Leaning towards Collegiality: Narratives of University Communities of Practice

by

Juliana Ryan, BA, LLB, Grad Dip (Legal Practice), M (Comn&MedSt)

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List of abbreviations

AUQA: Australian Universities Quality Agency

ALTC: Australian Learning and Teaching Council

CoP: Community of practice

CoPs: Communities of practice

HR: human resources

OLT: Office for Learning and Teaching (formerly ALTC)


TEQSA: Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative in a study of communities of practice (CoPs) established to enhance Australian university teaching and learning. CoPs of this kind are a relatively recent phenomenon in higher education, where the term is variously used to describe a social learning process and a strategic knowledge management tool. In this thesis, CoP is conceptualised as a social process of learning which involves belonging, becoming, experience and doing.

I argue that many accounts of higher education CoPs focus on the explanatory value of CoP as an approach rather than investigating the value of CoP participation. This study focuses on participatory value because participation is a precondition for learning, meaning and identity formation in CoPs. Participatory value is therefore a relevant and useful lens through which to consider these processes.

Methodologically, this study is distinctive in combining discourse and narrative to investigate the participatory value of CoPs. Discourse is conceptualised in ‘Big D’ terms, encompassing social and cultural dimensions, and as a form of practice which shapes meaning. Narrative is understood as a way of thinking and knowing. Through the concept of narrativity (the storying of identity and subjective and inter-subjective meaning), narrative is also understood as a form of practice. This hybrid approach reflects the origins of the study and my ambiguous and mobile positionality as a CoP co-facilitator and researcher. I first became involved with CoPs by writing professional biographies of members of one of the CoPs in this study. This led to a role as co-facilitator of that CoP. As a non-teaching staff member, I was limited in the extent to which I could participate in the teaching and learning practice domain of the CoP. Through narrative I was able to connect with participants as a practitioner and contribute to the development of the CoP. By revealing intersections between lived experience and discourse as sources of meaning in CoPs, narrative also helped me to shape the distinctive methodology I have used in this study.

Where CoP accounts consider participation, they have generally focused on a single CoP in one institution. This study focuses on CoPs in three Australian universities.
presenting a collective story of these CoPs, this thesis interweaves ontological narratives which seek to express individual identities and experiences (for researcher and participants), and an epistemological (researcher) narrative which aims to contextualise ontological narratives temporally and socio-culturally. As a research narrative, the thesis entwines the ontological and epistemological narratives with national policy, institutional strategy and the literature on higher education CoPs.

This study adds to the literature by revealing the significance of discourse for higher education CoPs, as a form of practice and a factor which can affect participatory experience and, potentially, the viability of CoPs. The thesis concludes with an adaptive model of higher education CoPs which builds on existing work by describing the relationship between CoP discourse, epistemology and typology to inform future understandings and development of higher education CoPs.
Because they bring you together … You know that the goal of them is to come along and interact and do, and it just means you do it. Otherwise you could sit in your office and not do it… So it just gives it … a playground for it to happen in … (Lyndall, member-facilitator, Horizon University)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and context
Using community of practice (CoP) as a conceptual framework with extensions discussed below, this thesis considers the relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative in communities established to enhance teaching and learning at three Australian universities. Emerging in Australian universities in the mid-2000s, such communities have become a means to foster professional learning and to recognise and reward university teaching (for early examples, see Lawrence & Sankey (2008), Hort et al. (2008) and McDonald & Star (2008)). The growing incidence and profile of cultivated teaching and learning communities in Australian universities was given impetus by a focus on collaboration and funding provided by the former national Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) and its successor, the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) (McDonald et al. 2012). As will be explored in Chapter 3, both organisations have had formative roles in Australian university teaching and learning policy and practice. All three universities in this study received some ALTC funding related to CoP development.

The majority of cultivated Australian university teaching and learning communities have been developed under the banner of community of practice (CoP). In general, such communities are centrally coordinated and resourced; endorsed and often championed by Senior Executive; interdisciplinary; and organised around topics or cohorts. Currently they include university-wide and faculty- or School-based communities such as those established at Central Queensland University (Reaburn, Donovan & McDonald 2012), Flinders University (2013), Griffith University (2013) and University of Southern Queensland (2013). At two of the three universities involved in my study, CoP was used to conceptualise, describe and
implement teaching and learning communities. Although the term CoP was not used to label the initiative at the third university, the concept was influential. I have chosen to refer to the communities investigated in this study as ‘focus communities’ in general, rather than CoPs, to reflect the variety of applications (or variants) which I found, within and alongside, the formal CoP initiatives at each site.

To label a group a CoP is far from definitive. CoP is a mobile and ambiguous concept which has evolved in different ways, generating several influential versions. Much of the literature on the concept of CoP is ‘unclear or muddled’, with definitions of CoP and organisational work group often confused (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 15). CoPs are popularly defined as groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and together learn how to do it better (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 4). This definition, adopted in two of the three university sites in this study (Discovery University 2013 and Horizon University 2013), has an intuitive appeal which smooths differences and complexities that are associated with the evolution of the concept and its different applications. CoP is now variously understood and applied in corporations, industry and higher education as a situated learning heuristic, to describe organically emerging (and other) learning communities and as a strategic knowledge management tool. As this thesis will explore, the definition and meaning of teaching and learning-related CoPs cannot be generalised, particularly in hyper-discursive university settings.

‘Umbrella’ use of the term CoP can limit its usefulness at both functional and interpretive levels (Storberg-Walker 2008, p. 556). Further, as Cumming suggests, ‘...promoting an uncritical view of CoPs can risk reducing theoretical understandings to simplistic descriptions or slogans’ (2008). It also risks reification of a concept which was originally intended as an analytical tool, not a structure or entity (Cumming 2008). It is therefore important, as Cox (2005) proposes, to anchor usage and discussion of CoP to a particular version. My understanding and use of CoP as part of the conceptual framework for this thesis begins with what I call the ‘social identity version’ of CoP. Wenger expounded this in his second major work on communities of practice, Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Identity (1999). In the social identity version of CoP, learning is a social process structured by the interaction of three elements: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. Cumming sums up this interaction well: ‘...on the basis of a common interest(s), members of a CoP interact and participate in meaningful activities that are embedded in socio-cultural historical contexts’ (2008). These elements and their interaction will be considered in Chapter 2 as part of discussion of the conceptual framework for this study.

Learning, in the social identity version of CoP, involves belonging (community), becoming (identity), experience (meaning) and doing (practice) (Wenger 1999, p. 5). In this thesis I will explore the relationship between professional learning, community (belonging), identity (becoming) and narrative (meaning and practice). By linking both meaning and practice with narrative, I depart from the social identity version of CoP, which privileges lived experience over discourse (including narrative) as a source of meaning and identity-in-practice (or competence). Wenger claims that:

The experience of identity in practice is a way of being in the world. It is not equivalent to a self-image; it is not, in its essence, discursive or reflective ...who we are lies in the way we live day to day, not just in what we think or say about ourselves, though that is of course part (but only part) of how we live. (1999)

As I will briefly discuss below, and explore further in Chapter 4, my study has a poststructuralist orientation which means that I do not share Wenger’s view that phenomena have an essential reality. Further, his proposition runs counter to my experience of CoPs. The narratives which form a significant part of the data in my study suggest that discourse, including narrative, is both a source of meaning and a form of practice which can shape meaning and identity formation in CoPs. By discourse, I mean a way of representing the world and fixing meaning through mobile relations (Phillips & Jørgenson 2002, p. 143). As will be elaborated in Chapter 4, my analytic focus is on broader, Big D discourses, which encompass social and cultural dimensions (Gee 2010).

In this thesis I interweave my own and others’ individual experiences of CoPs as a ‘collective story’ of a social category (Richardson 1997, p. 32), Australian
university teaching and learning CoPs, to present a reflective account based upon stories of lived experience. In this collective story I combine participants’ stories, national policy, institutional strategy and the literature on higher education CoPs.

As I will explore further below, participation and identity formation in the CoPs in this study are shaped by discursive practice (the everyday practice of meaning-making) and discourse-in-practice (the meaning-making horizon) (Holstein & Gubrium 2000). I also consider the role of narrativity, by which I mean the storying of identity and subjectivity and inter-subjectivity (McQuillan 2000, p. 8).

Despite its limitations, CoP has an appeal which goes beyond its conceptual elasticity. As Cox suggests, CoP is ‘an idea that people are attracted to, for its humanizing of workplace relations’ (2005, p. 534). I have touched on this in the title of my thesis. ‘Leaning towards collegiality’ describes participants’ impulse towards social connection in the workplace, understandable given how much time so many spend at work.

**Origins of the research**

This thesis began with my own experience of CoP involvement, which shaped the methodology and has contributed to the data in this study. In mid-2008, I was seconded to a university teaching and learning centre to write short professional biographies of university teachers. These academics had been recognised as ‘excellent’ through national and institutional awards and grants, and consequently invited to become members of an institutionally established ‘network’ of excellent teachers facilitated through the university teaching and learning centre. That group is one of the CoPs in this study.

Researching and writing those biographies proved to be one of the most enjoyable paid jobs I have ever had. It integrated my personal and professional lives by enabling narrative practice around something I valued, and it legitimised my ongoing love of glimpsing others’ lives. One of my favourite small pleasures is to go walking, in good canine or human company, just before dark. In the gloaming, before people pull down their blinds or curtains, there are occasional quiet moments
of casual intimacy for a passer-by; temporary opportunities to glimpse, and (re-)imagine other people’s lives. Writing up the biographies felt similar. I scheduled interviews, took my list of questions and briefly looked into the lives of a group of academics. Their enthusiasm for teaching connected with my curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Exposed to their reflective practice (a language I didn’t have at the time), I mirrored their reflectiveness and felt energised by the transformative potential of learning which they embodied.

My secondment ended, those biographies became an artefact and, due to staff changes, the opportunity to continue working with that group in a support role emerged. Trying to understand my new role and its context, I read a report about a similar strategic community at another Australian university (Hort et al. 2008), and formally encountered the concept of CoP for the first time. Later that year I enrolled in the PhD which has generated this thesis. I had previously considered undertaking a PhD in creative writing at some time in the future, having studied creative writing and published some short fiction. Beginning the study represented in this thesis brought my personal and professional lives closer than ever before. This connection was affirmed by my findings, which showed that the personal and professional are generally intertwined, particularly when it comes to the transformative domain of learning. Further, because of my background and interests, this study and thesis are infused with narrative.

It is now more than two years since I moved into a different role and ended my professional involvement with higher education CoPs. As I have moved towards increasingly managerial roles, I have also travelled towards an identity as a becoming-scholar, starting with investigations of the CoPs in this study. In Chapter 4, I explore the implications of my professional history as it relates to positionality and delimits this study (Sikes & Potts 2008). The collective story presented in Chapter 5 includes reflections on my CoP involvement, its contribution to the development of the study, and discussion of encounters and connections formed with other CoP participants.
Aims and significance

Despite a growing literature on higher education CoPs, there is relatively little published on the learning and identity-forming processes they foster, particularly not in terms of the ways participants experience these and the value they place on their CoP involvement. By examining the participatory value of the focus CoPs in terms of the relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative, this study takes a distinctive and useful focus. As described below, this study also builds on previous work through its multi-institutional scope, distinctive perspective and innovative methodology.

A focus on participatory value

The idea of participation as a source of learning, meaning, identity and competence is central to the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999), which has had a formative effect on the development of many higher education teaching and learning communities, including those in this study. Many previous accounts of higher education CoPs, particularly in Australia, have focused on the explanatory value of CoP rather than investigating the experience and implications of CoP participation itself. This is despite the fact that participation is essential for learning, meaning and identity formation (in the form of developing competence) to occur in CoPs. There are some exceptions, such as Churchman (2006), McDonald et al. (2008) and Warhurst (2006), but they differ in scope from my study by focusing on the participatory value of a single CoP.

In the social identity version of CoPs participation is central to learning (Boud & Middleton 2003) and identity formation is linked to competence (Cousin & Deepwell 2005, p. 62). Developing competence as a practitioner depends on participating in a CoP in the recognised way: ‘Engagement in practice give us certain experiences of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participants’ (Wenger 1999, p. 150). Along with ‘reification’, participation defines and describes CoP experience. According to Wenger, participation is how we recognise ourselves in others, whereas reification is how we project ourselves onto the world. Through reification, experience is made tangible in objects (Wenger 1999, p. 58). Participation defines experience, learning,
meaning and identity in CoPs. This study usefully applies the key concept of participation to examine and describe the value and implications of CoP involvement based on participants’ stories of their experiences.

Previous CoP accounts have often focused on group-level description and analysis (for example, Boud & Middleton 2003; Hammond 2009; Heath and Leiman 2012; Luzeckyj et al. 2012 Hort et al. 2008, Kimble, Hildreth, & Bourdon 2008; McDonald and Star 2008; Viskovic 2006). This reflects a tendency to reify CoPs, by focusing on group structure rather than process, even when CoP is presented as an approach rather than as a tool. My study examines individuals’ accounts of learning and identity and explores the implications of these in the collective story presented in Chapter 5.

**Contribution to the field**

Most previous higher education CoP studies and publications in Australia have focused on a single university site, a notable exception being a recent national study of the facilitator role (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a). My study involved 33 CoP members and facilitators in three Australian universities, located in three different States. Delimitations and limitations are discussed in Chapter 4, including those relating to the participant profile. In being predominantly female, participants reflected the gendered Australian academic workforce, particularly in university teaching and learning (Southwell & Morgan 2012, pp. 9-12), and the profile of Australian university CoP facilitators (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012c). The three universities were varied, in terms of their history, strategic focus and location. One was metropolitan (‘Discovery University’), one regional (‘Horizon University’) and one multi-campus, with both metropolitan and regional sites (‘Pioneer University’). To de-identify the sites, I have used these pseudonyms or removed identifying details from all related references. Full references are available on request. Further information about the three university sites, including the basis for their pseudonyms, is provided in Chapter 5.

There is still only limited evidence about the benefits of CoPs in higher education. In a review of the literature around academic development, Southwell and Morgan
found some positive shifts in attitudes, skills and satisfaction reported by participants in formalised situated learning groups, or CoPs, which they referred to as ‘learning communities’ or ‘quality learning circles’, but little evidence of impact on teaching practice or student learning (2009, p. 53). Boud and Middleton found some evidence of informal workplace learning at the group level in a study of work groups at a Vocational Education and Training provider but concluded that such groups, although they showed some CoP characteristics (with reference to the social identity version) ‘could not generally be regarded as communities of practice, or components of a community of practice, even with respect to some of their more major roles’ (2003, p. 200). Subsequent literature, with some exceptions, including those noted earlier, has also focused on the explanatory value of CoP for situated professional learning (for example, Heath et al. (2013)) and as a site for distributed leadership and leadership capacity building (for example, McDonald, Star, Nagy, Burch, Cox, & Margetts (2012)). My study adds to the evidence of CoP benefits and impact, particularly as these relate to identify-in-practice formation, or competence. In this sense the study relates to shifts in attitudes and skills referred to by Southwell and Morgan (2009). Changes to teaching practice and student outcomes are beyond the scope of this study because it only considers the participatory value of the focus communities.

**A distinctive perspective**

Most of the literature on higher education CoPs is written by academics who have either intended to foster a CoP or come to conceptualise a group they were involved with as a CoP. Bruner argues the importance of knowing the author’s point of view in constructing meaning from narrative (1996, p. 138). I bring a distinctive perspective to this study which is reflected in the narrative represented in this thesis. The majority of those involved in Australian university CoP facilitation are academic staff in continuing roles (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012c). My CoP involvement was not as an academic but as a ‘blended professional’, a hybrid role which Whitchurch, in a UK study, describes as occupying a ‘third space’ between academic and professional domains (2008, p. 27). My CoP involvement took me beyond ‘the traditional academic-general staff divide’ in Australian universities to a space between the two related to professional development in higher education.
Occupying this emergent space meant that I was geared towards hybridity and ambiguity; alienated by dichotomies such as academic or professional, collegiality or managerialism; and the co-option of terms such as ‘quality’ and ‘excellence’ to one exclusive meaning. This will become evident in the discussion and findings presented in this thesis.

The hybridity of my role also had implications for my CoP practice and methodology. I had to find an answer to the question how, as a non-teacher and non-academic, I could contribute to fostering participation, engagement and value for members of a teaching and learning CoP? Having little capacity to contribute to teaching and learning practice development in the community, I found narrative was a way to participate in, and contribute to, the CoP as a practitioner. Narrative is also significant in my methodology, as theory, data source and the means of representing this study.

**An innovative methodology**

In generating, analysing and writing up related data, I have adopted a distinctive approach which refers to narratives of participation to examine and represent the individual and collective value of CoPs. I follow Richardson (1997, p. 65) in drawing on and narratively representing lived experience (of professional learning and identity development in the focus communities) as a way to explore the complexities of a concept (higher education CoP). Richardson connects her development of a writing-based methodology with the transformation of her identity from ‘sociologist’ to ‘writer’ (1997, p. 2). Richardson’s methodology has strongly influenced my own, which evolved with my development from writer to CoP facilitator and becoming-researcher. With the writing of this thesis, I have become a hyphenation of all three.

My methodology could also be seen as a hyphenation of three aspects – a poststructuralist orientation; narrative (as data, theory and representational form); and Big D discourse analysis (Gee 2010). This hybrid approach responds to the complexity of interpreting experiences of professional learning and identity in workplace settings, as I will explore further in Chapter 4.
My study is poststructuralist in orientation because it rejects the possibility that there is one authoritative reality or truth (Belsey 2002, p. 94), that truth is essential or stable (Williams 2005, pp. 2-3) and that there is an ultimate, and unified, form of reason (Peters 1996, p. 2). This orientation is reflected in the research questions, which were framed open-endedly and anticipated multiplicity and variety.

**Research questions**

The research questions were:

1. What are the notions of value or benefit reported by participating community members and facilitators?

2. What do these notions of value or benefit say about community, professional learning, knowing, identity, and teaching and learning practices in Australian universities?

3. Do the reported values and benefits seem to support the propagation of communities of practice in higher education? If so, how and why? Which model/typology?

I put these questions in the plural, in recognition of the potential variety of the processes and experiences which they sought to elicit. In the course of looking for a conceptual model that would reflect this dynamic and its different contexts, I adopted the metaphor of kaleidoscope.
Kaleidoscope as a metaphor to live and work by

Influenced by Lakoff and Johnson’s account of the pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday thinking and action (1980, p. 3), I have adopted the figure of the kaleidoscope as a metaphor to ‘live by’ while undertaking this study and representing it in this thesis. Kaleidoscope is a ‘structuring metaphor’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 13) which describes the dynamic relations between the contextual factors and theories that frame and position the study, and their implications and application in the methodology described in Chapter 4. I have also used the kaleidoscope metaphor as a framework for the collective story and an adaptive model for higher education CoPs, which I present in the concluding chapter to this thesis.

In choosing, and working, with the figure of kaleidoscope, I was drawn to the potential of metaphor to open up multiple meanings and make such meanings tangible. As Ferguson, Dixon, Hay, White and Moss state, ‘We use metaphors because of their elusive, yet practical nature. They make concrete that which is abstract’ (2004, p. 13). Just like the kaleidoscope itself, a metaphor-in-action forms and re-forms through different associations, to shift and expand perspective.

In the context of teacher education, Wang, Lin, Spalding, Klecka and Odell work the kaleidoscope metaphor deftly:
The kaleidoscope viewer puts one end of the tube to her eye, points the other toward a light source, then rotates the tube, producing colourful symmetrical patterns formed by the tiny, tumbling objects inside. Beautiful through they are, these patterns are evanescent, disappearing with the twist of the wrist. The kaleidoscope maker cannot predict what patterns might emerge from the individual bits of coloured glass, beads, or stones placed inside the tube. (2011, p. 331)

The kaleidoscope holds continuity and variety. It enables and contains a range of possible patterns. Yet by opening up particular kinds of potential meanings, a metaphor closes off others. In this study of higher education CoPs I use metaphor to make processes explicit, to the extent it is possible given the limits of both researcher and language. This risks providing false closure in order to reconcile difference and respond to the ‘real world’ of experience, a practice MacLure usefully cautions against (2006, p. 730). Although it has the potential to offer mobile views, the kaleidoscope can only offer a single view at a time. This is fixed, however temporarily, according to the point of view of the person looking into the kaleidoscope. Further, a kaleidoscope is biased towards pattern-making and symmetry. While lived experience is the focus of my study, my poststructuralist orientation rejects the notion of an ultimate reality grounded in lived experience (or any other phenomenon). Like Richardson I recognise that there is a difference between the way I theorise lived experience (as mobile and subjective) and the way I experience it (as knowable, meaningful and tellable) and represent it in this thesis as a knowable and tellable collective story (1997, p. 65).

The kaleidoscope brings the literal and metaphorical together because it encapsulates mobility, but by being ephemeral, resists closure. A kaleidoscope can only ever offer a glimpse. The patterns it offers vary with point of view and individual gaze, and in the ever-varying combination of its parts in motion. I offer this thesis for kaleidoscopic reading.
Outline of thesis

Chapter 2: Conceptualising the focus communities
In the next chapter I present a conceptual framework for investigating the communities in this study. This framework encompasses CoP, discourse, narrative and epistemology (how we know what we know and how we can justify this as knowledge, (Audi 2010)) as concepts, lenses and analytical tools for undertaking this study. After discussing CoP theory I describe how I extend the social identity version of CoP through conceptualisation of discourse as a form of practice to enable understanding of the relationship between identity, narrative and meaning-making in the focus communities.

Chapter 3: Putting the focus communities in context
In Chapter 3 I consider the higher education context in which the focus communities have evolved. I outline policy reforms and complexities related to the multiple discourses which shape higher education, and university teaching and learning. I then consider applications of CoP in higher education with reference to a number of recent studies.

Chapter 4: Turning the kaleidoscope: research design and methodology
In this chapter I orientate my research as qualitative, practice-based, poststructural and narrative. I position my study as ‘multiperspectival’ (Phillips & Jørgenson 2002) and discuss methodological tensions associated with working on the ‘borderlands’ of poststructural and narrative research (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007). I conclude that these tensions are negotiable and generative for my study, drawing on the example of Søreide, whose multiperspectival study of teacher identity shows how narrative and discourse combine in the development of teacher identity (2006). I propose that my multiperspectival approach is apt, given my combined interest in lived experience as expressed in Big D discourse (Gee 2010) and individual, embodied narratives, as well as the complex contexts in which the focus communities are situated. I describe my process of data analysis and justify my research design with reference to voice and representation among other
considerations, noting delimitations and limitations of the study. I consider my positionality as a researcher and its implications, and discuss the ethical considerations and choices that permeated every stage of the study, particularly in relation to the representation of findings in Chapter 5.

**Chapter 5: Cultivating university teaching and learning CoPs: A dance in four parts**

In this chapter I present the collective story of the focus communities. This focuses on ‘dance’ in two respects. Firstly, dance describes the negotiated relationship between the focus communities and their institutions. Dance also describes Big D Discourse as a mobile process of meaning-making and identification involving specific words, actions, feelings, values, tools, technologies, places and times (Gee 2010, p. 178). In presenting the collective CoP story, I interweave a first-person ontological researcher narrative with a third-person epistemological narrative that relates the CoP literature to data analysis and findings. I present site-specific stories and findings before concluding the chapter with comparative and summative findings linked back to my research questions. I present my key finding that discourse, surrounding and within CoPs, is a significant factor in shaping the participatory value, and thus the potential viability, of such communities.

