference to specific occupations is that conducted by Swedish researchers Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014). They examined occupational identity in the context of changes in contemporary society, with its greater emphasis on workforce flexibility and mobility, and questioned whether these changes diminish occupations as an influence on identity. A survey of 1,408 participants from Sweden was conducted, and the effect of variables such as gender, age, education level, socio-economic status, and occupational group were considered. Participants were asked to nominate whether they represented themselves using the words “I am” or “I work as” when speaking of their occupation. Using “I am” was considered to indicate “an occupation-based social identity” (p36) based on Tajfel and Turner’s Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986), which posits that social identity is a self-image gained from a social category and may be positive or negative. In this theory, individuals strive for a positive social identity which is based on comparisons between the preferred in-group and a corresponding out-group (Tajfel & Turner 1986). Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde’s (2014) findings indicated that occupational identity remains a relevant construct and that population variations do occur. Participants with a defined education, or in an occupation enjoying high status, professional standing, or with a strong culture, showed the highest levels of occupation-based social identity.

While Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde's (2014) investigation goes some way in exploring the variations in the levels of identification Swedes have with their occupations, it raises some other important questions. Do other countries show similar variations? How would these participants have responded if they were not asked to describe themselves to others, but to nominate how important their occupation was to them? The study led participants to specify their work as part of their self-description, what if they were free to identify themselves using other activities or roles? To what extent, if at all, would work be included in their descriptions?

Informed in part by Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde's (2014) findings and the questions they raise this study (Part A) examined the extent of occupational identity amongst people of working age living in Australia and explored the influence of gender; age; level of vocational qualification; level of work experience; employment status; occupational type; and work personality. The analysis of the results has also led to recommendations regarding terminology, included in Section 4.6, to provide definitional clarity and stimulate further discussion towards a consensus on that issue.

4.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the first part of this research project (Part A) was to explore the concept of occupational identity to enable it to be better defined, and to differentiate it from potentially related concepts such as vocational identity, work identity and professional identity. Once this is accomplished, the lived experience of occupational identity, and any barriers it may present to vocational redirection after injury, can be explored more meaningfully in Part B. This initial exploration addressed some core questions. How prevalent is occupational identity, how strong is it, does it apply to all occupations, and what role do individual characteristics play in these factors, if any?

Aims:

Investigate the nature and extent of 'occupational identity' amongst Australian adults to confirm our individual associations with work and assist in the clarification of the concept of occupational identity and how it differs from related concepts

Objectives:

The objectives of this study are firstly to administer an anonymous online questionnaire regarding occupational identity to Australian adults using Survey Monkey software. Based on the outcome of an analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, the next objective is to propose revised and clarified definitions of the various terms used in the literature to describe identification of work. Equipped with

those definitions, the final objective is to provide a framework for further exploration of occupational identity in Part B of the research project.

4.3 Methods and Materials

4.3.1 Participants

The inclusion criteria for this study was any adult living in Australia, defined as those 19 years of age or older. Participants were recruited using social, work and educational institutional networks through personal contact, print and social media platforms and email. Participants were directed to a questionnaire hosted on the Survey Monkey platform.

4.3.2 Questionnaire

Survey questionnaire was developed through an extensive iterative process with involvement of academic staff of the University of Wollongong. The initial draft (Draft Version 1) was devised with a view to establishing demographic data which might be influential on the development of occupational identity, and on assessing the presence and extent of the participants' occupational identity so that any relationship between those factors could be demonstrated. With the exception of a question based on research conducted by Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014) all items were original. All questions were subsequently reviewed by the PhD supervision team. Feedback was provided regarding wording of individual items and ordering of questions, which informed modifications. The amended version (Draft Version 2) containing 11 questions was then evaluated for content validity by an expert panel of nine (9) academics.

Evaluation of Content Validity

Draft Version 2 of the survey questionnaire, with explanatory notes (ref. Appendix 2), was distributed to academics within the School of Health & Society, University of Wollongong. This expert panel of nine (9) academic staff reviewed the survey questionnaire and provided feedback regarding inclusion, structure and ordering of questions. These responses resulted in changes to the placement and wording of one question, and simplification of the wording of another. . A majority of the expert panel agreed or strongly agreed on inclusion of all questions and a calculation of the Content Validity Ratio devised by Lawshe (1975) confirmed that survey questions were suitable for inclusion (CVR >0.8 for all items, n=9, p=0.05).

On Human Research Ethics Committee approval (ref. Appendix 1), the survey was opened and a pilot study of the first 100 responses was conducted. A review of those responses confirmed that no subsequent amendments were deemed necessary.

Final Questionnaire

The final questionnaire (Appendix 2) consisted of 11 questions. In addition to questions requesting the participants' demographic details (gender, age, educational qualifications, employment status and length of work experience), question 8 asked them to nominate directly their occupation. As occupational titles can sometimes be misleading, questions 3, 6 and 7 were included for use in their own right, but also for clarifying the actual occupational title as standardised in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Statistics New Zealand 2013).

Question 11 asked the respondents to choose from a list of six descriptions of their personality, based on Holland's typology of personality (Holland 1997; Shears & Harvey-Beavis 2012):

- I'm a practical, realistic person and don't mind 'getting my hands dirty' (Realistic).
- I'm a thinker who likes analysing and investigating complex, abstract things (Investigative).
- I'm a creative, sensitive person interested in expressing myself artistically (Artistic).
- I'm a social person who likes to be helpful to others (Social).
- I'm assertive and self-confident, good at communicating what I want to get results (Enterprising).
- I'm a careful, persistent, methodical person who values accuracy and efficiency (Conventional).

The survey questionnaire included two questions designed to obtain descriptions of the level of the respondents' occupational identity. Question 9 sought an indication of the respondents' occupational identity by asking them directly to rate on a scale from 0 to 7 how much of "who you are" is provided by the work that they do. Zero on the scale represented the proposition "my occupation is not at all a part of who I am", whereas seven represented "I am totally defined as a person by my occupation". This question sought to capture occupational identity isolated as far as possible from the influences of social desirability as the occupation itself is neither sought nor disclosed, and the participant is looking inwards in self-examination. In this way, the influence of reflexivity may not be totally eliminated (it is obviously not possible for the participant to dissociate entirely from their occupation),

and the identity itself might be socially constructed however, at the moment of response, the participant is introspective.

Question 10 was a free response question regarding the participants' occupational identity. It addressed how respondents preferred to be identified to others by presenting them with the following hypothetical social situation in which they described themselves to those others:

“Imagine you are at a barbeque or other social gathering, meeting people for the first time. One of them asks you to tell them a little about yourself. They already know your name and you don't need to describe your appearance. Briefly, exactly what would you say?”

This question was included to elicit the frequency of responses which included the respondents' occupation, and the terms used to disclose it, either “I am” (in responses which included specific occupations in the form “I am a Teacher”), or “I do” (responses which included the participant's work, but without declaring a direct identification with an occupation, for example “I teach”). Responses which did not include mention of work were coded as “other”. The question was based on survey questions applied by Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014), but differed from the latter study in that respondents were not compelled to make any mention of work: they could provide any self-description they thought appropriate. Question 10 also differed from the measure of occupational identity applied in Question 9 in that it attempts to capture the participants' social identity by seeking how they prefer to be seen by others.

4.3.3 Statistical Analysis

The data were analysed using Chi-squared tests, run on version 25 of the SPSS software programme. Where necessary, Monte Carlo simulations were employed to address instances of insufficient expected frequencies. The correlation between the two participant descriptions of their occupational identity, represented by the Question 9 Likert scale (“how much of ‘who you are’ etc) and the Question 10 hypothetical situation (“I am” or “I do”) was tested using Spearman's rho.

For the purpose of analysis participants' occupations were grouped into one of 11 categories, Managers; one of 4 categories of Professionals; Technicians, Trades and other skilled workers; one of two categories of Service Workers; Office Workers; Sales Workers; or Plant Operators, Drivers, Warehouse Workers and Labourers (refer to Appendix 2).

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Participants

A total of 336 participants completed the questionnaire. Females ($n=224$) responded more frequently than males ($n=111$) and most respondents were aged between 40 and 59 years ($n=191$). Their level of education was strongly skewed towards a university qualification ($n=204$) and most respondents reported being in permanent employment ($n=231$) and having been in their respective occupations for 10 years or more ($n=189$). The most populated occupational category was Managers ($n=52$). Most respondents described themselves as either Realistic ($n=128$) or Social ($n=82$) using a modified Holland typology as detailed in Section 4.2.2. Table 4.1 summarises the characteristics of the sample.

Table 4.1: Summary of the Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender ($n=335$)	Female	224	66.7
	Male	111	33.0
	Intersex/Indeterminate/Unspecified	0	0
	Missing	1	0.3
Age ($n=336$)	19 or under	2	0.6
	20-39	92	27.4
	40-59	191	56.8
	60 or over	51	15.2
	Missing	0	0
Highest qualification ($n=335$)	Did not complete Y12	25	7.4
	Completed Y12	21	6.3
	TAFE Certificate	42	12.5
	TAFE Diploma	43	12.8
	Graduate	109	32.4
	Post-Graduate	95	28.3
Current employment status ($n=334$)	Not working	33	9.8
	Permanent	231	68.8
	Temporary or Casual	70	20.6
	Missing	2	0.6
Years in usual occupation ($n=335$)	Less than 2	43	12.8
	2 to 9	103	30.7
	10+	189	56.4
	Missing	1	0.3
Occupation Category ($n=330$)	Managers	52	15.8
	Education Professionals	35	10.6
	Health Professionals	38	11.5
	Legal/Social/Welfare Professionals	34	10.3
	Other Professionals	33	10.0
	Technical/Trade/Skilled Workers	13	3.9
	Community Service Workers	29	8.8
	Hospitality/Protective/Personal Service Workers	12	3.6

	Office Workers	45	13.6
	Sales Workers	8	2.4
	Plant Operator/Driver/Warehouse/Labourer	31	9.2
	Missing	6	1.8
Holland Personality Type (n=335)	Realistic	128	38.1
	Investigative	40	11.9
	Artistic	16	4.8
	Social	82	24.4
	Enterprising	37	11.0
	Conventional	32	9.5
	Missing	1	0.3

4.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The Extent of Occupational Identity amongst Participants

As described in Section 4.2.2.2, two survey questions were used to investigate the extent of each participant's occupational identity. Question 9 required participants to rank their 'self-identification with their occupation' on a seven (7) point scale from 'no self-association between respondent and occupation' to 'totally defined by their occupation'. Only two (2) respondents failed to provide a response to this question. This measure will be referred to as the 'self-identification' measure in the following discussion.

The second survey question that related to the extent of occupational identity involved a self-description, provided at a hypothetical social situation, in which respondents were free to present whatever identities they wished to be known by. Free text responses to this question were coded into one of three categories:

1. "I am..."
Respondents who used the specific phrase "I am an (occupation)" in their self-description.
2. "I do..."
Respondents who referred to the work they did, but did not specifically use the phrase "I am".
3. All other responses.
Respondents who did not include any mention of their work.

This measure will be referred to as the 'self-description' measure in the following discussion. In order to ascertain the correlation between these measures, they were compared using Spearman's rho. A

significant correlation was found (correlation co-efficient = 0.302, $p < 0.01$). Figures 4.1 and 4.2 summarise the responses to the two items:

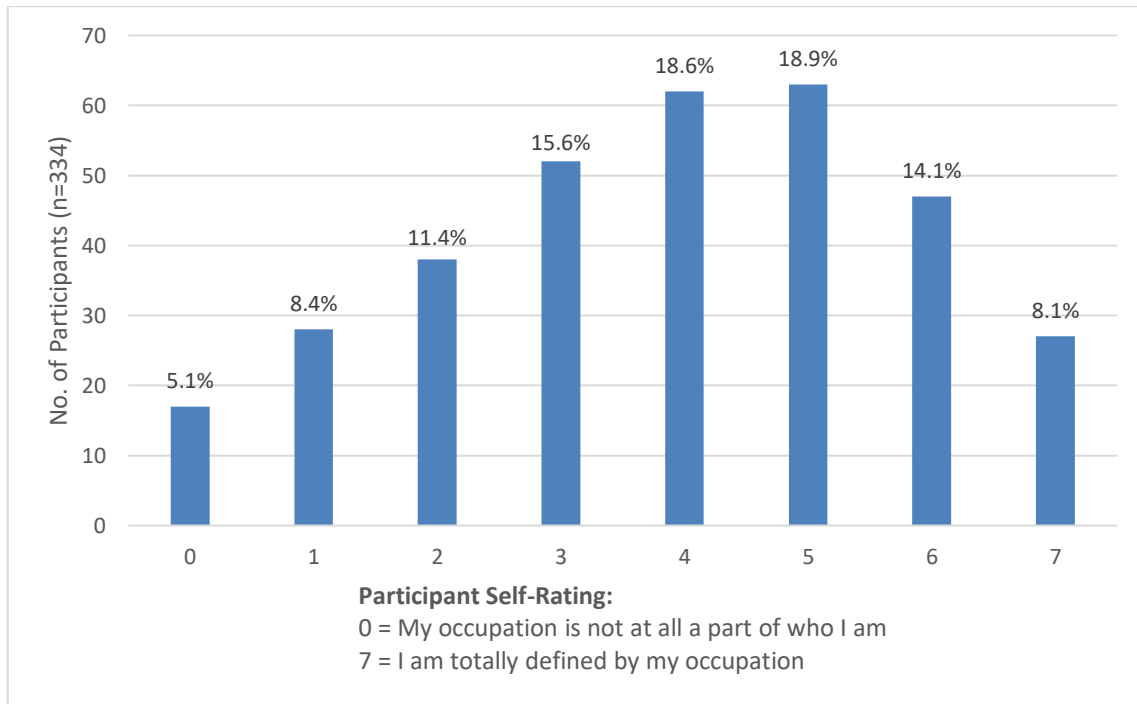


Figure 4.1: Frequency distribution of occupational identity (self-identification) among participants using a Likert scale

A chi-squared test for goodness of fit for the Likert scale, weighted for frequency, found significant differences between the self-identity scale points [$\chi^2 = 48.563(7)$, $p < 0.01$] indicating that the differences in the frequency of responses are unlikely to be due to chance.

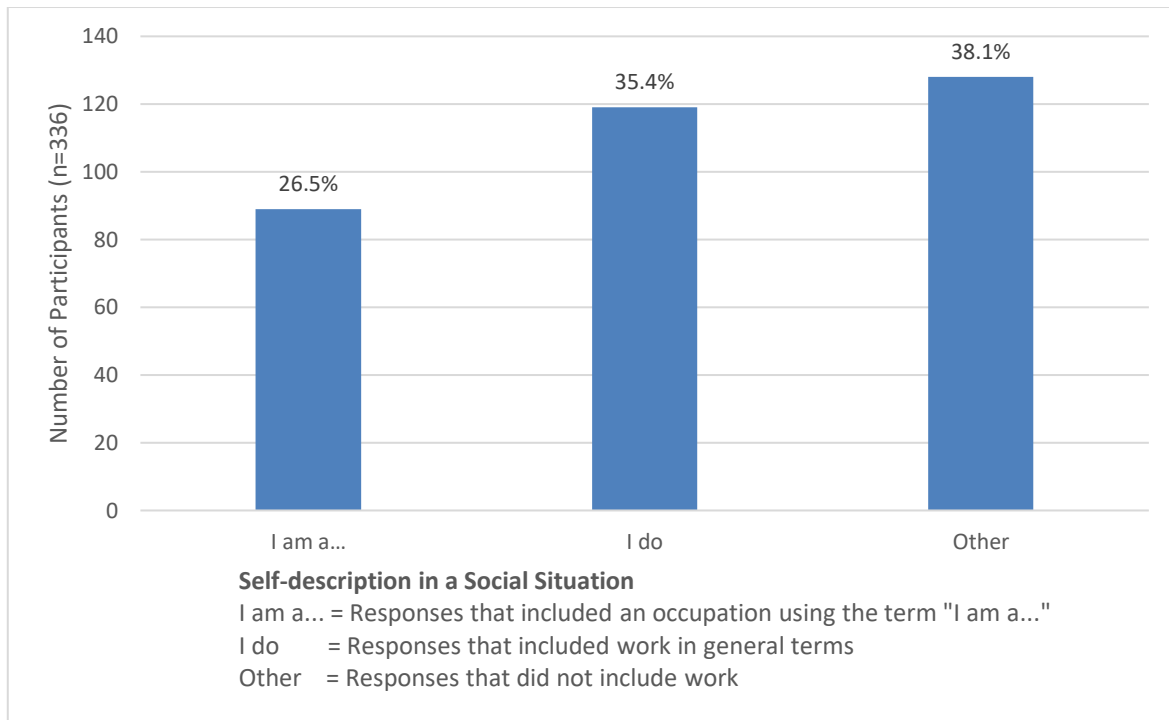


Figure 4.2: Frequency of occupational identity (self-description) among participants

4.4.3 Factors Influencing the Extent of Occupational Identity amongst Participants

As noted in Section 4.3.2, the questionnaire collected data on the participants' gender, age, level of qualification, employment status, length of work experience, occupation and personality, and chi-squared tests were performed to examine the relationship between those variables and the two measures of occupational identity. The results of those tests are summarised in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3:

Table 4.2: Summary of Chi-squared tests using the Self-Identification Measure

Variable	Significance ($P < 0.05$)	Strength	Direction
Gender	No	N/A	N/A
Age	No	N/A	N/A
Level of Qualification	$\chi^2=58.523(35)$, $P = 0.008$ (Monte Carlo Simulation)	Cramers V $= 0.187$	Respondents who had not completed Year 12 of high school provided a rating of 7 significantly more often than would be expected by chance. Respondents with post-graduate qualifications provided a rating of 6 significantly more often than would be expected. Respondents whose highest

			qualification is a Bachelor Degree provided a rating of 5 on the scale significantly more often than would be expected.
Employment Status	No	N/A	N/A
Experience	No	N/A	N/A
Occupation	$\chi^2 = 103.918(70)$ P = 0.005 (Monte Carlo Simulation)	Cramers V = 0.263	Occupational categories which rated themselves more highly than would be expected by chance were Community Service Workers (higher on 7), Educational Professionals (higher on 5), Managers (higher on 4), Technicians and Trade Workers (higher on 2), and Office Workers (higher on 1). Those whose ratings were lower than would be expected by chance were Office Workers (lower on 5 & 6), Community Service Workers (lower on 2) and Health Professionals (lower on 1).
Personality	No	N/A	N/A

Table 4.3: Summary of Chi-squared tests using the Self-Description Measure

Variable	Significance (P < 0.05)	Strength	Direction
Gender	$\chi^2 = 6.998(2)$, P = .03	Phi = 0.145	Females showed “I am” responses less than would be expected by chance, and greater “I do” responses than would be expected by chance.
Age	No	N/A	N/A
Level of Qualification	No	N/A	N/A
Employment Status	$\chi^2 = 9.959(4)$, P = .041	Cramers V = 0.122	Respondents who are permanently employed gave significantly higher numbers of “I am” responses, and a significantly lower number of “I do” responses, than would be expected by

			chance. Respondents who are employed on a temporary basis gave a significantly lower than expected number of “I do” responses than would be expected by chance.
Experience	No	N/A	N/A
Occupation	$\chi^2 = 54.078(70)$, P < 0.001 (Monte Carlo Simulation)	Cramers V = 0.286	Community Service Workers were observed to give lower “I do” and higher “other” responses than would be expected by chance; Office Workers responded more highly with “other” and less highly with “I am” than would be expected by chance; and Plant Operators, Drivers, Warehouse Workers and Labourers responded more highly with “I am” than would be expected by chance.
Personality	No	N/A	N/A

4.5 Discussion

The two measures of occupational identity demonstrated that for most people there is an association between who they consider themselves to be, or wish to be seen by others as, and their work. The finding of a correlation between the two measures indicated that they are related but the strength of that correlation suggests there is some level of difference between them and points to a difference between how people identify themselves to themselves, and how they identify themselves to others. The self-identification measure presents a curve weighted in the direction of an occupationally-derived self-definition with almost 60% of respondents rating their attachment to their occupation as at least four out of seven, and 8% indicating that their occupation totally defines them as a person. These results are similar to those obtained in a study conducted by Nel (2010) who asked UK journalists to rate on a scale from 1 to 7 how much that occupation defines who they are, with 63% of respondents provided a rating of 5 or above. The self-description measure, more suggestive of a social identity, supports this finding with over 60% of respondents spontaneously including their work in their description of themselves, and over 25% referring directly to their occupation and using the term “I am..” to do so. While not directly comparable, Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014) found that 41% of respondents used “I am...” and 59% used another way to describe their working self.

In addition to describing the prevalence of the relationship between work and identity, the results provided an indication of the variables that are associated with the level of this prevalence. Gender, level of qualification, employment status and occupation were associated with significant differences in at least one measurement of occupational identity, and occupational category was associated with differences in both measures. In each case, the level of association of these variables appears again to be relatively subtle and none can be described as a determinant. Three variables, age, length of experience and work personality, displayed no significant difference.

Closer review of the variables which were identified as having a significant association, appear to suggest that gender has some effect on the nature of the association between identity and work. On the self-description measure, respondents who identified as female gave a lower than expected "I am" response and a higher than expected "I do" response which is interpreted as females identifying comparatively less strongly with their occupation, but more with work in general. Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014) also suggested that an occupationally-based social identity was stronger in males than females. That there was no difference attributable to gender in the self-identification measure lends support to social factors as being potentially responsible. Socially, it appears as if women are more willing to be identified as workers, than as representatives of a specific occupation, while introspectively, they are as likely as males to associate themselves with their occupation.

The level of the respondents' qualifications had no significant effect on how they wished to be identified but did influence their own assessment of their occupational identity on the self-identification measure. In that measure, comparatively higher occupational identities were found in both university-educated respondents, and those with no post-school qualifications, while the self-description measure found no significant difference associated with from their level of education. This differed from Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014) findings regarding social identity, with higher levels of education associated with higher levels of an occupationally-based social identity. The authors suggesting that spending time in vocational training with others who are studying in the same vocational area results in socialisation towards an occupational identity. This suggestion is contradicted by the results found using the self-description measure.

Employment status seems to conform to a more conventional interpretation, as on the self-description measure those in permanent employment gave higher than expected "I am" responses and lower "I do" responses, although higher than expected level of "I do" responses amongst those working in temporary or short term positions mitigates this effect. Why this difference was not

reflected in the self-identification measure is unclear. While Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014) did not test this variable, other authors can assist with this interpretation. Sherwood and O'Donnell (2018) evaluated the effect on professional identity of job loss in journalism, finding that over a third of journalists who were no longer working in journalism continued to identify themselves as journalists. Leidner's (2016) investigation of occupational identity amongst stage actors, who are frequently unable to sustain work in that occupation due to its tenuous nature, demonstrated that they had a 'stable core self' as an actor despite principally having to support themselves through other work such as 'waiters or bartenders or office workers'.. As some occupations are more liable to be associated with casual, temporary or short-term contract arrangements than others, and workers in them also more likely to experience periods without work between jobs, it is possible that there is some confounding of effects and that it is the occupation which is the stronger influence.

As summarised in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, the respondent's occupational category was significantly associated with the level of occupational identity on both measures. Office workers demonstrated consistently low levels of occupational identity on both the self-identification measure, and the self-description measure. This may reflect a perception of low status and/or the diffuse nature of occupations in this category as workers can all be labelled 'clerks' with diversity arising from the industry in which they work, rather than their specific work role. Interestingly, community service workers self-identified with their occupations more highly than would be expected yet included their occupation in their self-descriptions less frequently. This contradiction might provide guidance as to the difference between our self-identification and how we would like to be identified by others. In a situation, such as may occur amongst community service workers, where there is a discrepancy between attachment to an occupation and a willingness to be identified by others as part of that occupation, such a contradiction can perhaps be expected. While an individual may consider themselves fulfilling an important and useful role as, for example, a personal care worker, they may not wish to be identified by others as belonging to an occupation which might be perceived by those people as having low status. Alternatively, this discrepancy could be linked with the variability associated with gender, as this type of work is traditionally associated with females who, as we have seen, are likely to rate their occupational identity higher on the self-identification measure than in a social situation. This explanation is supported by the results for Plant Operators, Drivers, Warehouse Workers and Labourers, traditionally male roles, who provided higher than expected "I am" responses while their self-identification gave no significant difference in association.

Analysis of these survey results is based on the assumption that the two measures of occupational identity used are valid. Alternative measures against which they could be validated mostly measure different concepts. The Vocational Identity Scale (Holland et al. 1993) and the Vocational Identity Status Assessment (Porfeli et al. 2011) for example, are valid and reliable measures of vocational identity. However, these measures are used in career guidance to assess the level of achievement of a vocational identity as understood by Erikson (Erikson 1995) and Marcia (Marcia 1966), with the aim of assisting young people experiencing career indecision. The Occupational Performance History Interview (Kielhofner et al. 2001) includes an occupational identity scale but, again, this is used to measure internalisation of desirable occupational values, interests and confidence. Groth et al. (2015) developed an occupational identity scale based on a collective identity scale (used to measure identity in a general sense) however it was designed specifically for use with rural landholders. As the concept of occupational identity is variously defined, the prospect of confirming this external validity is some way off, and the assumption of validity accepted in this research project is the only practical basis for conclusions to be made.

It should be noted that the self-description measure was limited by some abbreviated survey responses. This had the effect of removing the first-person perspective, essential for using the term “I am”. For example, respondent #3 provided “talk briefly about job but also interests and hobbies”. This response, and many similar to it, could not be coded as “I am” even though, had the respondent given a less abbreviated response, they may have used that term, and was coded as “I do”. Consequently, the number of “I am” responses recorded is likely to be an under-representation, and the number of responses to the other two categories misleadingly higher. This in turn is likely to have affected the strength of the correlation between that measure and the self-identification measure.

Regarding the other variables, some care should be exercised when considering the effect of the respondents’ occupational category, and their Holland work personality type. The ANZSCO lists and describes over 900 occupations. In order to consider the effect of each separate occupation, a sample size very much larger than the one on which this study is based would be required. The reduction of the occupations into 11 categories necessarily reduced the sensitivity of the analysis. Similarly, attempting to determine what a person’s Holland work personality type might be, based on a single sentence does not do justice to the complexity of this variable. Validation of those sentences is a possible solution however, administration of a full vocational interest inventory would be far preferable. Neither of those processes was a practical consideration for this study.

4.6 Summary and Implications for Practice

The results of this study contributed to a clarification of the conceptualisation of the association between our work and our identity. When respondents were asked to assess the extent to which their occupation forms part of their identity, in other words their self-identity, their responses covered the range of possibilities, but fell most heavily towards a strong sense of identification with their occupation. When presented with an opportunity to describe who they are, analogous to their social identity, survey respondents placed themselves into one of three groups. One group gave no indication that they have an association with their paid work. Typically those people described their marital or parental status, hobbies and/or place of residence. Another group volunteered information about what type of work they do, indicating some level of identification, but did not describe themselves purely as that work. The third group explicitly identified themselves as being their occupation – “I am a ...”. Therefore it can be concluded that there is extensive, and at times intensive, association between work and identity, and that the identity can stem from a hobby or an unpaid role, from work in general, and/or from a specific occupation.

This study suggests that there are some factors which might influence the level of this identification. Gender does not appear to result in differences to the level of self-identification, but it may subtly influence the nature of how females wish to be identified, swaying it away from identification with a specific occupation. As a factor potentially influencing occupational identity, the level of the participants’ qualification may be misleading. While this study found greater prevalence of occupational identity among the most highly qualified, it also found significantly higher levels amongst those with no qualifications. This tends to support the need to delineate between an occupational identity and a professional identity, whereas it may otherwise be more intuitive to consider the former to be a subset of the latter. While permanence of employment was associated with higher levels of occupational identity, length of experience in an occupation had no significant effect. It appears then that it is the security of the tenure, rather than its length which is influential, with the inference that security provides the comfort in which to nurture identification. While the above variables appear to influence either self-identification or how a person wishes to be identified, the type of occupation in which the person is involved seems to influence both. Office work was measured to generate low levels of self-identification, and social identification. As the status of the various roles conducted in offices varies from administrative assistants to office managers, it may be necessary to look beyond perceived status for the cause. Perhaps the sheer diversity of office roles prevents identification from having a firm basis. It may not be possible to identify with an occupation that is relatively anonymous, whereas an occupation that is known is something to which an identity might be attached.

The response of community service workers, who appeared to self-identify strongly with their occupation but did not seem to wish to be identified by it, reinforces the difference between the satisfaction obtained from a role, and its perceived status. It seems possible to derive pride from an occupation, without having pride in it. Personality has been implicated in deciding the differing states or statuses of occupational identity (Marcia 1966; Munley 1975). The role of personality was not found by this study to be significant, but this is perhaps more likely to reflect the limitations of the study.

As noted in Chapter 2, there is considerable confusion regarding the meanings of the different terms used to describe identification with work. The results of this study may assist to clarify this confusion. and the suggestions below are presented as a starting point for discussions regarding appropriate definitions based on this study. Further research is likely to result in amendments however the ultimate aim should be to achieve consensus definitions with the objective of assisting in formalising conceptualisation. Until that objective is achieved, the following definitions are proposed:

Occupation

The inclusion of unpaid roles as occupations, favoured by many authors, is unhelpful if our purpose is to achieve, or assist in, career change following biographical disruption. While it must be acknowledged that biographical disruption includes disruption to valued roles which are not paid occupations, a distinction is required. Consequently, I recommend that an occupation be considered in accordance with the definition provided by the ANZSCO (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Statistics New Zealand 2013) which, in summary, is that an occupation is a set of jobs which involve similar tasks, performed for an employer, including self-employment, in return for pay or profit.

Occupational Identity

It is recommended that the term occupational identity be reserved for use when describing identification with a specific occupation, as defined above. This recommendation is supported by the results of this study which indicate that people who identify with work can be divided into sub-groups; the “I am” responders, and the “I do” responders. The former identifies explicitly with a specific occupation and should consequently be described as having an occupational identity.

Professional Identity

The implications of this study indicated that there may be (at least) two paths to identification with our work based on the finding that people who have high levels of qualification and those with no formal qualification both demonstrated higher than expected occupational identity. The former group are likely to be engaged in what can be described as professions, although the definition of profession is also subject to debate (Evetts 2003), but the latter are identifying with occupations with less formally defined boundaries (and also excludes those requiring trade qualifications). If identification with a profession is achieved via a different path, then it is not appropriate to consider professional identity to be a sub-set of occupational identity.

Work Identity

If, based on the results of this study, we can assign the term occupational identity to those who identify with a specific occupation, we require a term to describe those who identify with work in general terms, and work identity immediately suggests itself. We might use the term vocational identity however this denies us access to a suitable term for the phenomenon described by Hirschi (2012).

Vocational Identity

Hirschi (2012) uses the term callings to describe occupations to which people dedicate their lives. He considers occupational identity distinct from a calling because it does not necessarily involve such a strong engagement. The term vocational identity is proposed as appropriate in those circumstances as the word 'vocation' has an association with a sense of destiny that comes close to describing a calling.

Career Identity

While Erikson (1995) used the term occupational identity, he seems to apply it to the development within adolescents of the decision to embark upon their career. While this decision may be directed towards one occupation, Erikson does not seem to be describing identification with an occupation, rather with any occupation. Thus career identity is recommended as term which more closely describes this state.

Organisational Identity

Organisations consist of people engaged in occupations. The development of an organisational identity, identification with the distinctive characteristics of an organisation (Gioia 2013), is shared by people engaged in different occupations and therefore must be considered different from the development of individual occupational identities.

Role Identity

Distinct from role-based identity (Welbourne & Paterson 2017), which refers to an assemblage of identities including both organisational and occupational identity, it is recommended that the term role identity be used to describe identification with occupations other than paid occupations, equivalent to the respondents in this survey who provided a self-description which did not include the (paid) work that they do.

While these recommendations for defined terminology are based on the empirical findings of this study, they are not presented as immutable. Instead, it is hoped that they present a stimulus for further research and discussion, and as an addition to the process of clarification of the concept of occupational identity. If the goal of these activities is consensus, our understanding of this concept can only increase, and our ability to mitigate the negative consequences of biographical disruption through an enhancement of our ability to achieve career redirection will build. Before that is accomplished, it is necessary to move from the conceptual to the actual by gaining an understanding of the experiences of people who have an established occupational identity which has been exposed to disruption. The following chapter details interviews with Truck Drivers interpreted to achieve that goal.

CHAPTER 5

STUDY 2: INTERVIEWS

TRUCK DRIVERS' EXPERIENCES OF BEING A TRUCK DRIVER

5.1 Overview

This chapter focuses on the participants' individual experiences of 'being' their occupation. It investigates their identification with that occupation; how it began; how strong it is or was; and which factors were influential in its development and maintenance. Discussion of the participants' experiences of biographical disruption or their attempts to make a change from truck driving to another occupation are explored in Chapters 7 and 8.

Study 2 Aims:

- To gain a greater appreciation of the experience of occupational identity and occupational change
- To investigate the potential that a persistent occupational identity can effect occupational change through an analysis of the participants' experiences

Objectives:

- An identification of the potential barriers to occupational change that are the result of a persistent occupational identity

5.2 Methods and Materials;

Semi-structured interviews with Truck Drivers who had attempted occupational change. The interviews commenced with the participants being asked to respond to questions included in the online survey questionnaire (detailed in Section 4.3.2.2) which were designed to assess the level of the participants occupational identity. Subsequent questions were unstructured and guided by the participants' experiences, generally commencing with their experiences of first becoming interested in their occupation.

5.3 Participants

The participants were all, at one time in their working lives, Truck Drivers. There are 998 recognised occupations in Australia and New Zealand (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Statistics New Zealand 2013) and, while including participants from different occupations is likely to have produced a broader range of themes, it was not possible to encompass even a small fraction of them. The choice of Truck Driver as the occupation was essentially arbitrary and based on nothing more than the fact that the research was prompted initially by a vocational counselling session with a Truck Driver. As the results of the survey described in Chapter 4 subsequently confirmed, occupational identity is a phenomenon that is common across the range of occupations and, while truck driving, by definition, is an occupation

distinct from other occupations, and no two occupations are alike, the focus of this research is not the characteristics of an occupation, or the people engaged in it, but on their experience of identification with that occupation, and of attempting to make a change from that occupation to another. Thus, any occupation could have substituted for truck driving, and it can be expected that the experiences of identification and change would have shared some common themes, and other themes that would have differed based on the individual characteristics of that occupation. As noted by Smith et al. (2009), the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method results in theoretical transferability which provides the potential for establishing links between the experiences of the participants, the extant literature, and the experiences of the reader. Transferability evaluations can then be made “to persons in contexts which are more, or less, similar” (Smith et al. 2009, p. 51).

Participants were recruited through social and work networks, and print and social media invitations. Recruitment was a protracted process as there were many more approaches than acceptances. Cold canvassing Truck Drivers at truck stops proved particularly unproductive as many drivers expressed a willingness to participate, and indicated that they would maintain contact, but subsequently failed to respond. Similarly, approaches to industry representatives failed to generate any participants. The most fruitful method was word-of-mouth using social and work networks, and after publicity regarding the research was generated through an article in Big Rigs magazine. The funds required to travel to participants in Queensland and Western Australia was supplemented by a successful entry into the University of Wollongong Global Challenges competition.

Eleven Truck Drivers, whose names have been changed to protect their privacy agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. Nine of the participants identified as male and two identified as female, reflecting the gendered nature of this occupation in which only 3% of the workforce are female (National Skills Commission 2016). Their ages ranged from 30 years to 70 years. They resided in either New South Wales, Queensland or Western Australia, in cities, regional towns or rural areas.

5.4 Procedure

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and subsequently interpreted and analysed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method described by Smith et al. (2009) and detailed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. In accordance with that method, as detailed in Section 3.4, each participant’s transcript was examined line-by-line and descriptive, linguistic and conceptual annotations were made by the researcher. These annotations were analysed and experiential statements were identified and developed for each individual transcript. While these themes remained faithful to the participant’s words, they incorporated both a description and an

interpretation of those words with a view to creating synergies. Patterns between the statements were identified and a process of grouping into super-ordinate themes was completed. The interpretation of the interviews was made by the researcher alone. As noted in Chapter 3, the IPA method encourages interpretation over simple description. In accordance with that method, the researcher does not initially bracket their preconceptions as they may not be conscious of them. IPA's iterative interpretation process is such that it can potentially reveal "a more robust and cyclical reflexive bracketing" (Tuffour 2017, p. 4).

Thus, each participant's experience is in two parts. The first part examines that experience in detail, and the themes that emerged are identified through a preliminary analysis. The second part represents a grouping of those emergent themes into super-ordinate themes based on the patterns that became apparent. This process was iterative, with repeated cross-referencing between identified emergent themes and the resulting super-ordinate themes.

Chapter 6 represents a comparison of the collection of themes to enable the identification of patterns across participants and to examine the connections between them. Again, this was an iterative process and themes detailed in this chapter were revised as necessary. Collected themes were then compared with higher order concepts, noting any inconsistencies. All data collection, analysis and interpretation was conducted by the researcher alone during the period from August 2019 to October 2021.

5.5 Identification and Analysis of Themes from Each Participant's Experience of Being a Truck Driver

5.5.1 Billy

Billy's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Billy is a 30 year old male who lives in Brisbane with his parents. He has been a Truck Driver since the age of 19 years. He started driving refrigerated semi-trailers along the east coast but in his mid-20s he drove road trains in remote locations for a few years. He then returned to metropolitan driving with the intention of settling down and buying a home.

The first theme that emerged from the interview with Billy was that he has always been interested in trucks but has no idea why. Apart from his younger brother who followed him into truck driving, there is no family connection to the trucking industry and, despite giving the matter some thought, Billy has been unable to find a reason for his attachment.

“I was into trucks for as long as I can remember. I can’t remember not being into them.” (line 4)

“...even when I was 2 or 3 (years old) I always loved trucks.” (line 12)

When Billy was questioned more deeply on the genesis of his interest, his responses indicated that he believes it is not innate, not so much ‘in his blood’, although he concedes it seems that way, but rather something that has happened to him as a result of an unknown external influence.

“It came out of the blue...I’ve got no idea.” (line 18)

Billy’s attachment to trucks began early, and the strength of that early attachment also emerged as a theme. He has some insight into how unusual his interest is and was unashamedly open about admitting to it.

“Yeah. I think that’s probably why I’m probably the most boring person in the world, is I don’t... I’ve never had any interests. Even as a kid, I was getting the shits with myself at school, like 8 years old, because they’re like ‘oh, what are you interested in?’ – ‘trucks’ – ‘no, you’ve got to tell us 3 things’ - ‘I’m not interested in 3 things, I’m interested in trucks’.” (line 246).

When aged 9 he bought a truck magazine which he still has. He collects them and now has over a thousand.

Billy’s commitment to driving is all-consuming.

“Generally, if I took holidays, I’d spend that time working (as a Truck Driver) for someone else. So, it’s just like, back frigging around doing my work...” (line 220).

While he cannot understand where the attraction comes from, to Billy, the size of the truck is thematically significant.

“I just like to drive big trucks” (line 44).

He was dismissive of his first driving job as the trucks were semi-trailers, not road trains.

“I just like road trains, the biggest stuff I can get hands on” (line 52).

Billy described the life of a Truck Driver as a difficult one. Themes emerged which contrasted those difficulties with his persistent commitment to his occupation. Again, he does not know the reason he kept driving.

“I’ve just always wanted to do it but not known why.” (line 10)

“I don’t know, I just even sometimes - I’ve got annoyed - had enough, when I was working full time – ‘I’m done with this shit, I don’t want to drive anymore’. But I’d be back Monday. (I) can’t get out of it.” (line 54).

“I sometimes sit and wonder myself why I’ve liked it so much, ‘cause there is a lot of crap goes along with it, but, (I) still come back every time, (I’m) not quite sure why though.” (line 190)

The themes emerging from Billy’s persistence with driving in the face of the difficulties associated with it are exemplified by the fact that he openly acknowledges the social cost involved yet he continues to drive. He expresses some regret over losing contact with his friends and notes the devastating effect driving has on family relationships for some drivers but seems to be resigned to the fact that the price must be paid.

“Oh, I don’t really have any (close mates) anymore. You sort of have good mates growing up, but they’ve all got careers and families and over the years your timeframes never match up, so you never meet up, so they go their own ways.” (line 102).

“Yeah, you sure miss out. Most social life gets missed out on, ‘til you have none and you’re just working, so...” (line 86).

“...you know, like your family life is gone so everything else is gone to shit, so (driving trucks is) probably all there is left to do.” (line 298).

Social contact with the broader community has been replaced by the social contact Billy has with other drivers.

“I think a lot of my social life came from being at work as opposed to outside of work...” (line 44).

“Yeah, you sort of run into people you know every now and then and you sort of sit down for a while, but generally I like to keep moving so I don’t stay for long...”. (line 98).

The emergent theme that occurred most frequently was the freedom Billy felt while driving. When questioned on this feeling and confronted with the contradiction that he worked in a small cabin,

generally to a deadline, and sometimes in traffic, Billy's responses indicated that he equated freedom with autonomy, and a sense of being without boundaries which the open road engendered.

"You've sort of got freedom like... You've got a job to do, but you're more or less... Irrespective of what your boss says, you're still in charge of what you're doing" (line 64).

"I know, it's weird but it's... You're still confined in four walls but you're not confined in four walls. You're still in control of what you're doing, whereas in an office you're sitting there...a goldfish in a fishbowl, just going 'round and someone always watching you" (line 60).

"I've never felt the pressure. I know that people put the pressure on me but, I've never taken it on board... If you give me a load, an hour late, to be somewhere in 12 hours and it's a 13 hour drive, well guess what, it's not getting there, so I don't care, it gets there when it gets there." (line 66).

"I can't handle people yelling at me in a workplace... I noticed like doing Aldi that you'd see Store Managers the way they'd treat store staff, like, yelling at them, into them, I would have knocked them out by now. I just can't work like that." (line 152)

Any perceived attempt Billy felt at an employer exercising authority was resisted. Aided by the availability of alternative work it would sometimes result in him resigning.

"Even people who have put pressure on me, they've just lost my respect and I can't work with them." (line 68).

"...there's no shortage of work for driving. Like, I've walked off a job where I've been treated like crap (at) 10am and I was in another truck somewhere else 2pm." (line 154)

Themes relevant to defining who is, and who is not, a Truck Driver emerged from the interview. For Billy, there are two types of Truck Drivers, those that started driving when he did years ago, and those that have recently appeared on the roads. Important for Billy is the process by which a person becomes a Truck Driver. He repeatedly stressed that in order to be a 'real' Truck Driver, rather than a person who drives trucks, an ordeal must be endured.

"...the industry's changed in the last few years...it's easier for people to get into...10, 11 years ago, it was more noticeable that a lot of people had the same sort of things in common." (line 36).

"...it's handed to people now. Like, I had to prove myself. I had to work hard. I was looking for my first Driver job two years before I could even get a licence. Just to

show that I was keen. Just try and get into warehousing and stuff, and how keen I was to learn.” (line 168)

“..worked heaps... go polish your truck on Sundays for nothing, you just did it. Now it’s sort of like – now it’s a bit different. People are just put in trucks. They don’t have to work their way. A lot of people, it’s just handed to them, so the type of people I think are changing.” (line 38).

Billy is dismissive of the latter group and seems to consider them unworthy of the title ‘Truck Driver’.

“I know people who are Dentists... and they just go drive trucks for a while.” (line 40).

He believes the camaraderie between Truck Drivers is diminishing as a result.

“Like people these days, a lot of other drivers, blow a tyre, years ago people pull over and help you. These days they don’t. Now, you know, someone stuffs up, first thing people do is take a photo and put in on Facebook, rag the shit out of them. It’s not the same. There’s still a few good people, just a small amount.” (line 176).

When asked to rate himself on the Likert scale included in the survey, Billy admitted he is close to a ‘7’ (“I am totally defined by my occupation”). He thinks many drivers these days would score much lower.

Billy also differentiates between Truck Drivers and other workers. Office workers are singled-out for particular attention.

“I think another thing too, is I find office people different... there’s a lot of office people in different roles trying to sort of dominate over people and trying to assert themselves... Drive your truck yourself, have fun. It’s different in an office.” (line 150).

An ‘us vs them’ theme continued from Billy’s description of Truck Drivers as a group treated differently by the general public:

“I don’t really think we’re that respected... I think the public’s perception is fairly negative and I think the way a lot of people you deal with is fairly negative.” (line 160).

Billy places a lot of the blame for that on the way the media reports about truck accidents are received.

“I noticed the other day they put up a thing that was a shared video from a news site about the amount of deaths involving truck accidents or something, and even though they said in that news report that a lot them were, the cars were at fault,

you read the comments, they obviously didn't watch the video because they're straight away 'they're all on drugs' or 'they're cowboys' or 'they speed' and all that crap." (line 162).

Stereotyping of this type seems to perpetuate Billy's identification with truck driving by allowing him to bond with other drivers over a shared grievance.

Analysis of Billy's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Billy defines himself as a Truck Driver and driving trucks has been almost a life-long ambition. His association with being a Truck Driver began in infancy with a deep and exclusive interest with trucks. How or why this interest began remains unclear. There is no family connection to truck driving, and it does not appear that any one person was responsible for creating the spark. Billy dismisses the notion that it was something innate, preferring to attribute it to an inexplicable external force, and one which he has not always been pleased about as he considers it rendered him boring as a child. This external, unavoidable source suggests that he considers himself to have been 'called' to his occupation. In that sense, his occupational identity might better be described by what we have, in Chapter 4, defined as a 'vocational identity', what Hirschi (2012) refers to as a 'calling', work that a person perceives to be their purpose in life.

For Billy, driving as an enjoyable activity is specific to truck driving as he gets limited satisfaction from driving his 4-wheel drive, although it potentially provides the same 'freedom' as driving a truck, and no satisfaction from driving a car for mundane purposes. This freedom, interpreted as the ability to work autonomously, is something that Billy values highly.

Also associated with Billy's occupational identity as a Truck Driver is his deep interest in trucks. The nature of these relationships is potentially of some relevance to the development of his identification with his occupation. Billy's interest in trucks pre-dates his working life and is likely to have been influential in his decision to work as a Truck Driver. It is conceivable that, having commenced truck driving, he could have found that his interest was ill-founded, in which case his attachment to his occupation may have been short-lived.

Billy's acknowledgement that his career as a Truck Driver has come at a cost to his social life, and his attempt to mitigate that cost by abandoning road train driving in favour of delivering to supermarkets, only emphasises the extent of his attachment to his occupation. As it happens, Billy found that, despite the high social price he paid, he enjoyed the work and this no doubt contributed to him

continuing with it. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that his interest in trucks and his enjoyment of driving them at the very least allowed for the development of his occupational identity, and possibly had a causal relationship to that identity. The test of these factors as a pre-requisite for the development of an occupational identity will be a comparison with the occupational identity of drivers who did not have an early interest and/or a feeling of enjoyment from the act of driving.

Billy does not consider everyone who drives a truck to be a Truck Driver, and he only identifies with those who, like himself, served an unofficial apprenticeship. His identification with Truck Drivers is contrasted by his view of office workers. The stereotyping and stigmatisation he has encountered emphasise the differences between ‘us’ as Truck Drivers, and ‘them’ as everyone else. Thus, unless we share Billy’s view that some drivers are not ‘real’ Truck Drivers, his occupational identity is probably better described as an identification with an in-group of ‘old-school’ Truck Drivers, and possibly an example of the intergroup behaviour posited by Tajfel and Turner (1986). Table 5.1 summarises the super-ordinate themes which arose from Billy’s emergent themes.

Table 5.1: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Billy’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Theme	Definition
External genesis of identity	A belief that being a Truck Driver came from without, and was not innate
Pre-existing strong interest in trucks	An interest in trucks developed prior to a direct association with them, plausibly providing the foundation for the development of an occupational identity
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight
Dissonance	Expressions of positive emotions associated with the nature of work as a Truck Driver, made despite acknowledgement of aspects of that work that might be considered intolerable
Association with an Ingroup	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences
Empowerment	Attraction to the power, size, sound or speed of the truck

5.5.2 Ella

Ella's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Ella is a middle-aged woman living with her wife in a large mining town in WA. She moved to the mines to further her career and to pursue a goal of driving large trucks. She started her working life in Melbourne in clerical jobs but quickly changed to working as a self-employed Courier Driver. After arriving in the west in 1997, she initially found difficulty securing work as a driver but eventually became the first woman Concrete Truck Driver in town. She had a somewhat tumultuous early working life as a Truck Driver and was forced to change jobs a few times after disagreements with her employers. She found a more sustainable position driving a truck carrying explosives from Perth to the mines. Her attempts to get work driving road trains were stymied by her employer who did not think she was capable.

Ella's relationship with her father appears to have been influential throughout her life and has had particular relevance for her work as a Truck Driver. Even though he was not a driver, he was the impetus behind her early driving career. Although she mentioned him only twice, his significance is thematically salient.

“My dad actually gave me the spark... He had a client... and what he did was he wanted me to chauffeur to the airport, so I went and picked him up from the hotel room and chauffeured him, and that was it, I got the bug! So ever since actually I got my learners, I just loved to drive. So my dad lost his licence for drink driving... and I could drive him around everywhere.” (line 123)

He was also the force behind her continuing association with driving.

“I've seen a lot of the country and it's great, and as my father said to me, he goes 'get yourself a job where you can travel the country and get paid for it'. I never understood then because I was just a Courier Driver then until I got this job (as a Truck Driver). I dunno, it must have been his presence or something that guided me that way. 'Go! Go for it! Don't be scared'. So yeah it pushed me that way.” (line 182)

As a woman in a male-dominated occupation, in a male-dominated industry and a male-dominated environment (tours of the town's brothel district are advertised in the town's tourist information office), it is perhaps not surprising that Ella's gender generated the highest number of her emergent themes. She was both proud of her achievements as a woman Truck Driver and aware of the extent of the socio-cultural forces acting against her. For most of her working life she has fought against

gender occupational stereotypes and her inability to avoid those stereotypes, which prevented her from realising her goal of driving road trains remains a source of regret for her. Delivering explosives was a source of occupational pride for Ella, heightened by her gender.

“Yeah, so basically being quite a few years ago the only female in Australia that actually did drive around explosives in the truck to deliver to mine sites and so forth, it was, I was quite, you know, proud of doing a job like that...” (line 8)

Interestingly, that sentence included another act of bravery of which she was proud.

“...and getting out there and being brave enough to be sleeping in the truck on my own...” (line 8)

Ella’s inclusion, side-by-side, of the dangers posed by her load and the danger she felt as a woman on her own, emphasises the vulnerability associated with being a woman in a male environment and reinforces the extent of her achievements. She returned to this theme several times and it affected her willingness to engage socially with other drivers.

“...going out there I had been approached by a few Truck Drivers of... ‘your cab’s very small but mine is bigger’ and I’m like – ‘I’m here to work, I’m not here to have fun, I have a partner at home’, you know, and which in a way made me feel a little bit vulnerable in that sense, so I kept a lot to myself going to truck stops for a shower for instance because there’s like 50 men there in their trucks and having a pow wow or having a meal and stuff like that. I’d go in very quickly, come out, get back in my truck, go to the nearest road stop and stay there by myself. Not only because I have explosives on board, but for me I felt safer”. (line 95)

“...I have a (female) friend who goes, who drove for the same company...loves going to the road stops, loves having a chat you know and getting to know people and having a meal or a beer or what have you...But for me I felt it was putting myself out there, make myself available when I didn’t want to have that kind of attention brought to me.” (line 97)

Ella’s pride in her achievements as a Truck Driver is heightened because of her gender due to the barriers she perceives arise from it. Becoming a Truck Driver may be no particular achievement for a man, but the attitudes of men towards women truck drivers make achieving this goal for Ella something extraordinary.

The attitudes of her male colleagues did not seem always to perturb her, and she was sometimes able to laugh them off:

“I did have one guy at (employer’s name) said to me ‘well, you gotta have tits in this company to get good jobs’”. (line 89)

“I used to be called the ‘death girl’, ‘the death girl and she goes off with a bang’, you know. Which I thought was quite funny at times...” (line 99)

Attitudes from her employer however still rankle.

“I just... it’s just got a stigma around it, you know, and women find it, I mean I know there’s places out there where they give women opportunities and stuff like that, which I have approached them but because the... I have a lot of experience truck driving as in HRs (Heavy Rigid – trucks that don’t articulate) but I have nothing in anything bigger. So with a trailer. I have got my licence and everything but to get anything bigger they seem to shy a lot and I can’t understand why.” (Line 48)

“I’ve got my MC (licence) and I went and got that while at (employer’s name), and while I was there he said ‘well you can’t get into a bigger truck unless you’ve got a licence’ and so I went out and spent x amount of money to go and get my licence and when I came back he said ‘well it’s not unrestricted’, so I went to the Department of Transport and said ‘you made a mistake’, and they changed it. So then I had an unrestricted licence and he still wouldn’t do it. Still wouldn’t let me in the truck.” (line 50)

Ella’s attraction to truck driving causes her some regret, again related to the theme of traditional gender roles:

“You’re out there and you’re on your own. I wasn’t allowed to have a dog with me, he’s lucky! But that’s what it’s like. You know you’re just driving along and you see all this wonderful scenery and these cars and you see this and families going on holidays but you think gee I wish I was that, but I’m out to the Bungle Bungles hey, I’m having a free holiday and I’m getting paid for it you know, but you wish you did take a partner with you, or your kids or something like that, but it is - it’s our livelihood, it’s your job.” (line 109)

“I was seven years on the road. Bought a house and I was in the house 60 days out of 365.” (line 166)

Ella’s early attraction to truck driving, and to an identity as a Truck Driver, was associated with the opportunities it presented to her:

“Every time a truck went past me or something like that it would be like, ‘I’m gonna be that one day’, ‘I’m gonna do that one day’. And okay, I’m still sort of in a little

box truck. You know at the end of the day there's opportunities out there and I'm hoping one day someone will give me that'. (line 131).

The thrill Ella got from her first experience driving a large truck was enhanced by the opportunities that were then opened for her:

"Amazing. I was just like this is how my career, how I wanted to progress in my career as a Driver. From a van or... I started off in a car, and progressed into a van, loved the van, loved going around because I felt like... (Q. *Is a van a truck though?*) Nah, it was just a one-tonner, yeah, just a lovely van. Anyway, I was making money, yeah it was good. And then to get into the truck for the first time, I could see... It was just amazing.... And I just wanted to progress from that, and now I'm aiming at getting into a road train, you know, I want to further it more." (lines 42, 44 & 46)

Ella's attachment to her vehicles was a specific theme as the language she used anthropomorphised those trucks, or more specifically, referred to them as a female child:

"Yeah, it's a possession. That's my girl. Yeah, do not touch. If you're gonna touch her, you make sure you look after her... I got a big Mack (truck) and it was like, 'ah, she's pretty, but she looked maltreated. So I got out and started polishing her and making her, looking, you know, give her some respect'. (line 74)

"And then I see other people getting into it now and if it's still alive, other people using it after I had left and they did, they abused her and they just don't, I don't think they have the same passion, they just look at it as being a job rather than the vehicle being... 'Cause I consider every vehicle being... If it breaks down I'll make no money, so if it's sick or it's hurt, then I'm not able to do anything." (line 76)

"And you know, it's just like your own child." (line 84)

"I said to the boss, 'I need one day a month on a Saturday when I can sit down and spoil her' because I said, 'I do not like driving around in a dirty truck'." (line 168)

Analysis of Ella's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

According to Ella, her attachment to driving began at an early age, chauffeuring her father's business associate, and driving her father around when he lost his licence. It was only later in our interview that Ella disclosed her early working life in accounting, and that her occupational ambition then was to "be" an Accountant. This early occupational identity has been totally subsumed by her current identity and is now insignificant. While her identification now as a Truck Driver appears indisputable, it is complicated by her gender. As truck driving is an occupation that is almost exclusively identified with men, her identification as a woman and as a Truck Driver has brought both into focus. The

question is, are these two identities distinct, or is her self-identity better described as a woman Truck Driver? When asked the I am/I do hypothetical social situation question during the interview, Ella answered immediately with “I am a Truck Driver” (although she subsequently modified that to describe herself previously as someone who drives a truck full of explosives), and on the Likert scale she rated the importance of her occupation to who she is as a ‘six’, yet she is acutely aware of the barriers she faced in her career due to her gender, and to the inescapable fact that some others consequently identify her as a woman and only reluctantly as a Truck Driver.

Ella has a special relationship with her trucks. She describes them not only as living things, but as her daughters, to whom she feels protective and worthy of spoiling. The role this relationship plays in her determination to work as a Truck Driver must be considered. If trucks are Ella’s substitute children, she apparently does not love her children equally. She prefers trucks to vans. She prefers articulated trucks to other trucks. She cares for her current truck, but still dreams of driving a road train.

Similarly, Ella’s path to becoming a Truck Driver commenced with the early satisfaction she gained from driving a car and, subsequently, a van. The role driving as an act plays in her attachment to working as a Truck Driver must also be considered. Again, Ella derives differing levels of satisfaction from different types of driving which again suggests that the act of driving alone is an insufficient explanation. Table 5.2 summarises the super-ordinate themes derived from the emergent themes identified in Ella’s transcript.

Table 5.2: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Ella’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Theme	Definition
Genesis from a significant relationship	Early development of an occupational identity due to the influence of a significant other
Intersectional identity	Occupational identity inter-related with another type of identity
Pre-existing strong interest in trucks	An interest in trucks developed prior to a direct association with them, plausibly providing the foundation for the development of an occupational identity
Animation of trucks	Elevation of trucks to living things
Dissonance	Expressions of positive emotions associated with the nature of work as a Truck Driver, made despite acknowledgement of aspects of that work that might be considered intolerable

5.5.3 Josh

Josh's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Josh is a middle-aged man who lives with his wife in the Illawarra region of NSW. His father was a truck driver and, according to what his mother told him, Josh's love of trucks had an uncertain start as he was, as a baby, petrified of any machinery. He soon lost this fear and, from the age of about three, developed what he described as an obsession, particularly with interstate driving.

Apart from being petrified of machinery as a baby, of which he has no memory, Josh's relationship with trucks amounts to a life-long "obsession". Thematically, the beginning of his relationship with trucks and truck driving seems to have been influenced by the male figures around him:

"Since I was about three I played with trucks on the floor...right up until I probably went to high school." (line 33)

"...I just got obsessed with them. Looking at 'em, buying magazines, knowing people that had trucks, going for drives on trucks, riding trucks. Our next-door neighbour actually drove a truck as well. Um, so I used to go for a lot of rides with him. I couldn't subsequently go with my dad for the company that he worked for. As I got older the obsession got a little bit more, and I always wanted to do interstate. And there was a gentleman close to us that did interstate. I was friends with his son and, um, yeah. Any time I got school holidays or, yeah, mainly school holidays I went for a ride with him all the time." (line 31)

"I surfed on weekends and then the, uh, the obsession sort of took over. That you drove six days a week. And... I got OCD. I like things to be clean so then it was the day off that you would have a day off you were cleaning to make sure that it was [inaudible] the next day." (line 39)

While males may have been influential in his early life, after leaving school, Josh's obsession survived his parents' better judgement:

"My parents wanted me to do a trade first...Something to fall back on. They didn't want me to go straight into driving a truck and not have anything if it didn't work out..." (line 50)

Josh's first choice of trade was directly connected to trucks however he became a Bricklayer instead:

"At school I wanted to become a Diesel Mechanic, but the Teacher said I didn't have the brains for it." (line 54)

Not that it made any difference:

"In saying that, I haven't gone back to my trade since I drove trucks." (line 50)

After over 25 years of driving, the obsession lives, but a different theme emerges from the language Josh used to describe his relationship with trucks he owned. It is difficult to conclude whether he owned the truck, it owned him, or the truck was a representation of him:

“I still watch truck videos. I still like the look of trucks. I like a nice shiny truck and... I dunno [*i'd say it's?*] a sense of pride, especially when you've got your own, cause it's, it's got your name on it, you work for it. It's yours.” (line 116)

And, according to Josh, he's not alone. He's also noticed many other Truck Drivers with similar focus:

“You probably couldn't get a conversation out of them if it didn't involve...truck driving or trucks or something like that would come up in conversation, or the conversation was about trucks...or someone that drove a truck, or 'did you see a picture of that truck', or 'that looked good that truck'. Something like that...(The majority of them think their world is their truck.” (line 84)

Josh's language fully expressed the extent of his obsession:

“I dunno, I just love them.” (line 37)

“I dunno, I just love the driving...” (line 138)

“I'm in love with it.” (line 144)

Despite the strength of the attraction Josh has with trucks and truck driving, he struggled to pin-point one specific reason for it, instead offering several. Themes of power, status, and autonomy emerge:

“I like the sound of them. I have a saying, 'if it's too loud, you're too old', but yeah, just the sound of them...They're big. Up there you can see the world.” (line 37)

“When I grew up and started driving, it was the fast driving (that was part of the attraction)”. (line 98)

“...in a way, you're your own boss. You're sittin' in that truck by yourself. Yes, you get told what to do, where to pick up loads and whatnot. But, you're there, you're not, you haven't got someone over your shoulder. You know, you don't generally have to answer to someone in that eight hour period.” (line 122)

“It's just, it's free, it's easy.” (line 126)

“...you just sit back, you can listen to music, look at the scenery. There's generally, oh, generally sometimes no pressure in the job.” (line 128)

“...you decide how you plan your day. You haven't got someone tellin' you... even though you've got a time to be there, no one's saying, well, you know, 'Josh...'. You know, by law, yes. You've, every five hours you, you have your half an hour break. But you can drive two hours and have a half an hour break, and then do another two hours and have a half an hour break, you don't have to do the norm like in a nine to

five job you start at 7 and your smoko's at o'clock and you're lunch is at twelve o'clock and you finish at three o'clock." (line 130)

During our interview, Josh was explicit in declaring himself a Truck Driver or, more specifically:

"I'll say I'm an Owner/Operator and a Truck Driver. Um, I used to be an interstate Truck Driver, but I do local now. Or intrastate." (line 13)

The use of the present tense should be noted as, at the time of our interview, Josh had not yet resumed paid work and had in fact not worked for several years beforehand. Later in the interview he used the past tense, again highlighting the theme that his identification was with his truck and his trucking company:

"...it sort of [*pause*] did define me, so to speak. Everyone knew me as, you know, Josh (surname), or (nickname) is my nickname, is that, you know, this is him, this is his transport company, this is his truck." (line 114)

Another emergent theme was the manner in which Josh announced his occupational identity in visual terms:

"I, I see myself as an Owner/Operator." (line 116)

"I couldn't see myself doing anything else but driving a truck. And I still can't." (line 112)

Josh distinguished between those who drive trucks, and a separate group of older drivers for whom driving is more than something they did:

"Some do it for the, for the money. Some do it for... as just a job. And then some do it because the, it's in their blood." (line 74)

"When I grew up, generally the guys that I was with, they had a passion for trucks. Um, now days you see the new generation come in... some of them got the passion, but majority of them it's just a job. And, and the money." (line 76)

Analysis of Josh's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Josh experiences the world as a Truck Owner/Manager, despite, at the time of our interview, being neither an Owner/Manager, nor a Truck Driver. He rated his attachment to that occupation as seven out of seven on the Likert scale prior to his marriage, and a five now. As described in Section 7. , his attachment has resulted in a determination to return to truck driving despite substantial barriers.

The genesis of Josh's obsession seems to be connected to his father, who was also a Truck Driver, but also to his friendship with a neighbour, with whom he travelled as a passenger when prevented from

travelling with his father. Josh’s parents’ concerns with him entering truck driving as a career without first gaining trade qualifications indicate that his obsession was not necessarily actively encouraged by them, and that they may have attempted to divert him from that work. Thus parental influence may have initiated his interest, but it cannot be implicated fully in its maintenance. In fact, during our interview, Josh divulged that he was very actively engaged with sports, including soccer and surfing, as a youth. Those interests appear to have declined as his attachment to work increased. While playing soccer is something that he may have abandoned with youth, surfing is an activity that is not as age dependent, and one that he could conceivably have continued with, but for his obsession. He admitted that he remains in contact with those he once shared those activities with, but that his closest male relationships are with Truck Drivers.

Josh has an emotional attachment to trucks, driving trucks and his occupation. He “loves” them all. His attachment to trucks is such that he feels the truck he owned, also owned him. It had his name, and the company he owned, on it. It represented him and he was proud of that representation. Driving trucks elevated him. It provided power and allowed him to be autonomous, free from oversight and censure. Josh identifies with two occupations, Owner/Operator “and” Truck Driver. He does not seem to consider his former status as an Owner/Operator as part of a hierarchy, rather he seems to be able to identify with both occupations equally and simultaneously. His inability to visualise himself in another occupation confirms the extent of his occupational identity. He continues to lapse into the present tense to describe his identity despite not having worked in his occupation for several years.

Josh divides Truck Drivers into those with a passion for the occupations for whom it is “in their blood”, and others who do it for more venal reasons. He thinks the difference is mostly generational. Somehow, drivers who belong to the newer generation lack something innate, something his generation have within. Table 5.3 summarises the super-ordinate themes arising from the emergent themes identified in Josh’s transcript.

Table 5.3: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Josh’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Theme	Definition
Genesis from a significant relationship	Early development of an occupational identity due to the influence of a significant other
Internal genesis of identity	A belief that being a Truck Driver is innate and came from within

Intersectional identity	Occupational identity inter-related with another type of identity
Pre-existing strong interest in trucks	An interest in trucks developed prior to a direct association with them, plausibly providing the foundation for the development of an occupational identity
Identification with trucks	Descriptions of trucks as being representations of the driver
Empowerment	Attraction to the power, size, sound or speed of the truck
Dissonance	Expressions of positive emotions associated with the nature of work as a Truck Driver, made despite acknowledgement of aspects of that work that might be considered intolerable
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight
Association with an Ingroup	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences

5.2.4 Darryl

Darryl's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Darryl is a 50 year old male living with his wife in South East Queensland. He was a passionate participant. He had strong feelings towards his industry and, for reasons that will become apparent in Chapter 7, he has obviously given a great deal of thought towards truck driving and Truck Drivers. His passion sometimes caused him to speak rapidly and jump from topic to topic, sometimes mid-sentence, to the point that whole passages of speech are only vaguely coherent. He openly and enthusiastically embraces a strong occupational identity as a Truck Driver.

As a youth Darryl had no particular interest in vehicles of any type, and it was not until he was 18 years old that he became enamoured of trucks. He was employed as a Clerk at the time, having worked in a series of casual positions, and was travelling, when he was offered the opportunity of driving a truck. He then worked for a succession of truck companies for a total of 18 years until a medical condition caused his career to come to a sudden halt.

Darryl's working life prior to his career as a Truck Driver was inconsequential to him and the first theme to emerge was his sudden awakening the first time he climbed into a truck cabin. The language he used to describe this came in the form of a metaphor in which his identity was likened to his feet finding foundation:

“No I was just floating. As an 18 year old in the time we grew up in, late 80’s, early 90’s when careers... You could have a job today and if you didn’t like it you could get a new one tomorrow... I was just sort of wandering, finding my feet, didn’t know what I wanted to do, then I seen this truck... And that was it”. (lines 22 and 24)

When asked to rate his attachment to truck driving using the Likert scale, Darryl replied:

“Beyond 7! I know you can’t have one, but all the way to 11, 12.” (line 10)

Interestingly, when asked to rate his attachment to his current career as an Academic, he gave himself a rating of 7.

A strong theme emerged from Darryl’s experience of trucks which was a passionate attachment which eventually consumed his identity and provided a means of representing himself to others with pride:

“But as soon as he showed me this and just said ‘do you want to drive that?’
Massive great black Peterbilt. This gorgeous machine. I just fell in love with it.” (line 20)

“You become part of the truck, you become that truck. That’s who you are, and that’s all you know.” (line 126)

“That’s who we are. You can’t take us... When you take us out of the truck, it’s still our truck. I got these... One of the very first Freightliners (inaudible). That was mine. No one touched it. My day off was my day off but the only time it ever moved was when a mechanic came and took it to the workshop. Otherwise it never moved. It was mine and everybody knew it.” (line 68)

Darryl was asked directly whether the ‘typical’ Truck Driver existed. He immediately and strenuously denied it, but despite this denial, themes emerged of individuals with shared characteristics:

“Oh, we’re all bloody-minded. There’s not a truckie in the world that’s not bloody-minded. They’re pains in the arse, they’re characters”. (line 58)

“We’re a very superstitious bunch of people. That’s who we are”. (line 68)

“There’s an unwritten rule about what type of music you play in your rig, what channels... What you read... Where you go and stop and have a feed.” (line 94)

“It’s... The language... I mean the truckie... The language of the Truck Driver the world over is consistently similar. They do have a sub-language. How that started I mean that’s probably more synonymous when you watch movies like ‘Convoy’ and... You hear that dialect, and it becomes more... You almost feel elite. I don’t want you

to hear so I'll talk truck-speak. You could call it truck-speak because that's all... That's the way it is." (line 98)

"But there's always that, you're looking at dollars, dare I say it, we're all sluts. We chase the money. We chase the best bucks, or chase all the new shiny toys. If someone gets to you with a new Kenworth, well we're going to work for that company, pull that rig out of the yard if that's what we like. That's who we are." (line 106)

"When you swarm together, you're a tightknit bunch of people. You might work with different companies, but at the end of the day... But there is no typical truckie in the world". (line 60)

For Darryl, not everyone who drives a truck is a Truck Driver. A theme of delineation emerged in which there is a difference between those who have pride in being a Truck Driver, and those who are not part of that 'profession':

"There's an argument across the industry about the 457 visa (a visa allowing foreign nationals to work in Australia in areas where there is a skill shortage). You may have seen, I know I have seen a lot of the migrants seem to drive tippers. And they're all mental. And they'll cut you off. So I think that's probably where the professional truckie who actually prides themselves on who they are, what they do, and why they do it are the 70%, the others just, it's a job." (line 82)

"I just think the current ethos of actually... Seems to be sort of shifting... Whether it be a lot to do with the way we train the truckies, the licences anymore... The other day I was driving out of the motor registry, and there's a sign on the trailer saying 'get your HC licence in 6 hours'. That is probably where the...So the mindset is probably different. And you just see them and you see that they don't seem to care or they're not looking, or not paying attention. My perception is when you look at the international community, they don't seem to have that professional pride." (line 86)

When confronted with the strong implication of a nationalistic, if not ethnocentric, aspect to being a 'real' Truck Driver, Darryl denied the allegation and pointed to American Truck Drivers in contrast.

"You'll find many trucks in America with the American flag on it, or the eagle or something. Yes it is more, who you are, what you do, but where you live. The way the American works, it's an identity. 'I am an American citizen'. It's pure that, and the Teamsters Union, they've got US flags all over. The boys and girls in the US on

the road, they don't work on significant national holidays. Independence day. They'll just stop." (line 88)

Darryl's reference to trucks as homes was more than a metaphor. The theme of the truck as a safe haven emerged:

"Just having that constant where you've got your own life. My cab was... My CDs were down there, I had a fridge, I had my creature comforts of home." (line 36)

"We have pride in your vehicle. You spend... The owner/drivers will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars making it his home, because it pretty much is their home. They might sink 250, 300 thousand dollars into this rig. It is home." (line 66)

"It is home." (line 96)

"It is a safe place. And the world will not get you in that cabin. It's your little armoured fortress. You're up in the air. No one can climb in. You can lock the door and you can leave the windows down and you can look at the minions in their cars and go 'fuck them, get out of my way or I'll mow you over'. It's that type of... It is sort of like a bank vault. It's the same feeling we have in our own homes. We lock the front door, we shut the garage door, we feel safe. The rest of the world can... Who cares what happens beyond the front... There can be a major accident out the front of my house, I'm not going to go out and look. I don't care. It's your work home. It's your life, so everything you do, everything you need to go from point A to point B. At the end of the day you just step 3 feet behind you, take your shoes off... It's home so it has to have the same connection to you." (line 128)

"And it's sort of like a giant family. Which is the only way I can describe the industry. It's like family at the same time as work." (line 60)

Driving trucks provided Darryl a complex mixture of personal satisfaction. Themes of freedom related to feelings of autonomy and power, tempered by strong feelings of responsibility associated with an altruistic purpose emerged.

"It gave me that freedom and the independence. I think that was probably what it was. The office work, you've got people to deal with, you've got all your (inaudible). 'I'm a bit of an independent person, I just... That freedom.'" (line 34)

"You do have that ultimate power and whether you choose to use it or not, it is in the back of your mind. 'No, I don't like that forky (forklift driver), I'm going to wait until half past three for the shift changes and get the bloke I like'. You took control

over what you do...(Q. So if you were particularly bloody-minded, you'd...) (laughs)
We are a bloody-minded people. If you don't like somebody or the company... Or somebody decided to put new rules in and you couldn't get to the warehouse to go and grab a cup of coffee anymore and you had to walk around the block... And you do get antsy (laughs). You do have that control." (lines 50 & 52)

"It's just... I can do something good for somebody. When you're driving road trains and you go out to all these remote people, all these regional centres in the middle of Christ knows where and people just seem to come out of nowhere. All these kids because... And you're thinking 'this is just brilliant'. Because you're doing something good for somebody that nobody ever sees. Working in an office you do a little bit of... You do your little job. Your boss comes up... I've turned up and with a fully loaded road truck and I've affected an entire community. It was just that big picture that I didn't... I probably didn't realise what that was doing but it was just that thrill. When I was going to those towns, or I was delivering something to the Argyle diamond mine or something, you have a purpose and if you don't turn up on time, everything can go wrong around you. I never understood how that worked but it was just like that was pure emotion, it was pure power." (line 34)

"Somebody at some point in time is either, when they've shipped they expect you to deliver it. Because it's for a need and the customer, whoever wants it, has a need for it. And you suddenly realise how important a part of life the lifecycle of a product is. Delivering face wipe products to cereal. There's probably, what, 300,000 children in the world that need your truck. But you don't actually know that, you don't really care. But Kellogs Corn Flakes may want it, because if they don't get your product, they don't get the next stage. So you suddenly realise how much of an important part in that whole process you are." (line 42)

Analysis of Darryl's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Before he became a Truck Driver, Darryl was drifting through life. The transformation was a grounding. It came suddenly and the initial attraction was related to the size and beauty of the Peterbilt truck to which he was first introduced. His attraction to his vehicles continued to the point where he felt inseparable from them, they became part of him, part of who he was.

Trucks were also Darryl's family and his home, somewhere he felt safe and secure. In equipping his truck, Darryl was home-making, but he was also building a threatening fortress to keep the world and

its dangers out. A place above the “minions”, away from responsibility for other people where he did not have to care.

Driving provided Darryl with a sense of freedom from other responsibilities and continued to enjoy the freedom to drift, and the power to do as he pleased, but his life had purpose. Through being a Truck Driver he could see himself as part of a bigger picture, providing an essential service. Chapter 7 details how this sense of purpose, still inseparable from Truck Drivers, continues.

Darryl has an obvious affection to some Truck Drivers. He refuses to accept a stereotype, but is willing to attribute shared characteristics of bloody-minded individualism, and a common language. His affection for Truck Drivers is however not universal. He draws a clear distinction between the Truck Drivers who share a traditional truck driving culture, and those who work as truck drivers under a 457 visa. He dismisses the latter as unprofessional and dangerously reckless. He thinks all they care about is money, although he himself is happy to describe his favoured type of Truck Drivers as “sluts”, always looking for money. Table 5.4 summarises the super-ordinate themes obtained from Darryl’s transcript.

Table 5.4: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Darryl’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Revelatory genesis	Description of an awakening of occupational identity attributed to one event
Identification with trucks	Descriptions of trucks as being representations of the driver
Enculturation	Disclosure of the adoption of behaviour, attitudes or language specific to Truck Drivers
Association with an Ingroup	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight
Empowerment	Attraction to the power, size, sound or speed of the truck
The penthouse	Descriptions of trucks as comfortable, familiar, safe-havens, above the rest of the world and looking down on it
Purpose	Feelings of altruism arising from the social or economic importance of truck driving

5.5.5 Garth

Garth's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Garth is a 55 year old male who lives with his wife and two teenage daughters on a rural property in southern New South Wales. Garth comes from a truck driving family and from an early age was intent on a career as a Truck Driver. He has had an eventful working life and has experienced several major disruptions, at least two of which were potentially fatal. His relationship with his occupation is complex and his occupational identity is intermingled with other aspects of his identity.