**Chapter 6: Between a map and a kaleidoscope: findings and further lines of enquiry**

In the final chapter of this thesis, I revisit the significance of discourse in the focus communities and findings. After noting relevant delimitations and limitations of my study, I conclude that strategic teaching and learning CoPs have potential as spaces where collegial professional learning can flourish. I also find that the social identity version of CoP (Wenger, 1999) is potentially useful in higher education, as an approach (for example, see McDonald et al. (2012)). Further, my findings reveal some of the tensions and stresses of contemporary university contexts reported in the literature, and indicate that these both motivate and hinder the realisation of strategic teaching and learning communities. I note some of the challenges for fostering strategic teaching and learning CoPs, suggesting these may have been under-reported in the higher education literature, before offering my model of
higher education CoPs as a heuristic for adaptation in the future development of such communities. My model builds on previous work by adding discourse to typology and epistemology as a significant consideration in understanding and developing teaching and learning CoPs. In the model, I position discourse in terms of Big D discourse (Gee 2010) and as a form of practice (Holstein & Gubrium 2000). I draw on previous higher education CoP typologies (McDonald et al. (2012) and McDonald, Star and Margetts (2012a) and epistemologies (Amin & Roberts (2008) and Lindkvist (2005)). I conclude by noting the kaleidoscopic nature of this thesis as a situated and temporary glimpse into the focus communities.

Summary

In this chapter I have introduced the scope, purpose and aims of my study and proposed its significance and contribution to research into higher education CoPs. I have positioned the contribution of my study in terms of my distinctive perspective and involvement with CoPs and my methodology, and introduced the metaphor of kaleidoscope, which has structured my thinking and the development of my study and thesis. I have outlined the content of the chapters that make up this thesis.

The structure of this thesis and my adoption of a working metaphor for undertaking this study and writing up this thesis suggest formalism. In practice my approach has been more fluid. I have been guided by Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘pragmatic’ philosophy throughout, always asking ‘… does it work?’ in preference to ‘is it true?’ (Massumi 1994). In the next chapter I explore the conceptual framework for investigating the focus communities, including the truths, ways of knowing, being and meaning-making which shape them.
Chapter 2: Conceptualising the focus communities

This chapter presents the conceptual framework for investigating the communities in this study. This conceptual framework combines CoP, discourse, narrative and epistemology as concepts, perspectives and analytical tools. I trace the evolution of CoP across several influential versions before considering the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999), which is the basis for my conceptualisation of the focus communities. After discussing relevant strengths and gaps in the social identity version of CoP, I describe extensions in relation to narrative, discourse and practice, which I used to explore the relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative in the focus communities. The application of the conceptual framework in research design and methodology is described in Chapter 4. An overview of the scope of the literature review which underpins this chapter and the next is included as Appendix A on page 279.

CoP: an evolving concept

Tracing the evolution of the CoP concept is useful in two ways. It enables a perspective on the range and limitations of the concept. More importantly, it shows a shift from a focus on learning as a situated and social process and CoPs as spaces for this, to learning as a technology and CoPs as tools for this. Elements of both are evident to varying extents in the focus communities, as will be elaborated in Chapter 5.

As I noted in the introduction, Cox (2005) usefully illustrates how ambiguity around CoP can be attributed to incongruence in the most influential version of CoPs, on which most of the literature is based. He finds that CoP is variously used to describe how learning is situated and socially constructed and as a label for informal, organisationally supported groups for sharing knowledge and learning (Cox 2005, p. 527).
Comparatively evaluating early CoP versions, Cox (2005) finds they focus on learning as situated, social and identity forming (Lave & Wenger 1991); CoPs as a site for new forms of work practice shared through storytelling (Brown & Duguid 1991); and social identity formation as a process which occurs through multi-membership of different CoPs (Wenger 1999). Cox suggests that while these three accounts share a view of meaning as locally and socially constructed and identity as core to learning, they diverge significantly in the way they conceptualise community, learning, power, change, formality and diversity (2005, p. 528). Cox (2005) also considers a fourth influential work on CoPs, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). While this shares structuring elements (community, knowledge domain and practice) with earlier versions, it departs from these in its formulation of CoPs as a strategic knowledge management tool (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). It is this most recent version of CoP which is represented in much of the literature in organisational studies and business. Although some have rejected its application in higher education because of the distinctive nature of academic culture and work practices (Churchman 2005; Nagy & Burch 2009) and on the basis that it primarily serves managerial interests (Herbert 2005), this version of CoP has some currency in Australian university CoPs, as will be explored in Chapters 3 and 5.

Cox finds more differences than commonalities across the different CoP versions, in relation to ‘situated negotiation of meaning and the importance of identity in learning’ (2005, p. 536). He suggests that this divergence relates to ambiguities in conceptualisations of community and practice, and links ambiguity in the concept of community as a factor in the fertility of the CoP concept. Cox also emphasises the importance of linking CoP conceptualisation to a version (2005, p. 536). While I agree with, and apply, this approach in my study, as I will discuss below, ambiguities associated with the conceptualisation of both community and practice occur within CoP versions as well as across them. Even when CoPs affiliate with the same CoP version, as is the case in this study, the lived experiences and perceptions of value which participants assign to their community involvement can vary considerably. Consequently, in this study I use the term variant to describe and characterise the focus communities, as applications of CoP.
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUALISING THE FOCUS COMMUNITIES

CoP origins and development

Tracing the lineage of CoP as one of four contemporary practice-based schools of thought, Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow identify symbolic interactionism as a major influence on CoP thinking. They propose this because of a shared perspective of knowledge as being social, that is, based on and accessed through, interactions determined by applied meaning interpreted in a given environment (2003, p. 10). In particular, they attribute a symbolic interactionist perspective to Wenger’s earlier CoP accounts (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003, p. 12).

The concept of CoP originated (Lave & Wenger 1991) as a Critical theory of learning responding to ‘functionalist’ classrooms where learning was decontextualised from its use and seeking to ‘legitimate different knowledges’ (Creese 2005, p. 58). I will refer to Lave and Wenger’s account of CoP as the ‘situated learning version’ because it emphasises the importance of context in learning, which is explained as a process of enculturation through participation in a community. The situated learning version of CoP can be characterised as a Critical theory because of its questioning of accepted educational theory (Bronner 2011, p. 1) and emancipatory impulse to transform ‘everyday life and individual experience’ (Bronner 2011, p. 6). In the introduction to this thesis I described my approach to this study as poststructuralist, a position that will be elaborated in Chapter 4. This raises the question how a poststructuralist study can engage with a Critical theory. As will also be elaborated in Chapter 4, this is a multiperspectival study (Phillips & Jørgenson 2002) which traverses philosophical borders (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007). My poststructuralist orientation is compatible with Critical theory to the extent that both interpretive approaches question the given. An important departure point is that Critical theory rests on the notion that phenomena have an essential reality. As will be explored below, because of my poststructuralist leanings I do not share this belief. Consequently, I have extended Wenger’s accounts of practice and identity formation in CoPs to emphasise the significance of discourse (including narrative) as a significant and influential factor which constructs both practice and identity.

Linguists Barton and Tusting (2005) trace the development of the CoP concept. They critique aspects which they find ‘slippery and elusive’ and lacking what they
see as the critical edge of the situated learning version, but also recognise the strengths of the subsequent social identity version on which they focus, with supplementation (Barton & Tusting 2005, p. 6). Barton and Tusting link the original situated learning version of CoP to late 20th century developments in Psychology whereby social context and practice were used to supplement the limits of strictly cognitive frameworks and thinking was conceptualised as a practical and situated activity (2005, p. 4). According to Barton and Tusting, Lave extended the conceptual connection between thinking and practice by characterising thinking as distributed (2005, p. 5). The situated learning version (Lave & Wenger 1991) further developed this connection through the concept of CoP to describe learning as a form of participation in activities (Barton & Tusting 2005, p. 5). Barton and Tusting also identify complementary developments linking guided participation with learning communities and human development respectively (2005, p. 5). More recently, Lave has continued to develop conceptual connections between subjectivity, identity and participation in practice as, for example, in her work investigating social identity formation as a form of practice within a community of old British ‘port’ families in Portugal (2001).

Hughes, Jewson and Unwin also emphasise the significance of the situated learning version of CoP in tracing the concept’s origins and development (2007, p. 3). They credit it with generating a paradigm shift in the study of learning, from an individual process of knowledge acquisition to a social account in which participation was the means for learning (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin 2007, p. 3). In keeping with their Critical orientation, Hughes, Jewson and Unwin link situated learning to a philosophical tradition harking back to the Enlightenment era through Rousseau and his focus on experience as a basis for children’s meaning-making in the world. Drawing a line of development from Dewey’s work which linked learning to ‘real life’ experience, Hughes, Jewson and Unwin position the situated learning version as an extension of Ilich’s critique of the irrelevance of education to everyday life and Freire’s rejection of ‘bankrupt’ educational models whereby students were seen as empty vessels to be filled (2007, p. 4). Hughes, Jewson and Unwin view the situated learning version as both an analytical tool and a model for an ideal of learning (2007, p. 6). They trace the further evolution of the concept in several
influential versions, noting the variety of CoP approaches and applications (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin 2007, p. 4). I will now provide an overview of these influential CoP versions.

**The situated learning version**
In the situated learning version of CoP (Lave & Wenger 1991), community is characterised as a set of relations among people, action and the world. Participation in community is essential for enculturation and knowledge generation: ‘A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage’ (Lave & Wenger 1991, p 98). According to Contu and Willmott, this is the ‘enduring conceptual legacy’ of the situated learning version, and a significant contribution because it made visible learning that was marginalised in organisational learning theory (2000, p. 272).

**The social identity version**
Building on the concept of situated learning expounded by Lave and Wenger (1991), the social identity of CoP is principally concerned with learning as a social process, which encompasses belonging (community), becoming (identity), experience (meaning) and doing (practice) (Wenger 1999, p. 5). Community and practice are interrelated and interdependently defined. Wenger proposes that ‘practice is the source of coherence of a community’ and defines three dimensions in which community and practice are entwined: engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (1999, p. 72).

The social identity version of CoP is a ‘tightly knit’, ‘affect-laden’ social structure amounting to ‘dense relationships of mutuality’ and a ‘high degree’ of shared understandings and shared repertoire (Lindkvist 2005, p. 1194). Further, it seems to need a ‘significant amount’ of face-to-face encounters and an ‘extended’ time period of ‘local interaction’ among those practising together, ‘without being subjected to outsiders or hierarchical requests’ (Lindkvist 2005, p. 1195).

Wenger expands the reach of community in CoP through the concept of constellations which join practices across CoPs. Constellations are characterised by
shared historical roots and related enterprises; linked by a common cause or belong to a common institution; share similar conditions, members in common or artefacts; involve proximity or interaction, overlapping styles or discourses; and compete for the same resources (Wenger 1999, p 127).

Wenger proposes that constellations will have ‘discontinuities’ as well as interconnections (1999, 127). As Lindkvist suggests, however, there is little distinction between constellations and CoPs themselves since both are characterised by shared history, connected enterprises, artefact sharing and ‘overlapping styles or discourses’ (2005, p. 1194). Consequently, the concept of constellations lacks specificity and this limits its analytic usefulness. Lindkvist usefully sharpens the social identity version of CoP by proposing a group level epistemology for the workplace. He separates CoP, based on strong social relations and shared understanding around decentralised knowledge located in practice, from what he calls a ‘collectivity’ in which this social connection is not present and knowledge is distributed (2005). Both are explored further in the discussion of epistemology beginning on page 42.

**Social learning systems**

On its evolution from situated learning process through to strategic knowledge management tool, CoP was conceptualised in terms of a ‘social learning system’ (Wenger 2000). This focused on expansive concepts included in the social identity version (Wenger 1999): constellations of CoPs, modes of belonging and boundary processes. Contu and Wilmott critique this account on several grounds. Their key objection is to a perceived shift from a Critical theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger 1991) to ‘formulation of learning as technology conceived within a discourse of regulation and performance’ (Contu & Willmott 2000, pp. 272-3). For example, Contu and Wilmott propose that questions about constraints on legitimacy and participation (two key concepts in Lave and Wenger’s account) are missing from Wenger’s discussion of the ways that communities, boundaries, identities and organisations are produced and reproduced (2000, p. 271). Contu and Wilmott suggest that Wenger’s account of social learning systems treats CoPs as ‘a series of social objects, that, in principle, are amenable to manipulation by skilful
organizational designers and developers’ (2000, p. 272), a critique that is potentially realised in the knowledge management version of CoP (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002).

The knowledge management version
The social learning system grows exponentially in what I will call the ‘knowledge management’ version of CoP. In this version of CoP, community is positioned as the means to transcend organisational boundaries for commercial gain (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p 220) and as a globalised model of ‘world design’:

If we view the world as a learning system, we can imagine a constellation of communities of practice, a ‘worldwide web’ of interwoven communities that focus on various civic practices at different levels including district, municipal, regional, national and global. This broader learning system collectively provides the foundation of social capital to foster global learning and to improve socioeconomic outcomes. (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 229)

Considered in this light, CoP is an expansive concept indeed.

Elasticity of CoP
As the overview above makes apparent, the concept of CoP is highly elastic. CoP can be seen as an analytical tool in the ‘midlevel category’ (Barton & Tusting 2005). Wenger himself characterises it at this level, suggesting it is useful for analysing interactions in between the very specific (e.g. a conversation or activity) and the very broad (e.g. a city or a nation) (1999, p. 125).

In the social identity version of CoP, Wenger ‘resists encumbering the concept with too restrictive a definition’ or metrics about size, duration, types of activity. Instead, he states a preference for setting out an underlying perspective for CoP and a ‘framework by which to articulate to what degree, in what ways, and to what purpose it is (or is not) useful to view a social configuration as a CoP’ (Wenger 1999, p. 123).

This potential problem of definition and scale can be linked to the elasticity of the community component of CoP. As Lindkvist (2005, pp. 1192-3) and Gee (2005, p.
232) both suggest, the term community comes with ‘baggage’. Community often connotes idealised notions of social connection and comfort, as Lyon proposes:

*The word community does a job in the English language for which there appears to be a perennial perceived need. It refers to social ideals of belonging, togetherness, participation and camaraderie.* (1984, p. 254)

Lyon also proposes that community has both ideological (1984, p. 258) and Utopian dimensions (1984, p. 262). Ideologically, community often maintains the status quo in favour of the powerful (1984, p. 258). Calling for greater conceptual explicitness in relation to community, Lyon comments that ‘The gloss on its meaning permits use by anyone who cares to piggyback on its favourable connotations’ (1984, p. 261). Even so, Lyon concludes that:

*Community is still a worthy utopia, and, contrary to common usage of that term, a realistic utopia. It is too valuable a concept to be relegated to ideological use by default.* (1984, p. 268)

Different aspects of community are reflected in the CoP literature. For example, in describing an emergent Australian university CoP, Campbell endeavours to characterise the community in terms of ‘core’ values of trust, ‘a spirit of unity’, mutual benefit and ‘artefacts of interactions’ (2008). Similarly, Cousin and Deepwell propose that ‘communitarian values’, linked to knowledge sharing and discussion-based learning, shape the notion of community in CoP (2005, p. 57). They also note that such values come with constraints, including insistence on compliance with norms, and exclusion (Cousin & Deepwell 2005, p. 57). Bearing in mind the mixed potentiality of community, I will now explore the social identity version of CoP which forms the starting point for conceptualising the focus communities in this study.

**Building on the social identity version**

I have chosen Wenger’s social identity version of CoP (1999) to conceptualise the focus communities in my study for three reasons. Firstly, its focus on identity-in-practice formation substantively connects with my lived experience of co-facilitating a CoP to enhance teaching and learning at an Australian university. Secondly, by linking identity formation to participation it connects directly with the
focus of my study, which is to understand the relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative, principally through the experience of participation in the focus communities. Finally, it has been influential on the development of higher education CoPs. I will explore the constituent elements of the social identity version (Wenger, 1999) before discussing extensions I have adopted in relation to practice and identity formation.

**Mutual engagement**

According to Wenger, ‘Practice resides in a community of people and the relations of mutual engagement by which they can do what they do’ (1999, p. 73). Mutual engagement distinguishes a CoP from a work group or team or network (Wenger 1999, p. 74). By extension, enabling engagement means building community. Wenger includes diversity as a feature of a mutually engaged community, which is connected by engagement rather than by sameness. He proposes that CoPs may be far from harmonious and that conflict may be a characteristic of shared practice (Wenger 1999, p. 77). As noted earlier, scholars have noted the need to extend this version in order to investigate dynamics of conflict and power relations (for example, Barton and Tusting (2005)). This need can be seen as a legacy of the limited consideration given to power relations and conflict in the situated learning version of CoP (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 42), which the social identity version elaborates. Contu and Wilmott critiqued the situated learning version for inadequately investigating how conflict and consensus operate, contending that situated learning has been popularised in an unproblematised fashion as a result (2003, p. 292). Although the role of conflict in CoPs was acknowledged by Lave and Wenger (1999, p. 42) and Wenger (1999), it is not explored in much of the current CoP literature (Cumming 2008). As an exception in the Australian university context, Churchman proposes that examination of communities of practice in academia is ‘meaningless without considering the contextual power issues’ (2005, p. 14). I will discuss below how I supplement the social identity version with the concept of discourse to potentially account for power dynamics, among other issues.
Joint enterprise
According to Wenger, a CoP’s joint enterprise is collectively defined by participants as a ‘negotiated response to their situation’ (1999, p. 77). This occurs, he claims, despite circumstances outside participants’ control, such as the constraints of institutional conditions (Wenger 1999, p. 79). The CoP negotiates how external conditions, resources and demands shape practice rather than an ‘individual’, ‘prescription’ or ‘outside mandate’ (Wenger 1999, p. 80). Wenger elaborates: ‘Because members produce a practice to deal with what they understand to be their enterprise, their practice as it unfolds belongs to their community in a fundamental sense’ (Wenger 1999, p. 80).

The joint enterprise, or shared domain of activity which binds a CoP is more than a shared goal. It creates ‘relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice’ (Wenger 1999, p. 78). Wenger associates this social connection with the ways that workers collectively make a workplace ‘habitable for themselves’ (1999, p. 78), illustrating this proposition through a study of the practices of insurance claims processors. Wenger asserts that the insurance claims processors develop practices which are about making ‘work life bearable’ (Wenger 1999, p. 78) as well as ‘making claims processing real and liveable’ (Wenger 1999, p. 79). All participants are mutually accountable to this dual enterprise. Again, Wenger emphasises diversity, stating that the communal negotiation of joint enterprise doesn’t necessitate believing the same thing or agreeing on everything. Wenger rejects romanticisation of CoPs as harmonious or liberatory (1999, p. 85).

Given the traditional emphasis on autonomy and freedom in academic culture (Ramsden 2002), the relationship between individual and workplace is a particularly significant consideration in the focus communities, which primarily involve academics. In this context it is therefore important to heed individual intentionality and agency when conceptualising learning as a social process. Power relations and other dynamics may affect access and participation in professional learning. Billett emphasises the importance of individual agency and intentionality as factors in engagement in experiences, workplace practice and learning:
In sum, workplace learning experiences represent an interaction between the enactment, even the regulation of the social practice of the workplace and individuals' agency as they engage in paid work activities. (2004, p. 320)

Although Wenger acknowledges the presence of external influences on a CoP, he claims that external power over the CoP is ‘always mediated by the community’s production of its practice’ (1999, p. 80). This raises the question what resources the CoP has for this work. Wenger also describes as evidence of mutual accountability, relations within the CoP that establish what matters (and the opposite), what’s important (and not) and what to do and what not to do (Wenger 1999, p. 80). Both aspects need supplementation. As I describe below, discourse can be seen as shaping external influences and providing a resource, and potentially a constraint, for a CoP’s mediation of these.

**Shared repertoire**

Wenger describes a CoP’s shared repertoire as encompassing diverse activities, relations and objects as well as ways of doing things, tools, stories, gestures, symbols, concepts or actions adopted by the community as part of its practice. All of these, he proposes, reflect a history of mutual engagement. Theyaren’t fixed. He describes them as ‘inherently ambiguous’, signalling that they can produce new meanings. This ambiguity is ‘a condition of negotiability’ (Wenger 1999, pp. 82-3). It may also signal power relations within CoPs, whereby certain practices are legitimated and others are excluded, reflecting the influence of discourses within and around CoPs.

Taking the three constituent elements of a CoP described above, Wenger sets out 14 characteristics of CoPs which, without being definitive, show that these three elements are present (1999, p. 126):

1. sustained mutual relationships which may be harmonious and/or conflictual
2. shared ways of doing things together
3. speedy information flow and propagation of innovation
4. lack of preamble so that conversations seem to flow as if part of a continuous process
5. quick set-up of problem to discuss
6. substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
7. knowing what others know, what they can do and how they can contribute to an enterprise
8. mutually defining identities
9. ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
10. specific tools, representations and other artifacts
11. local lore, inside jokes, shared stories, knowing laughter
12. jargon and communication shortcuts as well as ease of producing new ones
13. certain styles recognised as displaying membership

Some of these characteristics overlap; for example, local lore, insider jokes, shared stories, knowing laughter and ‘communication shortcuts’. Wenger does not suggest whether some are more significant or others or the degree to which any need to be present. This lack of specificity is also evident in his definition of practice as ‘a level of social structure that reflects shared learning’ (Wenger 1999, p. 126). Wenger positions CoP as being experiential and analytical. As he puts it, ‘By referring to structures that are within the scope of our engagement, this category captures a familiar aspect of our experience of the world and so is not merely analytical’ (1999, p. 126).

The lack of specificity apparent in Wenger’s definitions of the constituent elements of CoP can be seen as an explanation for the appeal, and the limitations, of the social identity version. As Storberg-Walker contends, CoP is sufficiently conceptualised to constitute an abstract or mid-level theory of a social phenomenon, but does not meet the requirements of an applied theory which depends on specificity and uniqueness in definition for utility (2008, p. 567). Another tendency Storberg-Walker identifies as a barrier to effectively applying this version of CoP without supplementation is ‘circular reasoning’; for example, the interconnection of practice and participation, whereby each generates the other (2008, p. 567). She concludes that each of the four aspects of practice identified in the social identity version (meaning, learning, identity and community) would need to be taken from
abstract to tangible to comprise an applied theory (Storberg-Walker 2008, pp. 573-4).

The next section builds on the constituent elements of CoP to investigate how identity and meaning are accounted for in the social identity version and explain why and how I extend Wenger’s account (1999) to conceptualise discourse (including narrative) as a form of practice with the capacity to shape identity formation and construct lived experience in the focus communities.

**Identity formation**

As I noted in the introduction, Wenger separates lived experience and discourse, including narrative. He discounts the possibility that storytelling can be a form of practice which constitutes identity formation and lived experience (Wenger 1999, p 151). In a similar vein, Bruner defines practice, or ‘praxis’, as tacit, enculturated knowledge which is not necessarily conceptualised or explained (1996, p. 152). He proposes that ‘...mind is an extension of the hands and tools that you use and of the jobs to which you apply them’ and draws on the notion of ‘Rebus’, which describes the way that things, rather than words, shape action (Bruner 1996, p. 152). Quoting the jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, ‘When you're talking about it, you 'ain't doing it’ (Bruner 1996, p. 152), Bruner, like Wenger (1999), privileges lived experience as a fundamental source of reality. I take a different view in this study, proposing that discourse is a form of practice in CoPs. On this basis, depending on what ‘it’ is, talking about ‘it’ may be a form of doing which contributes to knowing-in-practice. For example, the production of professional narratives can be a form of reflective practice as well as narrative practice. As Bolton suggests, telling what we know can be a means to ‘develop human understanding, the ability to listen, willingness for practitioners' own stories to mesh with those of patients and clients, and practical wisdom from experience’ (2006, p. 216). Bolton’s work is applied in the Health domain, with doctors. It is also relevant to university teaching and learning, where reflection is valued as a key skill for professional practice (Ramsden 2003). Similarly narrative was the key domain of practice for me, both in terms of CoP involvement and in undertaking this study where narrative is a principal source of data and analysis.
Wenger describes identity formation as a quest for personal meaning that is produced by a dynamic of identification and negotiability:

*Identification gives us material to define our identities; negotiability enables us to use this material to assert our identities as productive of meaning; and we weave these two threads into the fabric of our identities.* (Wenger 1999, p. 196)

In his account, identification has participatory (what one identifies with) and reificatory (what one identifies as) aspects (Wenger 1999, p. 191). Identity (as well as learning) requires ‘authentic’ access to participation and reification such as ‘symbols, tools, language, documents’ and other ‘paraphernalia’ of practice (Wenger 1999, p. 184). Engaging in practice offers particular experiences of participation in Wenger’s social identity version. He describes participation through different modes of belonging – engagement, imagination and alignment. These ‘expand identity through space and time in different ways’ (Wenger 1999, p. 181) and ‘provide a framework for understanding how … communities are constituted’ (Wenger 1999, p. 182). Here Wenger is influenced by the concept of the ‘imaginary community’, used by Benedict Anderson to describe the Western concept of ‘nation’ and its development (1983). Anderson proposes that all communities extend beyond physical limits of face-to-face contact and that they derive their character from the ways in which they are imagined (1983). Different modes of belonging give rise to different forms of community and contribute to identity formation. They will not generate a community of practice as Wenger describes it, unless there are also mutual relations and the ‘negotiation of a shared practice’ (Wenger 1999, p. 181). These modes of belonging are considered further in discussion of the findings in Chapter 5.