The themes that emerge most strongly from Garth's experiences relate the amalgam of associations which combine to form his identity. When asked to describe himself in the social situation scenario, he first nominated his family status, then the work he did as a Truck Driver (I do, not I am), followed by his former interest in training greyhounds. When asked to rate himself on the Likert scale, Garth confirmed the effect his family has had on the change in his identity:

“Easy six. Probably would have been a seven before the kids come you know?... No... everything was trucks, trucks, trucks.” (line 31)

The primacy of the theme represented by his family status was repeated throughout the interview:

“...anyway I was still doing a bit of relief driving for (company name) overnight but cutting it down, cutting it down, because she said ‘we're gonna have kids, I don't want a bloke who's away every week’. And I said, ‘no, fair enough’. So I started off as a barman and then I got a job driving the truck for the hospital.” (line 89)

“As soon as I was told that day when (wife's name) said she was pregnant, family first. Kids want anything, if I can build it, if I can afford it, if I can do it.” (line 121)

Garth identifies his family focus as making him different from other traditional drivers:

“... If there was a fire at his place, the first thing he'd do is move his truck before he took the family out.... You can bet on it. He would be telling the wife to get the kids out and go while he saved his truck.” (lines 223 & 225)

“I know a fair few folks who are like that. They've lost everything, been through the divorce but always driven the truck... I think if you (could) marry it they would. And I suppose that makes me into a different category. Those two kids are just the, the, the light.” (lines 129 & 130)

Of interest, while both of his children are high achievers (the eldest having represented Australia in sport) and, while he is devoted to them both, Garth displayed a definite ‘soft spot’ for his younger daughter:

“The youngest one, if there's a Truck Driver in the family, it'll be her. She... she's a... she's too much like me now.” (line 135)

She's twelve. And she can drive that (points to his truck)... She can drive me car. She's got a YZ motorbike down there, she drives it. I trust her. If I was crook, I'd trust her to drive the truck home. No problem. She can do it.” (line 139)

“Where the other one, she's academically smart and she's a great sportsman but I keep, that youngest one, she's serviced the wife's [car], changed the oil, changed the filter, did everything right. It's the first time she's done it, she's been watching me for a while, so I just went around and checked everything like a professional Mechanic teaching an apprentice but she did a perfect job.” (line 141)

“We like to work with our hands. Do things like that. She's really smart too but she's heading down the same road as me and I don't... I haven't got that answer to stop it. She actually wants to be a jockey and I said, well whatever you do, I said to her Tuesday night, Wednesday morning, whatever you do, you'll be getting your bloody truck license as well. You'll work for me, I'll get a job for you to do.” (line 145)

Before he started his family, trucking took over Garth's life from an early age. He was a very willing captive and a theme emerged of the influence his father had on his future identity.

“Yeah, I was, um, I was always sort of skipping school to go with dad in the truck.” (line 43)

“Dad was working for a bloke who worked up at Dubbo at the time, (names), and they took me on as a truck jockey, who goes out and helps the drivers load at 14, first trip I got was in me Dad's truck” (line 45)

The first of Garth's career disruptions occurred on that day (refer to Chapter 7). After an extended period, his career resumed and Garth began to demonstrate a strong work ethic, centred on trucks:

“I started a job at (company name). I would get there around 4 o'clock in the morning, unload the trucks that came in from Corowa to Melbourne that had their depot there... So, I'd drive a forklift and take it off. Then at eight o'clock I'd go four doors down to the next one, which was (company names) from Colac, and I was the Manager there. I was only sixteen. I would unload the trucks, load the trucks, receipt, do all the paperwork, get the boys out, load the depot truck every day and have it tarped down so the bloke would come in with cream tanker, drop the tanker, pick up the trailer and go on home and swap it the next day. And at the... that was at five (pm), eight til five, and then, uh, at 6:30 at night I used to work on the dock at (company name) and load... (*'So, when did you sleep during all of this?'*) In the car

actually, I did that for twelve months and it'd give me enough money to buy a house up at (country town). That's when I bought me first truck." (lines 49, 50 & 51)

Garth's truck driving career was subject to five major disruptions (refer to Chapter 7). When he wasn't driving, he pursued his passion for breeding, training and racing greyhounds, a role he seems to have inherited from his mother, repeating the theme of an influential parent:

"There were two loves of my life at that stage and they were trucks and greyhounds. So me mum was training greyhounds at the time and us two boys we sort of were associated in that but we weren't the trainers we'd just help her out and take them to the truck and help her if she had four or five in, but then during the week we were off doing trucks." (line 65)

"I had two loves, the greyhounds and the uh, trucks, and the family over everything." (line 149)

"I said to me mum, mum and dad split up, and I said to me mum, well neither of us, we're country people and it's pretty hard living in (suburb), pretty rough suburb in Melbourne, so anyway I said to her if I get enough money we're going back to the bush. Back to the country. And hence that's why the three jobs, I um, bought a house on (country town) on about three acres of land all set up with kennels and everything. \$16,000. So I jumped at it. And that's, those three jobs paid for that. So it was worth it." (line 67)

Garth's passion for greyhound racing led to the role of an elected position in sports administration.

"I had a mission, I'd already been pushing to the election, made me promises how I'd work at the track and deal with the Board, 'cause this area is pretty well forgotten outside of Sydney. And uh, I won that, I went up, became the... became the Riverina representative. I sat with um... I sat on the Board with ten. The company turned over thirty million dollars a year. I was in charge of (major city dog racing track) and ten other racetracks so we were in charge with dealing with all that." (line 163)

Garth has been driving trucks off-an-on since he was 12 years old. A theme of a sense of belonging emerged:

"...it's like wearing your favourite pair of jeans." (line 33)

"...it feels like home. That's where I belong." (line 31)

The act of driving a truck provides him with a sense of freedom combined with a sense of being in control of his own destiny, to the extent that he believes his ability as a driver protects him. This

theme of autonomy is followed by a feeling of other-worldly calm that he didn't experience in other situations:

"It's a freedom. I can turn the music up... listen to the music at night... I'm in control, of me own destiny. I've always said...if I crash, I believe in my ability that much... that I... you can never predict the inevitable. Something that happens out of play. Everything else, I'm fully in control. It's a calmness that will go above you. I couldn't stay calm in the board meetings... with nine other people discussing multi-million dollars worth of um, business and how we would be spending and how we would deal with it. I can see stupid things being done, and I was getting cranky. But in the truck, if there's any stupid things being done it's me who's doing them. So the only person I can be cranky at is me. I'd get to the yards and any other Truck Driver would tell you this, get to the yards, do what you're told, unload, reload, as soon you drive out you're your own boss. You're in charge again. Um. And... It... it is, it's a funny sense of freedom that happens during that time. Especially on long runs." (lines 193 & 194)

Garth also expressed satisfaction from the results of his driving:

"I've always taken pride... (company name), our motto was 'In time, Intact'. That meant that we met our delivery times, we got it there in one piece, undamaged." (line 199)

"I'd break from Brisbane inland, out of the markets and do a milk run, and go out, through the centre and um, go out (to) these (cattle) stations, and I remember I went to one, one day, and you had like a palette of fruit and vegetables and another hard palette of other things like shopping needs and papers, and I remember we were unloading it at this station and the lady, the wife came out and she grabbed the paper and she started crying and her husband said to her, 'what's wrong, what's wrong'. She said, 'Lady Diana's dead. And I said, 'that happened a month ago'. She said 'we don't get the paper every day out here' I've never forgot that, she just burst into tears while we were unloading the trucks...". (line 195)

While Garth identified with his occupation, this identity was not necessarily associated with his truck.

"The bling? Well you know, it's getting a bit carried away, all the trucks that uh, I was associated with, were just basic, standard type trucks. Their bling was in their gear box and engine, that was the bling. Nice little paint job, not too much... Now. You've got bells and whistles on everything, they're standing out and they're wondering

why the police want to have a chat with them. You're putting a sign on you saying 'you're a cockhead' and saying 'come here and see what you can find'. (line 221)

"Now, you've got these new blokes... they're washed every trip, every day. The shine has to be... If I hear that word shine one more time I'm gonna headbutt someone. Some bloke said to me, last week, with mine, cause when it's washed it looks good, but it's made to work. I'm not gonna sacrifice sleep, or in fact doing my job when it can be done on the weekend when I'm not working, and um. Bloke said something and I said, 'that's how you tell if a truck's earning money. It's got dirt on it.'" (line 219)

As well as being comparatively less interested in his truck, Garth thinks his professionalism makes him different from other Truck Drivers:

"That was a complete understanding that I was the front line of the company, I was the first person customers were meeting. Presentation, truck driver, care for the freight and politeness. Most of these other blokes would wear the blue shorts, the blue singlet and a couple of thongs and uh, you know, ripped off the customer." (line 209)

A theme of differentiation between different types of Truck Driver, the traditional drivers, the new drivers and women drivers emerged. While Garth considers himself apart from the traditional driver, he laments their passing, regrets the emergence of the new driver and celebrates the arrival of women drivers. His description of his generation includes an acceptance that danger and death were among the things they had in common:

"There is a trucking... [sighs] there is a trucking brotherhood. And there is... that's been broken. These new blokes, even Australian truck drivers now who have taken it up from let's say the year 2000 and even before me there was a generation, there was a generation before me, in the 80s to 2000, um. There's a brotherhood there. I keep in contact with heaps of them now... They've all changed now. Now we're a bigger criminal than what we were but even back then in the 80s we were doing 100 miles an hour at night, at midnight, I wouldn't want to see me family out there. There was a happy hour, that would run, there were two groups of trucks and overnights were most of them and some of the general carters had their trucks tricked up that could keep up with us and they'd leave out of Sydney about 8/9 o'clock. They'd leave out of Melbourne around 8 o'clock and they'd meet out in Tarcutta area from Holbrook to Gundagai, that area would be full of trucks, and I

mean it would be endless. But we all understood what everyone was doing, we all looked out for each other, you know, lost a lot of good blokes. Crashes happen. Death happens. Um. But there was a generation before mine, where they didn't have the huge horsepower, the air conditioners, we were getting those. We had CB radios back then, and actual telephones you had to pick up to talk to someone. They had nothing, they worked their ass off the generation before from the 40s to the 70s. They'd come through, they were the real backbone, the Truck Drivers of the world. These blokes from 2000 to now, they have automatic trucks, they've got, bluetooth in their ear, they have air conditioners that uh, will freeze you you know. They don't unload or load. None of them, barely none of them know how to use a tarp. That was the one thing I learned at twelve, how to tarp a load in. They're either all tankers or vans or refrigerated vans tankers..." (line 215)

"But I said, that's the new breed. They're 25-30 year old now and the truckers... and I hear this a lot, 'I wish I was born in your time. In the 70s, 80s, 90s. You blokes took all the drugs, you blokes had the fast trucks and the good looking trucks and everything' [sighs] and I said 'yeah, but there's a lot of downsides to that as well.'" (line 243)

Garth is particularly disdainful of drivers who come from overseas to work under a 457 visa:

"You know, we've got drivers who can see signs at the minute, but they can't understand them. They can barely speak a word of English. If it sounds racist.... I don't... I'll work with anyone. I don't care if you're yellow, black... (Company name) when I started, that was full of Maltese, Greeks and everything and everyone got along, you could have a joke. They called us Aussie... whatever, and we called them wogs and we all got along. And work... this new... new group that have come out here, and uh, they just don't want to really interact. And I... uh can probably understand why, because some of the drivers don't have time at all. I've helped a few out but sometimes I just shake my head and go...I just gotta walk away from this. This happens weekly." (line 213)

Garth would prefer to see more women in the job:

"These new drivers that they've brought in, they're not very skilled and I believe the government should be investing in our own, making the industry, more... enticing. For young people to look at. The women are actually, uh, finding it that way. The blokes are walking away, and the women, and I have full respect for them, because I

believe back in WWII, they were the people running the farms when the blokes went off to war.” (line 209)

“And I thought, this isn’t really so bad and, as I say, back in the eighties when I used to own trucks, owned me own, you’d never see a woman in a truck. If they were, they were a passenger. I’d seen a couple that tried to break into the driving but the sentimentality out there was not a chance. And yet this week when I was unloading up at Blamey at (company name) um, all the trucks in the carpark were driven by women and mine was the only one driven by a bloke. And I’m standing there.... And uh, I’m standing there in the yard and over the years I can remember every time you get a group of trucks together the drivers would stand around and have a chat, but here I am on Tuesday, standing around having a group chat between group drivers and I’m the only bloke, the rest are women.... And I watched them, and B-Doubles and trucks-and-dogs and they land along as good as me. Different views of conversation that I haven’t heard, mainly when you come home or go out in the social element, yeah! And it wasn’t too bad. And I was quite happy to have met them and now know I’m going to be seeing them all the time. Just a different aspect.” (lines35 – 41)

Analysis of Garth’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Garth’s occupational identity is not all-encompassing, and there are aspects to his experiences which suggest that his attachment to his work, and his other roles, might better be described using another term. Despite being associated with trucks since a child, his loyalty to that occupation, and the attraction it has for him, has not prevented him from diverting to other occupations, although only once has he done so voluntarily. On that occasion, while it was at the behest of his wife, he was more than willing to agree, as his role as a family man forms another major part of his identity. The third component of that identity is his association with greyhound racing which, as detailed in Chapter 6, he persisted with despite experiencing every reason to stop.

Family is at the heart of each of Garth’s identities. It was his father who influenced his early decision to enter the truck industry and he followed his mother into greyhound racing. Before the birth of his children he accepted his wife’s suggestion that he discontinue work as a Truck Driver. He is devoted to his children and it seems as if his father’s influence will be passed in turn to his youngest daughter.

Garth’s response to the social situation scenario supports the contention that he might not be described as having an occupational identity, as defined in Chapter 4. While he rated himself six on

the Likert scale, he commenced his self-description with his family status, and then added his occupation saying that he 'drives trucks'. That response would place him in either the 'I do' or 'other' survey category, suggesting that his association with his work would better be described as a work identity, rather than an occupational identity, and that his association with his family role, and his involvement with greyhounds indicates a role identity. The description of having a work identity seems to be more apt as, throughout his working life, Garth has demonstrated a strong and persistent work ethic, which he has applied to all his roles.

There are other aspects of Garth's experience which support the description of work or role identity, rather than occupational identity. For example, Garth's attitude towards his trucks is different from some other drivers who seem to associate themselves very strongly with their vehicle. For Garth, his truck is more a tool than an extension of himself. He still spent weekends cleaning it, but he did not adorn it with the trappings that others tend to do. Although he did so in jest, he reported that, in the event of a fire, he would tend to his family first, and let his truck burn. His devotion to, and pride in, his family is obvious, and, unlike some other drivers, he puts them first.

There are however other aspects of Garth's experiences which are more typical of someone who does identify with their occupation. By his own account, driving trucks gives him a feeling of belonging, and he acknowledges that there is a brotherhood of Truck Drivers to which he belongs, although he does not identify with all of them, preferring an in-group of more traditional drivers. He also feels a calming sense of freedom and autonomy when driving, and pride in the service he provides.

The complexity of Garth's identity occurs in the context of the tumultuous nature of his working life which is detailed in Chapter 7. The extent to which this complexity has been influenced by the tumult is also discussed. Table 5.5 summarises Garth's super-ordinate themes.

Table 5.5: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Garth's experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Intersectional identity	Occupational identity contemporaneously inter-related with another type of identity
Genesis from a significant relationship	Early development of an occupational identity due to the influence of a significant other
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight

The penthouse	Descriptions of trucks as comfortable, familiar, safe-havens, above the rest of the world and looking down on it
Empowerment	Attraction to the power, size, sound or speed of the truck
Purpose	Feelings of altruism arising from the social or economic importance of truck driving
Association with an Ingroup	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences
Enculturation	Disclosure of the adoption of behaviour, attitudes or language specific to Truck Drivers

5.5.6 Arthur

Arthur's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Arthur is a 55 year old male who lives with his wife in Brisbane Qld. He first became attracted to the idea of truck driving while a child growing up in NZ. He lived in a small town and seeing trucks was rare, and there was nothing in his early life which presaged what was to come:

“When I was born the hospital must have put the DNA in... ‘cause no one in my family has ever driven a truck.” (lines 219 & 221)

However, at the age of nine he went to live with his uncle who drove trucks. A theme of the influence of a male role model emerged:

“I just idolised what he did. He was a pinnacle of transport back then. Um, always friendly, always did thumbs up for people, you know, when he goes past kids, tooted... He was a very loved person.” (lines 36 & 38)

“and I stayed with my uncle when I was nine years old... And he took me out in the truck and man it just, yeah!” (lines 30 & 32)

Being in a truck made Arthur feel special and somewhat superior, and this feeling emerged as another theme related to the development of his occupational identity:

“You, as a nine-year-old kid, you felt big, tall... looking down on people and...it made me feel, uh, special and, I dunno, it made me feel different... and, yeah that’s what made me want to do it.” (lines 34 & 36)

“No, it is something that you can never take it away. Um, as I say, like, you did. Even though you were a little kid (and) you were really no one, try sitting in that truck and looking at people waving up to you. Yeah, it’s an amazing feeling.” (line 54)

Arthur joined the Army in the Transport Division and got his licence aged 18 years before moving to Australia where he started driving smaller trucks. The size of the trucks he drove represents another emergent theme:

“And then (I) got an opportunity to jump into a semi – Western Star – and then, uh, did that for 9 months. And then, all of a sudden, I’m driving B-Doubles and road trains and that was it... Never, never ever did I ever wanna look somewhere else”
(lines 46 and 48)

When asked the hypothetical social situation question, Arthur supplied:

“Um, well, I was an interstate driver for 28 years, so... I drove road trains, B-doubles, uh and race cars for 26 years.” (lines 10 & 12)

Arthur isn’t working as a Truck Driver and is currently working as a Recruitments Consultant, locating and supplying Truck Drivers for transport companies. When asked to rate his attachment to his occupation using the Likert scale, he replied:

“(When I was driving road trains) I was, I was a seven. Now I’m a two.” (line 18)

“My life had always been driving, um yeah, so everything I did in life, be it making the money or recreational was driving.” (line 24)

For Arthur, not everyone who drives a truck is a Truck Driver. He associates real Truck Drivers with skill, masculinity, hard manual work and a stoical attitude:

“A real truck driver can drive any gearbox, you know, willing to do anything. Um, change our tires. But now it’s, princesses are out there.” (line 74)

“These days, no, it’s... the industry’s changed unfortunately. Um, yeah. I’m sort of against what they do now. Like, guys can go get a truck licence with an automatic licence.” (line 72)

“I hate to stereotype it but the old school guys, you had values. We work. We never complained about what we did.” (line 76)

“But we do it ‘cause it’s a passion. You know, rain hail or shine, you know, sick. There are days that we had, guaranteed you know, you’ll come along a car accident or a fatality, um, yeah but it’s in our nature to stop and help.” (line 84)

“You know, we were raised that way. We were raised that you wanna work, work. Work very hard. You know, don’t complain. The hours we do were phenomenal.”
(line 82)

He’s not impressed by the newer generation of drivers. Again, masculinity and a willingness to work hard are conflated:

“No. Um, I hear it all the time. I just got off the phone to, right now, from a client who was gutted that they had a driver there today. (The client’s) expression was that (the driver) was wearing a netball skirt... Evidently, quote unquote, ‘I’m just a driver’. ‘Open the curtains, open the gates, undo your straps’. But evidently this guy said it was beneath him. I’m sorry, but you’re a Truck Driver. You know, don’t expect to be paid for it. It’s what we do. (lines 162 and 164)

“We’re sick and tired of guys who shouldn’t be out on the road... You know, too many people have been killed out there... Everyone’s entitled to work, and that’s fair enough. But the end of that shift, everyone’s entitled to go home.” (lines 193, 195 and 197)

Arthur repeatedly stressed the pride he has in his work as a Truck Driver and in his truck.

“Still take pride. You know, I’ll go and wash my own truck. I’ll pay for my own truck wash. Um, it’s... you’re out there to do your job and do it right. That’s your home, that’s your office.” (line 130)

“Uh, the last company I worked for, the... uh, when I started there, I was given a truck. Um, that was all cool. And I worked for them for a week. And it was just to help a friend, yeah, I was just filling in for a friend while he was on holiday. And, the last run I was back into the depot and this guy comes up, he was sitting at his desk, and he goes, ‘uh, here the owner is quite impressed with you’, and I says, ‘oh why is that’, and he goes, ‘oh, you know, just we hear things.’ And he goes, ‘oh, but who gave you the brand-new truck’. And I turn around to the guy and says, ‘oh, no one. This is the truck I was given’, and, um, he goes, ‘yeah, you know, they’re really keen on keeping you on’, and I says to the guy, ‘don’t shit in my pocket. I’d rather be talking to the real people and not to a clown’, and he introduced himself as (name), and I was working for (same name) transport.” (line 142)

“And so yeah, this was a... Old school values is that’s how we were raised. Have pride in what you do” (line 156)

Arthur’s pride in his occupation sometimes leads him to proselytising:

“So you always waved out and you always got the thumbs (up) and I always have seen the thumbs up as part of the industry. So, and I know, when I drove trucks, I made sure when we saw kids you know I did the same as what I got... Um, yeah just gives them an interest to want to drive trucks.” (lines 50 and 52)

“Um, you know, truck drivers will get a bad name, so I like to change that name and show that we aren’t what you think. You know, we, we’re just normal human beings,

you know. Um, I used to have a prank, a lot, public holidays, school holidays, you know, you go into a truck stop and families will sit there and have a meal. I used to grab my meal and sit down at the family table. You know, they'd just sit there looking, they'd give you a dirty look, and you'd say, 'oh I just wanna have a family meal' and they crack up. And, it changes their perspective, I guess." (line 130)

"And I know guys who probably get five hours off a day and they'll still spend about two hours polishing. But yeah, it's... I dunno. I suppose it gets down to that kid. Someone's looking at that truck and going, oh wow, I wanna do that." (line 152)

Despite his pride, Arthur is fully aware of the price that needs to be paid:

"... I always say to the younger generation who wanna get into interstate driving and I say to them, 'interstate driving is a three-marriage relationship. First and foremost. And are you prepared to lose a family?'" (line 134)

"We were never home, um yeah, I was never around. So, part about it is we do the right thing by our families. We work our arses off, we're not home. And then yeah, you go to your son's 21st and you give your speech... The most heart wrenching thing you get is your son turns around and says, 'what the hell would you know? you're never at home'... So that's, it's a bit of a stab in the back" (lines 76, 78 and 80)

Analysis of Arthur's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Arthur was not born into a truck driving family, nor did his early childhood involve trucks. His attachment to the occupation occurred instantaneously at the age of nine, the first time he rode in his uncle's truck. He looked up to his uncle and, when he was in the truck, enjoyed the feeling of people looking up to him, making him feel special. He pursued work as a Truck Driver, initially in the Army, and his attachment was sealed when he commenced driving larger trucks. He never wanted to do anything else. His devotion to his occupation is such that he wants to influence young people to become Truck Drivers, and to promote the image of Truck Drivers to counter the negative perceptions that people have of Truck Drivers.

There are however internal contradictions within Arthur's experiences as a Truck Driver. He wants to encourage young people to become Truck Drivers, adopting the role of his uncle, but is disdainful of the 'new school' of drivers who are 'princesses' wearing 'netball skirts', unwilling to work hard without complaining. He acknowledges the hardships of being a 'real' Truck Driver, and warns people who want to become Truck Drivers that it will cause harm to their relationships. He loved spending months away from his own family but is resentful of, and hurt by, his son's 21st birthday comment that Arthur was never home.

Arthur’s identity as a Truck Driver is consequently associated with feelings of masculine superiority in which hardship and deprivation must be endured, and even celebrated, in order for that identity to be valid. Having achieved that status, he feels an obligation to inspire others to join him, and to present himself as an exemplar of all that is good about Truck Drivers, while simultaneously issuing dire warnings about the consequences of admittance. The contradictions revealed by Arthur’s experiences of being a Truck Driver are even more stark when consideration is given to the disruptions he has faced, as described in Chapter 7. Table 5.6 summarises the super-ordinate themes identified from Arthur’s interview.

Table 5.6: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Arthur’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Revelatory genesis	Description of an awakening of occupational identity attributed to one event
Genesis from a significant relationship	Early development of an occupational identity due to the influence of a significant other
Machismo	Association of truck driving with masculinity
Intersectional identity	Occupational identity contemporaneously inter-related with another type of identity.
Association with an Ingroup	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences
The penthouse	Descriptions of trucks as comfortable, familiar, safe-havens, above the rest of the world and looking down on it
Dissonance	Expressions of positive emotions associated with the nature of work as a Truck Driver, made despite acknowledgement of aspects of that work that might be considered intolerable

5.5.7 Andrew

Andrew’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Andrew is a 60 year-old man who lives with his wife in the southern highlands of NSW. He has had three main occupations, two of which he identified with strongly. His first occupation was as a Defence Force Member serving in the Navy, followed by working as a Nurse, but trucks have been a common theme throughout his life.

Andrew's interests in trucks developed early in his life:

"It started with a love of trucks. Like, as a young bloke. Oh, 3 (years-old)... (I would) run away from home, there was a quarry just down the road from where we lived and every time I went missing, I'd be down the quarry watching the trucks and the earthmoving equipment, that's where mum would find me." (lines 27 and 29)

There was no family connection to the trucking industry, and Andrew's involvement in work as a Truck Driver took many years to evolve, starting with getting a truck licence while serving in the Navy as a weapons specialist. The Navy did not provide Andrew with an enduring occupational identity, and he described it like an extension of his youth:

"No, no it was just a discharge because I'd done my time, and I didn't want to re-enlist, and this was the end of the first Gulf War, when I got out, and I'd seen more than enough to say that I'd had enough, and I'd had a relationship fall apart already. You know there was all those sorts of things. You, know, I've enjoyed this now, but I've grown up and I've had enough." (line 79)

On discharge, Andrew consulted a counsellor provided by the Navy and participated in what sounds like a vocational assessment:

Because I did a, an assessment, with a counsellor, and we did some questionnaires and things and he said 'have you tried...' What I was good at, what I should be doing." (line 77)

One of the options presented to him was work as a Truck Driver, which he rejected:

"I don't know why... There was no... I didn't see that there was any career progression. You know, I thought, there's nowhere for you to go. I mean, you're a Truck Driver. That meant something different to me then, than what it means to me now. If that makes any sense?... I was 28. I still had my whole career in front of me. You know, I'd envisaged a point in my life where I'd be in a management position. I'd envisaged where I would... and I'd already had a leadership position. I was a Petty Officer when I left the Navy, so like a Sergeant. I was used to giving orders and all of that sort of stuff and I envisaged seeing myself in a position like that again, and I never would if I was a Truck Driver." (lines 89 and 91)

Instead, Andrew eventually studied to be a Registered Nurse, initially while waiting for admission to the Ambulance Service, and drove a milk tanker to earn extra money. The choice of nursing as a career proved to be the right one and he developed a strong identification with that occupation until he experienced his first career disruption:

“To be honest I would still be nursing, because I invested a lot of time and a lot of effort and a lot of brain power, a lot of stress to get those qualifications and, without being arrogant about it, I was bloody good at it, but I got psoriasis and they wouldn’t let me scrub anymore, and I ended up from the operating theatre which is what I enjoyed doing, to the recovery room, which was still OK, but this psoriasis just got worse.... Because they wouldn’t let me scrub... So I ended up in the recovery room and one day I banged my elbow on a bloody trolley and of course... psoriasis is a terrible... this is pretty mild at the moment but the skin splits and you bleed and all of that sort of stuff... And I ended up with blood all over my elbow... And they said sort of ‘no, that’s it, if you stay in practice it’s going to be in administration’. And so I kept getting shifted sideways, and I ended up in an administrative role, and that was fine, I could do the job, but it wasn’t what I wanted to do, and I ended up... in a management position, managing a 10 room operating theatre, and the stress was just astronomical. It would drive me crazy. And I basically ran away, basically. I had a meltdown one day and basically threw my hands in the air and said ‘I’ve had a gutful of this’”. (lines 109 and 111)

While still working in the recovery room, Andrew had treated a patient who wanted to sell his truck. He bought it as a hobby with no intention of driving it as an occupation, until he had his “meltdown”:

“So I lost my rag and threw my hands in the air and it’s ‘what are you going to do?’ ‘I’ll go and drive trucks, screw you’. And off I went.” (line 113)

With the exception of a short period (refer to Chapter 7), Andrew has been a Truck Driver ever since.

Andrew believes that there is such a person as a ‘typical’ Truck Driver, a stereotype he does not quite fit.

“They’re a self-starter typically. They work well without being directly supervised. They tend to be, although this is not universally true, because I’m an example of something that’s completely different, but they tend to be... not quite so well educated. They tend to be not quite so good at things like English...The academic side of things. So your typical Truck Driver I’ve found from my experience as an employer of Truck Drivers, tends to be someone that’s got a fair amount of common sense, you can trust them to do things, if you tell them to do something they generally can, you can talk to them, they’re blunt, they’re usually blunt... They generally will speak their mind in a one-on-one situation. Of course, there are variations along the scale of all of these things, but typically if you look at a batch of

Truck Drivers, I'd be surprised if you found any real introverts, or real shy people.

You know what I mean?" (lines 119 and 121)

The distance Andrew put between himself, and other Truck Drivers subsequently developed as a theme. For Andrew, being a Truck Driver involves a degree of acting that role:

"People have a persona that they'll share with the world, and a persona they have to themselves... You know, I'm no different to anyone else, I'm sure you're the same... You know, you sit down and you... do whatever it is that you like to do... when you go into different situations, obviously you know, your social mores and all that sort of stuff kick in and you behave in the way that you're expected to behave... You do, you fulfil a role, and we've all fulfilled roles, you know, the parent role, the husband role, the father role, all those different roles. The Truck Driver role... And you've got to be comfortable with that, so you know... And it's a standard joke amongst a lot of blokes, or seems to be the blokes I know anyway, that you can do the 'Angry Truck Driver' routine when it suits you (laughs)... You can be... And you know when that's going to work and when it's not... You know what I mean?" (lines 123, 125 and 127)

Adopting the role means following the rules which govern behaviour, and overt displays of masculinity:

"There is behaviour which is expected of you and behaviour that you'll be called on... And things that are just completely unacceptable.... For example... If you go into a drivers' lounge with long distance drivers, and I can't speak too much for around town fellas, they're a different breed, I'm speaking specifically about long distance drivers. So if I pulled up at the roadhouse at Marulan, and I decide that I'm going to have a meal there or all the rest of it, you generally sit on your own, unless you know someone. Unless you're friends, you'll sit on a table on your own, and you'll eat there and you'll generally do it in silence. Right? Unless something happens to cause a conversation to develop. Something weird on TV, some mother walks through wearing something weird or... You know, some member of the general public sticks their head in and realises they're in the wrong place we'll have a laugh about it, but that'll be about it, you know...? If the TV is on whatever it's on, whatever channel it's on, you won't just unilaterally grab the remote and change the TV channel. If it's giving you the shits, if it's the morning show or something like that you don't want to listen to Kerry-Ann Kennelly carrying on... And you want to watch the news for example, and there's 2 or 3 other fellas there, but you want to change the channel, you will ask them if it's alright, it will become a democratic decision.

And, if you were to just change the channel on your own, someone would probably say something, and it wouldn't be, 'gee mate, that was unfortunate...'. It would be 'what the fuck do you think you're doing'. And there'd be a physical threat behind that. So if you chose to bark back, the next thing that would happen is that someone will stand up. And this is all part of the... part of the image I suppose. Because, you can't... You have to be a man, you can't be seen to be weak. You can't be seen to back down, if you make a threat you better carry it through." (line 291)

"Yeah, well I like my truck to look good. It's part of the image." (line 161)

Work as a Truck Driver provides Andrew with something that working as a Hospital Administrator didn't, unquestioned authority resulting from bearing sole responsibility:

"I was free to make my own rules, because the consequences were for me to bear. So, if I said 'no I'm not doing that job', then I didn't make the money from that job. You know, that's the, that was the consequence. Whereas when I was the manager in nursing, if I said 'no, that's not happening', someone else senior to me would say 'yes it is happening and you better learn to live with it'. And I didn't like that." (line 191)

Without that feeling of authority, Andrew's experience of truck driving was less satisfying:

"I don't know, I just... (My new employer and I) knew each other too (well). We had a different relationship. He found it hard telling me what to do, and... It just turned out, at the finish it was better for both of us if we went our separate ways. It wasn't that I hated the job, it was just that our relationship dynamic just wasn't what it could be or should be and, you know, he couldn't tell me what to do, because I wouldn't be told. You know, and he was a lot younger than me, and he it was hard for him." (line 223)

Andrew was happiest when just free to drive, associated with a theme of autonomy:

"What do I like about it? It's crazy stuff. I love to sit behind the wheel and just... 6 o'clock in the morning, the sun's coming up, you're just going... And you get a smile on your face and they think "shit, I'm getting paid to do this". You know, and there's no pressure for me. I came from an extremely high pressure job to a job which is... For as long as you tick the boxes and follow the rules, there is no pressure. Not for me. Some blokes feel pressure doing the job, we're not all the same, but for me,

when I go to work, you know, you know how they say 'find something you love doing and just do that for a job', well that's what it's like for me." (line 135)

Andrew acknowledged the stresses involved with the reality of deadlines and driving in traffic, but ultimately dismissed them as insignificant, separate from work and consequently not detracting from his enjoyment of it:

"I would go mental on Pennant Hills Rd in the traffic. I would do crazy things to try and make up some time. I would take my logbook to suit myself. I worked for one bloke and... Let's just put it this way, the logbook went in the bunk more than once, because you've got to be where you've got to be and if you're not there, you've missed the next load. You're paid for what you do, not for how many hours you do. Trip money... The Allocator's in your ear. Customers are in your ear. Everyone is in your ear... (But) it was a game." (lines 147, 149 and 151)

Reversing the dismissal of work stresses as an insignificant game, Andrew separated truck driving from other occupations by distancing it from real work:

"It's a lifestyle, not a job." (line 281)

In Andrew's experience, cultural difference results in a conflict between 'us' and 'them', repeating a familiar theme:

"But there's a whole lot of things that are changing now, that's changing because we're getting a lot of drivers in that don't... I don't want to sound racist, but it's true. We're getting a lot more East Asian drivers. Indians and Afghanis and all that sort of stuff who have a very different experience growing up to what we have, and they tend to be not the same as us in a lot of ways. And so they will do things that offend white drivers and get barked at because of it. And there's a whole other dimension to that. Now, you can't call it racist because it's not. You can't call it... It's intolerant. Does that make any sense?... So, look, we're all doing the same thing, you know, they're out there driving the same sort of gear we are and all the rest of it, but there's a lack of manners... so the manners that I've learned over the years of driving... Unwritten rules, all the unwritten rules, they don't understand those rules, they don't share them. And that causes conflict..." (lines 291, 293 and 295)

"And I fit in the old-style truck driver group. And johnny-come-lately, there's a different mind-set." (line 337)

Analysis of Andrew's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

While Andrew's identification with truck driving took many years to solidify, it has run like a thread throughout his life. As a child he was fascinated by trucks. In his first job in the Navy he obtained a truck licence. On discharge he considered work as a Truck Driver but dismissed it. While studying nursing he drove milk tankers. As a Nurse he bought his first truck, seemingly on a whim. When he left the health care sector he turned immediately to truck driving. Apart from one brief period, he has been a Truck Driver ever since. What began as an infantile adventure recurred persistently until it is now indisputably a part of Andrew's identity.

The persistence of truck driving in the background of Andrew's life, before it came to the forefront, does not seem to have a cause, unless we accept that his early fascination sowed seeds waiting for the opportunity to germinate. We cannot point to a family background in the industry, or any other stimulus, and yet it seems more than coincidence that truck driving emerged in the Navy, re-emerged while at university, and appeared again during and after his work as a Nurse.

Andrew's identification with truck driving is strong, but not absolute. While he emphatically described himself using "I am" in the hypothetical social situation question, he rated his occupation's importance to his sense of self as five on the Likert scale. He found work as a Nurse satisfying and would still be working in that field were it not for his skin condition. He concedes that he does not entirely fit the Truck Driver stereotype and spoke of the typical Truck Driver as someone similar to him, but perhaps less intelligent. He acknowledged that he consciously adopts the role of a Truck Driver and attempts to fit that image. If being a Truck Driver is a role he is playing however, it provides him with a sense of authority and autonomy and is one in which he is comfortable.

Andrew complies with what constitutes acceptable Truck Driver behaviour and knows that there are rules he must follow. He is disdainful of those who come from overseas and don't know, or won't follow, the rules. Interestingly, while he willingly follows those rules, he found the rules imposed on him in the hospital intolerable. He is attracted to truck driving because he believes it allows him to make his own rules. He admits to flouting the rules of the road. For Andrew, the rules of being a Truck Driver are fixed, whereas the setting and breaking of other rules are his preserve. Table 5.7 summarises Andrew's super-ordinate themes.

Table 5.7: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Andrew’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Pre-existing strong interest in trucks	An interest in trucks developed prior to a direct association with them, plausibly providing the foundation for the development of an occupational identity
Enculturation	Disclosure of the adoption of behaviour, attitudes or language specific to Truck Drivers
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight
Dissonance	Expressions of positive emotions associated with the nature of work as a Truck Driver, made despite acknowledgement of aspects of that work that might be considered intolerable
Association with an Ingroup	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences

5.5.8 Simon

Simon’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Simon is a 50 year-old man who lives with his wife and two daughters in the Illawarra region of New South Wales. His father was a Truck Driver, and he has had an interest in trucks since a child. He worked as a Truck Driver from 18 years of age until he was in his 40s and left reluctantly due to a combination of factors (refer to Section 7.2.15). He still drives trucks as part of his current occupation as a Mobile Plant Operator, and keeps in contact with Truck Drivers, but he has no intention of returning to work as a Truck Driver.