The experiences that are prominent in our community reify us as participants. Wenger defines reification to include making and designing; representing, naming and describing; perceiving and interpreting; using and reusing (Wenger 1999, p. 59). For identity formation to occur, meaning must be made not only in terms of exchanges such as conversations or storytelling, but with reference to making or having tangibles through which identity is ‘refracted’ (Cousin & Deepwell 2005, p. 62). Here the social identity version carries the legacy of the situated learning
version in which Lave and Wenger distinguish ‘talking within practice’ from ‘talking about practice’ in stories and through community lore. They contend that both types of talk engage and focus attention, support communal memory and signal membership of communities of practice. The purpose of this talk for newcomers is not to learn practice but to learn the discourse of practice ‘as a key to legitimate peripheral participation’. Lave and Wenger link the discourse to legitimacy and access in communities of practice rather than development of professional identity and competence. Learning to speak like a full member is part of the trajectory towards full membership (Lave & Wenger 1991, pp. 105-107). Lave and Wenger do not address the question of how other discourses might affect legitimacy and access in communities of practice or consider discourse (or narrative) as a form of practice in CoPs. They also do not consider how practitioner discourse contributes to (or constrains) an individual’s identity development and practice competence.

Negotiability in the social identity version of CoP describes the way we make the meaning in which we invest (Wenger 1999, p. 189). This is influenced by economies of meaning and ownership of meaning. Economies of meaning give some social meanings special status, greater or lesser value (Wenger 1999, p. 199). Meaning is a negotiable relation in which participants have varying degrees of control. Wenger describes identification without negotiability as ‘powerlessness’ and negotiability without identification as ‘empty’ (Wenger 1999, p. 196) but does not elaborate how this power dynamic occurs or could be addressed.

Identity formation is conceptualised as a ‘constant becoming’ formed through participation and community reification. Competence as a full member correlates with identity development (Wenger 1999, pp. 149-151). In the social identity version, identity is mutually constituted through engagement (what one does and relations with others); imagination (creation of self and world images); and alignment (the larger context for one’s actions) (Wenger 1999, p. 192). Reporting on an emergent CoP in the field of police education, where academic identity ‘is still being worked out’, Campbell affirms this account, finding that participation in the CoP creates a mutually constitutive individual member and community identity (2008).
Although Wenger separates discourse and practice, there is a substantial literature in which discursive practice, particularly storytelling, is linked to professional identity formation. Building on this line of work, I supplement the social identity version in this study by viewing discourse (including narrative) as a form of practice. I link practice and identity formation through the concept of narrativity, which I conceptualise as the narrative construction of the subject and intersubjective experience (McQuillan 2000, p. 8). Here I agree with Bruner that we do not have a core or essential self. Instead we construct and reconstruct ourselves narratively (2002, p. 64). Our self-stories accumulate and change over time as we, and our contexts, change (Bruner 2002, p. 65). Self-stories have inner (memory, feelings, belief and subjectivity) and outer (the esteem of others and cultural expectations) dimensions (Bruner 2002, p. 65) and are a means of constructing and socially negotiating identity.

**Narrative and identity formation**

Linde provides a useful and relevant account of this social process of negotiating identity through a study of individuals’ stories about their professional choices (1993). Linde makes visible the social practices involved in constructing, sharing and negotiating coherent life stories (1993, p. 98). She also investigates the presence and significance of culturally-determined coherence systems in relation to behaviour (Linde 1993, p. 191).

In one of the influential CoP accounts referred to earlier, Brown and Duguid contend that storytelling contributes to construction of professional identity and reciprocally to the construction and development of the CoP in which we work. By telling stories workers becomes a member of a professional community (Brown & Duguid 1991, pp. 46-47). Such narratives are situated, ‘embedded in the social system in which they arise and are used’ (Brown & Duguid 1991, p. 54). They ‘cannot simply be uprooted and repackaged for circulation’ (Brown & Duguid 1991, p. 54). In CoPs, narratives are both specific and contextualised.

Søreide usefully investigates how elementary school teachers use narrative practice to construct professional identity by positively or negatively positioning themselves
in terms of available subject positions depending on whether or not they relate to them (Søreide 2006, p. 529). For the teachers in her study, identity is ‘negotiable, flexible and adaptive’ (Søreide 2006, p. 544) and teacher identity construction is ‘elastic’ (Søreide 2006, p. 545). Søreide also proposes that narrative identities are ‘constantly shaped, reshaped and adapted to the situation in a process of great complexity’ (2006, p. 544). She concludes that the teachers in her study actively use subject positions as narrative resources to construct and negotiate teacher identities while simultaneously being positioned by such identity constructions (Søreide 2006, p. 545). Søreide’s study is helpful in illustrating the complexity of teacher identity construction and in demonstrating the utility of combining narrative and discourse methodologies to explore the individual and social aspects of such identity construction. As I will explore further in Chapter 4, I have adopted both aspects in my research design and methodology.

A number of higher education scholars link narrative practice with a social process of identity formation, including participation in CoPs. Contrasting individual and organisational perspectives, Churchman ties identity formation to lived experience and storytelling in the study of a collegiate community of practice in an Australian university (2005). Churchman and Stehlik take the same position, suggesting that academics’ multiple definitions of self are often ‘constructed in terms of the language and symbols of their community of practice(s)’ (2007, p. 273). Lees and Gravett propose that ‘narrative is the primary learning process through which lecturers develop a professional identity at the university’ (2006, p. 252). Campbell links increasing confidence in academic identity in an emergent CoP with production of artifacts; in this case a monthly newsletter on relationship between teaching and research (2008). Hammond associates storytelling with enrichment of community identity and rapport in an Australian university community of practice of Education academics (2009, p. 6).

Churchman and King use the contrasting notions of ‘private’ and ‘corporate’ or ‘institutional’ narratives (using both terms) to explore academic identity formation in an Australian university (2009). They find that universities are sites of multiple narratives which include dominant public stories and private, identity-related
stories. Academic staff use private stories to make sense of their role and to build workplace identities (Churchman & King 2009). In keeping with the social identity version of CoP, academics construct their stories with the support of colleagues (Churchman & King 2009). In a bid for plurality, Churchman and King suggest that the corporate story and private stories could constructively co-exist given recognition of private stories and provision of ‘safe’ spaces in which to share them (2009, p. 514). What they don’t consider is the possibility of diversity and contradiction within the range of corporate narratives. In this way Churchman and King close, at the institutional level, the possibility of multiplicity they envisage at the individual level. Churchman and King’s account is helpful, however, as a perspective on the contradictions and complexities of academic identity in Australian universities and in linking narrative, academic identity and CoP (2009 p. 513). The notion of safety as a key aspect of academic CoP is also picked up by Campbell, who describes an emergent CoP as ‘a safe space for unhindered discussion’ (2008).

**Meaning and experience**

As proposed earlier, the relationship between meaning and experience as it relates to discourse is largely absent from the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999). For example, as Barton and Tusting point out, there is no relationship drawn between language, literacy, discourse and power in CoP dynamics. Consequently, Barton and Tusting propose extensions related to language in use, power and conflict in communities and the need to consider the broader social context (2005, p. 12).

Creese proposes that the social identity version does not explain how meanings are made and interpreted in CoPs (2005, p. 55). Neither does Wenger describe how language shapes understandings and negotiations of meaning and shared repertoire (Creese 2005, p. 73). This leaves a shortfall in relation to describing and understanding power dynamics and diversity in communities (Creese 2005, p. 74). Creese responds to this gap in her ethnographic school-based study by supplementing CoP with speech community theory to explain situated and practice-based identities formed within contextualised constraints (2005).
Rock draws on the social identity version of CoP to inform a sociolinguistic study of how discourse (police practice in cautioning suspects about their right to silence) facilitates membership of a professional community (2005, p. 77). She proposes that mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire can be used to explain other kinds of practice (Rock 2005). I build on these identified limitations in my study by extending the conceptualisation of practice in the focus communities to encompass discourse at both macro and micro levels, by drawing on the work of Holstein and Gubrium in relation to discourse and social practice (2000).

**Discourse as practice**

Holstein and Gubrium view discourse as a social practice which occurs at two levels. At the macro level, discourse-in-practice shapes the meaning-making horizon, or ‘the conditions of possibility’ for discursive practices as ‘they are embedded in historically or institutionally available discourse’ (Holstein & Gubrium 2000, p. 94). At the micro level, discursive practice is the ‘everyday methods members use to articulate social structures’ (Holstein & Gubrium 2000, p. 94). In this study I conceptualise discourse in Big D terms to understand meaning as encompassing the way we talk and act as members of social and cultural groups, along with ‘objects, tools, technologies and networks of people’ (Gee 2010, p. 150). I take the view that discourse operates at both macro and micro levels to define the horizon for identity formation by designating available subject positions (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 115). None of these discourses is fixed or final, so identity formation is always transitory, partial and relational (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 112). Self is a process rather than a core and better understood in response to the reflexive question ‘when, where and how am I…’ (Trinh 1992, pp. 156-7) than the conventional ‘Who am I’?

On page 38 I described how I conceptualised narrativity to understand identity formation as a form of narrative practice in the focus communities. Narrative is a resource which members of the focus communities use in their discursive practice more broadly. Storytelling is a socially situated practice involving the interaction between narrative work and the context in which narratives are created and shared (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p. 2). Narrative work involves ‘the construction and
elaboration of stories’ (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p. 41) through practices such as narrative linkage, which makes experiences meaningful through associations (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p. 55); and narrative composition, which expands narrative linkages into a ‘story with a content and shape of its own’ (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p. 69). Narrative is also significant in how I conceptualise knowing and knowledge in the focus communities, as I will describe on page 45.

CoP epistemology

Wenger primarily focuses on learning over knowing in the social identity version of CoP. Yet epistemology at the group level is also critical to understanding CoPs in general and the notion of community in particular. Amin and Roberts provide a valuable contribution through a typology of communities which recognises different ways that knowledge is used and produced, along with social interaction, innovation and group organisation (2008, p. 357). The focus communities in my study variously share characteristics of two of these types, ‘craft-based’ and ‘professional’.

Craft-based communities

In Amin and Roberts’ account (2008), craft-based communities resemble the organically occurring CoPs reported by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1999). They are hierarchical and operate on an apprenticeship model. The knowledge that craft-based communities use and share is embedded in sociocultural context and embodied in individuals’ know-how. It is tacit and reproduced through communal language, including through storytelling. Knowledge reproduction rather than innovation is the focus, although craft-based communities may generate knowledge development incrementally. Craft-based community members develop a strong mutuality through shared ways of doing things. These shared ways of operating foster the development of a distinctive work or professional identity (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 358).

Professional communities

Like craft-based communities, professional communities also foster ‘mastery’ of ‘tacit and codified’ knowledge through learning by doing (Amin & Roberts 2008,
Embodiment is emphasised in professional communities (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 359). As in craft-based communities, professional communities are organised along apprenticeship lines, with social interaction, through language and observation, generating practice competence in a trajectory of participation and professional identity formation traversing from newcomer status to full membership of the community. This requires co-location but members of professional communities who have attained competence, unlike members of craft-based communities, may effectively exchange knowledge through virtual networks (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 360). The social ties in professional communities relate to standards of professional conduct. Any innovation generated in professional communities tends to be incremental and may depend on links between different professional communities, such as inter-professional collaborations. Such communities may be large institutional communities or small peer communities. In either case, entry is restricted on professional grounds (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 360).

Knowledge communities and knowledge collectivities
Lindkvist adds insights into group level epistemologies and CoPs by focusing on the ways knowledge is shared and produced in contemporary project-based organisations (2005). He coins the term ‘knowledge collectivity’ to describe project-based communities, which he differentiates from CoPs (termed ‘knowledge communities’) with reference to the social identity version of CoP (Lindkvist 2005, p. 1192). In Lindkvist’s account, knowledge collectivities produce distributed knowledge, whereas CoPs produce decentred communal knowledge in the form of practice. CoPs foster learning through social interaction and problem solving (2005, p. 1205). Knowledge collectivities bring together different knowledge bases with little knowledge overlap or communal knowledge generation; instead, members have different specialties. Despite these differences, members of a knowledge collectivity may still be ‘well-connected’ with ‘quite a minimalist base of shared knowledge, develop a pattern of interaction and the collective competence needed’ (Lindkvist 2005, p. 1200). In this collectivity of practice there is dependence on the individual’s knowledge and agency with interaction focused on goals rather than knowledge (Lindkvist 2005, p. 1200). As I will discuss in Chapter 5, participants in
my study reported using and sharing various kinds of knowledge in the focus communities.

**Practice-based epistemology**

In CoPs knowing is a pre-condition of knowledge, which is institutionalised through situated action and interaction (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003, p. 3). Gherardi characterises CoP as a practice-based theory positioned between two contrasting views of knowledge. At one end of the spectrum, the mentalistic view views knowledge as independent from the ‘knowing subject’ who takes on knowledge without creating knowledge (2012, p. 4). At the other, the ‘knowledge management’ view commodifies knowledge so that it is ‘practically synonymous with information created, shared and stored in products, services and systems’ so that knowledge transfer is non-transformative (Gherardi 2012, p. 5). As I noted on page 29, Wenger’s later, and popularised, account of CoPs, with McDermott and Snyder (2002) tends in this direction. Wenger’s social identity version (1999), in line with practice-based theories, treats knowledge as emergent and open.

Knowing, learning and doing are inseparable in CoPs. Practice is the product of specific historical conditions caused by previous practice transformed into current practice (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003, p. 8). Knowing in practice in a CoP arises from both doing and being. Practice-based knowledge is paradoxical, being both constrained and open ended. It is constrained in the sense of being situated, defined by Nicolini and colleagues as indicating that ‘… knowledge and its subjects and objects must be understood as produced together within a temporally, geographically, or relationally situated practice.’ (2003, p. 23). It is also ephemeral and emergent. These qualities co-exist in the enactment and reproduction of practice (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003, p. 26).

Bruner investigates the relationship between knowing and practice, proposing that practice comes before theory (1996, p. 152). He contends that while theory might inform skill development, it is only through doing that we develop practice. Bruner distinguishes ‘skilled doing’ from ‘more abstract knowing’ (1996, p. 157). I do not
make this separation in my study because I view narrative as a form of practice, as well as a way of knowing.

**Narrative as a form of knowledge in CoPs**

Narrative is recognised as a form of knowledge in CoPs. For example, Hort and colleagues propose that narrative in university communities is significant as a way of structuring thinking about action: ‘what “could” be done, as much as what “is” done’, contending that this reveals meaning not only through individual stories but also what they term the ‘shared’ story (2008, p. 90). Klein and Connell suggest that in higher education CoPs organisational life is lived as narrative and narrative becomes a way of ‘providing a mechanism for vicarious experiential learning’ (2008, p. 68). McDonald, Collins, Hingst, Kimmins, Lynch and Star (2008) link narration and knowledge sharing in their account of the development of a community of practice of around teaching and learning within the business faculty of a regional Australian university. They refer to storytelling as the principal way of communicating at meetings and present members’ stories as testimony of the collegial, knowledge sharing and networking aspects of participation in the community (McDonald et al. 2008).

In the knowledge management version of CoP, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder identify narrative as a tool for knowledge sharing and for measuring knowledge in a knowledge system (2002). They claim that practitioners are best placed within an organisation to explain how knowledge is produced and how knowledge is applied to get results:

> Stories are the best way to traverse the knowledge system in a way that explains the linkages between community activities, knowledge resources, and performance outcomes ... The best way to assess the value of a community of practice, therefore, is by collecting stories. (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 177)

From this managerial perspective, a ‘good story’ shows how knowledge resources are produced and applied (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 177). Stories that do not serve this function risk being marginalised or excluded. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder propose that narratives offer recognition for protagonists and reinforce the importance of making practice visible (2002). They contend that
narratives help build a culture that values innovation and knowledge sharing: ‘legitimating the storytelling process encourages people to act out the stories they would like one day to tell’ (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 169). Here narrative is viewed as a resource for reproducing and reinforcing the managerialist discourse of knowledge as a valuable organisational asset. The knowledge management version leaves many important questions about narrative and CoP unasked. For example, whose story are ‘protagonists’ telling? Can all forms of practice be made visible? What if members’ stories represent practice that is dissonant with corporate or institutional narratives? What ‘value’ relates to individual identity in practice where it is inconsistent with corporate or institutional narrative? As described in Chapter 4, by focusing on Big D discourse, this study considers participants’ narratives in terms of their social practice and organisational context, enabling consideration of questions such as the above and others related to power dynamics, inclusion and exclusion.

Mode-1 and Mode-2 knowledge

Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons distinguish two contemporary modes of knowledge which I have found useful for conceptualising the knowledge shared and generated in the higher education CoPs in this study. Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons define Mode-1 knowledge as disciplinary knowledge in the traditional, conventional sense of being objective, decontextualised and bounded, whereas Mode-2 knowledge is contextualised through engagement with society (2001, pp. 67-68). Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons contend that the transformative effects of Mode-2 conditions and Mode-2 knowledge production are felt most in universities because of their unique role in training future ‘knowledge workers’ as well in producing knowledge. The proposition is that the expansion of those who are involved in research and the development of open communities of ‘knowledgeable people’ (including all graduates of mass higher-education systems) has blurred traditional distinctions between research and teaching. As a result the Mode-2 university is characterised as entwining research and teaching; being open and comprehensive; adaptable and resilient; encompassing new configurations of knowledge through novel alliances with other knowledgeable institutions; and entrepreneurial in its reach towards the wider knowledge economy (Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons 2001).
2 proved useful ways to understand knowledge in the focus communities. I do not privilege one mode over the other, however, or view disciplinary Mode-1 knowledge and contextualised Mode-2 knowledge as dichotomous, as Wheelahan (2014) suggests Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons do. Findings from the focus CoPs suggest that both knowledge modes can flourish in Australian university CoPs.

In this thesis I generally conceptualise knowledge sharing and knowledge generation in the focus communities as Mode-2, where it is contextualised, tends towards openness and interdisciplinarity, integrates research and scholarship with teaching, dissolves traditional value-based distinctions, and has the potential to generate innovation through new alliances (Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons 2001). My perspective on Mode-2 knowledge and CoPs therefore veers away from viewing knowledge as a valuable commodity in a global knowledge economy (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002), a perspective which can be associated with Mode-2 knowledge, where knowledge production is linked with economic development (Barnacle 2005).

**Summary**

In this chapter I have provided a conceptual framework for investigating the focus communities in my study. This builds on the accounts of practice and experience in the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999), which lacked specificity in explicating community, practice and experience. To better understand knowing and learning in the focus communities, I have drawn on practice-based epistemology through typologies offered by Amin and Roberts (2008) and Lindkvist (2005) and theories of practice (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow 2003; Gherardi 2012). I have also conceptualised narrative as a form of knowing in CoPs.

Further, having noted the need to elaborate Wenger’s account (1999) of the relationship between experience (meaning-making) and practice in CoPs, I have supplemented this account by conceptualising discourse as a form of practice to more expansively explain the connection between identity, narrative and meaning-making in the focus communities.
The next chapter contextualises the focus communities in terms of their higher education settings and university teaching and learning knowledge domain.
Chapter 3: Putting the focus communities in context

This chapter investigates the broad higher education and teaching and learning contexts in which the focus communities are located. I then consider applications of CoP in higher education with reference to a number of recent studies.

Enterprise and compromise – an overview of the contemporary university

Globally, higher education has experienced significant changes since 2000, associated with increased participation (or ‘massification’), the expansion of vocational and professional programs, and greater reliance by universities on student fee revenue (Biggs & Tang 2011, pp. 3-4). As a result universities have focused increasingly on teaching and learning and on teaching effectiveness (Biggs & Tang 2011, p. 3). This emphasis at the institutional level has been accompanied by external ‘Quality Assurance’ of university teaching and learning (Biggs & Tang 2011, p. 4), a direction reflected in Australian higher education policy, as will be explored below.

Volatility and versatility

For more than 25 years Australian universities have been shaped by a series of short-term policies built on a platform linking national productivity to increased participation in higher education, but hindered by a lack of funding continuity to support this long-term vision (Marginson 2013, p. 7).

The volatility of federal Government line-ups, higher education policy and funding arrangements, and the attendant emphasis and impact on university teaching and learning, have been striking during the period of my study, which began late in 2009. That year the Labor Rudd Government promised an ‘Education Revolution’, setting out the details in the policy document ‘Transforming Australia’s higher education system’ (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2009), which boosted higher education funding. This implemented many
of the recommendations of the national Review of Higher Education, which emphasised quality teaching and learning (Bradley et al. 2008, p. xv), as well as the importance of social inclusion in higher education. The Labor Government’s ‘Transforming Australia’s higher education system’ policy linked university teaching and learning with quality assurance and performance measures through the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2009, p. 16) and performance-based funding (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2009, p. 34). Julia Gillard, the first woman Deputy Prime Minister in Australia, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, and Minister for Social Inclusion, oversaw the review of higher education and its implementation (National Archives Australia 2014). A leadership spill on 24 June 2010 led to her election as Labor Party leader and swearing in as Prime Minister. Following an election that same year, Gillard retained her Prime Ministership in a minority government, formed with the cooperation of three independent members of parliament (Australian Electoral Commission 2014).

In 2011, as part of proposed savings measures to fund natural disaster relief in the flood-ridden State of Queensland, the Minority Gillard Government defunded the peak body for Australian university teaching and learning, the ALTC. The ALTC was later reinstated with reduced funding due to the intervention of Senator Andrew Wilkie, one of the three independent members of parliament which made up the Minority Government. Senator Wilkie made his support for the relief package contingent on reinstatement of the ALTC (Holden 2011). As noted in the introduction, ALTC funding was linked to the development of some of the communities in this study. ALTC funding also supported my fixed-term role as the project manager of one such project, which was the catalyst for my study.

At the time of its defunding and reinstatement with reduced funding, the objectives of the ALTC were to facilitate national responses to teaching and learning issues, to drive strategic change to enhance teaching and learning; to foster and share good practice; and to raise the profile and recognition of teaching and learning in higher
education institutions (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2010a). The stated values guiding this work were inclusiveness and diversity, collaboration, long-term systemic change and excellence via quality programs and awards, and recognition of quality teaching and learning. Later in 2011, following a review by an external consultant, the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) was established to replace the ALTC, with a mission to promote and support change in higher education institutions to enhance teaching and learning. Like the ALTC, its responsibilities include award and grant provision and administration, the commissioning of work, embedding good teaching and learning practice and practice sharing, along with the facilitation of networking and professional development opportunities (Office for Learning and Teaching 2013). Unlike the ALTC, the OLT has no publicly stated guiding values. Organisationally it is part of the Commonwealth Department of Education (Office for Learning and Teaching 2013).

In 2012 the Gillard Labor Government removed limits on the funding of bachelor degree places at public Australian universities, creating a ‘demand-driven’ system, which gave universities discretion about the number of undergraduate places on offer (Department of Education 2014). This was a significant shift in light of the Government’s previous regulation of the number of undergraduate university places and the cost of tuition fees, and could be seen as a move towards a ‘universal’ higher education system (King & James 2013, p. 11). In a move in the opposite direction, the Gillard Government implemented ‘efficiency dividends’ in 2013, reducing university funding (Marginson 2013, p. 7).

Following a federal election in September 2013, which returned a new Conservative Coalition Government, the new Minister for Education commissioned a review of the demand-driven system in November 2013 (Kemp & Norton 2014). This endorsed the continuation of the demand-driven system with the recommendation that it be expanded to include sub-bachelor courses (Kemp & Norton 2014, p. x11). At the time of writing, a Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014 is before the Australian Upper House (Senate), having been passed in the
Lower House of Representatives (Parliament of Australia 2014a). This proposes major reforms, including expansion of the demand-driven system to include advanced diplomas and associate degrees, along with private universities and non-university higher education providers and, most radically, deregulation of university fees. This is accompanied by a requirement that universities use 20% of additional student revenue to fund ‘Scholarships’ for ‘disadvantaged students’ (Parliament of Australia 2014b, pp. 1-2), a category which would grow with the uncapping of Australian university fees.

**Quality agenda and teaching and learning**

This brief overview of recent higher education policy reveals a volatile system subject to ongoing reform, as well as the shifting priorities of changing governments (at times within the same political party). A quality agenda and university teaching and learning have been entwined in higher education policy. Some scholars view this quality agenda, transposed from industry to higher education, as negative in effect. For example, Ramsden characterises the quality agenda as a ‘tool of control’ and an ‘administrative burden’ (Ramsden 2003, p 218) and contends that there is a lack of evidence that external quality measures have improved the quality of student learning (Ramsden 2003, p. 219). Murray and Dollery express the same view and propose that increased competition negatively affects the quality of course offerings (2005, p. 392). Based on her experience as a teaching academic in a US university, Richardson describes the impact of a Quality agenda (‘Total Quality Management’) where the personal and the political meet. She takes the standpoint that ‘The personal is the basis of the political’ and that ‘This is the “level” at which social theory must be constructed’ (Richardson 1997, p. 121). Similarly, CoP is a social theory of learning which, by extension, should be considered with reference to the political context in which CoPs operate.

Ramsden suggests that quality principles should be connected with principles of good teaching, learning and assessment based on scholarship, evidence and evaluation through peer review (2003, p. 220). The CoPs in my study could be seen
as examples. I examine their relationship to a quality agenda in the Discovery University narrative presented in part 3 of Chapter 5.

Australian universities are hyper-discursive, infused with competing meanings connected with the massification of higher education. These many meanings relate to increased competition and a dominant ‘Quality agenda’ accompanied by pressure towards accountability and performance (Ramsden 2002). As a recent report stated, ‘There has never been greater regulatory scrutiny of higher education standards than there is now’ (Kemp & Norton 2014, p. xi). Hyperdiscursivity is particularly evident in the many, and contested, meanings assigned to academic work in the context of a globalised, digitally networked knowledge economy in which knowledge is a tradable asset and academics are characterised as knowledge workers.

**A changing academic culture, identity and workforce**

Contemporary universities are structured around ‘marketized relationships’ and permeated with managerialism (Becher & Trowler 2001, p. 2), a value system and lexicon ‘oriented to efficiency, economy and market responsiveness’ (Becher & Trowler 2001, p. 10). A number of commentators associate these factors with negative effects on academic culture and identity, particularly the erosion of collegiality. Here collegiality is linked to notions such as academic freedom, the significance of disciplines, a detachment from external pressures and what Ramsden terms a ‘sense of community and ownership’ by academics over their affairs (2002, p. 23). Murray and Dollery propose that collegial decision-making has been devalued (2005, p. 388). Hammond suggests that community and collective structures are ‘under threat in an increasingly individualistic and competitive environment’ (2009, p. 2). In the UK, Deem & Brehony conclude that “‘New managerialism” has changed and will continue to change what universities do and how they do it; this is very clearly an ideological rather than simply a technical reform of higher education and one that is firmly based on interests concerning relations of power and dominance’ (2005, p. 231).
Reporting on a study of academic culture in the United States and the United Kingdom, Becher and Trowler present a more complex and nuanced picture of the impact of changes to higher education (2001). For some academics higher education change has led to ‘deprofressionalization’ and loosened academic community, whereas others have found a connection around intellectual exchange with greater role specialisation offering some compensation for ‘work intensification and diversification’ (Becher & Trowler 2001, p. 17). Becher and Trowler propose that massification and managerialism in higher education have mixed and contradictory effects, combining threats and opportunities. New opportunities include the potential to improve practice and create new possibilities (2001, p. 19). For example, a UK review of curriculum and teaching and learning increased accountability, surveillance and intensification of academic workload but also generated a collective idea of quality, awareness of student experience and a united spirit in adversity. Further, the authors argue that gender inequity is less possible in the changed order than in traditional academic culture (Becher & Trowler 2001, p. 19).

In keeping with international trends (Becher & Trowler 2001), the Australian academic workforce is gendered and casualised. Women in Australian universities are more likely to be in teaching-focused positions (Southwell & Morgan 2012, p. 9) or employed at the less senior academic levels responsible for much of university teaching (Southwell & Morgan 2012, p. 12). This is in line with broader structural inequities related to gender, reported in higher education internationally (Becher & Trowler 2001, pp. 150-3). In Australia, academics are increasingly employed on a casual and fixed-term basis, with increases in appointments at the junior and senior levels but few appointments at the middle level, along with a perception of management as a profession rather than being part of academic work (Bexley 2013). Bexley describes the ‘fragmentation’ of academic work across a range of non-traditional forms, including research-only and teaching-only categories (2013). Reporting on a study of the Australian academic workforce including 5550 academics employed in 19 institutions, Bexley finds a dissatisfaction with academic work which she attributes to the loss of traditional tenured roles encompassing
autonomy, a rich range of experience across teaching, research and service, clear promotional pathways and job security. Further, she finds that many contemporary Australian academics report little job security; greater specialisation (towards teaching or research); little opportunity to contribute to institutional decision making or community engagement; and a loss of career pathways (Bexley 2013, p. 97). More than one-third of respondents in Bexley’s study were considering leaving higher education employment to work overseas or in non-academic employment some time in the next ten years (2013, p. 98). The Australian academic workforce is also an ageing one, with tenured academics moving to retirement (Bexley 2013).

It can be argued that university teaching itself is gendered. In the United States, for example, Statham, Richardson and Cook identified differences in the teaching approaches of male and female teaching academics at a large university (1991), which were found to be equally effective, in terms of student evaluations (Statham, Richardson & Cook 1991, p. 155). Statham, Richardson and Cook identified gendered differences in terms of pedagogy and the academic environment. They describe a ‘feminist pedagogy model’ with ‘major tenets’ including ‘demystification of the research and teaching process, facilitation of innovation, and emphasis on the collaborative search for knowledge’ (Statham, Richardson & Cook 1991, p. 142). This also aligns with a ‘cooperative, relationship-centred, affective, egalitarian’ style compared with a ‘competitive, status-driven, argumentative, individualistic’ style associated with the male academics’ teaching (Statham, Richardson & Cook 1991, p. 145). The characteristics and styles described as feminist align with a CoP approach so it is not surprising, for this reason, among others, that the majority of CoP facilitators in Australian universities are women (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012c). Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 5, the mostly female champions of the communities in this study have not chosen to position CoPs this way. Instead they have tended to ‘manage up’, reflecting their use of managerial values (such as tangible and preferably quantifiable outcomes) to describe CoP benefits. This is not to suggest that it is not possible for feminist alignment and managing up to co-exist, only that this did not seem to be the case in this study.
A model for the contemporary Australian university
Though conducted a number of years ago, Marginson and Considine’s study of Australian universities (2000) is still definitive because of its reach, which spans changes to academic culture and market-driven reforms. Their characterisation of the ‘Enterprise University’ remains useful as a description of contemporary Australian universities, encompassing influences including the impact of competition and accountability frameworks on research and scholarship (Marginson & Considine 2000, p 235). Two characteristics of this model are relevant to my study: the changing role of collegial structures and a decline in the prominence of disciplines (Marginson & Considine 2000, pp. 10-1). Collegiality, as I understand and discursively characterise it in my study, is variegated, characterised by competing interests, with mixed and contradictory effects. Like its contemporary university context, this collegiality is a ‘postmodern alternative’ (Marginson & Considine 2000) to the conventional collegial tradition described by Ramsden (2002, p. 23), bearing closer resemblance to the chromatic picture of academic culture provided by Becher and Trowler (2001).

In my study I follow Marginson and Considine (2000) in understanding globalisation as referring to the ‘growing impact of world systems of finance and economic life, transport, communication and media, language and symbols’ (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 47). I adopt an understanding of globalisation’s reach being [as much]:

*about the cross-global movement of people and ideas as about markets and money, and more about networks than about patterns of commodity, trade or off-shore production.* (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 47)

The ‘movement of ideas’ via ‘networks’ and its impact on social action and collective knowledge production is key to the focus communities in my study. Noting that globalisation is by no means integrated or uniform in effect, Marginson posits higher education as a single worldwide arrangement which combines networks of ‘words and ideas’, national systems shaped by local history, law, policy and funding and institutions that variously operate locally, nationally and globally (2006, p 2). Such ‘global flows of information and
resources’ may exceed the influence of nation-states. They ‘intimately connect the local and global and may have any combination of physical, social and economic characteristics’ (Becher & Trowler 2001, p. 2).

Marginson links global competition to changing organisational culture:

In Australia as in the UK this takes a specific form in which the University is normed as an autonomous, self-serving corporation, and entrepreneurial behaviours and business systems become central to organisational personality. Commercial global competition reinforces this by installing business bottom-lines. (2006, p. 33)

This changed organisational culture is variously evident in the sites in my study and forms an important part of the discussion of my findings in Chapter 5.

**CoPs in higher education**

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the formal cultivation of CoPs is relatively recent in higher education. As a phenomenon it has occurred in the context of a growing focus on the effectiveness and quality of university teaching and learning, associated with increased participation in higher education (Biggs & Tang 2011, pp. 3-4). Emeritus Professor Adrian Lee offers a personal perspective on this twin focus in a reflective paper on his experiences as inaugural Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Improvement) (Lee, no date). In this role, Lee led ‘culture change to improve teaching and learning at research intensive university of 40,000 students’ over a period of six years (no date, p. 2). Lee credits community building activities around Fellowships, a grant program and staff development as the single biggest success factor in leading this change (no date, p 8). Lee also retrospectively aligns such community building with the knowledge management version of CoP (no date).

More specifically, the growing incidence and profile of CoPs in Australian higher education can be linked to a focus on collaboration and funding provided by the former ALTC and its successor, the OLT (McDonald et al. 2012). All three universities in this study were granted ALTC funding related to CoP development. As explored in discussion of the findings in Chapter 5, two out of three developed
their CoPs in connection with the ALTC’s Promoting Excellence Initiative (2008). The Promoting Excellence Initiative sought to enhance university teaching and learning by enabling engagement with ALTC programs (Devlin et al. 2011).

In a recent national study of the facilitation of Australian university CoPs, participants (n=71) reported the existence of five different types of CoP. These included organic or informal CoPs (evolving over time without necessarily taking the label of CoP); staff-created CoPs; staff-created and institutionally recognised CoPs (for example, as part of professional development or promotion processes); institutionally supported (through funding, administrative support or time allocation); and institutionally created CoPs (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012c, p. 8). Among these, staff-created were the most commonly cited, followed by staff-created CoPs which had been recognised institutionally (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012c, p. 9).

As noted on page 7, institutionally sponsored CoPs have been adopted by a number of Australian universities as part of strategic initiatives to enhance teaching and learning. A literature on higher education CoPs has grown alongside these initiatives. This tends to focus on CoP variants (that is, different applications of CoP) rather than versions. There are four discernible strands of the literature. The most theoretically engaged of these involves advocacy of CoPs as a means to restore collegiality (for example, Churchman 2005; Nagy & Burch 2009).

A second strand of literature uses CoP theory as a frame for reflection on teaching and learning practice (for example, Campbell 2008; Viskovic 2006). Typically of such post hoc accounts, Campbell comments ‘...communities of practice present as difficult beasts to develop and form, often being identifiable only after they come to exist’ (2008). Campbell’s focus, in keeping with the majority of this literature, is on a CoP in one institution (2008).

A third strand of literature reports on the formation of higher education CoPs (for example, McDonald and Star 2006; 2008). Such accounts often highlight the disparity between CoP theory (version) and application (variant), adding to debate
about what higher education CoPs are and what they mean (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 21).

A fourth strand of the literature treats the notion of CoP as a heuristic for understanding learning (for example, Adlong et al. (2004), Anderson & McCune (2013), Lea (2005), Trowler & Knight (2010)). Related to the use of CoP for its explanatory value is the notion of ‘CoP approach’. Gertner, Roberts and Charles (2011) apply what they term a ‘CoP approach’ to understand knowledge transfer in three UK university-industry partnerships. This CoP approach (Gertner, Roberts & Charles 2011, p. 630) draws on the situated learning (Lave & Wenger 1991) and social identity (Wenger 1999) versions of CoP, as well as elaboration of the latter in Wenger’s work on social learning systems (2000). Gertner, Roberts and Charles characterise knowledge transfer as a form of learning (2011, p. 626). They conclude that the CoP approach is useful in recognising practice as being inherent in knowledge, in analysing knowledge sharing and production within and across communities (2011, p. 631), and in illuminating the social interactions and processes that enable successful knowledge transfer (Gertner, Roberts & Charles 2011, p. 640).

As noted in the previous chapter, in this study I adopt the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999) as a heuristic because this enables me to focus on learning and identity as social and discursive processes rather than as strategic technologies for managerial deployment. My approach aligns with Lea, who rejects the uncritical use of CoP ‘as a top-down educational model, in which practitioners are encouraged to follow some guidelines for developing their own communities of practice, in their own teaching context’ in favour of a heuristic approach to CoP (2005, p. 186).

**Versions and variants**

There are diverse views in higher education on the appropriateness of Wenger’s evolving accounts of CoP to the university context. McDonald and Star (2008), Lawrence and Sankey (2008), and Koegreiter, Trolina and Smith (2008) all endorse Wenger’s model of communities of practice as an innovative knowledge stewarding vehicle, in keeping with the knowledge management version of CoP. In
CHAPTER 3: PUTTING THE FOCUS COMMUNITIES IN CONTEXT

a case study of a faculty-based community of practice around teaching and learning in a first year course, McDonald and Star propose that Wenger’s account of communities of practice (1999), as adapted by Wenger et al. (2002), can provide a framework for building successful academic CoPs (2008). Similarly, Lawrence and Sankey report on the success of a CoP in fostering collegiality and mentoring, and as a vehicle ‘for change in teaching practice’ (2008).

Nagy and Burch suggest the need for ‘a new paradigm’ for communities of practice in higher education, the Community of Practice in Academe (CoP-iA). Focusing on the specifics of the higher education context, Nagy and Burch differentiate CoP-iA from Wenger’s knowledge management version of CoP in terms of power relationships, incentives and rewards, responsibilities and resource control (2009). Nagy and Burch argue that the distinct nature of academic work and the specifics of the corporate university model (with its negative effect on collegiality) create a very different context to the business and industrial settings in which Wenger’s framework has generally been applied. In combination, the distinct university context and ‘the unusual demarcation between university goals and personal goals’ effectively silences CoP theory in the higher education domain, according to Nagy and Burch (2009, p. 242). While conceding that more needs to be learned about the conceptualisation and application of CoP-iA, Nagy and Burch offer their model as a source of insight into the contextual differences applicable to implementation of CoPs in higher education, proposing that such CoPs may be a means for fostering ‘past collegiality within a contemporary context’ (2009, p. 242).

**CoP and professional learning**

As part of a project to promote informal learning in the vocational education and training sector, Boud and Middleton (2003) investigated the usefulness of the situated learning version of CoP (1991) and the social identity version (1999) for discussing informal workplace learning. As noted earlier, the latter emphasises social participation in community as the source of learning (Boud & Middleton 2003, p. 194). Boud and Middleton found that informal workplace learning happens in different ways and there are diverse CoPs; however, not all workplace learning
networks build identity and meaning in line with Wenger's social identity version (2003, p. 202). Some learning networks contributed to workplace learning without building identification with practice; for example, groups concerned with bureaucratic processes (Boud & Middleton 2003, p. 200). Further, the learning potential of networks differed depending on how work was structured and related contingencies (Boud & Middleton, 2003). Boud and Middleton also concluded that the cultivation of workplace CoPs is difficult despite what Wenger and colleagues suggest in their 2002 work (2003). Boud and Middleton identified the degree of ‘coupling’ in workplace learning groups as a factor in the facilitation of CoPs. Such coupling related to how closely and frequently knowledge was shared among members (2003, p. 201). In keeping with Lindkvist (2005) they found that the nature of contemporary workplaces could be an inhibiting factor in the efficacy of the social identity version of CoP (Boud & Middleton 2003, p. 201).

In a study of tertiary teacher development across three diverse New Zealand tertiary institutions, Viscovic found that informal workplace learning is ‘a major factor in becoming a tertiary teacher’ and theorised this learning using Wenger’s evolving CoP model (2006, p 332). She proposes a framework for tertiary teacher development that draws on the Wenger model to integrate individual learning and practice development through participation in local communities of practice that are sustained within a broader, institutional context (Viskovic 2006, p 334). Viscovic also acknowledges the potential existence of barriers to successful learning through participation in communities of practice, including lack of collegiality, negotiability and mutual accountability (2006, p 335).

In a review of the literature on academic development, Southwell and Morgan distinguish informal CoPs from formalised situated learning in groups (2009, p. 53) such as the cultivated CoPs in this study. Southwell and Morgan find changes in attitudes and skills and satisfaction reported through ‘in situ’ formal learning (2009, p. 53) and propose that academic groups offer an ‘effective setting for developing the complex knowledge, attitudes and skills involved in teaching’ (2009, p. 53), as well as finding little evidence of clear impact of in situ training on teaching practice.
or student learning (Southwell & Morgan 2009, p. 53). More recently, the majority of participants in a national study of higher education CoP facilitation endorsed the value of situated learning in CoPs but noted that this was a highly variable process dependent on domain, context and facilitator skills (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012b, p. 5).

Moving outside higher education, Owen relevantly finds that communities of practice contribute significantly to professional identity formation in a school-based study while noting the difficult of achieving collaboration and the related importance of consultation, communication and cooperation (2005, p176). Despite its relevance, this point is not prominent in the higher education CoP literature, which has tended to focus on collegiality as a value rather than an outcome. A notable exception is Nagy and Burch, who caution against the idea that communal engagement is readily achievable in the Australian higher education context (2009, p. 242).

**CoP and identity**
Churchman and Stehlik (2007) find that in the contemporary higher education context opportunities for collaboration are hindered by managerialist policies that promote individualism through competition and demarcation of disciplines. As a countermeasure they propose CoPs, where such communities are connected with collective action linked to meaning and identity formation generating pluralism:

> These communities will influence the 'new' academic professional identities which develop as a response to the changing environment and increasing control by policy-makers. (Churchman & Stehlik 2007, p. 272)

This conceptualisation, which involves a series of multiple communities of practice, is distinguished from notions of a collection of individuals or a ‘homogenous idealized community’ (Churchman & Stehlik 2007, p. 273). In an earlier publication Churchman focuses on a single collegial community of practice in a large Australian university, finding that members construct academic identities that are acceptable and sometimes satisfying because they ‘may not identify with the views attributed to institutional management’ (Churchman 2005, p. 13). Churchman reports that engagement with others who have compatible values and
perspectives gives community members the opportunity to share common difficulties and emotional responses to corporatisation of their institution. Participation also leads to enhanced confidence in views and identity as academics try to overcome their isolation by communicating with others who share their interpretations of academia as ‘a discourse of collegiality rather than isolation and competition’ (Churchman 2005, pp. 18-20). As will be elaborated in the next chapter, a Discourse of collegiality is prominent in the focus communities, with various implications.

Churchman critically engages with the social identity version of CoP (Wenger, 1999). She proposes that collegial communities of practice offer value in their capacity to sustain academic identities and disciplinary traditions but differentiates this notion of value from Wenger’s (1999) idea of value as linked to organisational rewards through contribution to organisational strategy (Churchman 2005, p. 19). For Churchman, the value and validity of collegial CoPs in higher education depend on ‘heterogeneity’ and ‘texture’ generating creativity and scholarship (Churchman 2005, p 28). In this way she echoes Marginson and Considine’s assertion that university identity depends on ‘mobilising the academic core and forging university community. Stimulating the academic heartland also brings with it advanced capacity to innovate in education ..., which enhances global offerings’ (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 247).

Churchman and Stehlik (2007) propose that the situated learning version of CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991) offers a means of recognising the value of diversity within institutions through its focus on language, culture, practice and interaction. Churchman and Stehlik qualify this proposition by rejecting the traditional collegiality of the academy as patriarchal rather than egalitarian and with the contention that communities of practice theory has evolved (including Wenger’s own more recent accounts) into a knowledge management tool. Churchman and Stehlik (2007) refer to a notion of like-mindedness, a value which I consider in the findings presented in Chapter 5. The idea of like-mindedness bears further examination in light of the facilitation of plurality. Nonetheless Churchman and
Stehlik offer some useful principles for reconceptualising the notion of CoP in the Australian university context.

King reports on research into instigation by an Australian university community of practice of radical change in practice through development and implementation of a new curriculum (2005). She describes the emotional transitions of newcomers and old-timers in this community. King states that challenges to constructions of identity and practice during the reform process engendered strong emotional responses from participants and attributes this to corresponding challenges to the meaning behind their practice (2005). King argues that emotions play a more significant role in CoPs than acknowledged previously by Wenger (2005, p. 90) and require deeper consideration in terms of their role in reconstructing learning, meaning and identity (2005, p. 101). The narratives of CoP participants in my study affirm the significance of emotion as a dimension of CoP involvement.

**CoP, knowledge sharing and management**

Koeglreiter, Torlina and Smith report on challenges associated with boundary spanning between a university CoP and other areas of the university (2008). They note a tendency in CoP literature to present an idealised situation where CoPs are nurtured and provided with the chance to have influence in their organisation. However, they also observe that CoPs can play a major role in enhancing organisational efficiency and improvement in terms of innovation and creativity essential to success and advancement in a tertiary education institution (Koeglreiter, Torlina & Smith 2008, p 164). This proposition is supported by the contention that their CoP can be seen as an effective vehicle for a bottom level organisational knowledge management structure where they provide an interactive forum for the creation and sharing of knowledge that is otherwise difficult to externalise (Koeglreiter, Torlina & Smith 2008, p 167).

**A higher education CoP typology?**

As the above review of higher education CoPs suggests, there are a range of views about, and applications of, CoP in higher education. McDonald, Star and Margetts also note some confusion about the meaning and role of CoPs, which they attribute
to the relative newness of the concept in higher education as well as some debates about CoP type associated with ‘definitional rigidity’ (2012a, p. 11). A typology is proposed by McDonald, Star and Margetts which identifies three types of CoPs operating in contemporary higher education: ‘organic’ (or naturally occurring) CoPs, ‘nurtured/supported’, and ‘Created/intentional’. Each is characterised according to structure, support, membership, themes, agenda and timing for outcomes (2012a, pp. 22-3). Nurtured/supported and Created/intentional CoPs bear some similarities in being institutionally supported, having membership which may be suggested (in Created/intentional CoPs membership is encouraged), and a guided agenda (although this may be self-determined by a Nurtured/supported CoP). These two CoP types differ in terms of structure, with Nurtured/supported characterised as having modified ‘bottom-up’ leadership and Created/intentional having ‘top-down’ leadership (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 22). McDonald, Star and Margetts offer their typology as a ‘generalised view of the types of CoPs in Australian higher education and the dynamics that may apply in certain circumstances’ (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 23). According to this typology, the Horizon University and Discovery University CoPs can be characterised as Nurtured/supported, whereas the Pioneer University CoP evolved from Created/intentional to Nurtured/supported. I define and discuss the focus communities by site in Chapter 5 with reference to CoP version (Wenger 1999; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002), CoP type (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a) and CoP epistemology (Amin & Roberts 2008; Lindkvist 2005).