Simon’s long career as a Truck Driver represents an extension of an interest which developed early in his life. It may at least partly have been influenced by his father, but Simon’s language qualifies that influence:

“Dad did drive trucks but not, ‘cause dad’s 84, so the trucks weren’t to the size they were, they are today, so... Umm... You know they were smaller... Yeah, dad done a little bit of truck driving in his younger days... Dad’s got a love for trucks, he used to come, when I had my own truck he rode in me own truck with me for a while. But I used to work in a 2nd job at night, when they had the, they’d tip coal at the top of the mountain before they had the access to come down 24 hours down the

mountain, so dad would often come and ride round with me on a Saturday night in the truck. So, yeah, I'd say it was in the blood a bit, yeah..." (lines 29 and 31)

His fascination took unusual forms:

"It's just always been there. You know, I'd go to Sydney with my parents, and I'd sit with a piece of paper and go, with a list of all the different trucks – 'that was a Mack, that was a Kenworth, 2 Kenworths..'. And you'd just tick off all the trucks that you passed, how many. And that was from an early age." (line 27)

"Anne-Marie (a mutual acquaintance) could probably vouch for me that I could be sitting across the road, and you could hear a truck coming in the distance and I could tell you what sort of truck that was and just, they'd race to the window and 'oh, you're right'." (line 23)

Before leaving school he had already decided on his career:

“When I (was) kind of coming to leave school, I was hoping to try and get an apprenticeship... Mechanic or something along those lines that kind of give me somewhere to stand, a base before I went off truck driving.” (line 39)

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, it would have had to be driving, I wouldn’t have been happy sitting... working under a truck there day in day out in the same workshop. I like to be out and about, seeing something or going somewhere so..” (line 51)

“It was laid out in front of me, yeah... (I) always had a passion for it.” (lines 43 and 45)

“I, I started at... I got my truck licence as soon as I could, probably at the age of 18. That was just a small, rigid sized truck. I think I was 21 when I got my semi-trailer licence. I changed occupations from the building supply company to a bigger transport company where I spend the next... I done nearly 25 years with them, but there was 12 to 13 years as an owner driver. So, 10 years or so as a company driver, and then bought me own truck through them to become an owner driver.” (line 55)

Simon’s tendency to focus on outward displays of identity emerged as a theme. He somewhat sheepishly drew attention to a display cabinet containing models of trucks and related memorabilia:

“You walk into the spare room there and there’s just a cabinet of trucks, and I’ve got t-shirts of trucks and posters of trucks and... For a 50 year-old that’s...” (line 21)

When asked to rate his attachment to Truck Driving on the Likert scale he again responded with a reference to appearances:

“... It wouldn’t have been that long ago you’d probably rate me at number 7. I had the t-shirts and I’d be working in boots and that, but, I’m thinking maybe 5 and a half these days.” (line 19)

The theme conflating identity with appearance was repeated several times, including when Simon was asked to respond to the hypothetical social situation question:

“Um... first I’d... You don’t look like a truck driver so, thinking that you’re not a truck driver... You get to know... You look at people and you go, ‘aw yeah looks truck driver-ish’ or... and that’s a lot of how I relate to things around the truck and transport industry, and that’s how conversations come up and... Yeah, I don’t know how I’d kick a conversation off, but if someone was interested I’d tell them what I do and how I do it. Where I’d done it.” (line 13)

“Work usually features unless someone’s wearing a South Sydney football jumper, then we can go there... But um, majority of it, it’s work” (line 17)

“A couple of years ago (I would have said) ‘I am a truck driver’. But now, ‘I drive trucks’. So, that’s probably where I’m at now... Probably with the wife that, she’s ‘you don’t need to wear that t-shirt, we’re going out with friends, you don’t need to wear that truck t-shirt’. Um...probably a little bit of a push from her to get away from that sort of... Um ‘I’m a truck driver’, but then, I’ve seen people say ‘you’re not a truck driver, you don’t look like a truck driver’. My doctor (says) ‘you don’t look like a truck driver, you don’t act like a truck driver’. And he says that regularly to me.” (line 87)

“There’s a lot you think ‘yeah, he’s doing well, he’s doing well’ but at the end of the day, it’s shiny on the outside but shit underneath.” (line 61)

“Younger guys, you know they’ve gotta have the blue singlet, and the scribbling all down the arms, show off their big muscles and their tattoos. I see that, you know, I’ve recently been to the Brisbane Truck Show which is the major event in Australia, and you see a lot of guys that come from all ‘round the place to it and you see the big muscle shirt and the scribbling all over them and... Yeah that’s the newer generation, and then you see the older, quieter generation, the older blokes getting ‘round, more interested in having a yarn, and saying g’day to someone than looking (like that)...” (line 95)

Even when contemplating alternative work, Simon referred to appearances:

“I went and applied for a couple of jobs there, probably between being a company driver before becoming an owner driver. And... They were just internal jobs with a big company that I was working for at the time. But it just didn’t feel right... It just... I couldn’t see myself, kind of, just dressed neat and tidy... It just wasn’t me.” (line 69)

While Simon had always planned to be a Truck Driver, his long association with it is due to the attractions it had for him and a theme of autonomy emerged:

“Yeah but you’ve got no interruption of public, other than out there on the road in front of you. You’ve got no one over your shoulder going, “do this, do that, or “... Yeah, I can understand that thought, because, not everyone gets along and if you’re sitting in an office with 10 people around you, and there’s 2 or 3 that’s got an annoying voice or something like that, well you can’t turn the radio down. You can

turn the radio down if you don't like what you're listening to, but you can't turn that person in the background off, that annoys the crap out of you." (line 154)

Alternatives had no attraction for him, again for reasons of autonomy:

"Yeah. At one stage it was mentioned, 'oh well, they're looking for someone in allocations', that was in the early days when I was humming and haa-ing, but I don't know whether I could stand there, you've got a boss at this shoulder, you've got a telephone here, you've got a radio with all these drivers calling you wanting to know what they're doing next... I'm thinking 'nah, that wouldn't be for me'. The customer on the phone saying 'I want it now!'. Don't know whether I could deal with that, but... Yeah, and then you've got mechanics saying 'oh, that truck's broken down, can't fix that until then..', you know it's... Yeah, I suppose you work with the processes you've got. Yeah, it's just so easy to (be) sitting behind the wheel of a truck." (line 164)

Despite the attractions, or rather because of them, Simon was well aware of the price to be paid:

"I know a lot of truck drivers, I've seen a lot of truck drivers, and it's a strange way of life. You get into that and it's all they live and breathe for. You know, they even lose track of what their family's doing. You know like, they get off in their truck and before you know it, they're heading here, they're heading there, doing this, doing that and, wash the truck, 'oh, this has got to go, I've got to go', and, before you know it, they just lose scope of whatever else is around them." (line 81)

"Yeah, well, most of them are... carry a little bit of weight about them... It's probably the younger generation, some of them realise it's important not to. Umm...You're sitting in that truck for 12, 14, 16 hours a day, some people live in them, and it's... You don't get out and exercise. You do 800, 1000km a day, day in, day out, and you're just sitting there. Just sitting there and, even though you might think the vibration's going through your body, you know you're sitting in that same position, you're getting shortening of the muscles, umm, yeah you know.. you see a lot of truck drivers, especially when they start getting a bit of age about them, you see them getting out of the truck and, they're slow to get moving, gradually get themselves warmed-up and they can start to move a bit quicker and... Yeah, it's a bugger of a life, when you think about it." (line 89)

"as well as probably, don't want to end up with that, from sitting in a truck that, me knees are buggered anyway, but be able to still be mobile and get around. I see a lot

of the older generation absolutely struggle. From being behind the wheel of a truck... Yep, yep. I see it still, you know like, one of the places, there's a lot of external trucks come in through the place we work at now. There's a flight of stairs to get to the office at the weighbridge... and... you could near have a cup of tea while they're climbing the stairs, do their paper work, and come back down again. Some of them are just, you just shake your head." (lines 144 and 146)

"Like, I know guys with hips and knees and bad backs but, they still come and sit in the truck and go to work." (line 152)

Simon is not optimistic for the direction of truck driving and distinguishes between his generation and the current generation of drivers recruited from overseas:

"I just see a lot of these new guys that are imported from overseas who don't care about the truck, they don't care about the people around them, they're just there to make money and go back home to wherever they come from." (line 132)

"Yeah, you do. You know like, I know there's an instance there a couple of years back, another major company, that were bringing the guys in on the visa, as long as they could point the truck forward, get the truck out the gate, and get it going... And then they get stuck in tunnels. And then they had to get another driver in to back the truck out because they couldn't drive it backwards. So... Yeah, that creates bad blood. That sort of thing." (lines 136 and 138)

Analysis of Simon's Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Simon has wanted to be a Truck Driver from an early age. He acknowledges that he developed some of this interest from his father, describing it as "a bit" in his blood, noting that his father only drove smaller trucks. Before working as a Truck Driver, trucks were his hobby. He enjoyed 'spotting' them while in his parents' car. He learned to identify individual models from the sound of their engines. He built model trucks and displays them still.

While he planned first to get a trade for stability, this proved to be unnecessary as, until he decided on a different occupation, he enjoyed a satisfying and successful truck driving career. For Simon, the attractions of truck driving include not having people around to annoy him. Working autonomously meant he could suit himself. His current occupation shares that feature.

The indicators of Simon's identification with the occupation of Truck Driver are several. Even though he no longer works as a Truck Driver, he continues to identify with that occupation. While, at the

urging of his wife, he no longer wears the ‘uniform’ of a Truck Driver, he still socialises with former colleagues, attends truck shows and watches truck convoys. He still displays model trucks and truck memorabilia. Simon’s focus on the visual aspects of Truck Driver identity is unmistakable, and amongst the other participants, unique.

Despite the extent of his identification, Simon resisted the depth of immersion he has noted in other drivers. As detailed in Chapter 7, unlike drivers of his acquaintance, he prioritised his family and his health over his occupation. Table 5.8 summarises Simon’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 5.8: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Simon’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Internal genesis of identity	A belief that being a Truck Driver is innate and came from within
Genesis from a significant relationship	Early development of an occupational identity due to the influence of a significant other
Pre-existing strong interest in trucks	An interest in trucks developed prior to a direct association with them, plausibly providing the foundation for the development of an occupational identity
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight
Dissonance	Expressions of positive emotions associated with the nature of work as a Truck Driver, made despite acknowledgement of aspects of that work that might be considered intolerable
Association with an Ingroup	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences

5.5.9 Shirley

Shirley’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Shirley is a 60 year-old New Zealand-born woman who lives with her husband on Queensland’s Gold Coast. She drove road trains in the Northern Territory for over 10 years. At that time she was one of only four female road train drivers. Twenty years ago, an event happened which suddenly caused her to stop driving (refer to Chapter 7). She still enjoys mixing with Truck Drivers and has started a Facebook page supporting them. Her son is a Truck Driver. Her granddaughter wants to be a Truck Driver.

Shirley comes from a Truck Driving family. She is a third generation Truck Driver. Her father, uncle and both her husbands were Truck Drivers. Her father was a notable figure in the industry who developed road train design and worked as an advocate for Truck Drivers on various government committees. As might be expected given her family background, trucks featured heavily in Shirley's early life. Her mother was taken to the hospital to give birth to her in a truck, and she was taken home in one:

"I was basically born in one." (line 16)

Her memories of childhood are mostly associated with trucks:

"(I) used to go on the truck with Dad before I started school. (line 27)

"Yep, I just loved the industry, loved being, you know, as a child, being in the workshop, always being out and amongst it in the yard." (line 32)

"I finished my secondary schooling in the late 70s, but because I was so into my trucks, that's all I lived and breathed." (line 24)

Shirley wanted to be a Truck Driver, but her parents had other ideas. While a theme exists of paternal influence in the beginnings of her attachment to truck driving, once an attachment had been established, parental influence could not reverse it:

"But (I) was very heavily discouraged... My parents thought (it was in) my best interests, they tried to distance me from it... and they sent me to a boarding school in Adelaide to try and keep me away." (lines 24 and 26)

The strategy worked, initially:

"I wanted to be a Diesel Mechanic. Unfortunately, in the late 70's (it wasn't done). (line 34)

"I started my spare parts apprenticeship with Mack Trucks (instead)." (line 36)

Marriage and a move back to New Zealand interrupted her apprenticeship and freed her to gain her heavy truck licence and commence her career as a Truck Driver. She then moved back to the Northern Territory:

"Came back to Darwin December '85, so would have been '86 I would have got my semi conversion (licence). Um, and then by late-'86, early-'87 I had the classification then was C5, which is like, which is what an MC (road train licence) is today." (line 46)

Shirley is especially proud that her achievements as a Driver were obtained despite her father's strong influence, not because of it:

“If somebody asked me what my proudest achievement in my life was, um, being involved in the transport industry and became a road train driver in my own right, independent of my family connections and my family ties.” (line 4)

“I’ve always been regarded, given who my family is, I’ve just been one of the boys.” (line 54)

Having established her independence, Shirley is now reconciled with her family:

“I also, because of who my parents were – my father’s still alive, he’s back in New Zealand now... And my father’s just written his autobiography which I’ve been editing and proof reading, and it’s now at the editors in Singapore. And there’s actually... it’s probably a little bit surreal seeing so many years condensed into a book. You know, it’s a pride, you know, in who my family are and what they achieved, you know? Especially my parents, you know?” (line 180)

The dynamics of family life were interwoven with trucking, including sibling rivalry:

“I’m the eldest and we have a male sibling, he’s only referred to... He’s known as the golden-haired child, you know, everything honestly, like. You know, that boy inherits everything, like, you know, not to be jealous or anything. I’d rather be who I am and have the respect I have, I earned that, than be in the position he is all the time (not a Truck Driver)... Got to tell you, he never did the hard yards. I did.” (lines 138 and 142).

“There was always fights over who’s going (on the truck) with dad... I’d go with dad” (lines 28 and 30)

Shirley’s gender emerged as a complex theme. On the one hand she is proud to have been one of only four female road train drivers. On the other, she described her acceptance by her peers in gendered terms:

“I’ve just been one of the boys.” (line 54)

“(I’m) more comfortable with (male Truck Drivers) than what I am with half a dozen women or, you know, God forbid I ever join a bingo club or something...” (line 56)

She expressed attitudes towards women that are usually associated with sexist males:

“You know, for example, husband and wife. Husband drives his truck, you know, was a Truckie when he met his future wife, you know, etcetera. A couple of kids. They split up, divorce, all of a sudden, she’s taken him for the cleaners, he’s lost his truck. You know, sorry, my view. You don’t touch that. You know, he was a Truckie when

you met him. If he owned this truck, you know. Good on him. You don't take that away." (line 164)

Shirley has been married twice and both her ex-husband and her husband are Truck Drivers. It is inconceivable to Shirley that she could ever have had a partner who was not a Truck Driver:

"I've only ever had one boyfriend, which was in high school, that was not in transport and all that. I wouldn't know what it's like to go out with a Doctor or... I'm sorry I just... there's to me no common bond, you know? I wouldn't know how to." (lines 172 and 174).

Although she hasn't been a Truck Driver for over 20 years and she responded to the hypothetical social situation question with "I'm a retired Nurse" (line 4), Shirley still has a strong connection to her work as a Truck Driver and gave herself a rating of "probably still a six to a seven" (line 12) for that occupation on the Likert scale. She remains most comfortable when in the company of Truck Drivers:

"I've just been always able to interact with drivers, I'm still in touch with, you know, employees that we had 40 odd years ago. I like being, you know, around those, I can talk the language. I know what they're saying, they know what I'm saying, we're talking about the same people. You get a couple of us, what you'd classify as old-school Truckies together. We start talking, you can't shut us up... (I'm) more comfortable with them than what I am with half a dozen women... We come together as a family. We, we feel each other's, we understand each other's life. We understand each other's health issues. We understood the lifestyle back then." (lines 54, 56 and 58)

"And I'm still at my happiest, you know, being in probably that sort of environment, being in a transport or trucking yard, or being in a pub with a bunch of other drivers." (line 126)

"It just never, ever leaves you, it'll never, ever leave." (line 182)

Shirley's explanation of the attractions of truck driving are closely linked to the type of driving she did and, in particular, where she did it. She preferred road train driving in the outback and was disdainful of other types of driving work:

"No, I hated (driving semi-trailers on the east coast). No, no, no. Nup, there's. No, I would never have done, never even hinted into that... Yep yep, had to be outback... You know, let somebody else do the shit truck driving." (lines 130,132 and 134).

In that environment, Shirley was able to indulge herself with what she enjoyed most about driving:

“That driving, the power. Some nights I would be happy having no music playing and just listening to the sound of my own, you know, hearing my motor talk to me.” (line 108)

Shirley listed the autonomy she experienced as a Driver as one of the attractions...:

“You haven’t got your boss looking over your shoulder, in our day, there was no mobile phone, no nothing.” (line 114)

“...just the freedom. Nobody looking over my shoulder.” (line 108)

...While also acknowledging the weight of responsibility:

“No, you were on timetables and if you were running late there’d be roadhouses looking for you wondering where you were or wondering what had happened. Unless you’d rung them, you’ve had a breakdown or whatever. But, yeah. It was a lot of, you know, I’d say responsibility because you’d, you know, three trailers with, say, cattle on. I mean if you put one over, you know, big truck and... Thankfully, I’m very grateful I never had any incidents. I had a couple of close calls with other smaller vehicles but... ”

Analysis of Shirley’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Shirley was immersed in truck driving quite literally from birth and her long association with it would be unsurprising if her parents’ attitude was not so obviously against their children following that path. Her younger sibling did not follow in the family footsteps, and he was regarded as the ‘golden-haired’ child. Shirley was sent to boarding school to remove her from the truck driving environment. Nevertheless, Shirley married a Truck Driver and became one herself after escaping to New Zealand. Despite parental discouragement, early environmental influences appear to have been influential.

Shirley succeeded in becoming a road train driver despite her gender and she is especially proud of having done so without leveraging her family connections. In doing so, she feels she is more accepted as a Truck Driver, as ‘one of the boys’. Being accepted as part of the truck driving family, not part of an elite family, is important to her, and she is most comfortable in the company of ordinary drivers from her chosen peer group. While Shirley knows of female road train drivers, her peer group is predominantly male, and she is proud to consider herself one of them.

Shirley’s occupational identity as a Truck Driver has survived over 20 years of not being a Truck Driver, and an intervening period when she had another occupational identity as a Nurse. This phenomenon will be further discussed following the interpretation of her experience of change in Chapter 7. Table 5.9 summarises Shirley’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 5.9: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Shirley’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Pre-existing strong interest in trucks	An interest in trucks developed prior to a direct association with them, plausibly providing the foundation for the development of an occupational identity
Machismo	Association of truck driving with masculinity
Empowerment	Attraction to the power, size, sound or speed of the truck
Enculturation	Disclosure of the adoption of behaviour, attitudes or language specific to Truck Drivers
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight

5.5.10 Dean

Dean’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Dean is a 69 year-old single man who lives in a caravan on his property in western NSW. On leaving school, he followed in his father’s footsteps and completed an apprenticeship as a Butcher however, the theme of an influential parent did not emerge:

“I was working in my father’s shop and I just, didn’t enjoy it” (line 34)

He worked there for five years but did not feel comfortable around customers and it was decided he would be better off in a factory. It was not long before he found more satisfying work, with themes of freedom and autonomy emerging:

“I got a job at a smallgoods factory when I was 20 and I’d only been there a couple of hours and my new boss said, came to me and said ‘well, have you ever driven a truck?’ And I said, ‘well, no’, and he said, ‘well, our smallgoods maker just left, our delivery driver just left, would you like to take over the delivery driver’s job?’. So, I said, ‘oh I suppose so’. So, I went out, and I spent one day with the retiring delivery driver and I just thought, ‘how good is this? Free as a bird.’” (line 16)

“Oh, just that you were out there away, the boss would send you away in the morning and as long as you did the job and got back in the afternoon, he was happy. Job was done. There was no one looking over your shoulder. Your job for the day was sitting in front of you and you knew what you had to do.” (line 26)

“I worked my way up from there and ended up, the biggest truck I drove was a triple road train in the outback of Australia with three decks, two decks of stock on and about 140 tonne.” (line 20)

His attachment to truck driving was instant and permanent, and came from an external source:

“Oh yeah, I was bitten. Truck driving’s not a job, it’s a disease... and there is no cure.” (lines 22 and 23)

Dean’s response to the hypothetical social situation question revealed a confused occupational identity:

“Well, I’m 69 years old, I’m a, was a truck driver for many years.” (line 4)

When asked to provide a rating on the Likert scale when he was a Truck Driver he was less equivocal:

“Oh, I was a truck driver, so 7, 10, I was a truck driver.” (line 8)

Dean’s attachment to truck driving was related to his fascination with machinery and the power of technology, to which he gave almost magical qualities:

“I especially enjoyed working with trucks. My favourite brand of trucks. And in particular T650s.” (line 4)

“The attraction of driving trucks, you know, you are in charge of... I mean you stand beside a truck, a B double truck, and you think, ‘that’s big, that’s huge’. And you stand on the side of the highway B double truck goes past and you think, ‘man oh man’ there’s a kind of energy there, you know, they just sort of blow you over as they go past. And to me it’s fascinating. You put a, I mean it could be, you put a litre of water on the table and then you think, ‘if that was a litre of diesel, there’s enough energy stored up in that litre of diesel to push a B double truck along the road for 2 k’s at a hundred kilometres an hour’. And I think... I can never, ever get over the fact that after all these years, I can never get over the fact that an internal combustion engine can do that. It just, I’m fascinated by it. I’m fascinated by engines, and the mechanical advantages that we’ve harnessed and how well they work and, you know, just a diesel engine it can pull out of Melbourne and you can be in Brisbane the following morning, you know, all that weight... “ (lines 86 and 88)

His attraction also had more prosaic roots:

“And the reason is, you can always just pick up the phone, get a job, and normally they want you to start the following day or that afternoon. Yep. And, um, you can always make good money at it.” (line 48)

“Good money out there, (a Truck Driver) can get a job where he can make 120, 130 thousand dollars per year if he works hard. That’s not bad money.” (line 58)

“Like I said you can always pick up the phone and start a new job. I knew when I came home from the Philippines, before I got crook, honestly, I had not worked for (name) before and I knew I could just pick up the phone and say ‘shall I come over?’ And he said, ‘yeah, come over this arvo I’ve got one sitting here for you’. And I said, ‘not today. Tomorrow, okay.’” (line 116)

He appreciated the predictability:

“So that’s what I’ve got in front of me for Monday and then I’ll know that. Well, maybe I’ve gotta load it at 7am Monday morning so I’ve gotta be out, I’ve gotta be gone by 4am Monday morning. Gotta be in Melbourne by midday. Then I’ve gotta go to Geelong and put fertiliser on and the home by Tuesday morning, for instance. So, you know what you’ve gotta do by Tuesday morning... And if you do that, the phone won’t ring. That’s what I do. So, and then by Monday night they’ll tell you what you’ve gotta do after you’ve ticked off on Tuesday morning. So that’s, yeah, that’s how your week goes.” (lines 124 and 126)

Dean rejected the suggestion that working in a truck represented confinement, and what he described sounded more like a haven, away from people:

“Well, in the cab of a later model truck, you’ve got a large bed. The bed would be as wide as this (desk), over 6 feet long. It’s as wide as the cab is so it’s not, it’s 6 or 7 foot long. And Kenworth trucks, which you know I like, they’re all done out with pin pressed studs you know, thick padding. They’ve got a beautiful interior. Wood grained dash. It’s all, it’s done out like a unit. So, it’s roomy inside, you can stand up inside the cab, so it’s got an airy feeling about it. So, you, even though you might be at a standstill in traffic, you’re still in your own cocoon. It’s not like a car when you’re down there and people are close to you. Where you can reach out and touch the people beside you. You’re quite isolated from the people around you.” (line 106).

Being away from people suited him:

“I used to come home and, you know, go home and I’d rather be with my family or be on my own. I’ve always been a bit of a loner which is one of the reasons why truck driving suited me so well.” (line 68)

Dean denied there was such a thing as a typical Truck Driver, but he conceded that there was a truck driving culture:

“I have a friend, a lady who’s a friend out in Wagga. And she said, ‘she talks truckie’. Because, I didn’t realise but, when I talk to other truck drivers, there’s things that we say to each other that, that’s like a sort of, like we use words to each other that I probably wouldn’t use, like, not just swearing, but we use words to each other that we wouldn’t use elsewhere because they wouldn’t have any meaning elsewhere. I can’t think of what they are right now but, she did a lot of, many years ago, she did a lot of trips from Wagga across to Adelaide with me, monotonous trips back and forward and back and forward, and the first few trips I was on the two-way (radio) talking to other drivers coming towards me and she would say, ‘what did you say to him?’ ... Yeah, now she said she’s quite happy, she talks truckie.” (lines 62 and 64)

Dean’s truck driving career spanned 40 years. He had some experience of other work but always came back to driving:

“You know, it’s funny. I was, there’s times when I’ve, I guess tried to break away. I’ll give this up and go and do something better, but I’ve always come back to truck driving.” (line 46)

Analysis of Dean’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Dean’s father initially influenced him to complete an apprenticeship in the family butcher shop. That influence was not sufficient to keep Dean working in that trade. It did not suit him. He identified as a “loner” and did not enjoy being exposed to customers. He changed to working in a meat processing factory. This may have proved more suitable for him but his exposure to work as a Truck Driver caused an immediate, and durable, conversion. His description of being “bitten”, and of catching a disease absolves him from being responsible for abandoning the family business as it left him with no choice. He preferred the autonomy of truck driving as there was no one, including his father, looking over his shoulder.

Dean does not feel confined by a truck cab. He described the living space behind the seat as something luxurious. While home-like, he did not describe it as a home. For him it is like a cocoon, a haven that keeps him away from people. Although he considered other occupations, he always came back to Truck Driving. In return for hard work, it provided reliable financial reward and a predictability which also suited him. It allowed him to marvel at technology which fascinates him still. He was part of truck driving culture and was fluent in Truckie. For Dean, truck driving wasn’t a job, it was an incurable disease.

According to Dean, Truck Drivers have a distinct language that allows them to communicate with each other, but which is incomprehensible to others. He was not conscious of having that facility, and was amused by his friend’s reaction to it. Over the course of his life as a Truck Driver, he had assimilated the culture of that occupation and the realisation of that, revealed to him, caused him pleasure. Table 5.10 summarises Dean’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 5.10: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Dean’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Revelatory genesis	Description of an awakening of occupational identity attributed to one event
External genesis of identity	A belief that being a Truck Driver came from without, and was not innate
The penthouse	Descriptions of trucks as comfortable, familiar, safe-havens, above the rest of the world and looking down on it
Empowerment	Attraction to the power, size, sound or speed of the truck
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight
Enculturation	Disclosure of the adoption of behaviour, attitudes or language specific to Truck Drivers

5.5.11 Nat

Nat’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Emergent Themes

Nat is a male in his late 30s not currently in a relationship who is living with his parents on the south coast of NSW while he recovers from an injury. Career indecision was a major theme that emerged from Nat’s early life experiences. His father, a Pharmacist, represented a sound role model who did not apply influence on Nat’s career choice, but Nat seems to have placed expectations on himself which he found hard to live up to:

“Dad was... had a good work ethic and I was trying to probably emulate him...” (line 221)

“You know, but no, he never ever forced me to go into pharmacy, he... um... no, I didn’t... it, it wasn’t really coming from within, it was kind of like coming from outside the... that I should have a career or something. Yeah and I was panic, I was a bit panicky about it.” (line 229)

Any thoughts he had regarding his future working life were eliminated when he started boarding school:

“(I was) just trying to keep out of, you know, the bully’s way, really... I got bullied heaps up there.” (line 78)

He changed schools however he developed a chronic fatigue condition and began to experience depression. He attributed much of his mental health difficulties to the uncertainty he felt over the future:

“This is the huge problem. That was one of my major, major problems, was that I did not know what I wanted to do.” (line 96)

After leaving his second high school, expulsion from a third for drunkenness, and subsequent alcohol abuse rehabilitation, he completed secondary studies at TAFE and enrolled in university, working in unskilled casual jobs to support his studies. Despite his laudable efforts, his uncertainty continued to emerge as a theme:

“I had no, I had no direction, I had no desire to be anything in particular. Um, it was a real, real problem for me.” (line 102)

He enrolled in an Arts degree in German and Linguistics and his choice of university course reflected his vocational uncertainty:

“Totally non, um, you know, vocational.” (line 122)

“And, and, I’d never travelled. I’ve never travelled. I only went overseas three years ago.” (line 147)

“And I’m thinking, oh, you know, like, oh yeah, I’ll teach or something, but, I did a couple of teaching subjects. I didn’t really like it. Didn’t like teaching. Plus, I didn’t have the, the correct number of subjects over a certain amount of time to do teaching” (line 124)”

“Um, I think if anything I would have wanted to teach English to people coming from overseas... Um, so I approached Canberra Uni about that but apparently, I’m not, I wasn’t, I couldn’t do that. For some reason or another, I can’t remember what it was.” (line 151)

This uncertainty continued:

“And my first job (after) Uni was selling dildos in Canberra, like, at one of the sex shops.” (line 128)

“Um, so I was completely... when you’re talking about vocationally, um, uh, you know, um, uh empty, that was me. Like, I still didn’t know then what I wanted to do.

I just thought that I would like, I sat for the, um, er, you know the government, the ser-, the public service exam” (line 130)

Nat experienced depression during most of his early life. Improvement in his mental health coincided with the commencement of a relationship. His vocational confusion did not abate, although it became less distressing, and a theme of role identity as a dependent partner emerged:

“Yeah, it was, when I, well it was interesting because I kind of met my partner, and, like, I started on these medications, and it was unbelievable, it changed my life completely. Um, you know, I got my life back once, um, I started on those.” (line 199)

“I moved into his place, and, basically, he just sort of kept me, I suppose. But I did work. I worked for St Vincent de Paul and then I worked in, uh, a printing factory. So... but there was still no sense of vocation.” (line 165)

“...the job situation...didn’t really worry me...he had a good job and I was kind of just, I just wanted to work to just have the extra money sort of thing, and contribute as much as I could.” (line 203)

“Yeah, it was more to, you know, to, like, to, yeah, to give him money or to sort of, um, which I suppose in a sense gave me some self-confidence I suppose. And I just gave him all my, actually I gave him, I gave him my card, my ATM card and he would withdraw all of my money out of the bank, every week or fortnight or whatever, and, and do whatever with it, but then we would give me, I dunno, 5 bucks a day for lunch and stuff like that. You know, he would feed it out to me. Which some would call financial abuse these days, and it probably was.” (line 211)

It was during this time that Nat obtained his truck licence, again with no real commitment to an occupation:

“(Partner’s name) paid for me to do that, to get that licence.” (line 441)

“Well, it was just another, you know, just to have another sort of qualification.” (line 451)

“...’cause, you know, we had, the test, the truck that I did the test on had that horrible gearbox and no, um synchromesh, so, I dunno how he passed me because I had so much trouble synchronising the clutch and the engine and doing it all, you know, he made me do it a few times and I must have got it pretty much right enough for him to pass me. But, um, because I, I had a bad experience with that, and I thought, ‘oh, I don’t wanna drive these trucks, they’re too hard.’” (line 453)

His motivation for getting his truck licence had a spurious genesis:

“... and also there was the whole drugs thing as well, because, you know, I was taking quite a bit of speed and whether you know, funny things happen in your mind, don't they. And I don't know whether getting that, a driver, you know, getting a job as a truck driver was going to, you know, um, be a conscience balm for me to use speed or I don't know.” (line 455)

Towards the end of his relationship, Nat finally found a steady job in an occupation several aspects of which pleased him. A theme of autonomy was obvious:

“I got that when I was with Craig, just, you know, it was a backup, I guess. But, yeah, delivery driving was great... But I did like that job because I was reasonably, you know, I had autonomy, a bit of autonomy.” (line 339)

“You know, 'cause this is before, we didn't have any GPS back then. Yeah, and I liked, um, working out shortcuts...” (line 371)

“Um, what I did like about it, um... I liked going to see the regular customers. Like, I quite liked, you know, you go to drop something off and it, 'oh how you, how you going, how've you been?' you know, and they, we interacted quite a bit. I'm, uh, I often dream about that job actually.” (line 363)

Interestingly, driving provided another benefit, and another emergent theme:

“Yeah, and I felt, I kind of felt very, quite masculine too doing that type of job. I dunno, I just thought about that before, when you were asking me. I did, you know, I felt that, um, yeah, I just sort of thought, oh, I'm part of a group of what society would call a masculine, um, vocation.” (line 391)

After what, for Nat, was a lengthy period of employment, he felt it was time to move on, in more ways than one. :

“And, uh, yeah, so when I left Craig, I left the job as well. (line 336)”

The theme of dependent partner identity seems to have been replaced by the emergence, finally, of an occupational identity and Nat began a career proper. He returned to TAFE, did certificates in Community Services, and started working as an Assistant in Nursing (AIN). His attitude to that occupation is ambivalent. He feels pride in it, and rated his attachment to it as five on the Likert scale, but is reluctant to disclose his involvement in it to others:

“Only because aged care at the moment's so, kind of, you know, it's, it's, you know, it's a tough subject to talk about and, and I... I tend to, you know, I get quite passionate about it and if I was at a party and with someone, I'd just be, I'd try to avoid, you know, whinging about it. And I don't wanna be like get up on the soap

box and so, I know that that might happen so I might tend to pull back a bit on the whole work thing.” (line 425)

“I would always associate myself as an AIN. Well, yeah. But if anyone asks me, I’ll tell them I’m a Diversional Therapist. I’ll very rarely mention that I, that I was an AIN.” (line 535)

Nat’s career in aged care has developed. He returned to TAFE and gained further qualifications enabling him to perform less strenuous duties as a Recreations Activity Officer. It suits him well:

“And, it’s only really been since then that I’ve really felt, um, relaxed in my job and have had fulfilment. Well, just the fact that I can be myself. I can be relaxed.” (line 247)

“Down here I’m more like a normal person, like a normal person that would work, you know, like...” (line 253)

“Now, it’s just me, really. It really is just me. And, um, I ... I’m so much more myself when I’m at work.” (line 285)

Nat has worked in aged care for over ten years now and has no intention of doing anything else.

Analysis of Nat’s Experience of Being a Truck Driver – Super-Ordinate Themes

Nat’s occupational identity is now established, but it was a long time coming. His youth and early adulthood are characterised by a desire for direction which went unfulfilled. In many ways, his experiences support the Eriksonian model of confusion occurring after a failure to progress through the identity vs role confusion crisis (Erikson 1968; Erikson 1995). His mental health appears to have suffered as a result of his confusion, against a background of a dysfunctional period in his youth. He continues to consult a Psychiatrist. He attributes the improvement in his mental health to medication, although it is interesting to speculate whether his adoption of the role of partner is more than a coincidence, and whether it provided him with an identity of sorts.

Nat did not, and does not, identify as a Truck Driver. The importance of his identity as a Truck Driver should not however be underestimated. It marks the beginning of stability in his working life, the development of feelings of masculinity, and the end of his dependence on his partner. While this growth may have occurred in the absence of his new-found association with an occupation, it was through that occupation that Nat discovered fulfilling work, associated with the attraction he felt towards the autonomy his duties provided, and the masculine way they made him feel. Driving his van was not the vocational direction he had previously sought so keenly, but it laid the foundations for personal growth which allowed that direction to unfold. While his work as a Truck Driver does not form part of Nat’s identity, it has allowed him to find an occupation that does.

The form of Nat’s identification is interesting as he is passionate regarding his industry, and identifies strongly with his occupation, but prefers not to disclose it, or if he does, he elevates his status to that of a Diversional Therapist. He identifies with an occupation about which he feels some embarrassment. This experience supports one of the conclusions reached in the analysis of the survey data detailed in Chapter 4. Chi squared tests identified that community service workers self-identified with their occupations more highly than would be expected yet included their occupation in their self-descriptions less frequently. This was interpreted as meaning that, while they had pride in their occupation, they did not wish to disclose it to others due to a perceived lack of status. Table 5.11 summarises Nat’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 5.11: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Nat’s experience of occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Identity confusion	Disclosure of negative emotional response to the lack of an occupational identity
Autonomous control	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight
Machismo	Association of truck driving with masculinity
Undisclosed identity	Professing to identification with an occupation that is not disclosed to others due to shame or perceived lack of status
Gradational genesis	Identification with an occupation that occurs over an extended period

5.6 SUMMARY

In accordance with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method, the individual experiences of eleven Truck Drivers relevant to their occupational identity have been identified and discussed. Emergent themes arising from an analysis of those individual’s experiences were interpreted resulting in the construction of super-ordinate themes applicable to each participant.

All the participants clearly experienced an established occupational identity. The analysis of the individual experiences of the participants revealed differences in how and why their occupational identification developed, and the nature and extent of their identification, however it is apparent that despite those differences, many participants shared similar experiences, and these similarities allow confidence that thematic patterns can be identified. Accordingly, the next chapter presents a comparison of themes across participants with the aim of identifying those patterns and analysing

their significance for the development and maintenance of occupational identities. The resultant themes are then compared with higher level concepts for comparison.

CHAPTER 6

THE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES OF BEING A TRUCK DRIVER

6.1 Overview

In Chapter 5 the individual experiences of the research participants were examined, interpreted and analysed. Subsequent iterations of analyses resulted in the identification of 19 distinct super-ordinate themes relevant to at least one participant's experience of being a Truck Driver. While most of the super-ordinate themes were shared by several of the participants, no one super-ordinate theme was common to all participants. In accordance with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis process (Smith et al. (2009), the next stage of the analysis was to look for patterns that exist across the individual analyses. The purpose of this stage is to identify connections between super-ordinate themes and highlight higher order concepts while noting idiosyncrasies. This chapter outlines that process, examines thematic commonalities and differences, and presents themes which incorporate the essential experience of being a Truck Driver. Table 6.1 presents the combined super-ordinate themes of the individual participants occupational identity.

Table 6.1: Combined super-ordinate themes of the participants' occupational identity

Super-Ordinate Theme	Definition	Common Participants
Internal genesis of identity (n=2)	A belief that being a Truck Driver is innate or came from within	Josh, Simon
External genesis of identity (n=2)	A belief that being a Truck Driver came from without, and was not innate	Billy, Dean
Revelatory genesis (n=3)	Description of an awakening of occupational identity attributed to one event	Darryl, Arthur, Dean
Gradational genesis (n=1)	Identification with an occupation that occurs over an extended period	Nat
Genesis from a significant relationship (n=5)	Early development of an occupational identity due to the influence of a significant other	Ella, Josh, Garth, Arthur, Simon
Pre-existing strong interest in trucks (n=6)	An interest in trucks developed prior to a direct association with them, plausibly providing the foundation for the development of an occupational identity	Billy, Ella, Josh, Andrew, Simon, Shirley
The penthouse (n=4)	Descriptions of trucks as comfortable, familiar, safe-havens, above the rest of the world and looking down on it	Darryl, Garth, Arthur, Dean, Josh
Empowerment (n=5)	Attraction to the power, size, sound or speed of the truck	Billy, Josh, Darryl, Shirley, Dean
Identification with trucks (n=2)	Descriptions of trucks as being representations of the driver	Josh, Darryl

Animation of trucks (n=1)	Elevation of trucks to living things	Ella
Purpose (n=2)	Feelings of altruism arising from the social or economic importance of truck driving	Darryl, Garth
Autonomous control (n=9)	Perception of autonomy of action, free from external direction or oversight	Billy, Josh, Darryl, Garth, Andrew, Simon, Shirley, Dean, Nat
Association with an Ingroup (n=7)	A delineation between those identified with, and others based on perceived differences	Billy, Josh, Darryl, Garth, Arthur, Andrew, Simon
Dissonance (n=6)	Expressions of positive emotions associated with the nature of work as a Truck Driver, made despite acknowledgement of aspects of that work that might be considered intolerable	Billy, Ella, Garth, Arthur, Andrew, Simon
Enculturation (n=5)	Disclosure of the adoption of behaviour, attitudes or language specific to Truck Drivers	Darryl, Garth, Andrew, Shirley, Dean
Machismo (n=3)	Association of truck driving with masculinity	Arthur, Shirley, Nat
Intersectional identity (n=4)	Occupational identity contemporaneously inter-related with another type of identity	Ella, Josh, Garth, Arthur
Undisclosed identity (n=1)	Professing to identification with an occupation that is not disclosed to others due to shame or lack of status	Nat
Identity confusion (n=1)	Disclosure of negative emotional response to the lack of an occupational identity	Nat

6.2 The Experience of Becoming a Truck Driver

The experience of being a Truck Driver has an obvious precursor and each participant's story includes their unique experience of how they came to work in that occupation. For most, there was an agent of generation, a person or event that influenced their decision to start working as a Truck Driver. Others also experienced the influence of something within themselves that found expression in their work. Only one participant (Nat) arrived at their occupation incidentally.