This overview of CoPs in higher education makes it clear that the term is conceptualised and applied in a range of ways, with varying outcomes reported. While typology offers some insight into these variants at the level of group structure and dynamics, it needs supplementation with discourse (to understand meaning making and the meaning horizon in higher education CoPs) and epistemology (to understand knowing in practice).
Summary

This chapter has explored the broader context in which the focus communities are located. I have characterised the Australian university context as hyper-discursive with reference to the competing meanings surrounding national policy and globalisation, which co-exist in complex, sometimes contradictory and often unpredictable ways. I provided an overview of the different ways CoPs are applied in higher education in the context of more than one influential CoP version and a range of reported variants. The next chapter introduces the methodology and research design for this study to explain how the relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative in the focus communities was explored and constructed using the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2.
Chapter 4: Turning the kaleidoscope – methodology and research design

In the introduction to this thesis I proposed that my methodology is part of the contribution of this study because of its distinctive combination of poststructuralist orientation, use of narrative as data, theory and representational form, and Big D discourse as its analytic focus. This hybrid approach usefully responds to the complexity of interpreting human experiences, as I will explore further below.

At the outset I also offered kaleidoscope as a lens through which the data can be viewed. I proposed its strengths: mobility and variety and a capacity to form and re-form. I also noted some limitations: a telescoped, one-way perspective and a bias towards pattern.

I chose kaleidoscope as a structural metaphor, a concept which could scaffold another, (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 13). The figure of kaleidoscope seemed to offer insight into the dynamic relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative in the focus communities. According to Lakoff and Johnson, ‘Metaphors partially structure our everyday concepts and ... this structure is reflected in our literal language’ (1980, p. 46). For me this turned out to be reciprocal because although I was thinking of kaleidoscope as a structural metaphor, at the same time I was indiscriminately treating the metaphor as a container for the many different ideas and images I accumulated from participants, the literature and policy documentation. Because of this blurring, kaleidoscope proved to be not only a conceptual container but also a container metaphor which emphasised the separation between being and experience of the world (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p. 29). We have to project ourselves onto and into the world to make sense of our relationship to it. As I will explore below, reconciling conceptual meaning-making with lived experience has been the biggest challenge in this study.

In this chapter I begin by orientating my research. I then introduce the ideas and images through which I was eventually able to connect thinking and lived
experience in this study, through a poststructuralist approach which combined narrative and big D discourse analysis. I discuss complexities related to working across poststructuralism and narrative, as well as difficulties I encountered in relation to conceptualisation, representation and analysis of the data. I explain how eventual illumination of these problems enabled me to glimpse, within a tumble of ideas and words and images, the patterns which I present as findings in the next chapter.

Orienting the research

Qualitative and practice-based
My study is qualitative, in keeping with its focus on the relationship between professional learning, identity, community and narrative. It ‘involves focusing on the cultural, everyday and situated aspects of human thinking, learning, knowing, acting, and ways of understanding ourselves’ (Kvale & Brinkman 2009, p. 14). It is also qualitative in the sense that it primarily understands the focus communities in terms of the meanings that participants bring to them and because it draws on a range of empirical materials and interpretive practices (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p 3).

In this study, practice is a way of knowing and a resource for perceiving reality (which I view as multiple and relational). I investigated practice-based epistemology in conceptualising the focus communities in Chapter 2. Practice-based approaches to research involve a view of ‘reality’ as ‘relational, constructive, heterogeneous and situated’ (Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow 2003, p. 26). My conceptualisation of practice encompasses discourse as a key form of practice in which individuals have agency. Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow propose that ‘practice-talking reiterates that beyond grand constructions like discourses, paradigms, or logics there is a daily reality of local tactics, pockets of resistance, dialects, collusions, contradictions’ (2003, p. 27). In Chapter 5 I explore some of these discursive acts in discussion of the findings at each university.
One version, many stories
Like any story, this thesis is only one possible version of events (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 31). It is a collective story (Richardson 1997, p. 14) which links individual experiences (including mine as researcher) with their broader social contexts, to tell a story that might not otherwise be told (Richardson 1997, p. 32).

This study focuses on ‘problems with the social text, its logic, and its inability to represent the world of lived experience fully’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 24). I do not claim that it captures knowable objective realities or truths (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 4). I offer a partial account which can only be true to itself. As Richardson suggests, it is possible to know something without claiming to know everything (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 961).

Poststructuralist affinities
I locate this study within a poststructuralist paradigm because it makes no claims to a ‘single authorized meaning based on an ultimate reality or truth’ (Belsey 2002, p. 94). In representing the study and findings in this thesis I am conscious of the constraints and instability of knowledge, and define and understand knowledge in terms of its limits and possibilities (Williams 2005, pp. 2-3). This study is not presented as the product of a unified form of reason; it recognises and reflects ‘many reasons arising out of many discourses and knowledges (epistemes), not just the so-called unified human reason’ (Peters 1996, p. 2). I argue that although this perspective is in tension with some approaches to narrative research (such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Clandinin and Rosiek (2007)), which are grounded in the notion of a foundational reality in the form of lived experience, it is possible and generative to work across poststructuralism and narrative. Working across poststructuralism and narrative makes it possible to understand lived experience in its broader social and discursive contexts. I will provide examples to support this contention.

Poststructuralist approaches provide a range of accounts for how language prescribes power and social organisation, how this meaning is contested, and how
language constructs subjectivity in historically specific ways (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p 961). Through a focus on the narrative construction of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity (narrativity), my study engages with ‘the problem of the subject and of subject-centred reason’ (Peters 1996, p. 10).

Orientation towards poststructuralism means working in an open-ended space, without boundaries or settled knowledge (Semetsky 2006, p. 120). In finding and making meaning in this study, I have been influenced by St. Pierre’s descriptions of her work as a ‘Nomad’ researcher (1997). As explored in this chapter I have followed St. Pierre in recognising the limitations, and mobility, of qualitative research concepts such as voice, interview, narrative and experience (St. Pierre 2009, p. 223).

**Baroque method**
My thinking, interpretation and analysis of the data in this study are also influenced by the Baroque research method described by MacLure (2006, pp. 731-2). A sometimes confronting aesthetic, the Baroque works at a sensory level to unsettle and dizzy, and is prone to theatricality and distortion. Applied to research, the Baroque method focuses on the ‘complexity of the specific’, which proliferates new meanings and connections while ‘wavering in its scale and focus’ (MacLure 2006, pp. 733-4). As I describe below, I was bamboozled by this specificity at one stage. During close textual analysis of individual transcripts I found meaning atomised as I zoomed in on linguistic detail to the point of blurriness. It wasn’t until I began to find broader thematic connections across the data, which translated into Big D discourses, that I ‘turned the kaleidoscope’ and briefly glimpsed patterned meanings. These became the collective story (Richardson 1997) of the focus communities and their participants presented in the next chapter.

The Baroque method recognises that ‘clarity’ may entrench power relations by marginalising that which lies beyond the status quo. It rejects certainty in favour of ‘some temporary point of indecision on the threshold of knowing and unknowing that is so often absent from our responses to education and from our own research.
practices’ (MacLure 2006, p. 738). Throughout this research I have tried to cultivate ‘negative capability’, the ability to be ‘in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason’ (Keats 2001, p. 370). Negative capability enables the pursuit of knowledge which can let a ‘fine isolated verisimilitude’ go by, as Keats wrote admiringly of fellow poet Coleridge, ‘from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge’ (2001, p. 370). I only try to follow Keats partway. I am not seeking the complete knowledge which ‘half knowledge’ implies, because I recognise that knowledge and knowing are situated and dynamic. I understand from experience that trying to know is often uncomfortable and nearly always disruptive (Seymour 2007).

**Aesthetics in practice**

My enjoyment of Baroque is mostly conceptual. For example, I was attracted to the idea that subject and object are artificially demarcated when analysing and representing data (MacLure 2006, p. 734). When it is visually represented, as in this example of Trompe l’oeuil, I want to push the boy back inside the frame where he ‘belongs’. Aesthetics, like metaphor, can only go so far in bridging conceptualisation and lived experience.

![Figure 2: Escaping Criticism, 1874, by Pere Borrell del Caso, oil on canvas, Collection Banco de España Madrid (del Caso 1874)](image)

Aesthetics and emotions are intertwined and important factors in workplace-based research and in understanding the lived experience of practice development as Gherardi and Strati show (2012, p. 44). My experiences of professional learning and identity and those described by many of the other participants in this study reveal an emotional character which goes beyond views of work as simply being instrumental. Such perspectives include an understanding of CoP involvement as
being ‘craft-based’. In craft-based CoPs described in early accounts, such as Lave & Wenger (1991), knowledge is embedded in individuals and sociocultural context. It is drawn from experience, tacit knowing, embodied know-how, continuous learning and ‘kin (aesthetic)’ awareness (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 358).

Aesthetics are also important in representation. To convey and offer insights into lived experience in this thesis is an aesthetic problem as well as an ethical problem. Genre, rhetoric and images are aesthetic choices geared towards a poetics of lived experience (Richardson 1997, p. 180). At its most ambitious, the Baroque reveals ‘the attempt to “represent the unrepresentable”’ (MacLure 2006, pp. 731-2). This thesis could be seen as an example. So too could narrative, a key concept, and an analytical and representational tool in this study. Yet, as I will now explore, narrative bridges thinking, knowing, lived experience and identity formation to construct truths and realities.

**Narrative**

Narrative is the principal way of thinking and knowing in this study. It is a form of practice which shapes identity formation and inter-subjective meaning-making. Narrative is the primary source of ‘data’ and the means of representing this research and its findings.

**Defining narrative**

In this thesis I use ‘narrative’, ‘story’ and ‘account’ interchangeably. All three terms refer to ‘spates of talk that are taken to describe or explain matters of concern to participants’ (Gubrium 2010, p. xiii). Unlike a narratologist, I do not conceptualise story as being a separate property of narrative. Instead I follow Smith, who proposes that ‘For any particular narrative, there is no single basically basic story subsisting beneath it but, rather, an unlimited number of other narratives that can be constructed in response to it or perceived as related to it’ (2000, p. 144). As I noted earlier, this thesis is one of many possible versions of a collective CoP story. It is not simply an iteration of a single CoP story.
Narrativity

Narrative practice was part of this study and implicated in identity construction from the beginning. As I described in the introduction to this thesis, I first became involved with one of the focus communities by writing professional biographies of its members. Through the concept of ‘narrativity’, I have explored the construction of the subject and the condition of intersubjective experience (McQuillan 2000, p. 8). Narrativity is also a means for analysing the processes that shape how stories are constructed, conveyed and received, and how these elements interrelate (Gubrium 2010, p. 387). I conceptualise identity construction in the focus communities as being narrative in character (Elliot 2005, p. 12; Holstein & Gubrium 2000; Linde 1993). Narrators use narrative strategies to construct a self across different stories (Chase 2008, pp. 64-67). To make sense of these beyond the individual embodied instance, this construction of self needs to be understood in a social context; that is, in terms of Big D Discourse, as I propose on page 77.

Narrative and reality

Narratives shape the way we think and what we view as the real world (Bruner 2002, p. 8). Clandinin and Connelly describe narrative thinking in terms of five characteristics, which are all present in the way I conceptualised the focus communities and analysed the data which shaped the collective story presented in the next chapter. Firstly, narrative is located in terms of a past, present and implied future (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 29). Narrative understands people as being in a process of change (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 30) and as having storied histories (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, pp. 30-1). Meaning is tentative when thought narratively. Events could always be otherwise. Finally, context is always present in narratives (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 32).

Bruner proposes that we interpret and understand reality narratively, and describes key narrative characteristics as ‘tenets’ for narrative reality. These overlap with those identified by Clandinin and Connelly in terms of temporality and sequencing (Bruner 1996, p. 132) and uncertainty and multiplicity of meaning (Bruner 1996, p. 138). Other significant characteristics of narrative which shape our perceived reality
are genre (for example, comedy, tragedy and irony) (Bruner 1996, p. 136); the ability to accept different versions of reality based on its negotiability; and continuity, which encompasses ‘turning points’ (Bruner 1996, pp. 143-4).

Because of my poststructural orientation, I draw on this work to understand how narrative can work at the perceptual level without sharing the view that there is an underlying reality. I take the view that the notion of reality is mobile, multiple and contingent. In this sense I follow Gubrium and Holstein, who use the term ‘narrative reality’ to describe and analyse storytelling as a socially situated practice (2010, p. 2). As I noted in chapter 2, I extend the social identity version of CoP to view discourse and narrative as forms of practice in the focus communities. Narrative reality is mutually constituted from narrative practice (the prompts and processes of storytelling) and narrative environments (what meanings storytellers draw on) (Gubrium 2010, p. 27). Narrative work involves ‘the construction and elaboration of stories’ (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p. 41) through practices such as narrative linkage, which makes experiences meaningful through associations (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p. 55); and narrative composition, which expands narrative linkages into a ‘story with a content and shape of its own’ (Gubrium & Holstein 2009, p. 69).

In organisations, narrative is a way to connect the institutional past with the institutional present and the place of members within or outside that (Linde 2009, pp. 3-4). It is also a currency for making sense of human relationships within organisations (Czarniawska 2007, p. 385). Realities and truths are closely associated. Narrative bridges both.

Narrative and knowing
Narrative and knowledge are conceptually intertwined, ‘tangled beyond sorting’ (Bruner 2002, p. 27). Etymologically, narrative and knowledge are equally implicated. ‘Gnarrus’, the Greek verb ‘to know’ is the root of ‘narrative’ (McQuillan 2000, p 2). ‘Poststructuralism proposes that systems of knowledge are narratively constructed’ (Richardson 1997, p. 179). Narrative rests in narrator and
narrative text. The narrator is also the ‘knower’ (McQuillan 2000, p. 2), making it important to position the writer of a text as both knower and teller (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 962). I address this in relation to voice below.

As I have noted earlier, power and knowledge are entwined. Since narrative is inherent in knowing it is important to consider ‘the webs of power that that surround and are woven through the stories we tell’ (Daya & Lau 2007, p. 4), including the research narrative. I have tried to show how my positioning as a researcher has created knowledge in this study and how it is constructed by knowledge (Richardson 1997, p. 108) in discussing representation below.

Narratives have sociocultural significance in knowledge production and transmission. They are ‘culture’s coin and currency’ (Bruner 2002, p. 15) and the way that knowledge is stored and shared communally (Lyotard 2000, p. 161). Narrative is associated with professional knowing (Lyons 2007, pp. 615-6).

Social circumstances and resources enable and constrain narrative (Chase 2008). Narrative is a discrete form of discourse which is ‘contextually embedded and makes particular connections between particular events’ (Richardson 1997, p. 109).

Thinking and knowing narratively connects with lived experience, which feels personal, tellable, meaningful and knowable, as Richardson describes (1997, p. 65). Narrative does not us about the social context in which we live, however, and how that shapes our lived experience. To consider that relationship I draw on discourse as both theory and method in this study.

**Discourse**

As MacLure proposes, discourses ‘establish what it is possible (and impossible) to “be” … – as well as what will count as truth, knowledge, moral values, normal behaviour and intelligible speech’ (2003, p. 175). It was important to include the broader discursive context for participants’ narratives in analysing and representing the data because accounts of personal experience alone do not necessarily
illuminate the larger patterns, systems or discourses that structure them. Insight into these is necessary to understand any social phenomenon, including the focus communities.

**Discourse and subjectivity**

My first thinking about discourse and subjectivity was informed by Laclau and Mouffé’s work (1985). They explain subjectivity as a position within a discursive structure which designates subject positions (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 115). Subjects are ‘overdetermined’, fragmented by multiple positionings in multiple, contingent discourses, which are relationally linked. No discourse can fix a final or complete meaning; however, discourse ‘is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre’ (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 112). ‘Nodal points’ partially fix meaning and relationally create identity through ‘chains of equivalence’ (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 112). Chains of equivalence lattice meaning differentially, as Laclau and Mouffe illustrate, using the example of colonisation. Colonists’ dominant power is evident through common skin colour, customs, dress and language. These shared characteristics are equivalent in the sense that they differentiate the colonising people from the colonised people. By expressing this equivalence, however, these shared characteristics smooth away differences among the colonising (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 127). The chain of equivalence produces a negative identity in which ‘the colonizer is ‘discursively constructed as the anti-colonized’ (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 128). The ‘logic of equivalence’ is simplistic, reducing subject positions to contrasting poles. The logic of difference, on the other hand, expands the number of subject positions which may be relationally combined and continuous with each other (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 128). As I will explore in the next chapter, my findings reflect a logic of difference, providing instances where seemingly contradictory subjectivities co-exist within the focus communities.

Laclau and Mouffe propose that discourses are always in contention (‘antagonism’) with other discourses, although hegemony may naturalise a discourse so that it is taken for granted. Hegemony arises out of ‘antagonistic forces’ separated by
‘unstable frontiers’. According to Laclau and Mouffe, ‘Only the presence of a vast area of floating elements and their articulation into opposite camps … is what constitutes the terrain permitting us to define a practice as hegemonic’. In other words, hegemony depends on the logic of equivalence associated with frontiers (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p 136). I found Laclau and Mouffe’s theorisation of discourse broadly useful but on too large a scale for ready application in my study because their theory refers to society at a macro level. As Phillips and Jørgenson note, Laclau and Mouffe’s account is ‘undertheorised’ in terms of how fixed social areas of stability and permanence can be identified and investigated in different social domains (2002, p. 55). I needed to be able to analyse community at the micro level as well as the macro. Further, although language, in the form of transcripts of interview, was my principal source of data, I needed analytical tools beyond language. Consequently I have built on my understanding of discourse by referring to Big D discourse, conceptually, and as a tool for data analysis in this study (Gee 2010).

**Big D discourse: moving from theory to practice**

As noted in Chapter 2, Big D discourse considers meanings as being not only shaped in our minds and in language but also in ‘objects, tools, technologies and networks of people’ (Gee 2010, p. 150). Big D Discourse includes the way we talk and act as members of various social and cultural groups, such as CoPs, and the particular identities and activities associated with these (Gee 2010). Taking this approach gave me a conceptual and analytical framework for considering participants’ lived experience and the value (or otherwise) they assigned to their involvement in the focus communities. That value is the main focus of my research and instrumental in findings about the propagation of higher education communities of practice.

**Research questions**

During the course of this study I refined my research questions. Originally, they were:
1. What are the notions of ‘value’ or personal benefit of communally produced and shared knowledges and identities in practice found in the focus communities?

2. Do these notions of ‘value’ suggest guiding principles for the development and embedding of communities to promote teaching and learning in contemporary Australian universities?

3. How relevant is the Wenger model of communities of practice? Are there viable alternatives?

After I had generated interview ‘data’ (transcripts of audio recordings) and begun to analyse data I revised the research questions. I re-focused research questions 1 and 3 after undertaking early data analysis. I reframed research question 2 based on a fresh perspective which related to a change in my professional life.

When I began to analyse the data it became clear that participatory value was the key focus of my study and one of its distinguishing features. Much of the literature on higher education CoPs has ‘told’ rather than ‘shown’ the value of CoPs. This study aims to make a distinctive contribution by ‘showing’ (representing) the participatory value of the focus communities through the collective story presented in Chapter 5.

This study began as an investigation into an area of professional practice. Stepping out of my role in supporting CoP development and out of the teaching and learning domain in early 2012 changed, and refreshed, my perspective on the study, particularly its aims and focus. I realised that there was a presumption built into my second question – that CoPs would, if not should, be part of the Australian university teaching and learning repertoire. Through this insight I reframed research question 2 to remove the in-built presumption and instead focus on the implications of the participatory value of CoPs as reported in the data. Reframing the question this way also connected better with my methodology by foregrounding values and meaning-making as conceptual considerations and forms of practice.

My research questions became:
1. What are the notions of value or benefit reported by participating community members and facilitators?

2. What do these notions of value or benefit say about community, professional learning, knowing, identity, and teaching and learning practices in Australian universities?

3. Do the reported values and benefits seem to support the propagation of communities of practice in higher education? If so, how and why? Which model/typology?

These questions structured my data analysis and the collective story presented in the next chapter.

**Representation**

**Why narrative?**

Narrative links CoP conceptualisation and lived experience. As I described in Chapter 2, the social identity version of CoP (Wenger, 1999), with extensions, is the basis for my conceptualisation of the focus communities. In the social identity version of CoP, professional learning is a form of becoming in which community participation, identity formation and the development of practice competence are entwined. This trajectory resembles the narrative arc of life experience, whereby being is a form of becoming, in which narrative history is linked, through the present, towards the future (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 145).

As explored earlier in this chapter, narrative is a means for both constructing and conveying a reality, sharing knowledge and representing lived experience in recognisable and perceptibly authentic ways. In this study, participants’ stories are the main source of data on the relationship between professional learning, community, identity and narrative in the focus communities.

Describing the potential of the collective story, Richardson suggests that ‘New narratives offer patterns for new lives’ (1997, p. 33). As noted on page 45, Wenger,
CHAPTER 4: TURNING THE KALEIDOSCOPE – METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

McDermott and Snyder recognise the potential of storytelling to motivate CoP members to enact stories for future telling (2002, p. 169). If the collective story presented in this thesis encourages anyone to embody or enact new collegial teaching and learning identities, it will, to that extent, have usefully represented participants’ lived experiences.

Finding form
Originally I envisaged this study as small, focused on intensive narrative work with participants, particularly CoP members. I intended to build representation of findings around individual stories. This did not work out for practical and aesthetic reasons.

The response to my call for participants, particularly at my home site, far exceeded my expectations and my original participant quota of 17 participants across the sites (up to 9 members and up to 8 facilitators). From many more expressions of interest, I interviewed 33 participants (22 members) located in three different States across Australia. I delimited the number of participants by scheduling interviews on set dates and times, selected around paid employment and candidature milestones. Realising that working with 33 participants (or even 22 members) in the originally intended, immersive way was not going to be practicable, I began looking for other ways of representing the many stories and voices in the data.

Before I knew the number of participants in my study I made a ‘false start’ (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 137) as I tried several times to craft individual narratives based on participants’ transcripts. The original transcripts were already narrative and because I had transcribed them myself, I could hear participants’ voices when I re-read them. Operating in a space of ‘responsibility within indeterminacy’ (Lather 2009, p. 19), I tried to write ‘towards’ (St.Pierre 1997) several participants. The result was several bland vignettes cobbled from the transcripts. My superimposed structure and voice flattened out individuality in the representation so that even direct quotes sounded stilted.
I had tried to reflect participants, evoking the song lyric, ‘I’ll be your mirror. Reflect what you are, in case you don’t know’ (Reed 1967). As Warhol famously remarked, ‘I'm sure I'm going to look in the mirror and see nothing. People are always calling me a mirror and if a mirror looks into a mirror, what is there to see?’ (1976, p. 15). Each vignette was as empty as a mirror held up to a mirror. I didn’t want to create a totalising story. I had read a paper in which a researcher produced ‘holistic’ stories from two sets of research transcripts with just four participants (Collin 2009). I felt uncomfortable with this methodologically, based on the available information, which didn’t mention whether or not participants had been involved in production of the stories.

In one of my last research conversations a participant highlighted another challenge, how to individualise narratives and maintain confidentiality. By then I was looking for an alternative way to represent the study, one that would be expansive enough to encompass many voices and fluid enough to respect and convey the ‘…reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story.’ (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 71).

A case beside the point
Looking for a way to represent findings collectively, I investigated ‘case’ as a genre. According to Yin, case is ‘generally a bounded entity (a person, organization, behavioural condition, event or other social phenomenon’ but it may also encompass contextual conditions (2012, p. 7). I conceptualised the case as the social phenomenon of intentionally established higher education communities to enhance university teaching and learning considered in terms of their value and implications for professional learning, community identity, university teaching and learning, and the propagation of higher education CoPs. I thought about the case as a hybrid, combining ‘descriptive characteristics in offering ‘specific social scenes and interactions’ (Yin 2012, p. 49) with partial and consciously imperfect explanatory attributes in seeking to ‘explain how and why a series of events occurred’ (Yin 2012, p. 89). This proved to be another false start. Case did not fit with my poststructural bias towards multiplicity and contingency. More importantly, it did
not enable me to convey the emotional and aesthetic qualities of a key focus of my research: participants’ notions of value and experiences of CoP (Gherardi & Strati 2012), and the relationship of both to Discourse and identity in practice. Representing lived experiences of participation involves poetic and aesthetic considerations. I had to look again for a representational form.