While they experienced more than one influence leading them to work as a Truck Driver, both Josh and Simon used language which attributed their identity as Truck Drivers to something inside them.

For Josh, there are Truck Drivers for whom the occupation is just a job, but for others, like himself, it's something "in their blood" (Josh line 74). Something acting from within themselves that 'makes' them a true Truck Driver. Simon also considers truck driving to be "in the blood" (Simon line 31), although for him, this is due to a genetic link with his father who was also a Truck Driver. The experience of an internal agent suggests a surrender to an inevitability or an absolution of responsibility for being a Truck Driver and infers that there is no easy escape or acceptable alternative.

Dean and Billy also both experienced more than one influence that led them to truck driving, however unlike Josh and Simon, the agents were explicitly attributed to an external source. Like Josh, Dean's identity is also 'blood-borne,' although his was introduced 'in the blood' by an unidentified external agent similar to an insect. "Oh yeah, I was bitten. Truck driving's not a job, it's a disease, and there is no cure" (Dean lines 22 and 23). Billy's path to truck driving came "out of the blue" (Billy line 18), with no apparent source. Attribution to an external source implies that working as a Truck Driver is potentially avoidable, although Billy could not explicate where the external source originated, and the source of Dean's infection is the occupation itself.

For three participants, the experience of becoming a Truck Driver occurred instantly in a moment of revelation. Dean had worked for several years as a Butcher, an occupation which he did not enjoy as he is a self-described loner and was working in a shop and exposed to customers. He tried a change of environment and started work in a smallgoods factory but on his first day he was asked to drive the delivery truck. He spent a day with the retiring Delivery Driver and described the experience as feeling "free as a bird" (Dean line 16). Darryl was 18 years old and had drifted from job to job and place to place. He did not even need to drive a truck to experience his conversion. A man in a pub asked him if he wanted a job as a Truck Driver and he was initially ambivalent but, as soon as he saw the truck, he saw a "gorgeous machine" and "just fell in love with it" (Darryl line 20). Arthur's decision to work as a Truck Driver was made early. At the age of nine years his uncle gave him a ride in his truck. The experience made an immediate impression on him, making him feel "big", "tall", "special" and "different" (Arthur line 34). While the events which triggered their desire to work as Truck Drivers cannot by themselves be said to be the cause of their occupational identities, it should be noted that each of these participants continued to work as Truck Drivers until, just as suddenly, the events described in Chapter 7 removed the option of continuing.

Of the 11 participants, only Nat experienced an extended delay in the establishment of his occupational identity. In fact, Nat stated he did not identify with his work as a Truck Driver at all.

While his experience of driving trucks ended many years of emotional turmoil associated with a desire to find what he wanted to do, it was not until he started work as an Assistant in Nursing (AIN) that he developed an occupational identity. It is interesting to speculate what would have occurred if he had commenced work as an AIN earlier in his working life, and especially prior to the stabilisation of his life that he experienced after starting work as a Truck Driver.

With the exception of Nat, who did not identify with work as a Truck Driver; Darryl, for whom the beginnings of being a Truck Driver commenced as soon as he saw his “gorgeous” truck; and Dean who was working as a Butcher, all of the other participants described a personal relationship with a Truck Driver and/or a strong interest in trucks prior to being a Truck Driver themselves. Simon and Garth both attributed their early interest in driving trucks to their Truck Driver fathers, and Chris’ influencers were his father and a neighbour who both took him along on truck driving trips. Ella’s father was not a Truck Driver, but she found inspiration from his encouragement and support. Arthur idolised his truck driving uncle. Shirley comes from a truck driving family and, while she is proudest of becoming a Truck Driver despite her family’s name, and their strenuous opposition to her career plans, she was around trucks and Truck Drivers from birth. Billy and Andrew have no truck driver connections and found their interest directly through the machinery. Billy was “obsessed” with trucks from an early age. According to family lore, as an infant, Andrew would abscond to a nearby worksite to watch the machines in action.

The influence of early experiences on occupational identity has long been recognised in the literature. Phelan and Kinsella (2009) summarise the prevailing view amongst occupational identity theorists that children develop identities through seeking approval from their parents, peers and society, and that approval with respect to occupations “may form, shape or even produce identities” (p88, italics in original). This view fails to explain how several of the participants became Truck Drivers despite parental disapproval. In their study of the sources of occupational identity Ulfsson and Eriksson and Linde (2014) attempted to draw conclusions with regard to the association between occupational groups and occupational identity. Amongst their findings was that people engaged in trade occupations, crafts, agriculture and fishery displayed higher levels of occupational identity which they seemed to inherit as a result of socialisation from early childhood. Unfortunately, their occupational groups are not small enough to allow for an examination of occupational identity amongst Truck Drivers, however this ‘inheritance’ appears to have been confirmed by the experiences of the Truck Drivers described above, as almost half experienced early and influential exposure to Truck Driving

families. If those who were influenced by an early exposure to trucks are included, this proportion increases to over three-quarters.

An early determination to begin working as a Truck Driver seems to have been experienced by most of the participants. Others came to that decision later, but with equal determination. Only Nat, who spoke of having no vocational direction, seems to have drifted into that occupation. Having made the decision to work as a Truck Driver, the process of developing an occupational identity could begin. How this occurred is explored in Sections 6.3 to 6.7.

6.3 The Experience of Driving Trucks

Whether through a sudden revelation, or after the influence of a pre-existing factor, ten of the eleven participants who started to work as a Truck Driver subsequently developed an identity associated with that occupation. Their experiences revealed themes which suggest explanations for why this happened. Many of those themes relate to the experience of driving a truck.

Most of the participants noted that it was common for them to wash their trucks on their day off, or to personalise it with decorative paintwork or accessories, however for Josh, Darryl and Ella, the truck was much more than a 'tool of trade' or a source of pride. Josh owned and operated trucks, but the relationship went deeper than that. He felt people recognised him through his truck, and through the name of his company, explaining that those things defined him. Darryl's passionate declaration is worth repeating.

"You become part of the truck, you become that truck. That's who you are, and that's all you know." (Darryl line 126)

Ella's relationship with her truck was described as a mother/daughter relationship. Her truck was her daughter, whose honour she protected, and on whom she doted:

"That's my girl. Yeah, do not touch. If you're going to touch her, you make sure you look after her." (Ella line 74)

The truck was a source of power and status for most of the participants. For many, including Billy and Darryl, the size of the truck was important, the bigger the better. Josh was also attracted to the size, but appreciated the sound of the motor, and the speed. Shirley would only drive road trains and was also attracted to the sound of power, often listening to her engine through the open window. For Dean, that power had almost magical qualities:

“I can never get over the fact that an internal combustion engine can do that. It just... I’m fascinated by it.” (Dean line 88)

Another common truck-related theme was the experience of the truck as a home. A place of safety and security from where “you can see the world” (Josh line 37). Dean described the comforts of his truck cabin “done out like a unit” with wood panelling and cushioned ceilings, a “cocoon”, “isolated from the people around you” (Dean line 106). Darryl also appreciated “the comforts of home”, “a safe place” and an “armoured fortress” from which “you can look at the minions in their cars and go ‘fuck them, get out of my way or I’ll mow you over’” (Darryl line 128). Garth’s truck was his “home” and the place he “belonged”, comfortable like his “favourite pair of jeans” (Garth lines 31 and 33). Arthur looked after his trucks with pride because “that’s your home, that’s your office” (Arthur line 130).

The high regard in which the participants held their trucks, and the act of driving them, was ubiquitous, and it can be concluded with confidence that this relationship was responsible for much of their devotion to their occupation. At the very least, their enjoyment of driving trucks laid the foundation for the development of their identification with their occupation. It may even be considered responsible for that development, evidenced by the experience of some of the participants for whom their truck either represented them, or became part of them.

6.4 The Experience of Working as a Truck Driver

While driving a truck appears to influence the development of an occupational identity as a Truck Driver, there are other aspects of the work separate from the vehicle which may be relevant. Participant experiences of working as a Truck Driver included both positive and negative elements. Positive elements included an almost unanimous feeling of autonomy, and feelings of a sense of purpose. Many negative elements, including the dangers commonly encountered and the effect on family and social lives, were described by the participants but did not seem to alter their positive relationship with their occupation.

With the exception of Ella and Arthur, all the participants commented on the freedom they felt while driving their trucks. On questioning, it became clear that this feeling originated from the lack of scrutiny they experienced while conducting their duties. The phrase “no one looking over your shoulder” was used by Josh, Simon, Shirley and Dean. Billy contrasted the feeling with how he felt working in an office, which he likened to working in a “fishbowl, just going ‘round and ‘round and someone always watching you” (Billy line 60). Garth, Darryl and Andrew described the feeling of

power that came from autonomy which for Garth gave him a sense of calm amongst the chaos of the road. Andrew and Darryl felt the power of being able to set the rules by which they worked.

Darryl and Garth highlighted another source of enjoyment associated with their duties, a sense of purpose derived from a perception of the value of their work for others. Darryl appreciated the 'big picture' of how his work was an important part of the distribution process on which so many people depend. Garth's experience of delivering the news of the death of Princess Diana to a woman on a remote cattle station was particularly poignant and a moment that made a lasting impression on him (Garth line 169).

Nine of the eleven participants were men, reflecting the gendered nature of this occupation in which only 3% are female (National Skills Commission 2016). The data obtained from the interviews potentially provides some insight into gender and occupations however that matter is beyond the scope of this research project and may be an area for future study. Ella was the participant most affected by this gender imbalance as she stated she is prevented from driving road trains, seemingly because she is a woman. While truck driving is statistically associated with men, three of the participants associated being a Truck Driver with being a man. Unlike Ella, Shirley was able to drive road trains and was proud of being considered "one of the boys" (Shirley line 54), more comfortable in the company of male Truck Drivers than "half a dozen women" (Shirley line 56) or worse, joining a bingo club. After a long period of being the heavily dependent partner in his same-sex relationship, Nat stated that working as a Truck Driver provided him for the first time with a feeling of masculinity, and whether by coincidence or not, he ended that relationship soon afterwards. Arthur used gendered language in a derogatory way to describe Truck Drivers who he considered did not display a sufficient work ethic, referring to them as "princesses" (Arthur line 74) wearing "netball skirts" (Arthur line 162), reinforcing the theme of machismo.

All the participants enthusiastically reported the positive experiences of work as a Truck Driver, and those experiences doubtless influenced their continued involvement in that occupation, even after the circumstances described in Chapter 7. For most of the participants, their experience of work as Truck Drivers also included negative elements. While the positive experiences seem to have encouraged continuation of their work, the negative elements (including those recounted in Chapter 7), many of which would ordinarily seem intolerable, did not seem to have had the opposite effect. Garth put it most starkly:

"(We) lost a lot of good blokes. Crashes happen. Death happens" (Garth line 215).

Billy and Ella lamented that the long hours away from home came at a cost. Billy lost all his mates and has little social or family life. Ella bought a home but only lived in it for a fraction of the year. She saw families on holidays driving past and regretted that she would never experience that. Simon described the effect truck driving has on the health of the Truck Driver:

“You’re sitting in the truck for 12, 14, 16 hours per day, some people live in them, and it’s...You don’t get out and exercise. You do 800, 1,000km a day, day in, day out, and you’re just sitting there. (Simon line 89).

Arthur described several attempts to influence younger people to take up truck driving, while issuing cautions regarding the devastating effect it can have on relationships. When confronted by the fact that they were confined in a truck cabin for hours at a time, and often had to contend with traffic and tight deadlines, all the participants dismissed those realities as insignificant, a “game” according to Andrew (line 151).

Given the hardships that the participants reported, the nature of work as a Truck Driver would not suit those looking for human companionship, stability, predictability or safety. It involves long periods away from family, friends and home, and is ruinous on relationships. It is by all reports dangerous, and occasionally deadly. Yet none of the participants allowed those factors to influence their dedication to their work, and their identities as Truck Drivers survive undiminished. While they were sometimes willing to concede that those negative factors existed, they were able to ignore them, or minimise their significance. It is uncertain whether this ability arose because of the strength of their occupational identity; or their occupational identity developed because of this ability. Based on the extent of the incompatibility of the positive and negative influences, it seems most likely that the two conditions developed in tandem, and that the negative influences were progressively side-lined as the positive influences gained traction, allowing the occupational identity to grow, increasing its power to minimise the negative.

6.5 The Experience of Truck Driver Identity

Central to the experience of being a Truck Driver is understanding who is, and who is not, a Truck Driver. The experiences of the participants suggest that working as a Truck Driver is not a sufficient criterion for claiming an identity as a Truck Driver and that, in a broader context, not only are there differences between Truck Drivers and others who drive trucks, there are cultural differences between Truck Drivers and those who engage in other occupations and roles.

Firstly, it is important to note that for Ella, Josh and Garth, an occupational identity as a Truck Driver did not exclude a simultaneous identity with another significant role. Ella's experience of identifying as a woman and a Truck Driver is the most obvious example, made salient by male attitudes towards a woman who also drove trucks. Those attitudes included sexist jokes, unwanted attention and workforce discrimination. Ella felt sufficiently vulnerable to avoid male Truck Driver company and continues to resent being disallowed from driving road trains. She noted that other female drivers, who seem to have adopted Shirley's 'one-of-the-boys' approach, were more willing to accept similar treatment, however she continues to resist it, and in doing so has retained dual identities as a Truck Driver and a woman despite the perception that they are incompatible. Josh and Garth have also adopted dual identities which others have found incompatible as both have at one time been willing to compromise their identities as Truck Drivers by maintaining their family roles. Garth admitted he had "two loves, the greyhounds and the trucks, and the family over everything" (Garth line 149). The machismo theme described in section 6.4 might also be considered an example of dual identities although Arthur's gendered language was directed at other Truck Drivers inferring that being a masculine Truck Driver is a sub-identity of the Truck Driver identity, rather than a different identity.

Several of the participants identified cultural elements to being a Truck Driver. Darryl denied that there is such a thing as a typical Truck Driver, but insisted they are a collection of individuals who share certain characteristics including listening to the same music, eating the same food and using a "dialect" he called "truck-speak" (Darryl line 98). Dean recounted how a female friend now "talks Truckie" (Dean line 64) after listening to him talk on the radio while riding in his truck. Andrew described the violent ramifications of transgressing expected behaviour in a truck stop. Garth laments that there is a "brotherhood" of Truck Drivers which is disappearing (Garth line 215). Shirley spoke of a meeting between her peers as a family coming together.

Cultural differences of a more fundamental nature caused many of the participants to express ethnocentric views towards overseas Truck Drivers who work in Australia by virtue of a '457 visa' allowing temporary residence for those employed in selected occupations. Darryl's attitude was typical:

"There's an argument across the industry about the 457 visa. You may have seen, I know I have seen, a lot of the migrants seem to drive tippers. And they're all mental. And they'll cut you off" (Darryl line 82).

Andrew denied this attitude is racist, but:

“We’re getting a lot more East Asian drivers. Indians and Afghanis and all that sort of stuff who have a very different experience growing up to what we have, and they tend not to be like us in a lot of ways... but there’s a lack of manners... Unwritten rules, all unwritten rules, they don’t understand those rules... and that causes conflict” (Andrew lines 291 to 295).

Simon sees drivers who are “imported from overseas” (Simon line 132) who are only interested in making money and lack truck driving skills which “creates bad blood” (Simon line 138).

For other participants, the differences between Truck Drivers and those who drive trucks is generational and usually related to a rite of entry that no longer exists. Billy is disdainful of the ease with which people, even Dentists, are now able to take up truck driving to make easy money. Josh distinguishes between his peers, who had a passion for truck driving, and the new generation some of whom treat it as “just a job” (Josh line 76). Arthur also notes a lack of passion in the current generation, and a different work ethic:

“I hate to stereotype it but the old school guys, you had values. We work. We never complained about what we did” (Arthur line 76).

Billy was adamant that Truck Drivers are different from people in other occupations:

“I think another thing too, is I find office people different” (Billy line 150)

Billy’s experience typifies the suggestion made by Tajfel and Turner (1986) that individuals use social categorisations to create a means for self-identification in social terms, and that comparisons with other categorisations results in a (favoured) in-group, out-group differentiation. Intergroup differentiation is dependent on a number of factors including a necessity for group members to have internalised membership as part of their self-concept, not just be identified by others as part of that group. All the participants displayed an internalised identification with an occupation which they consider desirable and, in that sense, Tajfel and Turner’s conceptualisation is supported. The existence of a distinct culture and a rite of entry however adds another dimension to their intergroup differentiation.

6.6 The Experience of Not Being a Truck Driver

Nat’s experiences are different from the other participants. While he did work as a Truck Driver, enjoyed several aspects of it, and gained a sense of masculinity from it, he did not identify as a Truck Driver. Unlike the other participants, he had no pre-existing interest in trucks, or a significant early relationship with a Truck Driver, nor did he develop an instant affinity when he first encountered

trucks. This suggests that those factors have a causative relationship with the development of an occupational identity as a Truck Driver. His subsequent development of an occupational identity as an AIN indicates otherwise, as equivalent factors which may have influenced the development of that identity are also absent.

Nat's occupational identity was formed later in life. He confirmed that a lack of a career direction in adolescence had contributed to his mental health problems.

"This is the huge problem. That was one of my major, major problems, was that I did not know what I wanted to do." (Nat line 96)

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Erikson 1968) describes similar consequences from a failure to gain an occupational identity during the Identity vs Role Confusion stage in adolescence and early adulthood. Erikson's model also predicts that a failure to negotiate that stage may result in difficulties in sustaining stable relationships. Nat did establish a long-term relationship during that period, however from his description, it was as a dependent, not as a partner.

"I moved into his place and, basically, he just sort of kept me, I suppose." (Nat line 199)

This relationship provided Nat with a role with which he was able to identify. While he attributed his improved mental health to the medication he was prescribed, the proximity of the adoption of his role identity to that event could be considered as a potential contributing factor.

Nat's employment as a Truck Driver marked the beginning of a change in his identity which culminated in the establishment of an identity as an AIN. While he identified strongly with that occupation, he did not admit to it publicly. He gave his passion for the work and a tendency to "get up on the soap box" (Nat line 425) as reasons for not disclosing his actual occupation to others. Instead, he led people to believe he was a Diversional Therapist, which indicates that perhaps the real reason for non-disclosure was the low status of work as an AIN. If this is so, it represents another example which potentially contradicts a theoretic principle outlined by Tajfel and Turner (1986) which states that an unsatisfactory social identity will cause an individual either to seek to improve their group, or leave it. Nat vigorously defended his occupation but was probably powerless to improve it. Rather than leave it, he disavowed membership. Disavowal obviates the need to leave as it removes negatively discrepant social comparison with an out-group.

6.7 Summary

Chapters 5 and 6 detail the interpretation and analysis of the experiences of the eleven participants and combine to produce convergent super-ordinate themes relevant to the development and

maintenance of an occupational identity. While no super-ordinate theme applied to all participants, there were far more similarities than differences, which allows for conclusions to be made.

Collectively, the participants displayed a pattern depicting the genesis of their occupational identity as a Truck Driver as being the result of an agent. Sometimes this agent was felt as an internal pre-destination, more often it was external but related to exposure at some time to trucks, truck driving or Truck Drivers. The effect of this agent was partly one of socialisation, but socialisation alone cannot explain all the resultant identity formation as negative parental attitudes did not seem to be influential in preventing its development. Nor can socialisation explain how some of the participants developed an instant determination to drive trucks as a result of a single experience. Chance appears to have little part in determining the initial identity development and a pattern of either the experience of pre-determination, self-determination triggered by an agent or a combination of both, seems apparent.

Whatever the precipitant, once working as a Truck Driver was achieved, patterns exist which help explain how an occupational identity was established and maintained. Power and agency link many of the super-ordinate themes. The power of the truck, expressed by its size, noise and speed, and by its invulnerability above people and looking down on them, has much in common with the power of the Truck Driver to work autonomously, make and break rules, and fulfil traditional dominant male roles. The ability to do good and make a difference to people's lives can also be considered a source of power. This experience of power could be especially seductive amongst a socio-economic demographic which might otherwise be amongst the less powerful.

To be identified with, an occupation must have an identity. It must be distinguishable from other occupations in visible and significant ways. The participants experienced a feeling of difference between themselves as Truck Drivers, and other groups, including other people who drive trucks. The experience of a separate cultural identity, manifested by a dialect incomprehensible to outsiders; specific Truck Driver music and film genres; and even food, delineates an in-group and provides an entity with which to identify. Membership of this elite is only valued if it is earned. A rite of entry should be demonstrated, and Truck Drivers who have simply been gifted the opportunity to join are often excluded from membership.

Fatal accidents, serious injury, relationships lost or not found, and difficult working conditions were common experiences amongst participants and yet the significance of those factors is either ignored

or minimised by them. The reality of the existence of these negative factors was acknowledged, but tolerated and would appear to have no apparent effect on the attraction and affection the participants felt towards their occupation. It is not a question of 'this is the price we pay'. Comments indicated that there is an awareness that a price is paid, but no acceptance that the payment has any significance, despite that significance. In any in-group, out-group comparison, those negative factors would be expected to force a re-evaluation of group membership, or prompt action for change (Tajfel & Turner 1986). Certainly, some of the participants expressed the opinion that change is required, and frustration that change has not occurred. None however indicated that they have contemplated disassociation from their occupation. The strength of that association seems to override a more rational course of action.

While it may be strong, an identity as a Truck Driver does not seem to exclude identification with other roles. It may diminish or eliminate opportunities for identification with family or other roles, rendering them potentially incompatible, however some of the participants demonstrated identification with an additional significant role.

Established using the conceptual framework recommended in Chapter 4, the experiences of the participants have provided a deeper appreciation of what it is to 'be' an occupation. Chapters 7 and 8 explore the experiences of 'not being' that occupation, with specific focus on the effect of a persistence of the original occupational identity. The conclusions reached in Parts A and B of the research project will then be discussed with reference to how they may inform changes to the effectiveness of Rehabilitation Counsellors.

CHAPTER 7

INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE.

7.1 Overview

In addition to providing data relevant to their experience of being a Truck Driver, as explored in Chapters 5 and 6, each participant's story included an event or events which threatened to disrupt their truck driving career and forced them to consider a change from truck driving to another occupation. This chapter investigates the participants' individual experiences of attempting that change, again using the IPA method. Chapter 8 presents a comparison of the individual analyses of those experiences and compares them with higher order concepts relevant specifically to the process of occupational change.

7.2 Facing Occupational Change – Individual Experiences

7.2.1 Billy's Experiences of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

After a long career driving trucks, which satisfied an interest he has held since infancy, Billy sustained serious injuries to his back while working as a Truck Driver delivering goods to supermarkets. Even prior to his injury, Billy attempted a change towards what he considers a more normal life by working as a Truck Driver delivering goods to Aldi stores and by broadening his interests. For him, this represented a compromise, taking him away from road trains and the open road while remaining a Truck Driver.

“I was trying to become more, more human then so I thought I'll get a regular job and try that and see what that's like.” (line 74).

“Yeah, I was trying to force myself into a routine so I could buy a house, try and expand my interests as well. I bought a 4 wheel drive to go off road and all that sort of stuff, try and have an interest where before, all I did was work.”

Billy found some enjoyment from 4-wheel driving, but it was no substitute for driving a truck. Driving a car was a task, his occupation was implicitly more than that:

“It's just that, I find being in a car, I associate car driving to a task, you know, you've got to drive to the shop”. (line 238).

After his injuries Billy's doctors advised him not to work as a Truck Driver and recommended light duties. Experiencing an inability to drive and an unfamiliar work environment, a theme of entrapment and alienation emerged:

“I tried office work when I was on light duties and it just did my head in.” (line 60)

“I was getting claustrophobic in a room the size of this (a large meeting room). In an office it's like, fucking, I just didn't like it. It just didn't feel right”. (line 62).

When it became clear that his inability to drive would persist, he participated in a vocational assessment, a process designed to assist him identify a viable return-to-work goal which he would like to pursue. Work as a Truck Allocator (directing the operations of Truck Drivers from a control room) was identified, probably based on Billy's experience of performing suitable duties in that role. Clearly the assessment was unsuccessful as the vocational choices that resulted made no impression. Despite having demonstrated an ability to perform the duties of an Allocator, Billy could not commit to any alternative return to work goal:

"Ah, yeah. They had this Occupational Therapist come out and we talked about (truck) allocating and stuff like that, and Aldi claimed they offered an allocating job but they didn't. But anyway, I would have done it there for a little while if they did but... Then we spoke and they come up with a few things, like you were saying earlier, I had no interest in what they had either." (line 140).

"I can't find nothing else. I'm not passionate about anything else. 'Shit, I better go change careers'. I've been trying to change careers since 2016. There's nothing. Not much appealing to me about sitting in an office." (line 196).

Billy is still truck driving, despite the pain that results. He gains no pleasure, or profit, from doing so. Given he apparently had the opportunity of working in a more physically suitable role but chose not to accept it, a theme of irrational persistence emerges:

"I still do the occasional trip but I'm in a lot of pain when I do it." (line 110).

"2016 I stopped working full time, so I was off for 6 months, three bulging discs, so out for 6 months then and haven't worked full time since then. So that's 3 years now. Yes, so I haven't been able to find another career so I've pretty much just driven when I, driven part time rather than, whenever I can do things." (line 4).

"It's not really worth it. If you're only doing an occasional one, the pain takes the fun out of it. Anyway, the money's not enough to get by when you're only doing it occasionally so it's really, you're not getting anywhere." (line 112).

In Billy's experience, this is not uncommon.

"I know people that have had hard times as well and, but they've always gone back to (truck driving)." (line 106).

7.2.2 Analysis of Billy's Experiences of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

In Section 5.2, the strength of Billy's identification with his occupation was confirmed, to the extent that it is similar to a 'calling', or what we have defined in Chapter 4 as a vocational identity. His circumstances are otherwise almost identical to the Truck Driver who provided the initial stimulus to engage in this research project. After an injury that probably should have ended his career as a Truck Driver, he performed suitable duties in an office, in which he felt trapped and then participated in a vocational assessment. That assessment identified vocational alternatives, including at least one alternative, as a Truck Allocator, that he had demonstrated the ability to sustain. He had rejected those alternatives, cannot conceive of any others, and, three years after his injury, returned to driving despite the pain that results and the insufficiency of the income it generates. Rather than make a change to an occupation which denies him the freedom of truck driving, he would rather endure pain and a reduction in income. His situation highlights the central question - is it Billy's occupational identity as a Truck Driver that is responsible for his failure to engage with a new occupation?

While the specifics of the vocational assessment he participated in are unknown, Billy described how the process did not generate the desired result. If Billy expressed his intense dislike of working in an office, work as a Truck Allocator should not have been amongst the assessment's recommendations unless vocational counselling had been conducted to address this dislike. It remains possible that the assessment was poorly conducted. Even assuming that the assessment was conducted correctly, it is highly unlikely that the question of Billy's occupational identity was investigated or raised. Had this occurred, Billy may have been better prepared for the consequences. Due to his involvement as a participant, he is now more aware of the potential for his identity as a Truck Driver to present a barrier to occupational change. Table 7.1 summarises the super-ordinate themes relevant to Billy's experiences of occupational change.

Table 7.1 Summary of the Themes Generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Billy's experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Theme	Definition
Rejection of a viable alternative	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation
Persistence despite pain	Willingness to persist with truck driving despite the pain that results

7.2.3 Ella's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Ella's experience of truck driving commenced as a Delivery Driver in Melbourne. She subsequently moved to a mining town in Western Australia where she had several truck driving jobs, including delivering explosives to the mines.

Ella's first driving job in Western Australia was in a concrete agitator truck. She then had a succession of driving jobs, all of them disrupted:

“Yeah I mean I really loved it because I got out, I was driving a truck, and that was my main thing. You know, I got out there and I started getting experience. And then after that I was, I went into the mines and driving a big dump truck, and um, had a few incidences with that where I um, my mother passed away, um, and I had to do some legal stuff. They did give me the time off work but unfortunately between the split shifts I nearly, bit more time off work, I did mention it to them, and he wasn't happy with that, so get up in the morning to go to work, and I said I'm ready to work and he said no you're not, didn't you get the email or whatever. And I'm not that savvy with stuff. So anyway, lost that job. And then I went into another mine site and did dump trucks there, went 360 down the ramp, the truck wouldn't stop 'cause the ramp was too wet, and at night shift, and I made a complaint to the manager there, or supervisor manager of the pit. He said he will... make a... he'd ask everybody the next day about it, and no-one stood up and said yep she's right, this that and the other. Um anyway, I decided not to go back, that was my choice. I have not gone into a dump truck since my first day on the tar. Then I got another job here in (town name) with a scrap metal place and um, through an employment agency, the same lady who got me the job through the concreting. Um, he was an absolute pig. Every time I tried to ask for time off, he said 'if I have to get my arse in that truck, it's your job'. So one day I actually had an injury at work and I had two bins split and sort of fold in together and got my finger caught underneath and split my finger open, and I said well I suppose you have to get your arse in the truck then don't you. And he didn't appreciate that, so he got somebody else in the truck and a few words were exchanged. I did stay at that job for another two weeks and I just thought I'm not worthy of receiving this shit that he's been giving me. Um, I'm a better person than that.” (line 36)

After the scrap metal truck driving job, Ella secured her explosives delivery job. Soon after starting, she sustained a knee injury. She performed light duties in the office, but despite persistent symptoms she was determined to return to driving as she felt she had something to prove:

“Twisted (my knee) in the back of the truck and I thought to myself, well, WorkCover said ‘you have to go back to work’, and I said ‘but I can’t because of my crutches’ and this that and the other, but as soon as I got off the crutches and started to feel less pain, less pain, the more I was at work ... the more... the urge was for me to get better. The more ... I didn’t want to sit here in the crib room filling out all paperwork or shredding paper or answering phones and all that sort of stuff. The more I wanted to get back into that truck and drive. Because yeah it wasn’t so much the money factor or anything like that. It was for me to know I can still do that job. I had to prove something. Not only to my boss but to myself. But, that I could do the job.”
(line 150)

Including her current driving job, Ella has returned to truck driving a total of six times. The last time was the hardest as she experienced debilitating pain and endured a protracted period of fruitless diagnostic investigation, five unsuccessful operations and referral to three pain specialists. After active treatment stopped, her employer would not allow her to return to delivering explosives due to the amount of pain medication she required to control her symptoms. She persisted because she wanted to be who she was, a Truck Driver. This is an explicit statement of the strength of her occupational identity, and of the barrier that identity formed to prevent consideration of a different, more suitable, occupation:

“But that place didn’t see my determination they didn’t see... the passion I had in wanting to be who I wanted to be. Which is really disappointing in that fact because I wanted to do it. I might have not been able to talk properly or say the right words or be literate enough to you know say what I wanted but at the end of the day that...what I wanted to do was get back in the truck... “ (line 152)

Ella’s determination to return to driving motivated her to withdraw from her medication and she secured work in her current job, collecting rubbish skips:

“And I’m driving a truck. And it might not be me big fancy Kenworth or Western Star or anything like, but it’s still a truck” (line 168)

Ella thinks she has no alternative but to maintain her identity as a Truck Driver:

“I’ve tried the reception jobs... I’ve tried ... used to work for a news.... Worked for a newspaper in Melbourne, working as an Accountants Clerk in Melbourne and all that when I was growing up in Melbourne first getting into work and just had this vision in the back of my head that I was going to be an Accountant and do all these

wonderful things, but like I said, you start driving and you just got this mentality of being the driver. You are a driver. Even people say to me now, 'well, why don't you do something else', and I go 'no, I'm a Truck Driver'" (line 148).

Despite evidence from her work history to the contrary, and her clear statement identifying with her occupation, Ella considers the reason she is not working in an alternative occupation is her lack of ability, combined incongruently with her preference for her current work environment:

I can't do anything else, I don't have the brains for it. I have the brains for freight, I have the brains to go and tell you what street in (town name) to go to or what mine site's down there, and what's over there and blah blah blah, but to sit down and do a reception job or anything like that I'd be looking out the window all day thinking that's where I belong. Out in the fresh air, out where you know I can hear the birds and or see animals and you know and all that sort of stuff or. Yeah." (line 148)

While she still holds hopes of returning to long haul driving, that is not the end of Ella's ambition:

"But I know one day I'll get there. You know. And maybe one day I might actually be able to become an Operations Manager like other people and I don't think I'd be... I'd be having a fleet of women Drivers!" (line 182).

7.2.4 Analysis of Ella's Experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

Despite her early desire to work in accounting, and a history of working in other clerical environments, Ella considers that she has no choice but to be a Truck Driver. On six occasions she had the opportunity of reconsidering her career and on at least two of those occasions an injury had caused her to be unable to drive at all due to the severity of her pain. At no stage did she appear to contemplate any other occupation. The reasons she provided for returning to truck driving were confused. Almost within the same sentence she attributed her inability to work in another occupation to the fact that she is a Truck Driver, then immediately afterwards she attributed it either to lacking the "brains" to do anything else, or her preference for outdoor work.

Ella explicitly wants to be a Truck Driver. While it is clear that her occupational identity is the cause of her unwillingness to consider alternatives, she discounted her identity as a factor and gave preference to a personal lack of competence which does not withstand exposure to the fact that she previously had the ability to perform intermediate-level clerical work. It is irresistible to hypothesise that she would have been more willing to consider her occupational identity as a factor, and less willing to blame herself, if the concept that an occupational identity could represent a barrier to career redirection was available to her. Table 7.2 summarises Ella's super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.2: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Ella’s experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Rejection of a viable alternative	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation
Persistence despite pain	Willingness to persist with truck driving despite the pain that results
Competence	Transition influenced by perceptions of competence to do alternative work
The barrier of identity	An explicit statement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver was a barrier to change

7.2.5 Josh’s Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Josh was employed as an Owner/Operator, an occupation that he said defined him. In 2015, he sustained serious upper and lower limb injuries and was informed by his doctors that he would never drive again. He required a spinner knob on his car’s steering wheel and couldn’t control his foot. When describing his initial reaction, he used language that suggested something inside him was violently removed:

“Um, when ... when they said that I, um, wouldn’t be able to drive or, or drive a truck I was gutted. Um, I didn’t know what I could do with myself. ‘Cause I didn’t know anything, uh, I didn’t know anything else or I didn’t think I would be able to do anything else. Um, but, gutted would be the word.” (line 112)

He confessed to being “depressed” and “devastated” at the news however that feeling was short-lived:

“I came home (from the hospital), the ute that I’ve got out the front there, I was hopping in to see if I could control the accelerator, and when I found out I could, all that was my determination. And in sayin’ that, and when I got out of hospital, as I still had my licence, they hadn’t taken it off me, I jumped in the car and see if I could move it. And I had a manual ute at the same time and I drove around the block. And I realised that I could drive. Uh, and I think, like, I’ve driven with sprained ankles in the right ankle and that’s painful and you just adapt your driving.” (line 152)

Driving a car was one thing, driving a truck proved much more difficult and, after a failed attempt to drive his truck, and the loss of his truck licence, Josh sold it. However, in late 2019, Josh felt the lure of truck driving again. His persistence was the dominant theme:

“But after I sold that, sittin’ at home, you know, watching videos on YouTube, uh, talking with friends, it was still drivin’. Then I went, ‘nup, I’m changing it. I, I’ll push forward’. And, and in saying that...I was out at my mate’s out west, in the paddocks, jumping, that’s the first thing I did, jump in the truck to see if I could drive it. And each time I went there I got better and better.” (line 164)

In the meantime, his insurance company organised a vocational assessment which generated some vocational options which he conceded may have been viable, none of which impressed him, despite complications with his knee. In the end, his persistence over-ruled any attempt to pursue those options:

“... (the options) probably were viable, but, still, I was determined to get that licence back. Um, so much so that, um, it was more one of my legs couldn’t bend properly to lift it up and push it on the clutch. I had, um, I went from no arthritis to full blown arthritis in my knee within twelve months. I had had my knee replaced. Once I got my knee replaced it was easier to push the clutch down, I could bend knee a little bit further. Um, until I got to that stage, um, then I proceeded to move forward. Um, the insurance company didn’t wanna do, or, didn’t even pursue any other avenues or training or anything that was still, they were gonna wait to see if I got my truck licence back.” (line 180)

Josh was successful in regaining his truck licence and participated in a work trial. He confessed that the duties were difficult for him, with pain levels during the day reaching nine out of 10. Again, despite the extreme pain, he persisted:

“Oh, mainly just getting in and out, um, was, it, it was a hard one. Um, but even the right foot it, it’s not the same as what it used to be. I’m not quick at changin’ out of gears like I used to be. I’ve actually gotta concentrate more between the brake and the accelerator. Mind you, it is getting better. But there’s still that, when I hop in that first... even if I’ve driven it for three days straight, and then hopping in on the fourth day there’s still that hesitancy until I get, my foot gets... comfortable or I get comfortable with my foot. It was not like any other time prior to the accident where you just jump in and it was just, uh, second nature.” (line 185)

When questioned as to why he persisted with such determination to get back to driving, an activity which caused him pain, when he clearly had alternatives, Josh chose to ignore the obvious, and focus on getting back to work in general. Nevertheless, without work, he feels lost:

“I’d, I have made the comment, ‘I’d rather go to work in pain...than stay at home in pain’.” (line 193)

“That’s, and, without work I, yeah, I dunno if it’s a man thing or what it is. I’d just, I’m lost without it.” (line 199)

7.2.6 Analysis of Josh’s experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

Josh’s experience of feeling “gutted” when informed he could no longer drive provides a vivid description. It conjures a picture of the core of his identity being forcibly excised, analogous to no longer being. Josh is “lost” without his work. As the only work he will contemplate is driving a truck, he is lost without his identity as a Truck Driver.

Almost immediately after his initial recovery, and despite unambiguous medical opinion, Josh was determined to attempt to return to truck driving. He failed at his initial attempt but the attraction would not leave him. He is prepared to re-enter that occupation in the full knowledge that it will cause him severe pain, aware that his ability to drive is significantly impaired. It is difficult to conceive that any of the reasons Josh gave for the enjoyment he gained from driving, the sound, the speed, the autonomy, could possibly survive the effort now required just to operate his vehicle. When questioned on the remarkable extent of his persistence in returning to work as a Truck Driver, Josh pointed to his work ethic, and suggested the possibility that it was socially derived as part of the expectations placed on males. In doing so he gave no attribution to his attachment to his occupation, ignoring the fact that he had viable vocational options that he chose not to pursue. There is no question that he has a strong work ethic, but his single-mindedness was focused on the occupation of Truck Driver. Table 7.3 summarises Josh’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.3: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Josh’s experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Terminal condition	Description of biographical disruption as life ending
Rejection of a viable alternative	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation
Persistence despite pain	Willingness to persist with truck driving despite the pain that results
Lost	Description of change period as being lost

7.2.7 Darryl's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Darryl was a Truck Driver who was self-defined by his occupation, on a scale of 0 to 7, as a 12. Then he developed a tumour in his eye. Darryl's disconnection from his occupation was sudden and devastating. While the prospect of losing his eye did not particularly disturb him, he found it more difficult to come to terms with being unable to drive. He explicitly referred to those events as not only a loss of part of his identity, but also the end of his life:

"That was heartbreaking. My surgeon said 'I'll have to operate and take it out'.