I found the answer in the thought that mirrors do not hold images; they provide a plane for glimpsing images. Silver wigged Warhol dissolved into the looking glass and the smooth and empty surface of the mirror splintered into dozens of tiny pieces. In these, I glimpsed other selves to ‘live by’ (Holstein & Gubrium 2000). I found connections in these selves, a kaleidoscopic pattern, a collective story (Richardson 1997) of the focus communities, which include, but are not limited to, communities characterisable as CoPs in terms of the social identity version (Wenger 1999).

**A collective story**

Like a kaleidoscope, the view provided through collective story is the product of a dynamic. It is created in the space where personal and political meet. As Richardson contends, a collective story ‘displays an individual’s story by narrativizing the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs’ (1997, p. 32). By linking the individual and the social, a collective story can evoke the response ‘That’s my story. I am not alone’ (Richardson 1997, p. 33). In this thesis I have constructed a collective story of the CoPs in this study in which I tell a researcher story and retell participants’ stories in the social space where they seem to connect within and across sites. As I will explore in the next chapter, a shared value for social connection was very strong in the findings, particularly at one university which has built its CoP initiative around the idea of overcoming isolation through CoP involvement.

**Ontological and epistemological narratives**

The collective CoP story has two narrative strands: ontological and epistemological. Participants mostly speak through ‘first order’ or ontological narratives through
quotations from the stories they told about themselves (Elliot 2005, p. 12). I have taken these from transcripts of our audio recorded conversations, which participants approved. Ontological narratives represent participants’ identities and realities (Stalker 2009, p. 225). Epistemological narratives combine theoretical positions and empirical conclusions developed at a specific time and place (Stalker 2009). The story I have presented in this chapter to position myself and my research is an example. Across the thesis I have constructed the ‘second order’ or epistemological narrative from research notes, from ontological narratives (including my own), from the literature, and from national and institutional documentation, to make sense of the focus communities and participants’ experiences of these (Elliot 2005, p. 13). The epistemological strand of the collective story represents my understanding and interpretation of the specific social worlds of the focus communities (Stalker 2009, p. 225).

Representing the research story requires both types of narrative. Ontological narratives set the scene and epistemological narrative ‘problematisate and theorise’ (Stalker 2009, p. 230). Combining the two makes the individuals behind the stories explicit to readers (Stalker 2009, p. 230). In juxtaposing my voice with participants’ voices, I have aimed for an interactive researcher voice (Chase 2008, p. 77).

**Poetics and aesthetics**
According to Richardson, representation ‘stages the text’ (1997, p. 147). She offers speech as an example of everyday poetics, with its use of devices such as alliteration, assonance and rhythm (1997, p. 143) and proposes that poetry more closely represents lived experience than conventional sociological prose because of its emotional range (Richardson 1997, p. 180). Poetry is not only an aesthetic art form, it can also be a means for social change. As Trinh suggests, it is ‘a site where language is at its most radical in its refusal to take itself for granted’ (1992, p. 153). Richardson uses poetry to show how sociological truth claims are constructed (Richardson 1997, p. 137). My representational aims in this thesis are less radical. I have represented experiences collectively and, through findings, offer further experiential possibilities. In making decisions about representation I have been
mindful of what St. Pierre calls ‘a tangled responsibility to the Other’, an ongoing attempt throughout the research process to be ‘worthy at the instant of decision, when what happens is all there is—when meaning will always come too late to rescue us’ (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, pp. 972-973). In the process I have tried to balance reflexivity, critical consciousness and aesthetics by being attuned to fabrication and its capacity to convey truths. I see truth and fiction as being entwined. This thesis is somewhere along the spectrum of ‘fictitiousness’, which Trinh describes, ‘Every representation of truth involves elements of fiction, and the difference between so-called documentary and fiction in the depiction of reality is a question of degrees of fictitiousness’ (1992, p. 145).

Paying attention to rhetoric, I have assembled the collective story from theory, argument, politics, poetics and sensory perception. I have reflexively combined the personal storytelling voice, ‘mythos’ (Carlson 1998, p. 543), with an adaptation of the critical and analytical style of ‘logos’ (Carlson 1998, p. 543), which makes limited truth claims. In adopting these rhetorical styles I have not consciously or intentionally privileged either to structure argumentation or findings. I have, however, made aesthetic choices about which style to use and when. Who was speaking and what was being said guided many of these decisions.

Voice

Voice and representation
I have used the first person in this thesis to make my role as a storyteller explicit. Author Amos Oz likens the job of spy and storyteller because ‘They both gather information and mingle with the environment’ (The Book Show 2009). I am not an undercover operative, nor am I an omniscient author. These are important points, ethically and methodologically. Ethically, the interweaving of these narratives represents my individual understandings, analytical range (and limits) and responses. Methodologically, I do not claim a special objectivity or detachment for myself in researching and representing this study. Instead I aim to make my research process and my position in relation to this as explicit as possible.
CHAPTER 4: TURNING THE KALEIDOSCOPE – METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Ely suggests that narrative research representation aims to communicate the subject with ‘just enough of her own colour, cadence, and usage to “show” her to the readers, all the while taking care how so that her voice cannot be used to stereotype or denigrate her’ (2007, p. 573). This is far easier said than done. Richardson describes a poetry reading she rendered in a ‘hill southern accent’. Her poem was based on a transcript and presented at a conference, with the aim of problematising certain sociological concepts (1997, p. 156). I support Richardson’s aims and I am indebted to her work in this thesis, but when I read that reference to accent I felt uncomfortable. Although Richardson’s intention was to ‘resee/refeel sociology’ (1997, p. 167), adoption of an accent implies to me the risk of speaking as someone else. I first considered the dilemmas of representation and voice while transcribing research conversations with participants.

Re-inserting the breath
Before I started the process of transcription, my idea of representation (though I didn’t see it that way) was two-dimensional, transposed from the pages of works on narrative methodology (for example, Ely (2007), Elliot (2005), Riessman & Kohler (1993)). It was, as I recall and write it now, a readerly, rather than a writerly conceptualisation. It made sense to read Riessman and Kohler’s proposition that representation and analysis are interrelated in narrative analysis (1993). As a reader, everything seems obvious – and possible – when it is argued persuasively and it is not something that you are actually trying to do. In practice I found that it is very different and far more complex and troubling to take (even this choice of verb suggests appropriation) people’s words, however freely and knowingly given, and represent them in a fashion that is meant to be theirs, but which stops being theirs as soon as their words are recorded.

I tried, as I transcribed and began to analyse research conversations, to avoid stifling the many presences and absences that emerged in every text, individually and collectively. I tried (and kept trying as I wrote up this thesis) to write, as St. Pierre puts it, ‘towards’ participants without any sense of where that may lead (1997). In practice this was often confusing and troubling. Listening to interviews was like
eavesdropping on myself, as well as the research participants. When I began to type up the recordings I discovered the difficulty of rendering speech in print form. I often read myself out of difficulties but in this instance being readerly did not help. I identified a way out of this dilemma when listening to a radio program about the print publication of plays. The Australian playwright Alana Valentine talked about her ‘fascination’, as a playwright, with:

> how language performs around what I call the breath. I’ve been working with a poet who talks about technology removes language from the breath; and the book really is a form of technology. So when you put a play into a book it’s now a piece of technology with the breath of the artist, the breath of the actor, removed. But even so it still is a blueprint for what someone else might want to do when they pick it up and kind of, what I would call, reinsert the breath. (The Book Show 2011)

Can a written representation of a conversation be a blueprint into which the breath can be reinserted? Standard ‘sanitised’ research transcripts remove the details that characterise speech. They are free of the inaccuracies and stumblings and repetitions in which meanings seem poised. As I listened to, and transcribed, research conversations I sometimes cringed at my ramblings. I sympathised with the tidiness of the conventional transcript. I wanted to be able to speak like a telegram, in sharp bursts of concentrated meaning. I wanted to be able to think (and represent my thinking) this way too. I wanted meanings to be clear, understanding to be certain and persuasive.

I listened intently to the conversations, trying to key them as I heard them. As I did so I came back to the significance of voice and representation to narrative. I recognised that the transcripts were, in Valentine’s terms, a form of technology, just as this thesis, particularly the findings reported in the next chapter, is also a form of technology. To produce the transcripts, to analyse them and to represent the findings that resulted I listened for ‘the breath in the language’. I took this literally at first, carefully noting inhalations and exhalations, laughter, stuttering and mispronunciations before reverting to conventional, ‘clean’ transcript production. I created two transcripts for every research conversation: a conventional transcript stripped of ‘disfluencies’ (Riessman & Kohler, 1993) and a transcript of the
conversation as heard. This was literally played by ear, grouped idiosyncratically into lines by heard speech rhythms and non-verbal sounds. I idiosyncratically arrayed these in couplets and single lines, with little punctuation.

Feeling uneasy about the two-transcript approach, I discuss it with my supervisors. They ask me about the significance of the annotations on the transcripts that I did not send to participants. I realised then that any significance around the inhalations, exhalations, stuttering, false starts, over talking and mispronunciations was tied to a lingering notion of authentic representation of another. I came to understand that accepting the idea of transcripts as blueprints meant accepting the limitations of transcripts as representations.

I used the ‘cleaned up’ transcripts for analysis but kept two transcripts for each participant with the idea that I would return to the alternative transcript if I wanted to look inside a phrase for something else of its context: an inhalation, emphasis, or sniff. I did not end up doing this, but at the time it was comforting to know I had the detailed transcripts, even though I accepted that authenticity was not an achievable or desirable goal. I liked the idea of the annotated transcripts as encasing my best, though limited, attempts of (re)presenting the conversation as heard.

Voice cannot ever be authentic and it is not possible for me to sufficiently represent others’ voices. I moved away from the idea of developing individual narratives in favour of a collective narrative as I come to understand, with Riessman and Kohler, that ‘All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively and imperfectly’ (1993, p. 15). My transcripts of research conversations and this thesis are small exchanges, co-produced by teller and listener. At best they are, and will be, ‘blueprints’ (The Book Show 2011) breathed into life in voices uniquely heard by each reader who has ‘ears to hear’ (Lather 2009, p. 18), whenever, wherever and however she, or he, is.
A multiperspectival approach

In this study I have taken a multiperspectival methodological approach, following Phillips and Jørgenson who propose that discourse can be combined with other analytical perspectives to create a useful methodological ‘package’ (2002, p. 4). My methodology in this study combines the social identity version of CoP (Wenger, 1999) with conceptualisation of discourse and narrative as forms of practice which can shape the meaning-making horizon and identity formation in higher education CoPs. Wenger’s social identity version of CoP aligns with the Critical interpretive paradigm. My approach to narrative and discourse methodologies is poststructuralist. This mixed methodological approach responds to Lather’s call for ‘paradigm proliferation’ in educational research, which adopts multiple approaches, avoiding ‘tidy categories’ (2006, p. 48) and arguments about paradigms in favour of different directions from which ‘more interesting and useful ways of knowing will emerge’ (2006, p. 52). I explore the way my methodology crosses several ‘untidy’ categories below.

Traversing the ‘borderlands’: narrative research and poststructuralism

This study can be seen as concerned with narrative functions, contexts and consequences, in line with one of three types of narrative research identified by Mishler (1995, p. 90). This type of narrative research focuses ‘on the “work” stories do, on the settings in which they are produced, and on the effects they have’ (Mishler 1995, p. 107), including studies, such as mine, which associate personal narrative and identity development (Mishler 1995, pp. 114-6).

Broadly speaking my study could be described as narrative inquiry as Smith defines it ‘an umbrella term for a mosaic of research efforts, with diverse theoretical musings, methods, empirical groundings, and/or significance all revolving around an interest in narrative’ (2007, p. 392). Because of its poststructuralist orientation, however, my study can be distinguished from narrative inquiry as characterised by Clandinnen and Rosiek (2007). They propose that narrative inquiry and poststructuralism are divergent approaches despite sharing the perspective that
some knowledge is narrative in form. Narrative theory as they conceptualise it ‘cannot ultimately be grounded in post-structuralist theories about knowledge’ (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007, p. 52). According to Clandinin and Rosiek, poststructuralists contend that narrative is entirely discursive (and therefore a form of re-presentation of lived experience) whereas narrative inquiry treats narrative as a source of insight and knowledge about lived experience. They make this distinction by grounding narrative inquiry in pragmatic philosophy, whereby experience is conceptualised as the fundamental source of reality, which constantly changes as thinking interacts with personal, social and material environments (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007, pp. 37-39). Clandinin and Rosiek claim that poststructuralist inquiry, by contrast,

\[\text{does not deal with lived experience itself. Such experience may exist. But as soon as we speak or write about it, we have moved into the process of representation. Representations depend on other representations and discursive systems for their meaning. (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007, p. 55)}\]

This echoes the discourse/practice dichotomy Wenger creates in the social identity version of CoP which, as noted earlier, I reject in favour of the conceptualisation of discourse (including narrative) as a form of practice which can shape lived experience in the focus communities.

Clandinin and Connelly characterise narrative inquiry on the basis of its foundation in storied lived experience and distinguish it from what they call ‘formalist approaches’, such as poststructuralism, which originate in theories about social category and its effects (2000, p. 43). They propose that in narrative inquiry people are viewed as ‘embodiments of lived stories’ (2000, p. 43) whereas in formalist approaches, people are understood in terms of ‘form’, that is theories, ideas or categories such as race, class or gender (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 45). I reject this dichotomisation on several levels. Firstly, in my study theory and experience evolved alongside each other from the outset. Clandinin and Connelly contend that researching into experience is ‘to experience an experience’ (2000, p. 50). I take a different perspective and position. In researching experience in the focus communities I was able to glimpse experience and, through analysis and
representation, offer that glimpse as an insight in time which may be perceived and experienced by others in different, not necessarily predictable, ways.

Clandinin and Rosiek propose that if representations of experience are taken not to be genuinely connected or related to experience, then analysis is confined to investigation of the relationship between different discursive systems (2007, p. 56). They concede the importance of considering ‘macrosocial influences’ as they state poststructuralist researchers do, but reject the allegedly poststructuralist claim that macrosocial influences ‘are all that exists, and that therefore nothing is to be learned from a study of experience as lived’ (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007, p. 57). The certitude and perspective which they assign to poststructuralism is inconsistent with poststructuralist approaches, which emphasise contingency and multiplicity. Further, as noted earlier, studying experience as lived and poststructuralism are not mutually exclusive. It is important, however, to recognise, as Richardson (1997) does, that there is a difference between the way lived experience is conceptualised poststructurally and how it is experienced. As Richardson describes, lived experience feels personal, tellable, meaningful and knowable even when we accept the idea that we are ‘just moving subjectivities’ (1997, p. 65).

Clandinin and Rosiek temper prescriptiveness with a caution against reifying philosophical borders, stating that ‘The actual business of interpreting human experience is messier … We do not cross borders as much as traverse borderlands’ (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007, p. 58). I traverse borderlands in this study, as I will elaborate below.

**Cutting the coat to suit the cloth: a bespoke methodology**

Clandinin and Connelly propose that narrative form needs to fit with narrative inquiry methodology. They contend this means that narrative inquirers need to represent storied lives in storied ways, rather than ‘represent storied lives as exemplars of formal categories’ (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 141). I reject the dichotomy. Why can’t an exemplar also help convey experience? Surely an exemplar of a formal category only has value to the extent it can convey experience.
Through the concept of the collective story Richardson demonstrates that it is possible to think ‘narratively’ and ‘formalistically’. A collective story offers insight both into a social category and lived experience. It ‘displays an individual’s story by narrativizing the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs’ (Richardson 1997, p. 32). In a study which Clandinin and Rosiek characterise as being on the border of narrative inquiry and poststructuralism (2007, p. 67), Søreide shows how subject positions and storied lived experience can combine to develop teacher identity, as the teachers in her study choose how they position themselves in terms of available subject positions (2006, p. 545).

The findings I present in the next chapter have characteristics of a collective story. They endeavour to convey lived experience (my own and other participants’) and the context and particular social category (the focus communities). My aim in taking this approach is to give equal emphasis to people (which Clandinin and Connelly claim as the emphasis of narrative inquiry (2000, p. 45)) and the social category of the focus communities. I bridge the two by understanding discourse as a form of social practice.

**Constructing a self to live by: discourse and social practice**

My understanding of discourse as a form of practice is strongly influenced by Holstein and Gubrium’s work in relation to the construction of self in its social and discursive dimensions (2000). They propose they we construct our Selves through discursive practice (the ‘everyday methods members use to articulate social structures’) and ‘discourse-in-practice’, that is, ‘the conditions of possibility’ for discursive practices as ‘they are embedded in historically or institutionally available discourse’ (Holstein & Gubrium 2000, p. 94). To understand this process it is necessary to consider and analyse the interactional storying of self, the possibilities for subjectivity, and the settings and institutions in which selves are shaped (Holstein & Gubrium 2000, p. 94). As I will elaborate in discussion of data analysis, I used the ‘Big D Discourse tool’ to analyse the relationship between identity and the ‘sorts of actions, interactions, values, beliefs and objects, tools, technologies,
and environments … associated with this sort of language within a particular Discourse’ (Gee 2010, p. 181).

**Research design**

**The sites**

I chose the three Australian university sites in this study because they had all sponsored the development of communities to strategically enhance learning and teaching. As noted in the introduction, I was involved in facilitation of one of the focus communities at one of the sites. Through this involvement I participated in networks of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC – now Office for Learning and Teaching). All three CoP initiatives had received some funding support from the ALTC and the universities’ work in nurturing teaching and learning communities had been shared nationally, through ALTC publications and conferences. I had met colleagues from two of the sites at ALTC events, where we shared information about our universities’ CoP initiatives.

I have given each site a pseudonym which aims to encapsulate the mission and organisational culture of each. In the next chapter I present collective stories of the CoP initiatives at each of these sites – Horizon University, Pioneer University and Discovery University. These include a brief history of the university and information about the origins and development of the initiatives along with site-specific, comparative and summative findings.

**The focus communities**

As noted earlier in Chapter 3, McDonald, Star and Margetts identify three distinct types of CoPs currently operating in Australian universities: ‘Organic’ (or naturally occurring) CoPs, ‘Nurtured/supported’, and ‘Created/ intentional’. While Nurtured/supported and Created/intentional CoPs are both to some extent deliberately cultivated and institutionally supported, they can be distinguished in terms of their leadership, membership origins and timing for outcomes.
As will be elaborated in the next chapter, Horizon University and Discovery University sponsored Nurtured/supported CoPs (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a), whereas the Pioneer University focus community showed greater hybridity, beginning as Created/intentional and evolving into a Nurtured/supported CoP (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a). Created/intentional communities are led top-down with membership encouraged and institutionally guided themes and agendas, whereas Nurtured/support CoPs have modified/bottom-up leadership and, to varying extents, self-determine membership, theme, agenda and the timing for any outcomes (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a). As explored in Chapter 3, the discourse surrounding higher education CoPs is complex, with a range of views about the applicability of CoP to higher education. In keeping with this complexity, to the extent that they both involve institutional involvement, Created/intentional and Nurtured/support CoP types share characteristics with the knowledge management version of CoP (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, pp. 6-7), which has been rejected in higher education by scholars including Churchman (2005), Herbert (2005), and Nagy and Burch (2009). CoP typology is considered further as part of discussion of my findings in the next chapter.

The participants
I reported earlier that the number of participants in the study exceeded my original expectations and quotas. There were 33 participants, located across three universities. Eleven were CoP facilitators and 22 were members. I defined facilitators as staff who had played a significant role in the cultivation of an institutionally cultivated university teaching and learning community. By taking this broad definition I followed a national study of the role which defined ‘facilitator’ broadly in terms of leadership of higher education CoPs, where ‘leading’ was conceived generally to support a range of personal meanings and contexts (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 15). In my study facilitators included people whose work I was aware of through ALTC publications, conferences and networks, as well as people identified at the individual university sites. Some participants identified themselves as members; at Pioneer University some were institutionally identified as CoP members. Facilitator and member
proved to be porous categories in all three university sites. Eighteen of the 33 participants reported both facilitator and member experience and belonged to more than one CoP.

There were 26 female and seven male participants. Participation varied by site. There were seven participants from Horizon University (all female), 21 participants from Pioneer University (14 female and 7 male) and five participants from Discovery University (all female). Twenty-eight of the 33 participants were employed in academic roles; 22 of these were female. Twenty of the academics were working in their disciplines, four in a teaching and learning centre and four in a formal educational leadership role. I have provided a participant profile by site in the next chapter.

At each of the sites in this study I arranged for a third party to send out the invitation to participate in my study. Interested parties then contacted me directly to arrange one-off, face-to-face interviews held on site at each of the universities.

**Limitations**

The participant profile generated several limitations which are important to note. Limitations relate to constraints that are beyond the control of a researcher, such as access to a research site or the size of a sample (Murray & Lawrence 2000, p. 50). Firstly, facilitators outnumbered members at two out of three of the university sites. As I suggested above, member and facilitator were often overlapping categories. A number of participants belonged to more than one CoP.

Secondly, there were limitations by site in relation to participant numbers. More than half the participants in the study came from Pioneer University, my home institution. This raises questions about additional data that might be gleaned from individual sites given a larger and differently composed sample. Although this is a qualitative study, small numbers can be seen as a limitation in terms of exploring emergent themes and findings. In the conclusion to this thesis I consider further areas for research arising from my findings.
Gender could also be seen as a limitation in this study. Twenty-six of the 33 participants in the study were female; however, this composition reflects the gendered nature of the Australian higher education workforce, particularly the larger number of women involved in teaching and learning initiatives. I consider gender as part of discussion of the findings in the next chapter.

Sources of data
My study drew on five sources of ‘data’. The first two are sources which Clandinin and Connelly refer to as ‘field texts’ for narrative inquiry, capturing ‘experiential detail’ (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 116):

1. audio recorded research conversations with community facilitators and community members (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, pp. 109-10), which I transcribed myself.

2. journal entries made throughout the study (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 102) and field notes made during site visits (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 104). I kept these sporadically as I needed to explore emerging ideas, intuitions and themes. The writing of these notes was a form of inquiry (Ely 2007, p. 570) in which data such as sensory detail and emotions supplemented conventional sources such as transcripts (St.Pierre 1997).

3. national and institutional teaching and learning policy, including information about the ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative and criteria for teaching excellence

4. publicly available institutional documentation on the teaching and learning CoPs in this study, including reports (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 113)

5. conference and journal publications about the CoPs investigated in this study.

Clandinin and Connelly propose that it is important in narrative inquiry to position field texts because this has implications for the kinds of knowing and epistemological claims of a research text (2000, pp. 117-8). In undertaking the
analysis described on pages 98–108, I relied most on data generated during research conversations, policy and institutional documentation and the literature on CoPs. All three are integrated and, as relevant, identified in the findings presented in the next chapter.

All the narratives in this study were generated through interviews or, as I prefer to describe them, research conversations. This terminology recognises that interviews are a specific kind of ‘interactional event’ (De Fina 2009, p. 237). Interview-generated narratives have value as data for analysis but they need to be considered with reference to the context that shaped the data (De Fina 2009, p. 254). Context shapes narrative production in specific ways. Narrative accounts are a process for making sense. They come in different form(ats) ‘punctuated by negotiations between teller and audience’ (De Fina 2009, p. 246). Depending on the relationship interlocutors establish, accounts can range from brief summaries to those that are ‘highly evaluated and more thoroughly negotiated’ (De Fina 2009, p. 246). These are more likely when ‘interviewees are more relaxed and ready to share their experiences’ (De Fina 2009, p. 246). Where there is intimacy between researcher and participant the interview may become a conversation (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 110). However informal and flowing, research conversations are still more like interviews than spontaneously occurring conversations. As Clandinin and Connelly note, there is a structural inequality in the interview as an interaction because direction and questions come from the researcher (2000, p. 110). The interview, or ‘InterView’, occurs in the space between question and answer, knower and known (Kvale & Brinkman 2009, p. 2). In this interaction the interviewee has a ‘creative voice’; the interviewer is a facilitator (Richardson 1997, p. 141).