Yeah move on, whatever. And then he said 'I've got to send a letter to the RTA to have your licence handed-over'. That's the worst thing he ever said. I was in tears. Because life as I knew it was over. No more driving. I had everything. I had good money, a good truck, the world was at my feet. Then it was all gone." (line 114)

"Well there was nothing. My surgeon said 'that's it', game over. I had nowhere to go. So I always say that I had a career-ending illness." (line 120)

"I had nothing. I had 2 days. Sum total of 2 days to realise it was all done. And that was the hardest, probably the hardest, worst 2 days of my life." (line 122)

"Because this is who you are. The licence is probably one of the... for an occupation, your drivers' licence is the most integral part of who you (are)." (line 118)

Darryl's loss of licence was a legal barrier to returning to driving. Had he retained it, it is highly likely he would have persisted:

"I mean I did everything in my power day in, day out, probably for 4 years straight. I would have rorted the tests for the licencing renewal. I had to have. There's no other explanation for it. I would have deliberately falsified information. Whether that be conscious or unconscious is anybody's guess, but I would have deliberately done that. My job was important to me. It wasn't a job, it was home." (line 124)

And that's probably still... Even to this day, I would like nothing more to walk out those doors and find the first damn truck I can have, get in it and disappear to Perth." (line 120)

What followed was a very difficult year for Darryl. Themes of a being lost, frustration, anxiety and futility arose from catastrophising language.

"My surgeon said in his great wisdom after I had my post-op visit 'you can do something'. Like what? That's my great question, 'what the hell can I do?'. See you go to these places... Job network people. And they said 'what can you do?' I said 'something'. They said 'what's that?'. I said 'I don't know'. I had nothing. Everything I did and everything I was, was gone." (line 134)

Darryl's early attempts at change were unsuccessful. He did not feel competent to work in occupations outside of the trucking industry: and could not contemplate returning to that industry unless it was as a Truck Driver:

"Really, I went and applied for jobs that I probably knew I shouldn't have. That I couldn't do. One of them in retail. I've been delivering retail for years, I can go and work in a supermarket, can't I? No, that doesn't work. I don't want anything to do with the industry. I want to make it all go... I think I'll find a new job. I applied for a job in a bank. What the hell do I know about a bank? Literally you're trying to separate and break yourself apart." (line 132)

"It wasn't the lack of options, it was just that... It was probably fear. Pure fear. You don't know what to do. Come back and do something. What?" (line 144)

Feelings of incompetence kept Darryl from working outside of the trucking industry, but it was his identity loss which self-limited his options within the industry as he attempted forcibly to reject his identity, and anything connected with it:

"I was literally looking for something outside the industry. I was trying to make that leap. Which I probably shouldn't have done. I mean, yes I was going to radiotherapy and all the other treatments and all that other stuff, but at the same time, I think my mind was actually saying 'I can't drive trucks anymore, so I can't work in the industry anymore, I have to do something else beyond'. There's not much out there beyond the industry that you can actually do. And I discovered that the hard way." (line 136)

"And it was just one of those things that was just making the physical separation from who I was to who I have to become. You make this little model in your mind, obviously this is what I did, I made this little picture, well... Being a truckie is no longer. I somehow have to accept that. So then working in the transport game, isn't that the same? Can't do that anymore. Can't work in a warehouse. Can't. Just a lot of 'can'ts'. Career path after career path just got shredded. I mean you say I've got experience and knowledge, I could have done just about anything in the industry, that I put my hand to, but, I just shredded them. I can't do that because of who I was. I can't work in a warehouse because I might meet somebody that I used to drive with. That was going to happen. What am I going to suddenly talk about what happened or what's going on or... So I just became this complete..." (line 138)

For Darryl, the process of change included overcoming the fear of not being able to drive trucks by acknowledging his competence and returning to what he knew. The connection between his new career and truck driving seems to have resulted in a successful change.

“It took me probably 12 months to get back to work. I didn’t know if I wanted to go back to the industry, because it was... I had nowhere to go. Close personal friends of mine actually said ‘can you come back?’. They actually begged. The knowledge I had, and the respect I had was worth going to fight for. And yes, I did come back to (company name) and I did go on... Eventually I rose up through the ranks and I left (same company name) when they bought a company, and I went and worked for another company and I rose higher and higher and higher.” (line 130)

“Well after Michael (surname) convinced me to return to (same company name), I mean Michael was an ex-Navy person who actually said ‘you’re not dead yet’. So I think that was probably the wake up call. ‘Come back and do something. I don’t know what, we’ll make shit up. We’ll find you a job’. After he convinced me to come back to the industry, the world is not a scary place, I can do what I’m good at. (line 150)

Darryl was one of the participants whose occupational identity was associated with the super-ordinate theme of ‘Purpose’, defined as possessing feelings of altruism arising from the social or economic importance of truck driving. This theme persisted and he found that his new career restored his sense of purpose and altruism. While he no longer had the autonomy he once enjoyed, he was able to exercise some power to control his work. Again, for Darryl, a connection between his former occupation and his new occupation assisted his change:

“Alright, I can’t drive anymore, but I can do something. I can do some good for the boys and girls on the road. And I look after them. And, after I started... Maybe after I realised that... So that took 12 months... At the end of that last 3 or 4 months, to realise that I can still do something in the industry. That started the next chapter of my career path. I remained in the industry and I always looked after the industry the world over. The (same company name) drivers used to love me, because I made sure that they could go from point A to point B. The Managers were all being morons. My first... When I started working with major accounts, I rang up my boss one day because he was arguing and I said ‘do you actually know the difference between the front and the back of a truck?’ (laughs). Just, bang! And then Simon in his great wisdom... Obviously he’s the Account Manager and he has all these

pressures, and then one day obviously he got a photo of the (company name) truck and he wrote 'front', big arrow, 'back', big arrow and sent it to me, but he just... That realisation I'm still who I am, I still know life on the road so I protected these people. Because I felt they needed protecting because the managers were dickheads. The same mindset, never changed." (line 150)

The change from working in a managerial position in the logistics industry, to Darryl's current occupation seems to have occurred comparatively seamlessly. The themes of competence and connection were again apparent, this time prompted by someone who believed in him:

"How the career in academia started I have no idea. It just sort of... I met a lovely lady who had faith in my ability and just said 'do you want to do this?'. It gives me... I think it gives me more freedom and actually now teaches me to actually, to look beyond... I haven't actually moved out of the industry, even my research is still within the industry. The last several years of research has always been trucks this, trucks that, truck drivers are still... I've got to write something about truck drivers. I haven't lost that basic... What's close in my heart and who I am. I don't lose that identity because things get published." (line 156)

Darryl's changes of career seem to have modified his occupational identity, but not fundamentally changed it, with confusing results.

"I always said, if anybody ever asked in the last 18 years, 'I was a former Truck Driver who retired'. That is my statement in life. For 18 years it's been the same thing. I mean look at my Twitter profile. 'A former Truckie'. It's all there. This constant message". (line 148)

"How I think I became from what was, to being that former Truckie to what is now, I've found that same link. I may not be this Truckie anymore, but who I am is my job." (line 8)

"It's still part of life and I've still got that connection to that, to these people and life on the road is still part of who I am." (line 4)

"That realisation I'm still who I am, I still know life on the road." (line 150)

"This is the all the stuff I still am. Now I've just moved a bit sideways, maybe I'm living at an upper level, but I still am... Now I'm an Academic Truckie." (line 156)

"What happens between the basic fundamental principles of the industry and what I'm doing is still the basic fundamental principles which is that freight goes from A to

B by something. And somebody out there is away from their family, whether it be overnight, or for two nights or six days... That's always that driving force. What I'm doing is still that, and I look at the world differently, but I still look at the same world." (line 158)

7.2.8 Analysis of Darryl's Experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

Darryl's experience of change is a process of accommodating the forced changes to his strong identification with being a Truck Driver. He was prepared to move on from the loss of his eye until he understood the full ramifications for his ability to hold a truck licence and drive a truck, which he explicitly stated removed part of his identity. His early attempts to abandon his Truck Driver identity by completely distancing himself from any work associated with it, failed. He was afraid of confronting reminders that he was no longer a Truck Driver. He was unable to conceive of any alternative career and rejected any alternative. It was only after a friend reminded him of his competence that he found an opportunity of keeping some vestige of his Truck Driver identity, and applying some of the features that connected him to it in alternative employment. He continues to need to be identified in some way as the Truck Driver he was through two changes of career. By doing so, he has removed his occupational identity as a barrier to moving forwards by keeping it and, in his words, moving "a bit sideways". Table 7.4 summarises Darryl's super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.4: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Darryl's experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Terminal condition	Description of biographical disruption as life ending
Lost	Description of change period as being lost
Rejection of a viable alternative	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation
Persistence despite pain	Willingness to persist with truck driving despite the pain that results
The barrier of identity	An explicit statement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver was a barrier to change
Competence	Transition influenced by perceptions of competence to do alternative work
Connections	Connection between new career and truck driving

Persistent occupational identity	Acknowledgement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver persists post-change
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7.2.9 Garth's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Garth started his working life as a Truck Driver's off-sider. His truck driving career was subject to several disruptions, at least two that were potentially fatal. At age 14 his first working day as a Truck Offsider could well have been his last. The truck he was in rolled and he was thrown through the windscreen and trapped underneath the wreckage.

“You would think that would have pretty much turned me off...it um, took me about 18 months to rehabilitate, we shifted from where we were... to (suburb name) in Melbourne so I could go to doctors and all that.” (line 47)

It was while he was recuperating that Garth first became involved in his second “love” which seemed to have facilitated his change from the career he had planned, possibly aided by his youth and an occupational identity that had yet to develop:

“And you know when I was sat home there for eighteen months I didn't even have a license back then, um, I got more involved in the greyhounds the orthopaedic bloke said the best thing you can do is, uh, get out and walk. And next time I saw him if I'm going to walk I might as well buy a greyhound and that's sort of how I kicked off” (line 65).

On recovery, Garth made up for lost time by working in three jobs, all in the trucking industry, all done despite having a ‘drop foot’ due to irreparable tendon damage. When asked whether he had considered any alternatives to the trucking industry he replied simply:

“Nah it was always going to be.” (line 59)

After he had saved enough money, Garth bought his family a farm and himself a truck.

Garth's next change was voluntary and, as discussed in Section 5.2, related to his identity as a family man:

“And anyway, I was still doing a bit of relief driving for (company name) overnight but cutting it down, cutting it down, because she (Garth's wife) said we're gonna have kids, I don't want a bloke who's away every week. And I said, no, fair enough. So I started off as a barman and then I got a job driving the truck for the hospital.” (line 89)

A year later, Garth experienced a third disruption when the seat in his delivery van collapsed causing him a severe lower back injury requiring surgery and resulting in chronic pain. He also experienced

psychological injury, apparently related to a generalised sense of loss that included the loss of his truck driving career which caused him to believe his life was over.

“Actually um, uh, the consensus even back then was that I'd probably never drive again.” (line 101)

“... I'd gone through counselling with the back as well, for depression because I thought everything was over, my life was over, I couldn't drive trucks, I couldn't do this. [sighs].” (line 161)

Implicit in his decision to make a change to a new career was his acknowledgement of intellectual competence:

“I'd sort of resigned to the fact that I better start using this (points to his head).”
(line 103)

After the intervention of an occupational rehabilitation service, Garth was offered retraining in management, which he accepted:

“...the incident at the hospital happened in 2001, I was operated on in 2003 and my oldest daughter was born in 2004. So I'm more worried at that time that I'm not going to have an income of any form if they sack me. You probably get your little bit of long service leave or whatever you want, and I'm going, 'I've got a baby coming you know?'. So, anything they put up in front of me (I was willing to take).” (line 111)

His work as a Manager at the hospital provided an income, and not much else. When asked whether his heart was in the job, his reply confirmed that his perceived status as head of his family assisted him to accept it:

“Not a hundred percent. As I say, what was going on there was the head, as I said, I had two loves, the greyhounds and the uh, trucks. and the family over everything. So I went through that period where I have to do this, to be the breadwinner, you know?” (line 149)

Disruption number four occurred when Garth's recovery proved to be incomplete, and his employer chose to terminate his employment.

“...and I was having troubles, and the most I got back to work was like twenty hours, I was trying to fit in a heap of work in twenty hours like doing rosters and ordering and everything and I was doing pretty good and plus I had the computer at home which let me do a little bit of work at home. So that was alright, I was falling into it but I think it was after 2009, the hospital just walked in and said... 'you're finished.

You're gone.'. And I'm going, 'you just put, six years into me. You know, you've sent me away to be trained.'. And at that stage I will admit I hadn't got back to forty hours a week, we were talking that may never have happen. And... it seemed like they had been waiting for something and uh, anyway, they just walked in and said 'you'll be finishing up on such and such', legally I think they had found whatever they had been looking for and they could do it. It certainly wasn't on work performance because I was doing everything I was required to be doing, so I finished up there.”
(line 149)

Despite now having qualifications and experience for work as a Manager, Garth rejected continuing with that occupation and returned to a combination of his three favoured roles, truck driving, his family and his greyhounds:

“When I finished up, I said, well I'll train a few greyhounds and do a little... see what else I can pick up. And I took the family away for a holiday... I said youse deserve this because you've been through the same as me, a little hell. Anyway my brother was working for a bloke who was working for my sister at that time too, and he was driving a truck out of Gundagai to Wodonga and loaded up, take it down, come home empty and do it again. Anyway, Brian rang me and he said, 'do you want to share it?'. Because he has a heap of grounds over there, he said you do one week and I'll do the next week. It's only a couple of 100ks down from Wodonga from here. And so I did that a lot, three months and uh, I was... that was good. I was getting through it, I thought by the end of the week my back would be playing up, but I'd have the next week off and I'd be able to recup(erate). It was like part time working you know, you'd split a day, 40 hours over two weeks it'd be 40 hours over two weeks. And anyway at the same time I had the team of dogs...” (line 149)

In part because of the doubts that he had at the sustainability of truck driving, and at the urging of his greyhound racing colleagues, Garth ran for election to the Greyhound Racing Board, and planned another voluntary career change:

“My numbers said I would win. So I said, the last month, I'll just, shore it all up. I'll finish up at transport, and then I'll uh... go into this job.” (line 151)

He was in the process of doing so when:

“(I was) coming home at 9 o'clock at night on a crystal clear night, I can still see it... I could see (another car) coming. And, I had my lights on high beam. It was a crystal

clear night you could see everything. And I saw him coming up at the exit there, at the T intersection at the road and I thought... he's gotta see me. Can't help but see me. So I dropped my lights as soon as he hit the intersection. And I got within a 150 metres, on comes a blinker and he cuts in front of me. And all I can say, is I remember, what I said umm.. I'll never see the kids again and shit this is going to hurt. So I hit the brakes and I could hear them screaming and the car was full of fuel... just destroyed the car.” (line 151)

The resulting neck and psychological injuries only further inspired Garth to persist with the implementation of his plans despite chronic pain:

“I was sent to Wodonga for pain management, I was locked up in the hospital there for three weeks...to learn to deal with pain without take oxycontin or anything like that you know. To control the pain killers so I didn't become an addict. Um. That had all worked. So when I had this car crash, and uh, the things that had happened on that night I had this overriding urge to keep going forward. I had a mission. I'd already been pushing to the election, made me promises how I'd work at the track and deal with the Board, 'cause this area is pretty well forgotten outside of Sydney. And uh, I won that, I went up, became the... became the (area) representative.” (line 163)

While his time on the Board brought results, Garth's physical injuries caused persisting difficulties:

“Well. I got that bad... board meetings, I had to go out and get under a blanket in the chairman's lounge to get into the dark because of the migraines (and) the pain.” (line 165)

As a result of the accident, and an unrelated family tragedy, he was also struggling psychologically:

“I've ended up, going back to counselling for depression and PTSD.” (line 165)

Eventually, it became too much and, despite successfully gaining another two years on the Board, Garth reluctantly resigned. He applied for a Disability Support Pension.

“They sent me to their doctors, they interviewed me, they said you'll never work again. You're finished. So here's a disability pension.” (line 175)

In 2019, Garth's usual doctor ceased treating him. He found a new doctor who claimed an operation could help and Garth was once again forced to struggle with an Insurer for the costs. Again his family role rescued him:

“I was that bad with pain and everything I didn't think I'd get there, I thought I'd neck myself beforehand, and those kids are the only thing that kept me here during that time I'll tell you.” (line 175)

The operation eventually proceeded:

“As soon I woke up this.. this incredible pain that I'd been going through for the last five years... It was gone. Now I've just got pain in the joint, I've got three bulged disks in my neck, nobody wants to operate on that because I'm too old...” (line 175)

Garth was able to return to some form of work and, predictably, he has returned to driving trucks. The work is part time and he shares it with his brother. He doesn't think he has any alternative:

“I know I couldn't work in an office again, I can't work around a lot of people. Um, you can see where we live (on a farm property). Um, I've got to go to Sydney again next week...(It's) not until next Wednesday and I'm already getting worked up about it. I can't stand the flight, I can't stand being in Sydney. It smothers me. You know? So it sends me, pretty hyped up by next Wednesday. I'll be pretty edgy by the time I get there, like I was a month ago.” (line 179)

7.2.10 Analysis of Garth's Experience of Occupational Change

In Chapter 6, Garth was one of the participants who were included in a super-ordinate theme entitled 'Intersectional identity', defined as having an occupational identity inter-related with another type of identity. His identity as a Truck Driver co-existed with his role identities (as defined in Chapter 4) as a family man and a greyhound enthusiast. This complex of identities appears to have served him well.

Garth's first change occurred after recovering from an injury he sustained on his first day of work. As he was only just a teenager, his identity was probably a work-in-progress, being shaped by his father's involvement in trucks. While recovering from his first serious injury, he developed an interest in greyhounds, shaped this time by his mother, but his next experience of paid work was a return to the trucking industry. Given he continued to experience mobility restrictions as a result of the accident, pursuit of a sedentary career would probably have been more suitable, however Garth seemed to consider working with trucks to be inevitable. As his education was neglected in favour of working with trucks, at that stage he probably didn't have many alternatives.

After bowing to that perceived inevitability, Garth's next change was voluntary, and in response to his impending role change from Truck Driver to parent. While he did not report any difficulty in achieving that change, it is interesting to note that he eventually wound up back driving a truck, albeit a delivery truck. Nevertheless, his willingness to abandon an occupation which represented the fulfilment of a goal he had desired since childhood, in favour of any other job that allowed him to devote time to parenthood, indicates that his attachment to Truck Driving, although strong, was not immutable.

Garth's change from delivery driving to a managerial position was not planned and did not proceed smoothly. The circumstances which caused the change included the realisation that he would be unable ever to return to work as a Driver, but that was not the only loss he felt. Nevertheless, this realisation at least contributed to a psychological injury sufficiently significant to require treatment. Garth negotiated the change to work as a Manager as it allowed him to continue his role as family breadwinner.

Garth did not find work as a Manager fulfilling, although he dedicated himself to it in a manner consistent with his strong work ethic. When the position was removed and his employment terminated, Garth fell back on his three mainstays, he took his family on a holiday, he trained his greyhounds, and he returned temporarily to truck driving. The availability of those familiar, and preferred, roles allowed his next change to proceed, and he readied himself for a new role as a Sports Administrator in recognition of the unsuitability of work as a Truck Driver. With a tragic irony, truck driving did not release him without a painful farewell.

Committed, Garth accepted his new role and, typically, applied himself to it diligently, sustaining the duties for an extended period despite the severity of his symptoms. Inevitably those symptoms prevailed, and he made a change, with a degree of acceptance, to a disabled role.

Immediately prior to our interview, after receiving treatment that relieved at least some of his symptoms, Garth re-commenced driving a truck. He described the feeling as one of comfortable familiarity, and it gave him a sense of belonging. His role as a parent is becoming less salient as his daughters mature which places greater importance for his identity on his work and it would be interesting to see whether his Likert self-rating ever returns to seven. Table 7.5 summarises Garth's super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.5: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Garth's experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Voluntary change	Transition to a new career made without an immediate necessity
Terminal condition	Description of biographical disruption as life ending
Rejection of a viable alternative	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation

Persistence despite pain	Willingness to persist with truck driving despite the pain that results
Intersectional identity	The influence of having more than one significant identity on career change

7.2.11 Arthur's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Arthur had been working for almost 30 years as a Truck Driver and, despite the hardship and deprivation he acknowledges, he never wanted to do any other work. Arthur's career as a Truck Driver involved repeated exposure to accidents. Some he survived unscathed; some involved the injury or death of others; one almost ended his career and another did.

Arthur described the risks associated with his work as inevitable:

“There are days that we had, guaranteed you know, you'll come along a car accident or a fatality, um, yeah but it's in our nature to stop and help.” (line 84)

“It sounds stupid, but you're sort of pushed to do overnight shuttles. I did overnight shuttles for years... (it's) very deadly. It's, yeah. It's draining on the body. Mistakes (are) gonna happen.” (lines 102 and 104)

“...and sadly you know, look at our reports now. Fatalities all the time. It's gotta stop.” (line 110)

“I mean, we know this industry. And you ask any of the old school drivers and we'll all say the same thing. We're getting sick and tired of all these guys being killed out there.” (line 191)

Arthur experienced near-misses one of which, in the context of what was to happen, is significant:

“(A) B-double (truck stopped suddenly) in front of me and (me and a third truck) stopped. Both our prime movers were just dangling over a cliff. And I remember the cops showed up and yeah, they were just dumbfounded about how the hell we stopped. And, uh, it was just reaction.” (line 211)

In 2014, Arthur's competence as a Driver again served him well, presaging later events, but this time he could not escape injury:

“I remember everything about my truck crash. You know, unfortunately again it's an innocent person in the wrong spot at the wrong time. I was coming, going south. I was following a NQX Truck, B-double, and he's yanked his trailers when the lane's going to two lanes to one, coming over a bridge, he's yanked his trailers, and I thought, 'oh, I'm not gonna overtake you'. But he was avoiding a trailer sitting on the highway. So, by the time I got to it, it was too late. So, but again it comes down to reaction. Uh, my reactions saved my life and saved a few other lives. So, I

remember when the police come up to me in hospital and ask me what happened and how I did it, and uh, I remember looking at the cop's face, he was dumbfounded, and I explained to him I was on the accelerator with my trailer brakes on. I released my safety belt." (line 201)

Arthur suffered facial injuries but his most significant injury was psychological:

"And yeah, it rocked me. (I) didn't think I would drive trucks again. Um, but yeah. I did. I couldn't do Brisbane (to) Sydney. I couldn't go past my crash site. So, sadly I was forced to do it one day. And so, the only thing I knew what to do was actually stop at my crash site... And yeah, it was, I think, the best thing I ever did" (lines 197 and 199).

In 2017 Arthur was riding his motorcycle when his career as a Truck Driver did finally end:

"Due to some lowlife guy on the highway, who threw a smoke at my face when I was on my bike, I lost my legs. So, uh, (I) had to relearn life." (line 14)

"...so I couldn't work for two years. (I had) thirty-two operations." (line 166)

Again, Arthur experienced both physical and psychological injury. As therapy, he provided himself with incentives. Interestingly, one of those incentives was central to another part of his identity, that of a race car driver, not a Truck Driver:

"So I was told I would never work again. I was in a wheelchair and hated it. Absolutely hated it with a passion. So, I went out and bought a Harley and had it sitting in my back patio. So, it was my incentive to learn to walk and to have a life again. (I) had my race car sitting there, that was my other incentive. It still comes down to, I've lost 70% feeling from there down." (line 174)

After this disruption, Arthur was lost. He did not feel competent to do any other work and considered his life was over:

"To be honest, yeah, I was quite suicidal for a long time... because I didn't know anything else... It's the only thing I've ever done. (I've) always been a driver... So yeah, all I've ever known was driving. And then just by some person's reckless movement, yeah. Um...(I) didn't know what to do." (lines 176, 178 and 180)

Arthur's reaction to his injuries included being jealous of people who could still drive trucks:

"Yeah. It is, it's something I think every day. I dunno... It's like a fireman. You take a fireman away from a fire, he's lost. Basically it's like what I went through. You're someone who walks every day and you lose your legs; you lose your spinal cord. You've gotta learn anew. And, um, yeah, the battle we have mentally. Yeah, you feel

inadequate. Yeah, and you see people driving. And I've gotta admit, when my wife used to take me out in the car, um, and I see trucks, I used to get pissed off. Yeah, it's... You're just absolutely devastated. I don't know how to explain it." (line 184)

Arthur had the opportunity of returning to work as a Truck Driver. He declined because he did not feel competent to react in an emergency:

"I have had... two old companies ring me up and offer to buy me a brand-new truck and put hand controls on my truck to get me in. Sadly, it was a hard decision to say no... I learnt to drive with my feet. And so, my decision came down to, if someone cut me off, my natural reaction is to use my legs to avoid the situation. And to retrain yourself to do it from hand control: not worth the risk... My reactions would be totally different. I couldn't face that. So, it was heart wrenching" (lines 166, 168 and 170)

"Too many people have been killed out there, and I don't want to be a cause of that." (line 174)

Instead, Arthur does a job he dislikes, putting up with it because he can still contribute to his occupation and retain some connection to his former identity.

"I had lost my mind. Two years not working. Sitting in four walls for two years was not a good thing and so yeah, the only thing I knew is transport. So, I did this. I still regret what I'm doing. I'm not an office person. (I) don't mind doing paperwork, as long as it's logbook or, you know, (consignment) notes. But I still, I still have battles. But the only thing what gets me through now is knowing that I'm there to support the guys who can do their job, and making sure the right guys are doing the right jobs." (line 186)

Although Arthur will not be returning to work as a Truck Driver, during our interview he often alternated from the past tense to the present tense. For example, when asked to put himself into the hypothetical social situation, he replied:

"Um, well, I was an interstate driver for 28 years, so... I drove road trains, B-doubles, uh and race cars for 26 years." (lines 10 & 12)

"My life had always been driving, um yeah, so everything I did in life, be it making the money or recreational was driving." (line 24)

However, he frequently lapsed into the present tense:

"The...shortest trip I would rather (do), would be, uh, Brisbane to Melbourne. I can handle that." (line 112)

Although he works in an office, he still includes himself when describing Truck Drivers:

“We are normal human beings, it just that we do something different. Some people prefer to work in an office. They are passionate about it. We’re the same.” (line 132)

7.2.12 Analysis of Arthur’s Experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

Arthur has twice been confronted with career disruption and has many more times been involved in incidents which must have demonstrated the possibility of disruption. On the first occasion he managed the psychological trauma of a potentially fatal accident, initially by avoidance, and then by confronting the trauma and desensitising himself. Given his devotion to his occupation, his determination does not surprise. His attachment formed as a child and has been a part of his identity for his entire working life. He knew no other work and felt he had limited alternatives.

Shortly after achieving his recovery, he sustained another, more serious injury. He assisted his own recovery by providing incentives for himself to return to another part of his identity, that of a driver. Achieving the ability to drive restored that part of his identity.

Arthur has the opportunity of leaving a job he does not like, and returning to Truck Driving. His decision not to is based on his perception that he would not be able to control a truck safely. It is likely that his near-misses, and his first accident, have caused him to be more cautious than otherwise he would, aware of the need to react swiftly, and of his lack of competence to do so. In other circumstances he might have been more receptive to returning to truck driving.

Currently Arthur’s attachment to truck driving, and to a large extent his mental health, is maintained through the connection his recruitment job provides. He continues to lament not being a Truck Driver and, in unguarded moments, still includes himself as part of that occupation. His change to a different identity is incomplete after several years of not being a Truck Driver. Table 7.6 summarises Arthur’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.6: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Arthur’s experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Terminal condition	Description of biographical disruption as life ending
Lost	Description of change period as being lost
Competence	Transition influenced by perceptions of competence to do alternative work

Connections	Connection between new career and truck driving
Intersectional identity	The influence of having more than one significant identity on career change

7.2.13 Andrew's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Andrew's association with truck driving developed early and was persistently in the background of his life however his identity as a Truck Driver took many years to solidify. After a long period of service in the Navy, which included gaining a truck licence, he voluntarily discharged. That process involved career counselling. He rejected truck driving as a career and instead ended up studying to be a Registered Nurse. His identification with truck driving probably would not have eventuated had he been able to continue to work as a Nurse. A skin condition prevented him from working directly with patients, and a change to a managerial position did not survive a clash with upper management. After this "meltdown", Andrew commenced his truck driving career with a truck he bought from a patient and developed it into a thriving business as the owner of seven trucks:

"Well, I drove a bit myself but I ended up in the office, managing my business, and drove every chance I could I get, but... I did that basically for 7 years." (line 177)

A marriage break-up and an acrimonious divorce resulted in a total disruption of that business:

"The business was dissolved because that was what had to happen. And I was left with one truck, as a single owner/driver again. But my heart wasn't in it. There was nothing left to work for." (line 197)

"Well, I started drinking and... Well, I ended up... Ended up... To the point where I was... Not working because I was unable to... And I decided that it was time for me to get rid of the truck, which I did." (line 205)

Still experiencing the emotional pain of his divorce, financial circumstances forced Andrew back to work:

"So, I had to make some money somehow... So, I went to work for the Rural and Remote Nursing Programme in Qld and they would let me practice, so I went out and worked on Aboriginal communities as a Practice Nurse." (line 209)

"Oh yeah, but I was single, again, smoking like a train, so what was happening was I was going to work... This is a terrible thing really. You may well understand, you may not. I was really self-destructive. So if... someone wanted to argue the point with me I was more than happy. I'd argue the point about 2 flies going up the wall. Get into piss-fights no trouble at all. Drinking too much, not to the point where I was incapable of doing anything, but doing risky things... Risky sexual behaviour. (If) it involved a bit of risk and adrenalin rush, I was into it." (lines 211 and 213)

Asked whether he missed truck driving, Andrew was ambivalent:

“Yeah, I did. But at the same time, I did and I didn’t. I was pretty badly burnt. By a lot of things. Very, very badly burnt by a lot of things.” (line 215)

After a year in the outback, a friend contacted Andrew and convinced him to return. He secured another managerial position at a private hospital near Sydney. It didn’t last:

“(I was there) 3 or 4 months before I pulled the pin. I didn’t like it. I was back in the same... I was back in the same job that I’d left.” (line 217)

“And I walked out into the park over the road from the hospital and I was that lost. I’d just resigned upstairs. I just had a big argument with the senior management about some things that was supposed to happen and that I’d already said were going to happen and then was told that it couldn’t happen and I’d been undermined by someone yet again and I wanted their head on a plate, and basically that’s it for me. I’ve done this before. I’ve had enough of this shit. I’m not going to go down this road again. And I couldn’t see anywhere else good to go.” (line 221)

Less than a week later, Andrew was back driving trucks.

Andrew worked for a former employer in Adelaide for about nine months, and then moved back to Sydney to be with his new spouse, driving for a different employer. His life was back on track. Two years later, aged in his early 50s, he had a heart attack.

“And they didn’t respond to that very well and they cut me loose, basically.” (line 233)

This prompted Andrew to consider his alternatives, and reject them:

“Because I was really worried... that I wouldn’t be able to go back to nursing, uh to truck driving, and I had to entertain the ideas that, you know, what do you do? You know... I’m older now, so, in a lot of ways... To go and do something new, and be trained now to do something new, I think it would be pretty... A bit of a stretch... I could... Look there would be doors open to me, inasmuch as I could go and do an Allocator role or some sort of office job related to trucking, maybe, if I... Work in a yard or something like that, but there are a lot of problems with that. I wouldn’t earn the level of income I’m used to for a start. That would be the first problem. The second problem would be... That I wouldn’t be happy doing it.” (line 241)

Having dismissed the alternatives, Andrew again returned to driving.

Andrew spoke highly of his employer, and the conditions of work, but acknowledged the risks involved:

“We cart dangerous goods, chemicals, and I drive chemical tankers, so we... If I make a mistake, someone’s gonna get hurt, at least, maybe die. Probably die, and it will be on the news.” (line 141)

Approximately two years ago, Andrew experienced a return of heart symptoms which he concealed:

“I knew that that heart attack was coming 3 weeks before I had it... I’d been snorting away at the Nitrolingual and trying to get it under control, trying to slow down...Didn’t say anything to anyone... (It) never crossed my mind.” (line 265, 267, 271 and 273)

He rationalised his silence by saying he had doubts about what the symptoms were telling him:

“I didn’t realise that it was as serious as it was. Righto. I, you know what it’s like as you get older, everytime you move, if you sleep funny you hurt yourself... Right, and I viewed this in the same way. And because it’s not something that’s there all the time, it’s not like a pulled muscle, it’s not like, you know it’s something that’s a little bit of a sharp stab when you push yourself too hard. That’s the limit.” (line 277)

But it wasn’t a pulled muscle, or indigestion:

“I’m sitting in the cab of the truck with an empty chemical tanker sitting behind me... Having chest pain, knowing what it is. I’ve had this feeling before. I’d had a few squirts of the Nitrolingual. I know as soon as I make the phone call, it’s going to be bigger than Ben Hur. Right? Here am I sitting a thousand km away from our nearest depot, or more, there’s not another company truck within a thousand km of me, all my gear is in this truck that’s parked on the side of the highway, it’s a chemical tanker, it’s got hydrochloric acid written all over it, as soon as I ring 000 for an ambulance I’m going to have to tell them that, right? And it’s going to be bigger than Ben Hur. And what happens if it’s just indigestion?” (line 253)

He considered it might be better to do nothing and die:

“You know that straight away, you know, whatever you’ve got a certain amount of sick pay, you’ve got about, you know you’ve got a certain amount of holiday pay, you’ve got a certain amount of whatever you’ve got resources available to you, the bills don’t stop... This is all the shit that’s going around in your head, and I’m sitting there going (laughs). You know, the spray is not working the way it should be... It’s the... It’s actually to me it’s a case of, you know... Or just do I sit here and die?” (lines 255, 257 and 259)

Undeterred by his second heart attack, and the possible consequences, Andrew returned to transporting chemicals, persisting with an occupation that had nearly resulted in a catastrophe:

“I was back at work in 5 weeks. And that was very due to the company I work for. And not the fact that they pushed me back into work... It was that the boss did everything to facilitate me coming back to work. To the point where he had me in the office for a couple of weeks. It took me... As soon as I was able to... As soon as I was happy... I go stir crazy if I get stuck (away from work).” (line 235)

At the time of our interview, Andrew was due to visit his Cardiologist for a clearance to continue driving:

“There are a whole heap of things that effect whether I’m allowed to drive a truck or not. Right? So as I get older, and, it’s different... The return to work options for someone that’s 30 years old, who has a different level of physical ability to someone as they get older, they’re... It’s a sliding scale. I know a guy who is a driver who has only got one leg. He’s had a below knee amputation, and he still drives, right? I know a guy that drives that has had a full arm amputation on the left side. Still drives. I know a guy with one eye who drives. I know a guy... And there are diabetics all over the place who drive. But you have to meet the medical requirements, and as you get older, that becomes harder and harder. So, for me now, my next challenge to continue driving is going to be, you know in November when I’ve got to go back to the Cardiologist and have stress test. And if I have a negative stress test, and I can convince the cardiac guy that I’m not going to fall in a heap, then he’ll sign off on me for another 12 months and I can go (sighs). And I can continue driving. But if... I’d be lying to you if I said, that that’s not on my mind now... Because what happens if he says ‘you can’t drive mate, sorry’” (line 319 and 321)

As for his options:

“And having talked to you, I really don’t think I could do anything else, right now. Because it all becomes clear.” (line 317)

7.2.14 Analysis of Andrew’s Experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

Andrew has made several career changes. His change from the Navy was seamless as he felt ready for the next stage of his life, and he had professional assistance with career re-direction. His change from Nurse to a managerial position in the hospital had a less successful outcome but the experience itself, forced though it was because of a medical condition, was not troubled and his occupational

identity as a Nurse does not seem to have been a barrier. The change from Manager to Truck Driver was unplanned however it involved moving from a job that was intolerably stressful, to one that was familiar and offered refuge. Subsequent changes were negotiated with a higher degree of complexity.

After his marital breakdown Andrew's interest in continuing to drive lost all meaning for him. In his own words, he self-destructed. He could have continued to drive but destroyed the means to do so by selling his remaining truck and the destruction of his 'self' included the destruction of his Truck Driver identity. His risk-taking behaviour can be interpreted as his desire to complete the annihilation of that 'self'. His change to work as a remote area Practice Nurse was forced by financial necessity. He did not want to work, and the change can be seen as a compromise, a regression in place of disappearance, to be while no longer being. Fortunately, he failed, or was rescued before he succeeded.

Andrew's change back to a managerial position was born of desperation and was probably doomed, given his fragile mental health. The change back to truck driving was a return to the familiar, and a refuge, and the re-adoption of his identity as a Truck Driver completed the restoration of his selfhood.

Since he resumed working as a Truck Driver, Andrew has had reason to reconsider his career. Returning to work after his first heart attack was made difficult by his employer's attitude to his medical condition. While the circumstances surrounding that condition are unknown, in hindsight, changing occupations seems a very sensible option. Andrew confirmed that the prospect of being unable to drive trucks caused him concern, and conceded that he could have worked as a Truck Allocator. His reasons for not changing careers were partly financial, but also because he "wouldn't be happy".

Rather than abandon truck driving, Andrew resumed driving for a different employer. The position he accepted involved a high level of risk of which he was fully aware. His employer seems to have taken every precaution to ensure his drivers worked safely, but does not seem to have been overly concerned regarding Andrew's health status. This may have been a result of Andrew downplaying its significance, although subsequent events seem to indicate that the employer does not regard the prospect of a repeat attack as significant.

Andrew's description of the period prior to his second heart attack is contradictory. On the one hand he advised that he "knew" he was going to have another attack. On the other he recalls questioning

his symptoms and attributing them to the effects of age. The latter explanation can confidently be interpreted as denial. Even as he was having his second attack, he considered the possibility that he was experiencing indigestion. The strength of this denial was such that he continued to engage in work activities that he knew involved potentially catastrophic consequences.

The role Andrew’s occupational identity as a Truck Driver played in this denial must be examined. After his first attack, Andrew had conceded he had options for alternative employment. When he began experiencing symptoms prior to his second attack, and on one level knew he was going to have it, the rational course of action to take would have been to re-visit those alternatives considering the consequences of not doing so. The rational choice would have been to avoid those consequences by seeking different employment despite a loss of income. That choice would not have made Andrew “happy”. He would not have been satisfied with working in a different occupation. Clearly, his occupational identity played some part in his inability to make that change.