My research conversations with CoP members and facilitators were lightly structured. Being conscious that my presence as researcher and the narrative opportunities afforded in the research conversation would affect what participants said and how they said it (Søreide 2006, p. 539), my aim was that participants would do most of the talking (Søreide 2006, p. 530). I took an expansive narrative approach, which aimed to be open ended so that participants’ stories could ‘lead
where they would’ (Olson 2000, pp. 349-50). The three conversational prompts that I used were intended to elicit individual narratives with minimal possible conversational input from me. They related to community involvement, motivation and perceptions of value or benefit associated with this involvement:

1. How did you come to be involved in a community to enhance teaching and learning at an Australian university?

2. What motivated your involvement in that teaching and learning community?

3. Has the teaching and learning community been beneficial in terms of that motivation? How?

Delimitations
I was fluid in the way I worded Questions 1 and 3. There were 17 out of 33 conversations in which I used the term ‘community of practice’ to enhance teaching and learning at an Australian university in question 1 and 16 in which I followed the above wording exactly. I adapted my approach by site. I used the term CoP for all the research conversations at Horizon University. At Horizon University, CoP was a widely used term and the CoP initiative had a strong institutional profile. At Pioneer University I was conscious that the label CoP was not generally used for the focus communities, so I only used the term CoP in 7 out of 22 conversations. At Discovery University, the last site that I visited, I used the term CoP in all but one conversation. The exception was a research conversation with ‘Susan’, a professional contact. She and I had previously discussed my study, including its conceptual basis in CoPs, and she had been the third party who helped me to recruit participants. Our conversation was the last in a full day of interviews with participants and the variation in wording can be attributed to the fact that I used the plain language statement as a prompt. The summary of the study’s purpose and background, provided in the plain language statement, referred to ‘communities of practice’, thereby making clear my conceptual focus on communities of practice, irrespective of terminology.
I also varied the way I framed question 3, depending on whether I was speaking to a member or a facilitator. I asked members whether their involvement had been personally beneficial and facilitators whether the relevant community had been beneficial in terms of their motivation for establishing it. I made this distinction deliberately. Drawing on my professional experience in CoP facilitation, I anticipated that facilitators were more likely to have conscious intent related to the benefits of a community of practice. Members, in my experience, potentially have a range of motivations and levels of involvement and intent, which was why I framed value in terms of personal benefit.

**Data analysis**

In earlier discussion about representation and data sources in this study, I described why and how I moved from a focus on individual narratives to a focus on a collective story of the CoPs in this study. When I began data analysis I found many connections and disconnections across participants’ accounts, and other sources. Because of the sheer number of stories generated through my study I found it difficult both to individuate, and pattern, meanings. As I will describe below, after early data analysis I found that language-based or ‘small d’ discourse analysis (Gee 2010, p. 177) split meaning too finely to be of assistance. I needed to find an analytical tool with a wider focus. This chimed with Gee’s contention that ‘The whole point of talking about Discourses is to focus on the fact that when people mean things to each other, there is always more than language at stake’ (2010, p. 178). Gee’s ‘Big D Discourse’ tool seemed to offer a way to bring context into the analysis; a means of connecting individual experience and social practice, in terms of discourse as an element in the interactional storying of selves, along with the possibilities for subjectivity and the settings and institutions in which selves were shaped in the data (Holstein & Gubrium 2000, p. 94).

I drew on the data analysis approach taken by Søreide (2006, pp. 531-2), an earlier traveller on the ‘borderlands’ between poststructuralism and narrative research. In keeping with Søreide’s approach (2006), my analysis progressively involved three
different, and overlapping, analytic processes. Unlike Søreide, whose data source was transcripts composed into abridged stories, I worked directly from transcripts. Firstly, I used the research prompts to identify key values, benefits and experiences reported. My focus at that stage was on individual narratives. Secondly, I reviewed and refined the benefits and values reported and cross referenced these to narratives of motivation and involvement. During this stage of analysis (described below) my focus was still on individual narratives, involving close textual analysis of several transcripts. I attempted discourse analysis after Laclau and Mouffe (1985), using Louise Phillips’ worked example as a model (Phillips & Jørgenson 2002, pp. 165-7). Quickly discovering limitations related to disorientation as to scale and perspective, and atomisation of meaning, I realised the importance of being able to readily link individual narratives to broader social contexts. I traded ‘little d’ discourse (Gee 2010, p. 177) for Big D discourse (Gee 2010, p. 151). Through this process I refined the number of values and themes I had discerned across narratives.

Another researcher (one of my associate supervisors) analysed a selection of transcripts from each of the sites with reference to the themes I had identified. This comparison showed broad agreement across our analyses and no apparent thematic gaps. Variations in our choices of theme still showed compatibility and reflected the fact that after the first two stages of analysis I had yet to refine and, in some cases combine, the themes I had identified. In one instance my insider knowledge explained a variance in the themes we assigned, but in general the comparison signalled that I had further work to do to refine and consolidate themes.

I reviewed the way my associate supervisor had analysed the transcripts and continued to review the themes I had identified. As a result I reduced the number of themes by combining some and deleting others. This enabled me to undertake the third, and most comprehensive, round of Big D Discourse analysis on which my findings are based. This cross referenced participants’ notions of value or benefit with narratives about their motivation for and experiences of CoP involvement, helping me to develop findings in relation to the remaining two research questions: ‘What do … notions of value or benefit say about community, professional
learning, knowing, identity, and teaching and learning practices in Australian universities?’ and ‘Do the reported values and benefits seem to support the propagation of communities of practice in higher education? If so, how and why? Which model/typology?’

First analysis: key values and themes
Like Soreide’s, my first reading of transcripts was individual (2006, p. 531). Because of my narrative orientation it was particularly important to know the transcripts well. Having typed up the transcripts myself I was broadly familiar with participants’ stories, particularly at the individual level. In this phase of analysis I was aiming for a deeper involvement which would help me understand these individual narratives in a patterned way that could be represented as a collective CoP story. By ‘pattern’ I mean a discernible lattice of meanings. Despite my interest in narrative, I was not looking for smoothness or symmetry. I was cautious about the tendency of narrative practice to bind complexities into a coherent whole according to social norms (Linde 1993).

During this first layer of analysis I reviewed all the transcripts and assigned themes to excerpts as relevant, aiming to keep these open at this early stage to avoid oversimplification. Through this process I identified broad themes relating to participatory value or benefits; CoP facilitation and structures, including lessons learned about structuring and facilitating sustainable communities; and themes relating to narratives of CoP involvement.

I derived these themes from the literature as well as the transcripts. From the transcripts I identified benefits such as career development, culture change, leadership capacity building, publication, support and student outcomes, and structural requirements such as CoP championship. From the literature I included the widely reported CoP benefits of connection, networking and professional development. I also included the CoP elements of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger 1999) among the themes relating to CoP structure and facilitation. I wanted to review participants’ experiences against those
reported elsewhere. As I describe in the next chapter, this comparison enabled me to identify CoP experiences reported in the literature that were not reflected in the data in my study. I also referred to agreement with the literature as a measure of validity (Gee 2010, p. 185), as described on page 107.

During this phase of analysis I reviewed and refined themes as far as possible, looking for greater specification, particularly where this reduced the number of themes. For example, I deleted a theme entitled ‘knowledge exchange’ after reviewing transcript excerpts in relation to orientation, function, purpose and subject matter. I re-thematised data depending on whether it related to knowledge exchange as a benefit of CoPs, as a goal or outcome of CoPs or as a structural property of CoP. I looked for connections across themes. For example, I combined two substantially overlapping themes, ‘career development’ and ‘recognition and reward’. In another example I reviewed the relationship between data I had thematised in relation to engagement in CoPs and data which I had thematised in relation to facilitation of CoPs, looking for relationships between the two. I reviewed my analysis in relation to identity, which I had initially thematised in a number of different ways. Closer review enabled me to refine my analysis to just two themes: ‘academic identity’ and ‘identity in practice’. This linked to the literature around academic identity in terms of academic roles and identities tied to research (in discipline) and teaching roles, sometimes reported as divided (for example, by Winter (2009)). Despite ongoing review and refinement of themes, at this stage I found it easier to specify themes than to aggregate them. I had specification without context. I could not yet see how the themes I had identified could pattern (however messily) into a collective story. Having broken down the transcribed texts into smaller pieces as a means to begin understanding them, I now needed to return to the transcripts as whole texts to deepen my analysis.

**Second analysis: zooming in**

I began the second round of analysis by cross referencing participants’ narratives of CoP involvement and their motivation for this to the values and benefits of CoP participation which they had reported. My focus was on how participants came to
be involved in CoPs and why, and what, if any, benefits this experience generated. I found values-based connections between reported benefits and participants’ motivation for their CoP involvement; for example, in relation to a desire for connection and belonging, an interest in professional development, networking and improved student outcomes. There were differences among facilitators and members; for example, facilitators reported culture change as both a motivation and a benefit of CoP involvement. These interlinking themes began to suggest two possible nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 112) with which the meaning of professional identity and practice were latticed, collegiality, and teaching and learning excellence.

I attempted discourse analysis based on Laclau and Mouffe’s theory (1985) of several transcripts (one from each site) with reference to a worked example provided by Phillips (Phillips & Jørgenson 2002, pp. 165-6). I looked for the presence and absence of discourses relating to collegiality and excellence. I considered whether these suggested any contradictions or other difficulties fixing meaning. I also looked for evidence of discursively constructed identities and groups (Phillips & Jørgenson 2002, pp. 165-6). Although I was now working with whole transcripts rather than excerpts, I found this analytic process confusing as well as illuminating.

At the broader level of analysis it was useful because I was able to discern four nodal points relating to isolation and academic ‘silos’ (Becher and Trowler 2001) and Nagy and Burch (2009, p. 234)); managerialism and a ‘count culture’ (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 232); teaching and learning excellence (Light & Cox 2003) and collegiality, characterised by social contact and knowledge exchange (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 231). These raised a number of questions, about the co-existence of discourses and the ways they might interact; about inclusion and exclusion; about the significance of professional and academic roles in identity formation and experiences of CoPs; and about the intersection, and interaction, of the personal and professional.
Transcript by transcript, however, I soon began to encounter a problem of scale and an atomisation of meaning. Close analysis at the linguistic level split meaning so finely, I began to feel as if I had lost my sense of a collective story. For example, I identified multiple different signifiers. How did these relate to wider discourses? I needed to find a way to connect individual experiences with a broader context, which not only encompassed language but also social practices, including identity formation.

**Third analysis: zooming out**

Big D discourse analysis enabled me to link being and doing, connecting aptly with the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999) as I had extended it, to recognise discourse as a form of practice. Big D discourse encompasses distinctive ways of acting and interacting, thinking, valuing (Gee 2010, p. 177), among other characteristics. As Gee puts it, ‘Discourses are about being certain kinds of people’ (2010, p. 178). Gee’s Big D Discourse tool enabled me to link the thematic work I had done in relation to participants’ CoP involvement narratives, motivation and notions of benefit with the nodal points I had identified.

I was now able to move from an individual focus to a collective focus at two levels, site specific and summative. I identified three Big D discourses with reference to thematic analysis of transcript excerpts, as well as the nodal points derived through early attempts at small d discourse analysis and from the literature. These were a ‘Discourse of collegiality’ around social connection (Churchman 2005, pp. 18-20) and knowledge sharing to build capacity (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 231); a ‘Discourse of managerialism’ which emphasised accountability, often demonstrated through a ‘count culture’ relating to quantification and value assigned to teaching hours, articles published, publication ranking, grants awarded, research income and student evaluations, among other criteria (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 232); and a ‘Discourse of excellence’, transposed from industry and prioritising competition, efficiency, quality and accountability (Light & Cox 2003).
Having defined these Discourses, I read across transcripts looking for evidence of the co-existence of the Discourses in the form of commonalities, gaps, discrepancies and contradictions. I used the three Discourses as analytic lenses for understanding the implications of the data for professional learning, identity, community and teaching and learning, and to contextualise findings from interview data with other sources of data such as institutional and national policy. I draw on findings to develop a proposed model of higher education CoPs in response to my final research question regarding the future propagation (or otherwise) of such communities.

Guided by the three Discourses I looked for relationships of connection and irregularities, as well as any seeming gaps in my analysis of the data. A good example of this process is the way I came to reconceptualise professional development, firstly at the thematic level and then with reference to the three Discourses. Up until this final phase of analysis I had separately themed data as relating to ‘practice development’ and ‘professional development’. Analysis with reference to the Discourse of excellence (which emphasises teaching and learning ‘quality’ and accountability) and the Discourse of managerialism, which emphasises quantifiable accountability, showed that the two were connected. This was borne out by the literature which revealed a focus on teaching excellence evident in professional development for academics in higher education (for example, McLean et al. 2008; Southwell & Morgan 2009). CoPs are also reported in the higher education literature as a vehicle for professional development (for example, McDonald & Star 2008; Trowler & Knight 2010).

In relation to transcripts of interview, I used the Big D discourse tool to investigate the identity that participants were trying to have recognised. I also drew on the ‘Identity Building Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 199), which relates to the enactment of socially recognisable identity and positioning. The Discourse of collegiality was particularly useful as a framework for understanding identity formation in the focus communities as a form of social practice, linked to particular kinds of engagement, participation and modes of belonging, which I consider in the next chapter.
Analysing all my data sources, I used the Big D discourse tool to consider the implications of the three Discourses, including their potentially competitive interrelationship (Gee 2010, p. 182). I also used it to develop findings regarding the implications of the focus communities, and the potential, scope and prospective benefits of future propagation. The Big D discourse tool was my principal analytic tool at this stage; however, I also drew on other analytical tools proposed by Gee in order to assess the strength of my analysis and findings. Gee proposes that one measure of the trustworthiness of discourse analysis is the extent to which it is consistent or compatible with more than one discourse analysis tool (2010, p. 185).

Looking for assumptions or taken-for-granted meanings, I reviewed my findings using ‘The Making Strange Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 195). This helped me to see that seemingly contradictory Discourses such as managerialism and collegiality could not only co-exist but co-evolve. For example, the collegial Horizon University CoP initiative drew on the managerialist version of CoP (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002) in its design principles and was embedded institutionally, yet members reported deeper engagement with each other and the CoPs than at other sites.

I have mentioned earlier my interest in considering the collective CoP story in its wider contexts. I used the ‘The Frame Problem Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 196) to focus on context beyond Discourse analysis. Here Gee exhorts discourse analysts to ‘Always push your knowledge of the context as far as you can just to see if aspects of the context are relevant that you might at first have not thought were relevant’ (2010, p. 196). I followed this advice by reviewing policy documents, institutional communications and the literature, considering these alongside participants’ stories about the histories of their involvement and CoP development, looking for other contextual factors that related to analysis. I found some disconnections between my data and findings reported in the literature; for example, development of university teacher identity through CoP involvement was not reported by any of the participants in terms of personal experience, but it was reported by one participant as a finding from her own CoP research. I also considered this finding in terms of ‘The Context is Reflexive Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 198), which investigates the
relationship between what is said (and how) and the creation of the relevant context, to ask the extent to which utterances reproduce context and maintain the status quo and the extent to which a speaker is conscious of this and/or desires to reproduce context. In response to these questions I concluded that the speaker, who had a role as CoP ‘institutional mentor’ at Discovery University was to some extent positioning herself in relation to CoP success. Similarly, ‘The Cohesion Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 199) helped me to analyse how participants connected information in particular ways to construct coherence in their accounts.

I considered the relevance of ‘The Topics and Themes Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 197). This investigates utterances at the level of clause and sentence, looking for topics at the level of clause and theme linked across sentences. As I described earlier, during the first phase of analysis I thematically analysed data at a broader level (across transcripts), building and refining themes across related topics.

I used several analytical tools in combination to help formulate findings in relation to the development of shared repertoire (including tools, stories, gestures, symbols, concepts or actions adopted by the community as part of its practice (Wenger 1999, pp. 82-3), as this variously emerged within and across sites. These were ‘The Situated Meaning Tool’, which looks at the specifics of meaning making in context (Gee 2010, p. 200), ‘The Social Languages Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 200) which looks for types of phrases which show and enact social belonging (Gee 2010, p. 200); and the ‘The Figured Worlds Tool’ (Gee 2010, p. 201), which investigates typical stories and their social significance. In combination these analytical tools showed that there were more differences than similarities across sites in terms of the prominence and apparent significance of shared repertoire in the focus communities.

**Crystallization, not validation**

Rather than seeking to ‘validate’ my findings I have aimed to make them credible by aligning the research questions, methodology and findings as represented in this thesis. I began by testing the ‘trustworthiness’ of my analysis and findings using
three relevant criteria of four proposed by Gee (2010, p. 185). I looked for ‘convergence’ of findings after using several of Gee’s discourse analysis tools (2010, p. 185) and broad ‘agreement’ in the way my associate supervisor and I thematically analysed a small selection of transcripts. I also found a substantial level of ‘agreement’ between my findings and the literature (Gee 2010, p. 185). As I elaborate in the next chapter, this was strong, with one major exception in relation to the significance of discourse surrounding CoPs, which is a key finding discussed below. I identified ‘coverage’ in my analysis and findings, that is, the ability to apply analysis to related data and help make sense of prior events as well as predictions about the future (2010, p. 185). Based on my findings I developed a model for higher education CoPs, which I present in the concluding chapter of this thesis. Resisting the desirability and possibility of prescription, I developed, and offer, this proposed model as a heuristic for adaptive use.

In keeping with my poststructural orientation and debt to Richardson’s work, I have taken ‘crtallization’ as a figure for, and measure of, the ‘validation’ of my findings. Crystallization is an alternative to ‘triangulation’, which measures and validates findings based on the use of different methods (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 963). Triangulation hints at strangulation for me. This association is not only because of assonance, or an aversion to geometry dating from Year 9. It more strongly reflects the way I figure triangulation. The term conjures up a mental picture of meaning extracted through the tightening of a sharp-edged precision instrument, something akin to the symbol found on Freemasons’ lodges. Crystallization recognises that there are more than three sides to the world and moves beyond the rigid two-dimensionality of a triangle to offer an ‘infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach’ (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 963). The crystal is prismatic, offering various dimensionalities, shapes and transformations. Crystals reflect light (‘externalities’) to create different patterns depending on one’s point of view or ‘the angle of repose’ (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 963). Without losing structure, crystallization offers an alternative idea of validation. Crystallization recognises
that there is no single truth – ‘… texts validate themselves’ (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 963).

Using the methodology described in the chapter I have tried to make my findings credible (Richardson 1997, p. 77) in the hope that the collective story of the focus communities validates itself (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p 963). Another researcher or research participant would have seen things differently and perceived other patterns, knowing and doubting simultaneously, in the belief that ‘there is always more to know’ (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005, p. 963).

**Researcher positionality**

As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, my study began with a professional role supporting the facilitation of one of the focus communities. Although I moved out of that role in March 2012, because of that initial connection I was to some extent an insider-researcher. This term refers to a range of perspectives and positionalities. Sikes and Potts, for example, avoid a categorical definition. They associate insider research status with attachment to or involvement in the institutional social group on which an investigation is based (2008, p. 3). They differentiate insider work from ethnography on the basis that in insider work the researcher is already in the field, whereas ethnographers move into and, later, out of a field of research (Sikes & Potts 2008, p. 6). Despite my presence until March 2012 ‘in the field’ of CoPs and my broad identification as an insider-researcher, my involvement was very different to the level of intimacy which Clandinin and Connelly ascribe to narrative inquiry where researchers ‘settle in, live and work alongside participants, and come to experience not only what can be seen and talked about directly but also the things not said and not done that shape the narrative structure of their observations and talking’ (2000, p. 67). I shared some experiences with some participants, but we did not have the depth of contact or connection envisaged by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 67).

In referring to insider-outsider status, I do not view the two positions as dichotomous. Instead I follow Dwyer and Buckle in seeing my positionality as
mobile and fluid, located on a spectrum (2009). As a qualitative researcher I identify myself as variously occupying ‘the space between’ insider and outsider (Dwyer & Buckle 2009, p. 60). My positionality in this space shifted with my changing perspectives and experiences, in keeping with the ‘fluidity and multilayered complexity of human experience’ (Dwyer & Buckle 2009, p. 60). These shifts and changes in positionality influenced the interviews, methods, interpretation and analysis (Sikes & Potts 2008, p. 5).

When I undertook research conversations at Pioneer University I was a participant-observer in the sense that Potts describes, because I had shared some of participants’ experiences (2008, p. 162). Further, as Dawson notes, my ‘immersion’ in the community at Pioneer University, was intentional and for the purpose of gaining knowledge (2013, p. 147). I was known institutionally as someone who had been involved with the community I chose to investigate (Potts 2008, p. 162). This could be seen as both an advantage and disadvantage. I was less senior than many of the participants I interviewed. Had I been employing a structured interview approach, this power dynamic could have limited my ability to pursue a line of questioning. Because of my open, narrative approach to research interviews, however, participants generally led the conversational agenda. I had the option of following some leads and choosing not to pursue others. I did not, however, structure research conversations other than putting the three broad conversational prompts reported above on page 97 to all participants.

There was little risk of coercion arising from my professional role with the Pioneer University CoP as I did not, at the time, have direct involvement or responsibilities in relation to funding or other benefits which could materially affect the interests of prospective participants. My professional connection with many participants would have been a factor in their decisions whether or not to speak to me. By recruiting through a third party in a process described on page 111, I aimed to avoid any sense of obligation or discomfort regarding potential participants’ decisions whether or not to participate. I only had contact with those who had told the third party recruiter that they were willing to participate.
There were only two instances where participants referred to a professional connection, both times during research conversations at my home site, Pioneer University. One participant mentioned a ‘mentoring’ role that I and a more senior colleague had played in relation to an application for a national teaching award which we had all worked on together. Another mentioned that he had agreed to participate in my study out of guilt at not being able to participate in any sessions of the community in which we were both involved.

**Insider-outsider – a shifting perspective**

My insider status changed during the course of the study. At Horizon University, where I visited just once over a period of three days in 2011, I was an inside-outsider; positioned as a visiting scholar and welcomed in. At Pioneer University, where I was involved in CoP facilitation until 2012, I moved from being an insider at the time of interviews to experiencing the ‘uncanny’ (MacLure 2006, pp. 731-2) state of outside-insider when I wrote up my findings. At Discovery University, where I was least connected to people or place, and seemingly most an outsider, I enjoyed a temporary, and seemingly spontaneous, experience of lucid reflexivity in which I was both inside and outside a single point of observation. By late 2013, when I presented early research findings via Skype to a group of CoP facilitators at Discovery University (which included a participant), I recognised a new and stronger connection based on a shared knowledge domain and practice. Some of those facilitators had participated in this study. I had become an inside-outsider among Discovery CoP facilitators. These experiences reflect the ambivalence and mobility of the social researcher, positioned between insider and outsider status (Sikes & Potts 2008, p. 7). This ambivalence and mobility have ethical implications.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations have permeated every aspect of this study since I chose a research topic related to my professional life and opted to take a narrative approach focusing on lived experience. The personal and professional are blurred in narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 164) and ethics are an ongoing concern
(Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 170) in all forms of research. For that reason I have integrated ethical considerations into the above discussion of methodology, representation, voice and researcher positionality.

My positionality as a researcher increased the onus on me to take all possible precautions to ensure that there would be no repercussions for participants due to their involvement in my study (Dawson 2013, p. 154). This obligation related most prominently to recruitment of participants and representation of findings.

I recruited participants through a third party at all three university sites. At Pioneer University, my principal PhD supervisor (‘the recruiter’) sent out the recruitment invitation and plain language statement to members of the Pioneer University CoP after obtaining approval to do so from my line manager. These members were defined by an email list, which the recruiter used. Participants responded directly to the recruiter, either declining to participate or by completing an expression of interest in participating. The recruiter did not share details of declinations or non-responses. She only forwarded expressions of interest. I then made arrangements directly. At the other two sites, third parties circulated my invitation to participate along with my contact details to enable direct contact with those who wished to participate. Again, I then made interview arrangements directly. In Appendix B I have included the recruitment invitations (page 281) and Plain Language Statement and Consent forms for CoP members (page 285) and facilitators (page 295).