If Andrew’s cardiologist prohibits a return to driving, he will have no alternative but to make that change. Having considered during our interview the role his occupational identity has played in his past decisions, Andrew now understands the barrier it represents. He does not feel able to overcome that barrier. Assisting Andrew to make a change to a new occupation should consequently involve challenging that belief, perhaps by reminding him of his past ability to move from one occupational identity to another. Table 7.7 summarises Andrew’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.7: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Andrew’s experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Voluntary change	Transition to a new career made without an immediate necessity
Terminal condition	Description of biographical disruption as life ending
Lost	Description of change period as being lost
Rejection of a viable alternative	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation
Persistence despite pain	Willingness to persist with truck driving despite the pain that results
The barrier of identity	An explicit statement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver was a barrier to change

7.2.15 Simon's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Simon had wanted to be a Truck Driver from an early age and realised his intention when he started work in that occupation when 18 years old. He subsequently worked as a Truck Driver for over 20 years. While he continues to identify with truck driving, he no longer works as a Truck Driver and has successfully made the change to the different, though not entirely dissimilar, occupation of Mobile Plant Operator.

After leaving school, Simon's vocational alternatives were limited by economic conditions, and his academic prowess. He had wanted to enter a trade, but only as a stable foundation which would allow him to drive trucks. He worked where he could, and his change to work as a Truck Driver came along fortuitously.

"I come out of school at a pretty bad time... There wasn't too many apprenticeships around or anything like that, and the one's that got the apprenticeships were more educated ones" (line 39)

"Even to the extent that, where you'd done work experience, I'd done work experience as an apprentice Truck Mechanic but... By the time I got to leave school, another 3 months, that place had closed down. They were going to offer me a job, and they ended up closing down." (line 49)

Yeah, you know, they could pick the students with the A and Bs, rather than the D and Es, and down the paddock. They had the cream of the crop. There wasn't options there but I suppose I started in, I went off into lawn mower mechanics for a couple of years... Um... 'Til I was old enough to... The building industry started to pick up, and me mate's dad offered me a job, you know, like a building supply company, and that led to driving trucks so (I) started off in smaller trucks" (line 41)

Since that time, when making the change from Truck Driver to Owner/Operator, Simon considered alternative occupations, but rejected them all because they were not congruent with who he was:

"I did at one stage... But, I... Yeah... I didn't know which way I'd want to go... I went and applied for a couple of jobs there, probably between being a company driver before becoming an owner driver. And... They were just internal jobs with a big company that I was working for at the time. But it just didn't feel right... It just... I couldn't see meself, kind of, just dressed neat and tidy... It just wasn't me." (line 69)

"At one stage it was mentioned, oh well, they're looking for someone in allocations, that was in the early days when I was humming and haaing, but I don't know whether I could stand there, you've got a boss at this shoulder, you've got a telephone here, you've got a radio with all these drivers calling you wanting to know

what they're doing next... I'm thinking "nah, that wouldn't be for me". The customer on the phone saying "I want it now!". Don't know whether I could deal with that, but... Yeah, and then you've got mechanics saying "oh, that truck's broken down, can't fix that until then..", you know it's... Yeah, I suppose you work with the processes you've got. Yeah, it's just so easy to sitting behind the wheel of a truck." (line 164).

The impetus for Simon's change to his new occupation was his wife's response to the stresses he experienced running his business, his sense of obligation as a parent, a change in the organisation he worked with, and his failing health:

"About the age of 45, the wife was at me, she said 'you're going to end up in the grave' because we religiously do our 65 to 75 hours a week, week in, week out, and that's... Still go in Sunday morning and wash or do anything that hadn't been done by Saturday afternoon... And, it was wearing me down. I was missing out on a lot of things that the kids were doing. The wife, she'd kind of... The kids probably grew up thinking mum's a single mum. You know, dad was gone early in the morning, got home late at night and grumpy and um.... Yeah, so she kind of rode me for a little while about 'you need to slow down, it's not heading anywhere, OK we're earning reasonably good money'. It was up and down at that stage, but that's... Yes, and that's where I started to look around and... I kind of made a decision, 'yeah, she's right' (line 63)

"Yeah, that helped make a decision. I got a bad vibe out of this one particular Manager. Not from a face to face thing. It was something that happened in a meeting and I thought "I don't like you" and me gut feeling was right. He was an absolute arsehole, and he's just proved it again. Because, he's still in the same position and he's just put the knife through, probably, I think it's about a dozen guys that I used to work with out of Sydney." (line 67)

Simon expressed no regrets regarding his career change and, having made the change from Truck Driver, doesn't think he would find any future change difficult:

"Oh, I think I could adjust to something else. Now, that I've gone from 100% Truck Driver to operating machines, loaders and excavators and that so, even though I still probably can do a 60 something hour week, it's shared with different... a bit of

variety, which I suppose, if something happened and I couldn't sit down, day in, day out, to do that well." (line 142)

"I think if I had to, push come to shove, you know I could, I think I could adjust to what needed to be. At the end of the day, it's about putting food on the table for the family and, if I couldn't get behind the wheel of a truck or a machine, you know, there would be something that I could turn my hand to." (line 73)

"Sit down and do a couple of courses, you know to get me head around... Probably, not the best educated person... I suppose if you do things routine enough, I kind of get me head around things... Where some people can just go 'bing, I can see that', especially with any paperwork or anything like that, I'd rather go and dig hole, or change a tyre than sit down and look at paperwork, but if it's got to be done, it's got to be done so..." (line 79)

7.2.16 Analysis of Simon's Experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes
 Faced with failing health and a changing work environment, and at the urging of his wife, Simon enacted a planned career redirection. While that change appears to have been achieved without distress, it should be remembered that he still drives a truck to convey his earthmoving equipment. He still retains an interest in trucks and continues to associate with Truck Drivers. It could be argued that Simon's role identity as a husband and father assisted in making that change by providing him with a valued alternative role. As this role had not persuaded Simon from ceasing work as a Truck Driver at any time in the past, the evidence suggests it can be dismissed as a significant factor.

Having made the change, at least partially, from Truck Driver, Simon now feels capable of changing careers again, should the need arise. The prospect of retraining does not concern him despite not having attended formal education or training since he was a teenager. While he has not dispensed entirely with his occupational identity as a Truck Driver, he has weakened it sufficiently to allow consideration of further change. Table 7.8 summarises Simon's super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.8: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Simon's experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Voluntary change	Transition to a new career made without an immediate necessity
Rejection of a viable alternative	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation

The barrier of identity	An explicit statement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver was a barrier to change
Connections	Connection between new career and truck driving

7.2.17 Shirley's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Shirley was 'born in a truck' and had always wanted to work as a Truck Driver. Despite her parents' attempts to prevent her doing so, she proudly managed to achieve her goal independent of her family's influence within the industry. She had a very strong identification with her occupation and, in particular, her 10 year history of work as a Truck Driver driving road trains in the outback.

Shirley's commitment to truck driving was total:

"...because I was only saying this to my son the other day, actually, if you'd asked me 25 years ago would I have ever got out of the industry, would I have ever walked away from it, (I would have said) 'you're an idiot! No way! I'll die doing this!'" (line 88)

Shirley's commitment to her career as a Truck Driver ended due to someone else's tragic biographical disruption:

"If I really had to bring it down, I, that's what I did for 33, 34 years, until my father-in-law was killed, that's 22 years ago... And I actually lost my nerve, 'cause he was run off the road at night-time and I lost my nerve and, I was a dangerous driver and that's why I gave it away." (line 72)

"Oh, it was about... he was 27th of May and I'd given it all up by the beginning of September... My circumstances changed. I got that phone call that night about my father-in-law... 'Cause I was not only a danger to myself but to others because I couldn't handle night-time driving anymore." (lines 88 and 90)

Shirley's change to her new career was delayed:

"Oh, I was lost for a long time. I ended up moving back to Toowoomba, a bit closer to, because I'm very close to my mother-in-law. And, I was lost. I honestly did not know how or where or what." (line 92)

"So, there was, what, probably a good 6, 7, 8 months of just, you know. Didn't know (what to do)." (line 94)

Her change started by chance:

“I just saw something about a course that was at the time Assistant-in-Nursing entry, and it was working with aged care. And I’ve also had a bit of an affinity with working with elderly people. Started doing that, and I seemed to, you know, slip into it...”

(line 92)

“When I look back, probably, I did stumble into it... (It) definitely wasn’t planned. If I wanted to be a Nurse, I would have done that younger out of school, sort of thing.”

(lines 96 and 98)

The change was initially unsatisfying, and Shirley had trouble settling into her new career. She drifted from position to position for 12 years until she found what she was looking for:

“...and I moved back down here permanently in 2010... and I stumbled into nursing agency work. And I loved the challenge of being in... I’d only do night shift. And that was the legacy from truck driving, because I loved driving at night, (the) peace (and) quiet. And I did, I was with this nursing agency for 5 and a half years. And I would do night shift and I liked the challenge of being in a different place. I could be sent into it from Robina, to Redcliff to Ipswich to everywhere in-between. Different facility, hospital, it was all general nursing and that sort of, yeah. So, it, yeah, towards the end I got a real passion out of it.” (line 100)

“I can remember with my nursing, I liked the fact that, of driving to it and then having that driving, you know, after a shift... that was sort of my way of relaxing before I went home. Um, still to this day I like just getting into my car with my music and driving somewhere.” (line 104)

Now retired from being a Nurse, Shirley has returned to being heavily involved with trucking:

“It was in February last year, I started a Facebook page called Truck Dash Cams Australia, which is an industry specific page for guys and gals to post their dash-cam footage.” (line 82)

“And I’ve got 4000 members, it’s a closed group. Very hard to get into it unless I know who you are, or you’ve given me your credentials. So, I still follow a lot, in the background, I’m quite an advocate.” (line 86).

“And I’m still at my happiest, you know, being in probably that sort of environment, being in a transport or trucking yard, or being in a pub with a bunch of other drivers.” (line 126)

“And I’m very, very proud of my eldest son and what he does... Yeah (he’s a) road train (driver). Fourth generation... He’s got kids and the eldest, she likes going in the truck, so what will be, will be.” (lines 184 and 186)

“It’s just never, ever leaves you... It’ll never, ever leave.” (line 182)

7.2.18 Analysis of Shirley’s Experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

Shirley expected to die a Truck Driver. When she found, after the death of her father-in-law, that she could no longer face night-driving she was forced to stop. She seems not to have considered changing the type of truck driving she did. As noted in Section 5.2, her occupational identity was specific to driving road trains, and she was disdainful of other types of truck driving. Instead of returning to work as a ‘lesser’ Truck Driver, what followed was a period of disorientation, which was probably accompanied by feelings of grief and loss over the death of her father-in-law, but which continued even after she commenced her career redirection into nursing.

It was not until she commenced agency nursing that she found a level of satisfaction with her work and developed a passion for it. It is no coincidence that this passion was ignited by the nature of this work, which connected her with the enjoyment she once gained as a road train driver, long distance driving at night. The return of her enjoyment from night driving seems to have come too late for her to consider a return to road train driving.

Shirley recently retired from work as a Nurse. Since that time she has resumed her involvement in truck driving, as if the intervening period as a Nurse was insignificant. Her advocacy has enabled her to reconnect with Truck Drivers and it appears that she has replaced an occupational identity with a role identity. Her pride in her son, and hopes for her grand-daughter, allow her a vicarious attachment to her former identity, which will never, ever leave. Table 7.9 summarises Shirley’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.9: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Shirley’s experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Lost	Description of change period as being lost
Connections	Connection between new career and truck driving
Persistent occupational identity	Acknowledgement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver persists post-change

7.2.19 Dean's Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

After an unsuccessful early career as a Butcher, Dean started driving trucks at 20 years of age. Over the ensuing 40 years he had considered alternative work, but always came back to truck driving. In 2016 he travelled to the Philippines for 6 weeks to marry a second time. He had bought a farm property and was living in a caravan while his house was being built. He brought his partner back to Australia and resumed Truck Driving. Shortly afterwards he experienced a cerebrovascular episode and spent several weeks in intensive care. His stroke left him blind in one eye and his truck licence was cancelled. His partner left him. His mental health deteriorated, and he began abusing alcohol and prescription medication. He has returned to work but is finding it increasingly difficult to obtain.

Dean downplays his stroke:

“I’m a, was a Truck Driver for many years until I, uh, unfortunately (I) became sick.”

(line 4)

He was reluctant to revisit the events which followed immediately afterwards and, due to his sensitivity, he was not pressed for details. He confided much of what happened during this period after the formal interview, on the record, but off-microphone, and notes of his disclosures were taken from memory immediately afterwards. Essentially, as might be expected, he experienced a period of mental ill-health characterised by rumination over his losses, disorientation and anxiety over his future.

About a year after his stroke, Dean returned to work for the relative of a former employer, processing Truck Driver log books:

“He didn’t want me to go into the offices. He wanted me to do it at home. I actually wanted to go to the office, so I felt like part of the team.” (line 118)

While it was likely it was provided to him charitably, this work seemed to restore in him some self-esteem:

“I was doing logbooks, and I was, I was working directly for (the employer’s) daughter-in-law Fiona. She was Compliance Manager, and compliance is a big job in transport companies... Huge, yeah. And she gave me a compliment. She said, because they’ve had, like three years’ worth of logbooks, and every time they had an audit they were in trouble because they didn’t have logbooks up to date. And I got ‘em up to date, and she said, well she didn’t have to worry anymore because any time an audit came through, she knew they were right. Because I’d done ‘em right.”

(lines 134 and 136)

His self-esteem restored, Dean secured employment as a Tractor Driver, working on large farms in machinery that was guided by satellite Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and in which his duties were to turn the tractor around at the end of each run. He found this work enjoyable for the same reason he enjoyed driving big trucks:

“I enjoyed it. (Q. *As much as truck driving?*) I think I did... It’s modern technology.”
(lines 92, 94 and 96)

“I can never, ever get over the fact that after all these years, I can never get over the fact that an internal combustion engine can do that. It just, I’m fascinated by it. I’m fascinated by engines, and the mechanical advantages that we’ve harnessed and how well they work and, you know, just a diesel engine it can pull out of Melbourne and you can be in Brisbane the following morning, you know, all that weight and. To me a tractor, a big tractor is the same sort of thing.” (line 88)

Dean continues to live in his caravan. He does the occasional odd-job, including driving tractors, but is finding it more and more difficult to secure work.

7.2.20 Individual Analysis – Dean

The effect of Dean’s stroke on his life, of which the loss of his career was only a small part, was catastrophic. He narrowly avoided death and, on surviving, found his plans for building a life with his new partner obliterated. The neurological consequences prevented him from driving a truck, however the psychological damage proved far more debilitating. In those circumstances, thoughts of the loss of his career and the need to make a change to a new one were exacerbations.

Of significance was the restoration of his self-esteem through the charitable offer of work. While he was prevented from being part of the team, the provision of meaningful work in which he was able to demonstrate his competence proved effective in allowing him to make a change to work more closely associated with his previous career as a Truck Driver. He found driving technologically advanced farm machinery stimulated the same fascination he felt when driving road trains, and from that he also gained satisfaction.

Nearing 70 years of age, Dean continues to seek work. His next change is inevitable. His existing work identity will need to dissolve and be replaced with one more compatible with retirement. This is a change that most must make however its inevitability does not necessarily make it any easier to negotiate. Table 7.10 summarises Dean’s super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.10: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Dean’s experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Theme	Definition
Persistent occupational identity	Acknowledgement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver persists post-change
Connections	Connection between new career and truck driving

7.2.21 Nat’s Experience of Occupational Change – Emergent Themes

Nat’s early experiences are not those of a worker whose career was disrupted by life events, but those of a person whose eventful life was disrupted by periods of work. He was bullied; experienced mental illness and chronic fatigue; abused substances and attended rehabilitation; wasted years in fruitless study and gained qualifications he had no intention of applying to work; and entered a dubious relationship. Throughout these events, he worked for short periods in a succession of low skilled jobs. This pattern changed when he sustained steady work as a Truck Driver, and he eventually found direction towards an occupation with which he now identifies strongly. Since commencing work as an Assistant in Nursing (AIN), Nat’s life has stabilised, and his identification with his occupation has developed to the extent that when he is at work, he feels himself.

Amongst the challenges Nat faced as a result of his mental and physical health, and his history of substance abuse, he did manage to secure and, for short periods, sustain employment. As the occupations in which he worked were not meaningful to him, in no sense could he be considered to have made career changes:

“I worked for a little while in Sydney (in Hungry Jacks). And then I came back home and worked for Telecom for one year (as a Switchboard Operator)” (line 92)

“I did night shift, um, sort of, Concierge night shift car valet at the Sebel Hotel.” (line 299)

“Oh, I did a bit of function work at the Uni” (line 317)

“...selling dildos in Canberra, like, at one of the sex shops.” (line 128)

“Um, and then I just had this, you know, this sort of (south coast town)-Canberra-Sydney triangle moving around geographically kind of thing” (line 163)

“I worked for St Vincent de Paul and then I worked in, uh, a printing factory so, but there was still no sense of vocation even.” (line 167)

“I’m intrinsically sort of quite lazy. Or, I dunno whether it’s laziness or fear of rejection or not having the confidence, maybe, back then, too, you know... Because I

was, I was still unmedicated back then, I wasn't, just, you know I was functioning, but I wasn't functioning as well as I could have been." (line 183)

The change that occurred was not from occupation to occupation, but from a directionless person involved in a dependent relationship, to an independent person able to find satisfaction from work and, subsequently an identity associated with an occupation. That change began when he started to work as a Truck Driver and ended with his current employment in aged care. He is currently recovering from an injury but fully expected to be able to return to that occupation. Interestingly, it seems driving hasn't finished with him yet:

"But I think I'll be back before then. And because it's not work related, there's no light duties, so I'll have to be back on full duties, yeah. Um, and it's interesting, because, they've just got approval for a bus. To buy a bus. And guess who put their hand up to do that job?" (line 549)

"So, I'm still in, you know, I'm still into that transport mode, um, yeah, and I'm, I can't wait to do that.... The bus isn't there yet, you know. People say the bus is not gonna probably be there before Christmas. But, you know, I'm panicking that while I'm sick (Q. *Someone's gonna jump the queue?*) Yeah, that the bus'll be there and someone else is driving it. It's my bus!" (line 559 & 561)

7.2.21 – Analysis of Nat's Experience of Occupational Change – Super-Ordinate Themes

Early in his working life, Nat worked in several jobs, changing them frequently and without developing any attachment to them while in search of his identity. None of those changes could be considered a significant change as his experiences do not yet include attempts to negotiate career change. Should he have that need in future, it will be with the awareness of the strength of his occupational identity, and the potential of that identity to influence his ability to make a successful change. Table 7.11 summarises Nat's super-ordinate themes.

Table 7.11: Summary of the themes generated by an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Nat's experience of occupational change

Super-Ordinate Themes	Definition
Lost	Description of change period as being lost

7.3 Summary

Interpretation and analysis of aspects of the participant interview transcripts relevant to their individual experiences of attempting occupational change has resulted in the identification of super-ordinate themes, all of which are shared by at least two participants. This process has reinforced the importance of the participants' occupational identities to successful change by revealing the devastation caused by the threat of loss of that identity; the determination and persistence displayed by most participants to retain or regain that identity; elements which potentially hinder or assist change; and the persistence of that identity even after change has been made. All participants except Nat were working as Truck Drivers and experienced career disruption at least partly because of injury. Of those 10, only Simon can be considered to have made an uneventful change. The remainder encountered substantial difficulty, and some were still yet to succeed. Chapter 8 examines these experiences collectively.

CHAPTER 8

THE COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES OF OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE

8.1 Overview

Chapters 5 and 6 detail participant experiences, individually and collectively, of occupational identity. Chapter 7 describes the super-ordinate themes relevant to each individual participant's experience of occupational change in the presence of occupational identity. This chapter examines those experiences collectively. In accordance with the IPA method, the aim of this process is consequently to analyse collective experiences and to identify patterns and idiosyncrasies from which to draw conclusions regarding higher-level concepts. Combined, these four chapters provide opportunity for conclusions to be made regarding the relationship between occupational identity and occupational change after injury. Table 8.1 summarises the collected super-ordinate themes of the participants' experiences of career change.

Table 8.1: Combined Super-Ordinate Themes Relevant to the Experience of Occupational Change

Super-Ordinate Theme	Definition	Common Participants
Voluntary change (n=3)	Transition to a new occupation made without an immediate necessity	Garth, Andrew, Simon
Terminal condition (n=5)	Description of biographical disruption as life ending	Darryl, Garth, Arthur, Andrew, Josh
Lost (n=7)	Description of change period as being lost	Darryl, Josh, Arthur, Andrew, Shirley, Dean, Nat
Rejection of a viable alternative (n=7)	Inability to make a change despite acknowledgement of the existence of a viable alternative occupation	Billy, Ella, Josh, Darryl, Andrew, Garth, Simon
Persistence despite pain (n=6)	Willingness to persist with truck driving despite the pain that results	Billy, Ella, Josh, Darryl, Garth, Andrew
The barrier of identity (n=4)	An explicit statement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver was a barrier to change	Darryl, Andrew, Simon, Ella
Competence (n=4)	Transition influenced by perceptions of competence to do alternative work	Ella, Darryl, Arthur, Dean
Connections (n=5)	Connection between new occupation and truck driving	Darryl, Arthur, Shirley, Dean, Simon
Intersectional identity (n=2)	The influence of having more than one significant identity on occupational change	Garth, Arthur
Persistent occupational identity (n=3)	Acknowledgement that an occupational identity as a Truck Driver persists post-change	Darryl, Arthur, Shirley

8.2 The Experience of Voluntary Occupational Change

While many of the participants enacted occupational change during the course of their working life, Garth, Simon and Andrew did so voluntarily while working, and identifying, as Truck Drivers. The changes made by Simon and Andrew were voluntary to the extent that they were not directly the result of injury, although they were accompanied by injury. For Garth and Simon, change was facilitated by the effect of other super-ordinate themes.

Garth made several occupational changes, some involuntary and arising from injury, others he chose to make. He had been working as a Truck Driver for seventeen years when he and his wife decided to start a family. He agreed with his wife that working as a Truck Driver was incompatible with family life and his change from Truck Driver to Bar Attendant was made because his role as a parent was more important to him than his identity as a Truck Driver. He subsequently demonstrated a very strong identity as a parent, and as a greyhound enthusiast, and the super-ordinate theme of 'intersectional identity' seems to have assisted him to make further career changes, including after subsequent injury.

Andrew also made occupational changes in his early working life although his change from Truck Driver back to Nurse was made under duress. He was a successful Owner/Operator when he attempted that change, and the duress under which that change was made was not frank injury, but the end of a relationship which had an injurious effect through actions that represented self-destruction, including destruction of his identity as a Truck Driver. While the change was voluntary, it was accompanied by, and was probably a symptom of, significant injury to his mental health.

Simon had several times considered changing his occupation from Truck Driver but had dismissed alternatives because "it just wasn't me" (Simon line 69). He subsequently did make a change and is the only participant whose change from Truck Driver was successfully accomplished without complication. It was voluntary in the sense that he changed his occupation before it was made necessary. He was beginning to experience the physical and mental effects of many years of working long hours, at the further expense of his family life. He was in the process of injury, saw his future and made the change to work as a Mobile Plant Operator. His change seems to have been facilitated by his commitment to his family, his continuing association with Truck Drivers, and regularly driving a truck. Thus his change is linked to the super-ordinate themes of 'intersectional identity' and 'connections'.

8.3 The Experience of Involuntary Occupational Change

Five participants described the event that caused them to face involuntary occupational change as life-ending:

“I was in tears. Because life as I knew it was over” (Darryl line 114)

“...I thought everything was over, my life was over, I couldn’t drive trucks...” (Garth line 161)

“To be honest, yeah, I was quite suicidal for a long time...because I didn’t know anything else.” (Arthur line 176)

“Or do I just sit here and die?” (Andrew line 255)

“When they said I wouldn’t be able to drive, or drive a truck I was gutted.” (Josh line 112)

For those participants, the threat of the loss of their identity as a Truck Driver was equivalent to death. There can be no stronger indication of the importance of occupational identity to those individuals, with commensurate ramifications for their ability to make occupational change. Darryl and Arthur have made changes to a new career, although Arthur is deeply dissatisfied in his. Garth and Josh continue to work as Truck Drivers but do so in pain having rejected viable alternative occupations. Andrew’s driving career is in the hands of his Cardiologist and, now aware of the effect of his persisting occupational identity he does not think he could make another career change.

For many participants, the removal of the opportunity to do work congruent with their occupational identity caused a sense of disorientation. They described being direction-less, like being lost.

“Oh, I was lost for a long time... And I was lost. I honestly did not know how or where or what.” (Shirley line 92)

“It’s like a Fireman. You take a Fireman away from a fire, he’s lost...You’re absolutely devastated. I don’t know how to explain it.” (Arthur line 184)

“My Surgeon said ‘that’s it, game over’. I had nowhere to go.” (Darryl line 120)

This incongruity acted as a barrier to making a successful change.

“Even people say to me now, ‘well, why don’t you do something else’ and I go ‘no, I’m a Truck Driver.’” (Ella line 148)

“And it was just one of those things that was making the physical separation from who I was to who I have to become” (Darryl line 138)

Most participants persisted with driving trucks despite severe pain, and the existence of viable, substantially less painful, alternatives. Andrew continued to drive a chemical tanker after his first heart attack despite symptoms he recognised presaged his second attack, and despite a work history which included qualifications and experience in other, far less dangerous, occupations. Billy no longer enjoys driving due to the pain and can only do so on a part time basis, with less pay, having rejected

the recommendations of a vocational assessment and experience with clerical work associated with truck driving. Josh experiences severe pain from truck driving and his ability to control his vehicle is compromised, but he also rejected recommendations for occupations he concedes were viable. Ella endured years of chronic pain which prevented her from resuming her truck driving duties while dismissing entirely the value of her experience of work in accountancy. Garth is still driving trucks in pain and has not pursued work in occupations he had voluntarily made a change to in the past. Darryl “shredded” (line 138) career paths, not because he could not do the work, but because they involved the risk he might meet someone who knew him as a Truck Driver.

Such is the strength of the occupational identity of some of the participants, it has survived despite change to a new occupation. Arthur still speaks of himself in the present tense as a Truck Driver despite several years in a new career as a Recruitment Consultant. Shirley has worked for over a decade as a Nurse and is retired but now runs a Facebook page for Truck Drivers, and continues to be happiest in their company. Darryl established himself in a managerial position in the logistics industry and is currently working as an Academic but considers truck driving to be “still a part of who I am” (Darryl line 4). Simon is now a Mobile Plant Operator, not a Truck Driver “100%” (Simon line 142), but associates with Truck Drivers, displays truck memorabilia and still drives a truck.

Feelings of the end of life, disorientation and in particular rejection of alternative identities could be considered to represent signs of unsuccessful psychosocial adjustment or adaptation to acquired disability. Marini (2017) maintains that there are seven common theories of adjustment or adaptation to acquired disability and provides a description of them. Among those theories there are some which consider changes in identity or self-concept as significant. The focus however is on the acceptance or otherwise of identification as a person with a disability, and there appears to be no specific consideration in any of the theories described regarding the importance of a change in occupational identity in the process of adjustment and acceptance. Livneh (2021) presents a complex model which adopts a phenomenological approach and attempts to integrate relevant constructs from earlier models. A large number of antecedent variables is considered, including occupational status and personal identity, but not occupational identity. The process notes identity as a factor but is specific to illness or disability identity. Outcome measures include occupational activities such as salary level, productivity and job retention. Again however, no mention is made regarding the loss or persistence of occupational identity. Thus the experiences of the participants do not seem support any major adjustment or adaptation to disability theory.

Through the analysis there emerged super-ordinate themes relevant to making an easier occupational change. Some participants experienced an easier change associated with the existence of connections between truck driving and their new career or the possession of an alternative identity on which to draw. The development of competence was a facilitator, and self-assessment of a lack of competence acted against change.

A continued connection to truck driving seems to have assisted Darryl, Arthur and Simon who all made a change to occupations directly related to truck driving. Dean eventually worked as a Tractor Driver, an occupation which connected him to truck driving due to the similarities with respect to the power of the machinery. Shirley did not settle into her new career as a Nurse until she worked for an agency which enabled her to enjoy long night drives, as she did when she was working as a Truck Driver.

Garth, Arthur and Simon all identified with roles in addition to their occupation as a Truck Driver. Garth and Simon identified strongly with their role within their family, and Garth also had greyhound racing as an alternative source of role satisfaction. Arthur identified as a Truck Driver, but also as a race car driver and motorcyclist and used those identities as an incentive for recovery. Only Simon made an uncomplicated change and the existence of an alternative role identity did not provide complete protection from the effects of change for Arthur or Garth. Arthur dislikes his new occupation and, while Garth continues to devote himself to his family, he still drives trucks in tenuous employment.

The participants' self-assessment of competence, or the lack thereof, seemed to influence the experience of change. Some participants benefited from a restoration of competence as defined in Table 8.1. Dean was unemployed after his stroke but was offered work processing log books which restored his confidence and resulted in a return to employment. Darryl needed to be convinced that he still had something to offer the industry before he could return to work, and again in attempting to secure employment as an Academic. Josh was determined to regain the competence to drive despite medical opinion to the contrary. The occupational change of other participants was hindered by their perceptions of a lack of competence. Ella blames a lack of intelligence for not making a change to another occupation, despite having worked successfully in clerical occupations. Arthur has been offered the opportunity of returning to work as a truck driver in a modified vehicle, but he does not feel he is able to react quickly enough to avoid an accident, influenced by near-misses and accidents he had experienced while working as a Truck Driver.

The experiences of the participants who identified a lack of competence as a barrier to making an occupational change lend some support to theories of identity arising from research into the role of education in the development and maintenance of identity (Illeris 2014; Jarvis 2012; Mezirow 2005; Thunborg & Bron 2019). Transformative learning would, according to those theories, have resulted in a successful change in identity. How that learning could have been implemented remains problematic, as the presumption is that a new occupational goal towards which education could be directed was available.

In their study of occupational identity change amongst participants with acquired brain injuries, Bryson-Campbell et al. (2016) linked self-perceptions of a lack of competence with negative labelling and social stigmatisation, and concluded that acceptance of a new occupational identity was contingent on regaining competence. While self-perceptions of competence seem to have influenced the experience of the Truck Drivers in this study, there was no evidence of any negative labelling or social stigmatisation amongst this group. In Josh's experience a restoration of competence only prevented the adoption of a new occupational identity.

8.4 Summary

The original stimulus for this research was an encounter with a Truck Driver who was unable to return to work in that occupation but who rejected the recommendations of a vocational assessment for alternative work with the explanation 'I am a Truck Driver'. The likely inference of that statement, that an occupational identity can present a barrier to occupational change, is supported by an analysis of the experiences of the participants of this project. The rejection of viable alternative occupations despite strong incentives to make a change is common to many of them, and the role of occupational identity as a barrier to making occupational change is explicit for some participants and compellingly implicit for the remainder. Some factors, such as the existence of a connection between truck driving and the new occupation, or the presence of a different role identity, have emerged as influential in the success with which change is made. Despite these factors, an uncomplicated change to a new occupation was uncommon, and some participants who would benefit from a change remain working as Truck Drivers.

The process of negotiating life changes after injury or chronic illness has been the subject of examination for several decades and the barriers presented by this process have proven difficult to address, as noted in the seminal research conducted by Australian Rehabilitation Counsellors Kendall and Buys (1998). Various models of psychosocial adjustment and adaptation have been proposed with

early examples describing this process as being similar to the stages of grieving for the deceased, and later models emphasising vacillation between a pre-injury identity, and an identity as a person with a disability (Kendall & Buys 1998; Livneh 2021). None of the proposed models specifically notes a change in occupational identity as representing a barrier to full psychosocial adjustment or adaptation. It seems clear from the experiences of the participants that this process is not complete unless or until issues concerning a change in occupational identity are resolved. As vocational rehabilitation is based on identifying barriers to sustainable employment, including those concerned with the process of adjustment to disability (Allied Health Professions Australia 2022), this apparent omission requires further exploration. Chapter 9 includes discussion of how the barriers presented by occupational identity might be addressed, and recommendations for a change in approach to assisting career occupational change are made.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

9.1 Overview

This research project was prompted by a vocational counselling session during which a Truck Driver seemed unable to make a post-injury occupational change because of a persistent occupational identity (refer to Section 1.1). Comprehensive review of the literature (Chapter 2) indicated that while the concept of occupational identity, and several related concepts, have been examined, they have been variously defined and there appears to be a lack of clear conceptual consensus. The effect of occupational identity on occupational change has been explored (see for example Bryson-Campbell et al. 2016; Taylor & Jones 2017), however investigations into the effect of a persistent occupational identity on occupational change are rare and not specific to post-injury occupational change (Bimrose et al. 2008).. The research question is therefore three-fold. How is occupational identity defined and differentiated from similar concepts; what is the experience of occupational identity, as defined; and how does occupational identity influence occupational change? A pragmatic mixed-methodology approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods has been adopted to address those questions. The results indicated that occupational identity, defined as the identification with a specific paid occupation, did occur in both the quantitative and qualitative sample groups, and that, for some of the latter group, it represents a substantial barrier to occupational change. This chapter briefly summarises and discusses the results of the research program, explores existing approaches for assisting occupational change, and recommends those which are likely to be beneficial for those whose occupational identity is resistant to change. It ends with a discussion on the broader implications for assisting occupational change after biographical disruption for reasons other than injury.

9.2 Part A

The first research question was addressed quantitatively in Part A of the research project using an on-line survey of 336 working-age Australians. Statistical analysis of the survey responses, included in Chapter 4, found that approximately one quarter of participants displayed an identification with their specific (paid) occupation, with that identification occurring most commonly amongst males; the permanently employed; those with a higher level of qualification; those with no formal qualifications; and in some occupational groups. Based on the results of the survey, recommendations have been made regarding the definition of occupation, occupational identity, professional identity, work identity, vocational identity, career identity, organisational identity, and role identity. The purpose of these recommendations is to initiate a move towards clearer conceptualisations and they are not presented as immutable. As the effect of occupational identity on occupational change is central to

this research project, the definition nominated for ‘occupation’ is specific to paid occupations and excludes other human activities which are sometimes referred to as occupations. Table 9.1 outlines the other definitions suggested by the results of the survey.

Table 9.1: Suggested Definitions of Concepts Related to Occupational Identity Resulting from the Survey of 336 Australians Detailed in Chapter 4

Concept	Definition
Occupational Identity	Identification with a specific paid occupation
Work Identity	Identification with paid work in general
Professional Identity	Identification with an occupation that has the status of a recognised profession
Vocational Identity	Identification with a paid occupation that is experienced as a ‘calling’
Career Identity	Identification with a career, usually experienced in early adulthood
Organisational Identity	Identification with an organisation in which one conducts their occupation
Role Identity	Identification with an occupation broadly defined, excluding paid occupations

These suggested definitions form the framework within which occupational identity can be explored further, in accordance with the stipulation by Moustakas (1994) that concepts which are to be explored phenomenologically require clear definition. Part B describes a phenomenological exploration of the experience of occupational identity and how it might act to influence occupational change.

9.3 Part B

The experience of occupational identity, as defined, was the first topic of Part B of the research project. Eleven participants, who had all worked as Truck Drivers, shared their experience of occupational identity. Those experiences were recorded during semi-structured interviews, the transcripts of which were analysed qualitatively using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 detail the results of that analysis which identified themes suggesting a strong

occupational identity among most participants. This identity sometimes developed spontaneously but more usually it arose from the action of an identifiable agent, either an influential person or from a driving experience. It was sustained by the experience of invulnerability and power generated by their work, and by identification with the culture of truck driving and/or selected others in that occupation. The participants acknowledged the inevitability of exposure to several negative aspects of their work, including fatal accidents and ruined relationships, however their occupational identity was not diminished by those factors which were commonly dismissed as insignificant. The themes generated by this analysis raise questions regarding existing theories of identity development.

9.3.1 A comparison between the participants' experiences of occupational identity and higher order concepts

In accordance with the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methods proposed by Smith et al. (2009), the interpretative analysis of the participants' experiences were compared with the conceptualisations examined in the literature review (Chapter 2). One of the earliest of the identity development theories to address occupational identity was Erikson's psychosocial stage model (Erikson 1968; Erikson 1995) which proposed that occupational identity normally develops in late adolescence. This model receives some support from the experience of one of the participants (Nat, see Section 5.5.11 et seq.) However, other participants gained their occupational identity at different stages of their lives, with some developing a determination to pursue work as a Truck Driver long before adolescence, including those who developed a nascent interest as infants, and others whose occupational identity changed later in life. Rather than a particular life stage, a specific agent, a person or a driving experience, seemed to be influential in occupational identity development. It is consequently suggested that Erikson's conceptualisation of occupational identity better matches the definition of career identity described in Table 9.1. This conceptualisation may account for some of the participants' divergence from Erikson's model, however it seems that there are forces at work which are not accounted for in that model. Other models of career decision-making which take Erikson's as a starting point, including Marcia (Marcia 1966), or those which consider the development of an occupational or vocational identity from the perspective of an initial career choice, such as Blustein et al. (1989), Grotevant and Thorbecke (1982) or Galinsky and Fast (1966), are subject to the same exposure. The models of authors such as Bordin et al. (1963) and Super (1951), who focus more specifically on the role played by an individual's childhood development on their eventual career choice, would consequently seem to be better supported by the experiences of some of the participants. Again, however the focus is on initial career choices in late adolescence, with no mention of later life career redirection.

Later theories originating from the field of psychology, including the Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner 1986) also seem discordant with the experiences of the participants. The context of SIT is conflict between competing social groups. In this theory, social categories serve to provide a framework for individuals to define their place in society thus establishing their social identity. Evaluations of the positive or negative values of membership of a group within a category lead to comparisons with other groups, and individuals join or leave a group based on the effect membership has on their self-esteem. The participants' identities as Truck Drivers did not seem to be derived through comparison with other occupations. There was some disdain reserved for clerical workers, however those opinions were expressed with reference to their confined working conditions and lack of autonomy, not directed at the workers themselves. There was also some feeling expressed by participants that the new generation of Truck Drivers, and particularly those working under 457 visas (which allow temporary residence and permission to work for overseas applicants), were undeserving of their occupational title. This could be described as in-group/out-group competition however it is difficult to consider members of the same occupation as members of different occupational groups, and the out-group in this instance may not even consider themselves not part of the in-group. Also, regardless of how group members evaluate their membership, it is usually not possible for migration to occur between those groups. While the participants' experiences revealed a definite 'us vs them' theme, the 'them' were not members of a different occupation, and for some participants, the 'them' could be represented by anyone who was not a Truck Driver, almost a Truck Drivers vs the world attitude.

Symbolic Interactionist conceptualisations of identity, particularly those that take a structural approach, have a better potential to accommodate the experiences of the participants as they are role based, rather than category based (Stryker & Burke 2000). In this approach, which forms the basis of Identity Theory (IT), individuals exist within, and interact with, social structures. The 'self' emerges in interaction with the complexities of society and is organised into multiple different identities. Each identity corresponds to the social position or role the person finds themselves in and provides meaning to membership of that position or role. As identity is specific to a structural situation, we do not present our whole person when we interact, only the identity or identities that are relevant to that situation. Identities are hierarchical based on their salience or prominence (Stets & Burke 2003). This salience reflects the level of commitment we have to each identity (Stryker & Burke 2000). Occupations are recognisable social structures with more-or-less discrete boundaries. Interaction with them is, for many, a central part of their lives which provides, in addition to the means by which to live, varying levels of status and satisfaction.

The results of the survey detailed in Chapter 4 indicated that most respondents attached some level of meaning to themselves by identifying themselves as either a member of their occupation (the “I am” group), or in their role as workers (the “I do” group). The strength of an occupational identification was reinforced by the experiences of the interview participants which reflected the salience that they placed on their occupations. It could be argued that the interview provided the situation for the occupational identity to be presented, and that an interview on a different aspect of the participants’ lives may have resulted in the presentation of a different identity. Certainly, the intersectionality theme that arose from the experience of some of the participants is concordant with the existence of multiple identities. The experience of intersectionality however appeared to be one of replacement, with, for example, identification as a Truck Driver being periodically side-lined for identification with parental roles. It seems that the presentation of different identities was related to a change in the salience of the identity over time, more so than in response to a change in a given, contemporaneous, situation.

In common with SIT and IT, Career Construction Theory (CCT) acknowledges the role of social structures in identity construction but extends it to include narrative identity processes. CCT posits the construction of career identities as occurring when people think of themselves in social roles in social contexts. Finding a niche in a social group solidifies identity and allows the person to be identified as part of a community. As identities are not stable, CCT suggests that identity changes are negotiated through autobiographical conversations which are micro-processes which provide bridges to new identities and supply consistent meanings available to the individual and others. Language plays a more central role in CCT, and culture is specifically noted as influential (Savickas 2013). Some support for CCT can be obtained from the experiences of the participants as the interviews allowed them to tell the story of their working life, and associated stories. It was through the language that they chose that the fullness of their experiences could be appreciated. What is not accommodated by CCT is the initial establishment of some of the participant’s occupational identity which, according to their narrative, seemed to several to have begun to take shape quite early in their lives. It is possible that the narrative of early identity adoption is an individual construct used by the participants to explain their later identity, however it would seem to be an autobiographical embellishment that serves no real purpose. Similarly, the dissonance between the participants’ acknowledgement of the negative consequences of their occupations and their enjoyment of it presents a contradiction which could easily be erased through a change of narrative, either to enhance perceptions of stoicism and

self-sacrifice, or to rationalise negative consequences by attributing them to other causes. Nevertheless, narratives seem to be an important part of identity disclosure, and self-disclosure.

Sharing similarities with CCT, biographical theories of identity development from education researchers posit that identities are created, developed and changed through learning, which is achieved when integrated identities are confronted with social situations which challenge those identities. A period sometimes described as floating is followed by identity anchoring when the situated identity becomes integrated (Jarvis 2012; Thunborg & Bron 2019). These theories do not seem to doubt that anchoring will occur and the means by which a nascent occupational identity could have been created in participants who experienced an attraction to truck driving early in their lives is not clear.

Post-structuralist and postmodern ideas of identity vary from a rejection of the idea of subjectivity and unique individual identities to an acceptance of identity as fluid, multiple or at least punctualised (Frie 2011; Han 2019; Munro 2004). The experiences related by the research participants indicated that their occupational identities were not only stable, they were durable, with some persisting well after involvement in their occupation had ceased. Certainly, some participants displayed multiple identities, different aspects of which might have been presented in a different context, but those identities were not mythological and they seemed as real to the participants as they seemed to the researcher.

A theory of identity that is based on the experiences of the participants would include an explanation for their willingness to be influenced by an agent which provided the genesis for their occupational identity. It would emphasise the importance of the interaction between the participant and social structures by including a closer examination of relevant structures, and how they are individually experienced. In addition to acknowledging the cultural influences which shape social structures, it would incorporate the development of cultural elements within the identified group such as the unwritten rules by which their behaviour is governed, rites of entry, and cultural elements which have been adopted by that group, including 'truck-speak', country and western music, truck-stop food, truck driving genre films etc. It would allow elitist intra-group grouping. It would encompass narratives and language as the bases for interpretation while conceding that such narratives are a part of occupational identities, but not necessarily formative. It would somehow explain how an identity can serve to negate circumstances which might be expected to extinguish it.

The experiences of the participants suggest that occupational identity has an identifiable progenitor, which may be socially-based but is not necessarily a social structure, or even a group within that structure. The progenitor could be an influential individual, an innate interest, or something on a more fundamental, even psychodynamic, level. The participants' experiences of occupational identity also suggest that, once established, it is maintained by virtue of its ability to provide feelings of power, security or life purpose. Establishment also seems to promote a shared culture by which it is sustained, and which assists to delineate the in-group from all others, not just an out-group. Narratives are the tools the participants used to relate their experiences, and their language allowed access to those narratives and interpretation of them, but those narratives do not seem to represent the totality of the experience.

9.3.2 A comparison between the participants' experiences of occupational change and higher order concepts

Part B of the research project was also concerned with the influence occupational identity has on post-injury occupational change. The experiences of many of the participants clearly demonstrated that, regardless of the mechanisms behind the establishment and maintenance of an occupational identity, its persistence post-injury, or after other biographical disruption, can represent a substantial barrier to occupational change. The literature review detailed in Chapter 2 describes previous studies of the effect of injury on career redirection however, the conclusions reached in those studies usually assumed that occupational identity is extinguished by biographical disruption. A process of rebuilding an occupational identity is considered then to occur, influenced by regaining competence and by the passage of time (Bryson-Campbell et al. 2016; Scalzo et al. 2016; Sveen et al. 2016). The experiences of the participants suggests that extinguishment is not inevitable, despite the pain that can result from persistence, even after change to another occupation has been achieved, and even after the passage of several years.

While literature relevant to career change after injury does not reflect the experiences of the participants, support can be found from different sources. In a study of 142 Journalists from the United Kingdom, Nel (2010) found almost half considered their occupation to strongly define them, with a large proportion considering it a 'calling'. After being laid off, some of those Journalists still found a source of pride in their occupation up to two years after losing their job. In a study of professional identity amongst 169 Australian Journalists who had been made redundant, Sherwood and O'Donnell (2018) found 53 (31%) considered their identity as Journalists intact even though many had since found other employment. Leidner (2016) interviewed 49 participants intermittently employed as Stage Actors, most of whom were described as being deeply committed to their occupational identity

(*"I am an actor"*, p9, italics in the original), and who sustained that identity during periods of other employment. While none of those studies considered the role of a persistent occupational identity as a barrier to securing employment in a different career, other studies infer this effect indirectly. Asbring (2001) identified partial changes in occupational identity amongst participants diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome seeking occupational change. Research by Vrkljan and Polgar (2007) and Kulkarni (2020) included descriptions of participants who persisted with activities with which they identified despite obviously insurmountable barriers. Strub et al. (2021) noted that participants with chronic pain persisted with their occupations, preferring to modify their work, rather than attempt occupational change.

Six of the 11 Truck Drivers who shared their experience of biographical disruption persisted with driving a truck despite aggravation of physical and/or psychological pain. Five of those six rejected a viable alternative occupation to continue to drive trucks. Four participants acknowledged explicitly that it was their identification with their occupation which was the barrier to making a change. While four drivers attributed their lack of competence for other occupations as the reason for delays in change, at least two of those four had work histories which contradicted their assessment of their own ability. All but one of the participants who have made a successful change are working in an occupation that is related directly to truck driving. Table 9.2 summarises the circumstances of the eleven participants regarding the outcome of their changes.

Table 9.2: Summary of the Outcome of the Participants' Attempted Career Transitions

Participant	Outcome
Billy	Rejection of viable alternatives and currently restricted to occasional part time driving due to physical pain
Ella	Rejection of viable alternative due to contestable perceptions of competence and currently driving despite many years of chronic pain
Josh	Rejection of viable alternative and currently attempting a return to driving despite physical pain and acknowledged loss of driving skills
Darryl	Successful change to a related occupation after extended delay attributed to persistent identification as a Truck Driver (continuing) and contestable perceptions of competence
Garth	Continuing to drive part time despite pain and repeated demonstrations of ability to make successful change to alternative occupations
Arthur	Returned to driving after near fatal accident despite psychological pain. Subsequent accident forced a reluctant and delayed but successful change to a related occupation
Andrew	Returned to driving after heart attack and is awaiting specialist medical advice to allow a continuation, despite a demonstrated ability to sustain alternative, and potentially less hazardous, employment
Simon	Successful and voluntary change to a related occupation while retaining a strong association with trucks
Shirley	Delayed change and acceptance of a new occupation which was achieved after experiencing similar conditions to that enjoyed as a Truck Driver. Now retired and has returned to indirect involvement with Truck Drivers
Dean	Reluctant retirement imminent after achieving delayed change to a related occupation following restoration of competence
Nat	No identification as a Truck Driver. Successful change to another occupation

The study of the negotiation of biographical disruption due to injury or chronic illness has a long history. Parker et al. (2003) consider it “one of the most important and heavily researched topics in rehabilitation” (p234). Early stage models, which proposed that the process followed a pattern similar to grieving for the deceased, gave way to later models advocating either a cyclical-recursive, pendulum-like or random process (Kendall & Buys 1998; Livneh 2021; Parker et al. 2003). Most recently, Livneh (2021) has presented an integrated model, incorporating antecedents, process and outcomes. One commonality displayed by all the models is the absence of any specific consideration of the role of changes in occupational identity. While Livneh (2021) includes amongst outcomes a range of work-related activities, these are confined to considerations regarding employment status, duration, productivity and retention. The experiences of the participants suggest that whenever a strong occupational identity is retained by an individual, full adjustment and adaptation to injury or illness could be delayed or even prevented, substantially affecting those employment outcomes.

9.4 Occupational Identity, Rehabilitation Counsellors and Vocational Counselling

In Australia, Rehabilitation Counsellors are entrusted with the provision of vocational services to support adjustment to the impact of disability (Allied Health Professions Australia 2022). Current vocational rehabilitation practice gives no consideration to occupational identity, as evidenced by the lists of core competencies published by the two organisations to which Rehabilitation Counsellors can be members, the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC) and the Rehabilitation Counsellors Association of Australasia (RCAA) (Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia 2011; The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors 2015). The ASORC core competencies do include mention of vocational identity, but it is defined as “being in a state whereby the client sees themselves as employable and is motivated to return to work...” (The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors 2015, p. 27) and consequently does not refer to identification with a specific occupation. As assisting injured workers return to work as a means of achieving adjustment to disability is the proper role of Rehabilitation Counsellors, the experiences of the participants indicate that competency in identifying and addressing occupational identity should be a fundamental requirement of that profession.

At least two of the interview participants had received vocational counselling which resulted in the identification of viable vocational alternatives, to no avail. While identifying potentially problematic occupational identity is probably best achieved during vocational counselling, during which the strength of the attachment can be explored through semi-structured interview, successfully

addressing the barrier it may present is a different matter. Guided by the experiences of the participants, it may sometimes be necessary to confront protestations of a lack of competence. Participants Ella and Darryl, for example, both explicitly reported their self-assessed lack of competence for work in other occupations as a reason for being unable to make an occupational change. In both cases, this self-assessment did not bear scrutiny, and had this been challenged at that time, change may have been less difficult. The experience of other participants implied similar difficulties.

The literature can also guide intervention attempts. Ibarra (1999) proposed that professionals attempting career change could construct new identities by studying role models, creating prototype identities based on their observations, or by deliberate imitation of whole or part of the role model's persona. Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010), Brown and Bimrose (2015), and Ashforth (2001) all propose changing narratives as being central to career changes. Savickas (2019b) proposes narrative counselling to assist individuals to story, and then re-story, their biographies, building narratives through dialogues. A three part process is recommended in which the interviewee is firstly introduced to the practitioner, and eventually to themselves, followed by the presentation and discussion of the interviewee's "life portrait" (p43) which is contrasted with the reality of their situation, leading finally to a resolution through re-visiting and reorienting the interviewee's narrative. Such approaches assume that the individual's narratives are sufficiently influential on their identities to affect a fundamental change. This assumption is not wholly supported by the experiences of the participants as their narratives include experiences which would seem to work against their occupational identity. For example, the dissonance many participants displayed between their attachment to their occupation and their acknowledgement of the negative aspects of it seems to indicate that their narratives are not fully concordant with their identity.

9.5 Limitations

The participants of the qualitative part of this research project were all, at one time, Truck Drivers. Recruitment was specifically directed at members of that occupation, which is obviously likely to have had the effect of attracting people who identified as Truck Drivers, and only one participant could be described as not having a strong occupational identity as a Truck Driver. It could consequently be argued that any conclusions reached from an interpretation of the experiences of these particular participants may not be replicated in a study of other Truck Drivers, or members of other occupations. In answer to that argument, it should be recalled that the quantitative part of this research project found evidence of occupational identity, sometimes quite pronounced, amongst members of a wide range of occupational groups. The literature, and specifically the study by Ulfsson and Eriksson

Linde (2014), also confirms the existence of occupational identities across other occupations. As noted above, a study of Journalists found evidence of a persistence of occupational identity up to two years of unemployment (Nel 2010).

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of occupations lists 998 separate occupations (Australian Bureau of Statistics & Statistics New Zealand 2013). In practical terms, any research which sought to identify differences in occupational identity or occupational change based on the characteristics of specific occupations would need to contend with that number. In some instances, there are themes identified in this project which could be identified as specific to truck driving. For example, the experience of driving a truck was identified as a factor in establishing an occupational identity as a Truck Driver. This theme is obviously unique to truck driving. It is however potentially transferable to other occupations in which the work was associated with specific processes or materials. Carpenters and other tradepersons may experience the use of their work vehicles or other tools in a similar way in which Truck Drivers experience their trucks. As noted by Smith et al. (2009), the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method results in theoretical transferability which provides the potential for establishing links between the experiences of the participants, the extant literature, and the experiences of the reader. Transferability evaluations can then be made “to persons in contexts which are more, or less, similar” (Smith et al. 2009, p. 51). Thus, the extent to which the themes identified in this research project are transferable is a complex matter, but one which should not summarily be dismissed.

Some authors have questioned the underpinnings of research into occupational identity as Western cultural values have dominated that research (Crafford 2021; Laliberte-Rudman & Dennhardt 2008). This criticism can be directed towards this research project as the cultural background of the survey participants was not sought, and all the interview participants appeared to share Western cultural heritage. It is recommended that this limitation be addressed in any future research.

9.6 Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations of the survey which formed Part A of this project, described above, are a potential area for further research. An obvious requirement would be to establish a validated means of measuring occupational identity. This would first require an agreed definition and conceptual parameters. Once established, a repeated and expanded survey would add more refinement to the qualitative analysis. Ideally, the number of groups of occupations would be increased allowing higher levels of distinction between occupations. Cultural background might also be added as a variable. A more effective

method of determining whether there is an association between occupational identity and personality may also be helpful.

Further research is indicated to explore the experiences of members of occupations other than truck drivers. Comparisons can then be made, and any thematic patterns identified. Given the large number of occupations, separate investigations are unlikely to be helpful, or even possible. Consideration could be given to investigating occupational identity amongst the general working population, rather than members of just one occupation. If the research participants were randomly selected without reference to their occupation, it is possible that a more general picture of occupational identity could emerge. The difficulties associated with eliminating occupationally-related variations could be avoided, however the sample group would need to be large enough to include a broad range of occupations to achieve that goal satisfactorily.

The conclusions of this research project support the contention that a persistent occupational identity is a potential barrier to successfully returning to work after injury in circumstances in which an occupational change is indicated. If confirmation of these conclusions is required, further investigation would be beneficial. Current interventions based on theories of psychosocial adjustment or adaptation would then themselves require adjustment or adaptation, or the application of new interventions. Trials of the effectiveness of those interventions represents the end point of this process.

The focus of this research project is the vocational counselling of those whose occupational identity has been disrupted by injury or illness. Biographical disruption due to other events, or unfulfilled desire to change an occupation voluntarily have not specifically been addressed. As the findings of this research project are potentially applicable to other disciplines, including career counselling and careers education, further research is indicated.

9.7 Wider Implications

The implications for a strong and persistent occupational identity that can delay or prevent occupational change are widespread. Injury is certainly not the only life event that can cause a need to make a change to a new occupation. Around the world, climate change is being addressed through the discontinuation of fossil fuel extraction. It can be expected that increasing numbers of Coal Miners, Oil and Gas Rig Workers, and workers in similar occupations will find that those occupations are no longer available. For workers whose identity is strongly associated with those occupations, plans to provide alternative sources of employment are unlikely to be successful without addressing that

identity. Similarly, increasing adoption of robotics and artificial intelligence in the manufacturing industry will further reduce the number of occupations associated with that sector. Driverless vehicles and delivery drones are already in service, and the future is likely to provide examples it is not currently possible to foresee.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Copies of Preparatory Documents

Ethics Approval

Dear Dr Coman,

I am pleased to advise that the application detailed below has been **approved**.

Ethics Number: 2018/315

Approval Date: 16/07/2018

Expiry Date: 15/07/2019

Project Title: Investigating the relationship between occupational identity and vocational redirection following work-related injuries.

Researcher/s: Bakand Shahnaz; Coman Robyn; Fox Mim; Girdler Ross

Documents Approved:

- Protocol
- Response to review 04/07/2018
- Revised Survey Monkey Survey. V2. 04/07/2018
- Supporting document Appendix A
- Supporting document Appendix B
- Investigator details - Dr R Coman
- Investigator details - Dr S Bakand
- Investigator details - Dr M Fox
- Investigator details - Mr R Girdler

The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document. Compliance is monitored through progress reports; the HREC may also undertake physical monitoring of research.

Approval is granted for a twelve month period; extension of this approval will be considered on receipt of a progress report **prior to the expiry date**. Extension of approval requires:

- The submission of an annual progress report and a final report on completion of your project.
- Approval by the HREC of any proposed changes to the protocol or investigators.
- Immediate report of serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants.
- Immediate report of unforeseen events that might affect the continued acceptability of the project.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process or your ongoing approval please contact the Ethics Unit on 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Barkus

Associate Professor Emma Barkus,
Chair, UOW & ISLHD Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee

The University of Wollongong and Illawarra and Shoalhaven Local Health District Social Sciences HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

CHANGING WITH THE CHANGES

**WHAT HAPPENS TO WHO YOU ARE
IF WHAT YOU DO
BECOMES WHAT YOU DID?**



UNIVERSITY
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AUSTRALIA

OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY

Who Are You?

How do you describe yourself to others? Imagine you are at a social gathering amongst strangers and one of them asks you to tell them a little about yourself. Before you read any further, what would you say...?

(In a recent University of Wollongong survey* of 336 Australian workers, 60% of participants included their work in their description. 30% used their specific occupation as a descriptor and employed the phrase "I am a..." to do so.)

How Much of You is the Work You Do?

On a scale of 0 to 7, with 0 indicating "my occupation is not at all a part of who I am" and 7 "I am totally defined as a person by my occupation", how much of "who you are" is provided by the work you do?

(The survey recorded that 60% of participants gave themselves a rating of at least 4 and 8% considered that their occupation "totally defined" them as a person.)

OUR OCCUPATIONS
ARE PART OF OUR
IDENTITY...

IF THE
IDENTIFICATION
IS PERSISTENT,



ARE WE LESS ABLE
TO NEGOTIATE
DISRUPTION
SUCCESSFULLY?

BIOGRAPHICAL DISRUPTION

Stuff Happens....

The world of work is changing. Artificial intelligence, robotics, self-driving vehicles... The occupations we did yesterday may not be here tomorrow. If the pace of change keeps increasing, more people will need to change their occupations more often. Also, despite our best preventative efforts, accidents do happen, and injuries can necessitate a sudden change in occupation.

What Happens Next?

While Safe Work Australia statistics do not distinguish between those who need to find another occupation and those who can return to their pre-injury job, the 2018 Return to Work Survey found that approximately 20% of people who had lost at least a day of work due to injury and had returned to work were not working at the time of the survey. **If an injured worker cannot sustain a return to their pre-injury occupation, successful vocational redirection is required.**

"Investigating the Relationship Between Occupational Identity and Vocational Redirection following Work-Related Injuries"

*PART ONE – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

An online survey of working age Australians exploring the nature and extent of their identification with their work (n=336). CLOSED – ANALYSIS COMPLETED SUBJECT TO REVIEW

PART TWO – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Unstructured interviews with approximately 20 Truck Drivers exploring their experiences with identification with their occupation, analysed thematically. ON-GOING...

PART THREE – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Narrative Interviews with approximately 5 Truck Drivers collecting stories of their attempts to negotiate vocational redirection following injury. ON-GOING...

Dr R Coman, Dr S Bakand, Dr M Fox and Mr R Girdler, researchers from the School of Health and Society at the University of Wollongong, are investigating occupational identity and its effect on vocational redirection following injury. After having conducted a nationwide survey to measure and explore occupational identity (Part 1 of the programme), we are conducting qualitative interviews with Truck Drivers in order to better understand their identification with that occupation (Part 2), and how it has affected post-injury career redirection (Part 3). The aim of this research is to make recommendations for improvements in providing return-to-work assistance to injured workers. For more information, please contact Ross Girdler (rgs616@uowmail.edu.au).

Survey Participant Recruitment Facebook Post



Ross Girdler
July 18, 2018 · 2

If you are an Australian of working age and would like to participate in my PhD research project, please complete the survey at surveymonkey.com/r/37T9NDF ✓ and share this link with any other Australian of working age. Thanks!



SURVEYMONKEY.COM
University of Wollongong PhD Questionnaire Survey
Web survey powered by SurveyMonkey.com. Create your own online survey now with SurveyMonkey's expert certified FREE templates.


1 Comment 1 Share

 Like  Comment  Share



Robyn Alainn
My PhD student, Ross Girdler, is currently undertaking research into 'occupational identity'. If you would like to participate please click on the link above. Also PLEASE SHARE with your FB contacts. Thanks for your help. RC

Like Reply 4y

 Write a comment...     



TRUCK DRIVERS,

HOW IMPORTANT IS YOUR WORK TO YOU?

Researchers from the University of Wollongong's School of Health and Society are interested in hearing your thoughts on this question, with the ultimate aim of understanding how we can better help injured Truck Drivers who can't drive trucks anymore.

We'd like to talk to you in person about your experiences as a Truck Driver, and how hard you think it might be if you needed to change to a different occupation.

If you would like to participate, or just learn more, please contact

Ross Girdler (PhD Candidate):

Email: rwg616@uowmail.edu.au

Mobile:

Information and Consent Forms

Survey Participant Information

This research project is being undertaken by Ross Girdler (PhD Candidate), Dr Shanaz Bakand, Dr Robyn Coman, and Dr Mim Fox, from the School of Health and Society at the University of Wollongong.

This research is concerned with helping people who are unable to return to their usual work as a result of injury.

We would appreciate your assistance in this research by answering some short questions about yourself. Your response will be completely anonymous unless you elect to give consent to providing us with your contact details. Any information you provide will be kept securely stored to ensure that everything you disclose remains absolutely confidential.

The next page gives you the opportunity of giving your consent. The third page contains the **questionnaire**.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Ross Girdler (rwg6l6@uowmail.edu.au). Thank you again for your invaluable assistance.

Survey Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research project being undertaken by Ross Girdler (PhD student), and Dr Shahnaz Bakand, Dr Robyn Coman, and Dr Mim Fox (PhD Supervisors), from the School of Health & Society, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong.

Study Overview

This anonymous survey is the first stage of a research investigation that aims to assist workers unable to return to their usual work as a result of injury.

The results from this anonymous survey should provide important insights about whether a person's identification with their pre-injury work may represent a barrier to them moving on to a **new occupation**.

The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete, and includes questions about your age, gender, education and employment

All of your data will be anonymous, and will be stored securely by the named researchers at the University of Wollongong. The findings of the research will be reported in publications and **conferences**.

Involvement in this research is voluntary, you are free to refuse to participate or, having consented, to withdraw your consent without refusal or withdrawal affecting your relationship with the **University of Wollongong**. **Please note that because this is an anonymous survey, it will not be possible to withdraw your data once you have completed the survey.**

Further research:

If you would like to be involved in the next stage of this research, you can choose to be re-directed to another site at the end of the survey where you can provide contact information. Your responses to this survey will remain anonymous

Interview Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY
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AUSTRALIA

Research Title:

“Investigating the Relationship Between Occupational Identity and Vocational Redirection following Work-Related Injuries”

Researchers:

Dr Robyn Coman (Chief Investigator), ph: (02) 4221 5348, e: rcoman@uow.edu.au

Dr Shahnaz Bakand, ph: (02) 4221 4794, e: sbakand@uow.edu.au

Dr Mim Fox, ph: (02) 4221 3779, e: mfox@uow.edu.au

Ross Girdler (Student), mob: e: rwg616@uowmail.edu.au

University:

University of Wollongong

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Health and Society

Research Aims:

Injuries can sometimes prevent a person from returning to their previous occupation, forcing career redirection to a new occupation. The aim of the proposed research is to examine how this process might be affected by a persistent identification with the pre-injury occupation.

Important Information:

Thank you for your interest in our research. We hope that this research will benefit people who are injured by improving the way we help them return to work. We welcome any questions you may

have concerning any aspect of this project. Please feel free to contact us should you require any further information using the contact details provided above. Should you wish to be a part of this research, please contact Mr Ross Girdler.

Participation involves being interviewed by our researchers on your experiences relevant to your working life. The interview will take approximately one hour. In order to achieve an accurate reflection of what you tell our researchers, the interview will be recorded using an audio device. It will then be transcribed by the researcher who will analyse the interview content and discuss the results with you to obtain any further insights that you can provide. The results of our analyses will be collected and submitted to the University of Wollongong in the form of a written thesis and an oral presentation, in support of a request for Mr Girdler to be awarded a PhD. It may also be submitted for publication in an academic Journal.

Interviews will be informal and conducted at a time and place convenient to the participant. The interviewer will avoid asking discomfoting questions or exploring any topic that is likely to cause distress.

Subject to the provisions of the relevant Commonwealth and State Government privacy legislation, the content of your interview will be confidential and no personal details will be shared with any person except those from the University of Wollongong directly involved in the research, unless unlawful not to do so (for example, if the participant discloses a criminal act, or an intention to cause harm to themselves or others). The recorded interview and the resulting transcript will be stored securely to eliminate the possibility that any unauthorised person gains access to it. On publication of the research, your identity will be protected and you will be anonymous.

Consenting to participate in our research is voluntary. If you agree to participate you may subsequently discontinue your participation at any stage prior to the submission of the resulting thesis and/or publication of the results. Should you choose to withdraw participation, your relationship with the University of Wollongong will not be affected in any way.

This research has been approved by a joint University of Wollongong and Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and Medical Health and Medical Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Protocol Number 2019/041). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, you can contact the University's Ethics Officer on (02) 4421 3386 or by email (aimee_wall@uow.edu.au, penny_potter@uow.edu.au).

Interview Participant Consent Form

Consent Form



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Project Title:

“Investigating the Relationship Between Occupational Identity and Vocational Redirection following Work-Related Injuries”

You are invited to participate in a research project being undertaken by Ross Girdler (PhD Candidate), Dr Robyn Coman, Dr Shahnaz Bakand and Dr Mim Fox from the University of Wollongong’s School of Health and Society.

By signing this consent form you are indicating that (please tick as required);

- you are a voluntary research participant,
- you confirm that you have read the written instructions issued to you,
- you are fully aware that your interview with the researchers will be recorded electronically,
- you are fully aware that the interview will then be transcribed,
- you are full aware that the transcript will subsequently be analysed,
- you are fully aware that the results may be published
- you understand that, subject to the provisions of Commonwealth and State privacy legislation, your identity will not be disclosed to any person unless they are part of the University of Wollongong and directly associated with the research,
- you understand that all personal data will be securely stored to prevent unauthorised access, and
- you understand that you may withdraw this consent at any time prior to publication.

I confirm that I have been given information about the research and had the opportunity to ask questions.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2: Study 1 (Survey) Documents

Validation of Survey Questionnaire

Background

This study is being undertaken as part of an (integrated) doctoral investigation of the concept of 'Occupational Identity'. The study will involve administration of an anonymous online questionnaire which has been designed to capture baseline data regarding occupational identity amongst adults of working age. The questionnaire will be administered using *Survey Monkey™* web-based software. People of working age will be invited to participate in the study via social media and/or snowballing. The questionnaire has been developed through an iterative multi-stage process with versions amended in response to review by the PhD supervisory team (Dr R Coman, Dr S Bakand and Dr M Fox) and piloting by nine academics within the School of Health & Society, University of Wollongong.

The general aim of this anonymous questionnaire is to gather the respondents' (non-identifiable) personal data which will then be analysed to determine the nature and/or the extent of its relationship with 'Occupational Identity'. The primary purpose is to explore this concept based on the methodology employed by Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014). Ulfsdotter Eriksson and Linde (2014) asked respondents whether, when describing their work, they used the term "I am an (occupation)" or "I work as an (occupation)", as an indicator of the presence or otherwise of an 'Occupational Identity'. The data was analysed with regard to the variables of age, gender, education level, social class and occupation. Findings supported the existence of an 'Occupational Identity' amongst participants from some groups of occupations, at some levels of training, and suggested it is more prevalent among male participants than females.

We are seeking your assistance, as an academic at the University of Wollongong, in establishing content validity of this anonymous questionnaire.

Please review the following questions and any additional information provided, and rank the suitability of the question for inclusion in the questionnaire.

Table A1: Summary of validation panel responses

Question No.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1				2	7
2				5	4
3				4	5
4				3	6
5		1		3	5
6				1	8
7				6	3
8		1	1	1	8
9	1			6	2
10		1		4	4

11		1	1	5	2
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Study 1 - Survey Questions

Question Number	Question
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1	What is your gender? Female Male Intersex/Indeterminate/Unspecified
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2	What is your age? 19 or younger 20-39 40-59 60 or older
----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------

3	What is the highest level of education that you have completed? Some high school but did not complete Year 12 Completed Year 12 TAFE or other Vocational Certificate TAFE or other Vocational Diploma University Graduate Post Graduate Degree
----------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4	Are you currently Not working Working in a permanent or long term job Working in casual, temporary, contract or other short term position
----------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

5	How many years have you worked in your usual occupation? Less than 2 years 2 years or more but less than 10 years 10 years or more
----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

6	What sector or industry do you work in? Clerical/Administrative/Business Sales or Marketing Hospitality Manual Work (mining, factory, construction or farm etc) or Cleaning Welfare, Human Services or Personal Care Transportation or Logistics Arts or Media Education or Vocational Training Hospital, Medical or Allied Health Information or Communication Technology Design, Engineering or Building Law Other
----------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

7	What is your main function in your usual occupation? Office duties Selling or marketing
----------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Serving customers in bars, restaurants, café etc
Other hospitality functions
Helping the aging, children, youth or people with a disability
Processing, assembling, packaging etc
Farming or mining etc
Driving
Other logistics
Operating Machinery
Trade services
Professional services (requiring professional registration or compulsory completion of tertiary studies)
Management

8 What is your usual occupation?

9 On the following scale, please indicate how much of 'who you are' is provided by the work you do? (Sliding scale)

My occupation is not at all a part of who I am (0)

I am totally defined by my occupation (7)

10 Imagine you are at a barbeque or other social gathering, meeting people for the first time. One of them asks you to tell them a little about yourself. They already know your name and you don't need to describe your appearance. Briefly, exactly what would you say? (Free text field)

11 Which of the following comes **closest** to describing your personality?

I'm a practical, realistic person and don't mind 'getting my hands dirty'

I'm a thinker who likes analysing and investigating complex, abstract things

I'm a creative, sensitive person interested in expressing myself artistically

I'm a sociable person who likes to be helpful to others

I'm assertive and self-confident, good at communicating what I want to get results

I'm a careful, persistent, methodical person who values accuracy and efficiency

Survey Occupational Categories

Category	ANZSCO Sub Major Group
Managers	11 (Chief Executives, General Managers and Legislators) 12 (Farmers and Farm Managers) 13 (Specialist Managers) 14 (Hospitality, Retail and Service Managers)
Education Professionals	24 (Education Professionals)
Health Professionals	25 (Health Professionals)
Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals	27 (Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals)
Other Professionals	21 (Arts and Media Professionals) 22 (Business, Human Resource and Marketing Professionals) 23 (Design, Engineering, Science and Transport Professionals) 26 (ICT Professionals)
Technicians, Trades and Other Skilled Workers	31 (Engineering, ICT and Science Technicians) 32 (Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers) 33 (Construction Trades Workers) 34 (Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers) 35 (Food Trades Workers) 36 (Skilled Animal and Horticulture Trades Workers) 39 (Other Technicians and Trades Workers)
Community Service Workers	41 (Health and Welfare Support Workers) 42 (Carers and Aids)
Hospitality, and Protective and Personal Service Workers	43 (Hospitality Workers) 44 (Protective Service Workers) 45 (Sports and Personal Service Workers)
Office Workers	51 (Office Managers and Program Administrators) 52 (Personal Assistants and Secretaries) 53 (General Clerical Workers) 54 (Inquiry Clerks and Receptionists) 55 (Numerical Clerks) 56 (Clerical and Office Support Workers) 59 (Other Clerical and Administrative Workers)
Sales Workers	61 (Sales Representatives and Agents) 62 (Sales Assistants and Salespersons) 63 (Sales Support Workers)
Plant Operators, Drivers, Warehouse Workers and Labourers	71 (Machinery and Stationary Plant Operators) 72 (Mobile Plant Operators) 73 (Road and Rail Drivers) 74 (Storepersons) 81 (Cleaners and Laundry Workers) 82 (Construction and Mining Labourers) 83 (Factory Process Workers) 84 (Farm, Forestry and Garden Workers) 85 (Food Preparation Assistants) 89 (Other Labourers)

Survey Sample Summary (n=336)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender (n=335)	Female	224	66.7
	Male	111	33.0
	Intersex/Indeterminate/Unspecified	0	0
	Missing	1	0.3
Age (n=336)	19 or under	2	0.6
	20-39	92	27.4
	40-59	191	56.8
	60 or over	51	15.2
	Missing	0	0
Highest qualification (n=335)	Did not complete Y12	25	7.4
	Completed Y12	21	6.3
	TAFE Certificate	42	12.5
	TAFE Diploma	43	12.8
	Graduate	109	32.4
	Post-Graduate	95	28.3
	Missing	1	0.3
Current employment status (n=334)	Not working	33	9.8
	Permanent	231	68.8
	Temporary or Casual	70	20.6
	Missing	2	0.6
Years in usual occupation (n=335)	Less than 2	43	12.8
	2 to 9	103	30.7
	10+	189	56.4
	Missing	1	0.3
Occupation Category (n=330)	Managers	52	15.8
	Education Professionals	35	10.6
	Health Professionals	38	11.5
	Legal/Social/Welfare Professionals	34	10.3
	Other Professionals	33	10.0
	Technical/Trade/Skilled Workers	13	3.9
	Community Service Workers	29	8.8
	Hospitality/Protective/Personal Service Workers	12	3.6
	Office Workers	45	13.6
	Sales Workers	8	2.4
	Plant Operator/Driver/Warehouse/Labourer	31	9.2
	Missing	6	1.8
Holland Personality Type (n=335)	Realistic	128	38.1
	Investigative	40	11.9
	Artistic	16	4.8
	Social	82	24.4
	Enterprising	37	11.0
	Conventional	32	9.5
	Missing	1	0.3

Appendix 3 – Study 2 (Interview) Documents

Sample of Interview Coding Sheet (initial coding)

SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES	Interview with Ella	EMERGENT THEMES
	<p>1. So Ella, thanks again for coming, and you've signed the consent form so we're right to go. Um, the first thing I do with people I interview is ask a couple of strange questions. Because I have this survey that I ask people to fill out. These are two of the questions from the survey and it's to gauge how much you associate with truck driving. So the first question is, you're at a barbeque, a social occasion, you don't know anyone there, you're chatting away and one of them says to you, Angela, tell us a bit about yourself. What would you say?</p>	
The Danger	<p>2. I'm a truck driver! <i>[Laughs]</i> 3. You'd say that straight off?</p>	<p>Why laugh? Nerves? Shock value – getting attention?</p>
Gender issues	<p>4. Umm, well, beforehand I used to say I drive explosives for a living. I drive round and deliver explosives for a living and they'd get pretty taken aback by that. 5. They would!</p>	<p>"girl" Shock value. Reflected glory from the load. Why is distance impressive? Bravery gender related and load – equal?</p>
The Danger	<p>6. And they'd go well, you know, you're a girl, you're out there, you travel a lot of distances and I wouldn't be able to do that job or anything like that, and geez you're brave to do that sorta stuff, and what happens if you have a lightening storm, and then it sort of snowballs from there. 7. Yeah that's quite a conversation to have yeah <i>[laugh]</i>. 8. Yeah so basically being quite a few years ago the only female in Australia that actually did drive around explosives in the truck to deliver to mine sites and so forth, it was, I was quite, you know, proud of doing a job like that and getting out there and being brave enough to be sleeping in the truck on my own and carrying that kind of stuff as well, so.</p>	<p>Uniqueness Pride Bravery from sleeping alone and carrying explosives – equal?</p>
Attachment to driving	<p>9. Yeah. The words you use, are important to me, first off you said I am a truck driver, but then later you said I work, or I drive or, and there's a kind of a difference to me between someone that says I AM an occupation and someone that says I do like, I AM a teacher or I TEACH. So when you use the first words I am a truck driver, is that what you would have said? 10. I would have said I drove explosives for a living. 11. Drove explosives okay. The next question is a scale I use from zero to seven. Zero is I'm not at all, my work is not at all a part of who I am, and seven is totally defined by my occupation. Where do you fit on that scale? 12. <i>[long pause]</i> As a truck driver, I love the job I mean, that is something that I came to (town name) to do, because I wasn't able to get anything over in the east, so I came here to. 13. How much of a part of you was it though? 14. Oh, big part. 15. Big part? 16. Yeah. 17. Can you give it a number? 18. Yeah, six? 19. Six. That's pretty high. 20. Yeah.</p>	<p>I do I do Limited opportunities due to gender I love the job (present tense) 6/7 = high self identity, why I do? Similar to survey.</p>