Maintaining participants’ confidentiality and privacy has been a priority from the outset. Drawing on published studies of small communities (for example, Elliot (2005, p. 142)) I was as explicit as possible during recruitment and research conversations about the way research findings would be disseminated. This was expressly stated in the plain language statement and consent form and in communication with participants. I assigned participants pseudonyms and participant codes, which I used to name audio recordings and transcripts of interviews. I have stored participants’ names and pseudonyms separately from
transcripts and audio recordings and all data is securely stored on a password-protected server in accordance with my host institution’s code of research practice.

Anonymising the three universities in this study was also a focus. In writing up findings I assigned pseudonyms to the university sites and stripped identifying features from descriptions of the sites. This meant leaving out specificities and details which I would usually have included in a story to set the scene and try to capture readerly attention. I also de-identified referenced details (in both in-text citations and in the reference list) which would identify the sites. Full reference details are available on request.

The way I have represented participants’ stories (which may be seen as ‘inseparable from the self’) and the potential impact of this on participants is also an important consideration (Elliot 2005, pp. 140-141). Representing another’s life risks challenging their self-view (Richardson 1997, p. 157). By opting to represent participants’ experiences as collective stories I have endeavoured to reduce this risk and take a broader, social view of the focus communities in keeping with their conceptual basis and aspirations. As an insider researcher and a narrator it has been important for me to continue to ask myself ‘... what social, power, and sexual relations are being reproduced?’ through my interpretation, analysis and representations in this study (Richardson 1997, p. 57). These considerations were uppermost when I wrote up the findings presented in the next chapter. In so doing, I was guided by Richardson in two ways. Firstly, I accept that it is not possible to know the consequences of this study for others. As she states, ‘...we cannot control contexts and readings. But we can have some control over what we choose to write and how to write it’ (Richardson 1997, p. 117). Secondly, in representing my findings in the next chapter, I have been inspired by Richardson’s view of communication as an ‘act of communion’ which brings people together (Richardson 1997, p. 79). I have written the collective stories in the spirit of the communities they portray, to invite participation and a sense of community (Richardson 1997, p. 79), tempered by a critical eye.
Summary

In this chapter I characterised my research as qualitative, practice-based, poststructural and narrative. I defined its key concerns as being aesthetics and emotion as dimensions of practice, lived experience, data, voice and representation. I defined identity formation, ways of knowing, knowledge, sources of truth and reality in this study in terms of narrative and discourse. I introduced the research questions and described how I refined them to remove an in-built presumption and more closely align them to my research topic and methodology. I provided an argument for the choice of narrative to represent the study and the hybrid form this has taken in this thesis. I considered the significance of voice in narrative and representation and delimited both as I have used them in this thesis.

I positioned my study methodologically as multiperspectival, operating on the ‘borderlands’ of poststructuralist and narrative research (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007) through a focus on lived experience concerned with Big D discourse (Gee 2010), as well as individual, embodied narratives. I described how I applied this multiperspectival methodology in analysing data and I justified my research design, noting delimitations and limitations of the study. I considered my positionality as a researcher and its implications for participants and findings. I noted that ethical considerations permeated every stage of the study and that I had integrated these in discussion of methodology and research design. I concluded the chapter by describing how I took precautions to protect participants and delimit risks associated with participation, particularly in relation to the representation of findings in the next chapter.

In the next chapter I present a collective CoP story which weaves together participants’ narratives, a research narrative, and policy and institutional documentation to offer a glimpse into learning, meaning and identity in the focus communities.
Chapter 5: Cultivating university teaching and learning CoPs

I guess from my perspective I think there’s probably a very careful dance that has to go on …about how much … you embed yourself within the institution …because at a certain point then the institution kind of subsumes it… (Amelia, facilitator, Discovery University)

Overview

The epigraph to this chapter, from ‘Amelia’, a facilitator with a special mentoring role in relation to her university’s CoP initiative, ‘stages’ the action to follow, by signalling some discursive tensions and complexities in the focus communities. As noted earlier, all were established with some institutional support linked to institutional strategy. Several Big D discourses co-exist and, in some cases, have co-evolved around and within the focus communities. In a seeming coincidence, Gee, whose Big D Discourse tool has been my principal analytic tool, uses ‘dance’ to explain Discourse:

*Discourse is about being able to engage in a particular sort of “dance” with words, deeds, values, feelings, other people, objects, tools, technologies, places and times so as to be recognized as a distinctive sort of who doing a distinctive sort of what.* (2010, p. 178)

In this chapter I investigate the dynamics involved in the dance of the institutionally supported CoPs in this study with reference to three Discourses: collegiality, managerialism and excellence. I consider the dancers as well as the dance, taking a particular interest in stories about the experience of the dance. As noted earlier, the participatory value of the focus communities is a key concern of this study and one of its distinguishing features.

In presenting the collective story below, I provide site-specific accounts of each university’s history, the origins of each CoP initiative and a profile of participants. I also provide an overview of participants’ narratives of their CoP involvement.
From participants’ narratives I present site-specific findings about the reasons why participants came to be involved in the focus communities, as members, facilitators and sometimes both. In part four of this chapter I consider findings comparatively and summatively. For ease of reference I have included a summary of comparative findings below.

Table 1: Reasons for CoP involvement reported across sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation/reason for CoP involvement</th>
<th>Horizon University</th>
<th>Pioneer University</th>
<th>Discovery University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague recommended</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture change</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve teaching and learning quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to join</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge management</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring opportunities (as mentor and mentee)</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal need</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I also draw on participants’ narratives to identify key factors associated with the successful facilitation of CoPs. Again, I have summarised findings across sites. These are considered in part four of this chapter.
Table 2: Key elements of successful CoP facilitation reported across sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Horizon University</th>
<th>Pioneer University</th>
<th>Discovery University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity (of facilitator)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Championship/auspicing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition-meaning attributed to CoP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed leadership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity (as community)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional culture</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional framework/embedding</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint enterprise</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory value</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared repertoire</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of CoP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (as a barrier and enabler)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic focus</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I consider the notions of value and benefit reported in relation to CoP involvement site by site, as well as comparatively and summatively, in part four of this chapter. A summary is presented below for ease of reference.
### Table 3: Participatory benefits/value of CoPs reported across sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Horizon University</th>
<th>Pioneer University</th>
<th>Discovery University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging/connection</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture change</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity development</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge exchange</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition and reward</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship of teaching and learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student outcomes</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chapter concludes with comparative and summative findings linked back to the three research questions posed by this study:

1. What are the notions of value or benefit reported by participating community members and facilitators?

2. What do these notions of value or benefit say about community, professional learning, knowing, identity, and teaching and learning practices in Australian universities?
3. Do the reported values and benefits seem to support the propagation of communities of practice in higher education? If so, how and why? Which model/typology?

**Part 1: Horizon University**

*And like I said, there’s things that I’ve missed that I’ve just gone ‘I just … have not got time for that’; and it’s rare that I will miss a community of practice because I just know that other than getting so much knowledge-wise out of it … from a collegial point of view … that community time is really, really important.*

(Annie, member, Horizon University)

**History**

According to the Horizon University website (2014b), the idea of the university began with the local community, originating in a public meeting from which a lobby group formed around the goal of establishing a higher education institution in the region. Horizon was first incarnated as an institute of technology, on a green-field site in the late 1960s. In the early 1970s Horizon became an autonomous institute of advanced education. From early on, the institution’s stated focus was on teaching and vocational education (Horizon University 2014b). This vista expanded on regional beginnings with a new emphasis on distance education from the mid-70s. This was accompanied by extensive internationalisation so that by the mid-1980s Horizon enrolled more than three-quarters of Australia’s off-shore international student enrolments (Horizon University 2014a; Horizon University 2014b). In the next decade Horizon moved towards university status by becoming a university college under the auspices of an older, more prestigious ‘Sandstone’ university located in the nearest capital city. By the early 1990s Horizon had gained full university status. From that time, according to the Horizon University website, the University began to develop a research profile, extended its postgraduate offerings, entered into new partnerships around vocational education, established other ‘branch campuses’; and expanded its international programs (2014b).
In these respects Horizon’s development is consistent with Marginson’s characterisation of the New University, which includes ‘specialist regional and/or distance education providers’ (2006, p. 11). As of January 2014, this focus was particularly strong, with the vast majority of Horizon University’s cohort studying online (Horizon University, 2014a).

The site

In Marginson’s typology of the Australian University market, Horizon University is classified as a lower status ‘New University’ (2006), granted university status after 1987. Marginson suggests that new universities ‘tend to produce themselves as inferior copies of the Sandstones’ (Marginson 2006, p. 11). Self-styled as the ‘Group of Eight’ universities (2014), ‘Sandstones’ are the most prestigious higher education institutions in Australia. Rather than showing pale imitation, my findings from Horizon University offer a glimpse of an innovative institutional strategy typical of a contemporary ‘Enterprise’ university (Ramsden 2002, p. 32). The Enterprise university is competence-focused, externally oriented and geared to learning in a changeable environment. In such a university, decision-making is flexible and leadership is devolved (Ramsden 2002, p. 32). As will be explored below, Horizon University’s CoP strategy has generated collegial spaces perceived as valuable by participants.

The pseudonym ‘Horizon’ University blends the literal and metaphorical in several ways. The university’s short history is expansive. Geographically, the Horizon University town is elevated, offering sweeping views. At a personal level, Horizon was instrumental in broadening my outlook as a researcher because it was the first site I visited in this study. While visiting Horizon I first began to feel that I was becoming a researcher. Before that I had conducted interviews as an assistant on others’ research projects and I had read a number of descriptions of other people’s studies. At Horizon University, for the first time I was applying what I had learned to my own study.
As I drove my small economy hire car along a large and open highway in July 2011, I hoped that the directions I had memorised from Google Maps the night before would work. Travelling under vast and unfamiliar skies in a tiny vehicle that buzzed like a gnat I let my thinking range over, and challenge, the fairy tale tradition that I would be safe if I held to the road (Carter 1979). I felt the potential for adventure that comes with not knowing what will happen next. As a new researcher I had a sense of travelling in disguise – as a wolf in sheep’s clothing, or perhaps vice versa.

A newcomer to the Australian teaching and learning research community of practice, and literally and figuratively a traveller from the periphery (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 121), I might have seen myself as being on an ‘inbound’ trajectory towards future competence (Wenger 1999, p. 155), but I didn’t. Instead I felt something much more like the unsatisfied longing, (in German, ‘Sehnsucht’) described by a nostalgic blind man in Lloyd Jones’ novel, Hand Me Down World:

*Whenever we stopped my eyes would go automatically to the horizon. There in the distance where all things merge and the boundaries are uncertain, there, I used to think, is a place I’d like to dwell.* (2010, p. 117)

I was interested in what lay just outside my peripheral vision, in the place where the horizon dissolves.

My visit to Horizon was hosted by ‘Alice’, a collegiate senior academic with a strong involvement in CoP research and facilitation, who has been instrumental in leading the Horizon University CoP initiative. I was familiar with her work through ALTC events and her publications on higher education CoPs. Since we met Alice had generously taken an interest in my work, sharing various resources. She also helped me to recruit participants by forwarding my invitation to her networks at Horizon. As was the case across the sites, after receiving an invitation and information about the study through a third party, interested participants then contacted me directly to make further arrangements.

Alice arranged a space for me to work in. A ‘welcome message’ affixed to the door described me as a ‘visiting scholar’. Not for the first time I felt like an impostor. I
have had this feeling all my adult life in a range of situations. As a junior lawyer I expected to be challenged as I approached the bar table. The first time I took my oldest daughter out on a walk, I felt as if I had stolen her, complete with pram. ‘Scholar’ felt like yet another appropriated identity. I came across the term for this phenomenon, ‘impostor syndrome’ while reading another early researcher’s account of identity development (Jones 2006, pp. 8-9). It was comforting to have a label with a story which belonged to someone else undertaking educational research.

As well as arranging my visit, Alice had asked me to present on my study while at Horizon, and promoted it as part of the offerings of the Teaching and Learning Centre where she worked. My feelings of impostorism reached full pitch when I later came across a promotional poster for my session while walking around the campus.

Due to the sustained hospitality of Alice and her colleagues, I was too busy to feel like an impostor for long. As I will explore in the findings on page 149, hospitality is something of a byword for the Horizon University CoP initiative, encapsulated in the tagline for the CoP initiative, which emphasises belonging and connection (Horizon University 2013).

As well as presenting on and discussing my study with a small and very engaged group on the second day of my visit, I was invited to a lunchtime meeting on my last day with members of a CoP set up to support staff who were also students. I was, in the context of the CoP meeting, a participant-observer to the extent that I was, very briefly, involved in the CoP and seeking knowledge by attending the meeting (Dawson 2013, pp. 146-7). I related to many of the anecdotes and comments shared, and contributed several times to the conversation. My involvement was informal and I did not draw on data from this meeting in this study beyond this reflection on the experience. On the last night of my visit I had dinner with Alice and ‘Lyndall’ a teaching and learning colleague of Alice’s. By then I
had already had a research conversation with Alice and arranged to speak to Lyndall the next day.

**The participants**

To protect participants’ privacy and maintain research confidentiality I have used pseudonyms for participants, all of whom were female. This composition reflects the gendered Australian academic workforce in which women are more likely to be teaching or in teaching-focused positions (Southwell & Morgan 2012).

The participants were:

- Laura, a facilitator, a senior academic in an educational leadership position in a faculty
- Alice, a senior academic in a teaching and learning centre, with a lead role in the university’s CoP initiative
- Barbara, a facilitator, a senior academic in an educational leadership position in a faculty
- Sandy, a facilitator and professional staff, also studying part time at Horizon University
- Lucy, a facilitator and professional staff, also studying part time at Horizon University
- Annie, a member and early career academic teaching in her discipline
- Lyndall, an academic staff in a teaching and learning centre.

Laura, Annie and Lyndall all reported membership of multiple Horizon University CoPs.

**Horizon University CoP initiative**

As an organisational initiative CoPs have existed at Horizon since 2006, with the University recently claiming to host ‘twenty vibrant communities’ (Horizon University 2013). Horizon University’s CoP initiative is defined both as an organisational development initiative (Horizon University 2013) and as a vehicle
for professional development and collegiality in teaching and learning (Horizon University 2014c). It is the teaching and learning-focused CoPs that are the primary focus, although several of the participants were also involved in non-teaching and learning CoPs. The teaching and learning CoPs began with the establishment by two academic staff (one of whom was Alice) of a faculty-based, cohort-focused CoP. Members were academics from a range of disciplines who all taught the nominated student cohort. The aims of this originating CoP were to provide professional development and support through conversations structured around a common, cohort-focused teaching and learning domain and practice (named author & named author 2006).

Alice’s story of her involvement in CoPs at Horizon, has coincided with the initiative’s development, which she described when we spoke:

… I was working with a faculty staff member and we did a … redesign of her course. And when we’d finished that, it struck me that we’d done some really great innovative work, which would benefit other course leaders within the faculty. And because I’d just finished my doctoral study in online learning communities and gone into the community of practice literature, I suggested we start a community of practice for the [named staff cohort] … It was quite successful. We … approached the faculty dean … to be our champion. And I’d pulled that idea from the literature and Etienne Wenger’s … book. So used quite a lot of the ideas from there … the whole idea of champions, the three elements of community of practice; that formed our framework for meetings. Because members are so time poor, I thought we needed to look at each of the three elements and look at outcomes for members … but also pitched at an institutional level as well. So that was part of the managing up. For the dean we went and said, ‘If we can get this going, if you support us and give us resources we will help address the student learning journey in the faculty – retention, progression’. So that was the kind of pitch up. And for the members, the sharing of practice, the time … saving, building capacity.

This association between championship and the nurturing of teaching and learning innovation is also affirmed in the higher education literature. For example, in a comparison of projects to develop teaching and learning practice in different disciplines, Catterall identified senior leadership as a key factor in ‘sustaining teaching innovation in higher education’(2008, p. 65).
Alice recounted that her role in promoting the initiative had been funded by successive grants and awards ranging from an initial institutional grant through to a national fellowship followed by a grant.

Laura, also spoke about the origins of CoPs at Horizon University:

_In 2006 [named colleagues] … introduced the idea of CoPs to the [Horizon] community by developing a [named staff cohort] CoP. And then I followed very soon after, with [named colleague], and we were co-facilitators of a learning and teaching CoP for [named cohort] … courses in [named faculty]. Then [the three previously named colleagues] and I won a couple of grants. So we developed a CoPs toolkit and kept on going._

Laura affirmed Alice’s key role in leading the Horizon University CoPs and her profile and work at the national level in contributing to scholarship and promotion of higher education CoPs.

**Which version of CoP?**

As noted earlier, Horizon University’s CoPs can be characterised as ‘Nurtured/supported’ in the typology developed through the OLT project _Identifying, building and sustaining leadership capacity for communities of practice in higher education_ (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a) because of the following characteristics: modified bottom-up leadership; a discipline or issue related theme; funding subsidisation by the university and membership which was either voluntary or suggested. Nurtured/supported CoPs often originate as self-initiated gatherings of ‘like-minded colleagues to share knowledge and practice’ but may later become “‘of interest” to institutional managers, so they may be encouraged to continue or to become more visible to enable the sharing of the knowledge created’ (McDonald et al. 2012, p. 66). Institutional interest may lead to additional members, meetings, funding for activities, community building, formalised or shared outcomes (McDonald et al. 2012, p. 66). Such institutional support and recognition may come at the expense of a CoP’s autonomy. McDonald and Star note the importance of balancing institutional support with CoP independence, particularly in terms of setting the CoP agenda. The importance of
meeting members’ needs and institutional goals without managerial intervention is a key facilitator responsibility identified by McDonald and Star (2008). Negotiating these competing claims involves the dance to which Amelia refers at the beginning of this chapter.

As Lyndall commented, at Horizon University ‘the formalised terminology of CoP is quite well embedded’. It isn’t just the terminology of CoPs that is embedded at Horizon University, the CoP initiative itself is strongly integrated institutionally, particularly in comparison with the other two sites in this study.

Alice elaborated:

> The initiative is also linked in with institutional processes...We’re looking at ... managing ... and generating institutional support. And it is part of people’s HR. They can log on, if community members agree. When you start up a CoP we ask, ‘Do you want this to be part of your HR process and record?’ ... they can register on HR and it’s professional development. It goes on their professional development record, which they can present in their yearly performance review.

The CoP initiative is also notably well profiled at Horizon University (Horizon University, 2013; 2014c). Nationally it has been commended for its contribution to academic staff development, scholarship of teaching and learning and facilitation of networking (Named author 2009). As noted earlier, leadership of Horizon’s CoP initiative has also garnered teaching and learning awards and fellowships (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2010b).

In using the term ‘institution’ I rely on the nested definitions of ‘institution’ and ‘organisation’ provided by Linde in her study of narrative as a tool for developing institutional history and identity (2009). An ‘institution’ encompasses formal and informal groupings and identifiable practices; an organisation is a subset of an institution (Linde 2009, p. 7). As a university, Horizon University is a version of an institution that dates back to the fifth century CE (Nalanda University 2013). As an organisation, Horizon University is less than fifty years old.

As a professional development initiative for academic staff involved in teaching and learning, Horizon CoPs can be seen as firmly connected to a Discourse of
collegiality which appears in the literature on higher education CoPs. This Big D discourse includes ways of talking and acting as members of various social and cultural groups such as CoPs. It includes storytelling, and the particular identities and activities associated with these (Gee 2010). I consider these aspects of the Horizon University CoP initiative below.

The Discourse of collegiality has two key aspects. The first is social support and knowledge sharing to build professional capacity (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 230). The other relates to the nurture of academic identity in corporate universities where the dominance of market ideology or ‘corporate beliefs’ can conflict with academic identities founded in universities’ scholarly and educational traditions (Winter 2012, pp. 340-1). In such contexts, CoPs have been identified as spaces in which a collegial academic identity can thrive (Churchman & King 2009; Winter 2009). Both aspects of collegiality are evident in the Horizon University CoPs.

In this Discourse, collegiality is shaped from a traditional academic values, summed up by Ramsen as:

... closely related to ideas of individual academic freedom, disciplines as frames of reference, separation from external pressures, conservation of special knowledge, and academic professionalism. (2002, p. 23)

Ramsden cites associated benefits of such collegiality as including a ‘sense of community’ and autonomy by academics (2002, p. 23).

The collegiality of Horizon University CoPs connects knowledge sharing and social support. CoPs are associated with belonging and connection and defined as:

... groups of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better. Communities of Practice (CoPs) provide an opportunity to create a learning community around an area of interest or practice, to share and develop practice and build personal and professional knowledge and expertise.

A CoP creates a defined ‘space’ to share knowledge about a specific area of interest or practice, which enables members to address the practical problems encountered in that practice. (Horizon University 2013)
The formation of individual identity is also mentioned, though in a somewhat ancillary fashion:

*Other activities include:*
- negotiating what it means to be part of that community
- developing resources and building a unique community identity. (Horizon University 2013)

The definition of Horizon University CoPs also connects to the knowledge management version of CoPs, popularised in business and industry as:

*... groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.* (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, pp. 4-5)

Here CoPs are a strategic knowledge management tool, a source of competitive advantage in a rapidly changing global knowledge economy in which knowledge is a commodity (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, pp. 6-7). In knowledge economy contexts, innovation comes from networking of tacit and codified knowledge by knowledge producers and knowledge users (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development 1996, p. 7), and cultural and economic systems combine (Walker-Gibbs & Knight 2006).

When this definition of Horizon University CoPs is considered alongside their institutional profile and integration, these CoPs can be viewed as constituted within a Discourse of managerialism. Managerialism has a range of characteristics. It can be seen as an ideological development in which managers’ right to manage has priority over professional autonomy and as a set of principles which include reduction of bureaucracy, performance monitoring and target setting linked to external processes such as Quality Assurance (Deem & Brehony 2005, p. 220). The Discourse of managerialism is associated with effects of managerialism in universities such as the generalisation of business language (Deem & Brehony 2005) and a ‘counting mentality’ linked to performance indicators based on ‘hurdle numbers’ (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 234). Deem & Brehony note that in UK universities, where managerialism was pervasive, many managers, including non-
academic managers, had embraced the language of management as well as its principles (2005, p. 231). Fluency in the language of leadership is seen as an asset in management literature, where ‘narrative intelligence’, or the ability to think narratively and use insights into narrative structures and audience stories for persuasive effect is seen as a ‘key enabler of using the language of leadership to full advantage’ (Denning 2007, p. 45).

Managerialism is linked to the conceptualisation of CoPs as a strategic knowledge management tool and to strategies such as managing up, emphasis on senior championship and auspicing, and institutional recognition (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). All of these are evident in the Horizon University CoPs alongside collegial values. The constitution of the Horizon University CoP initiative in Discourses of collegiality and managerialism is considered further below in light of the benefits reported by participants. These suggest a nuanced context and outcomes from the Horizon University CoPs which cannot be fully explained if managerialism and collegiality are considered in oppositional terms. This accords with Ramsden’s contention that ‘simple dichotomies’ are unhelpful in understanding the complexities of contemporary university settings (2002, p. 37).

**Involvement narratives**

Participants described a range of CoP involvement, with three out of seven referring to multi-membership (Laura, Annie and Lyndall). As noted earlier, Laura reported that she established two CoPs in 2006. At the time of our conversation she was facilitating two teaching and learning CoPs in her Faculty, one with a student cohort focus. Laura was also a member of a research supervisors’ CoP, an international CoP, a CoP for CoP facilitators and a CoP for educational leaders. In recounting her involvement, she tallied nine CoPs, laughingly describing herself as an ‘enthusiast’.

Alice had led the CoP initiative as it related to teaching and learning. As described earlier, her involvement began as the co-facilitator of a student cohort-focused CoP in a Faculty. Our conversation focused on teaching and learning CoPs although she
briefly also mentioned outcomes for an organisational CoP for professional staff CoP involved in student support.

Barbara was facilitator of a faculty-wide CoP to enhance learning and teaching for a nominated cohort. Although considered part of the CoP initiative, Barbara’s community used the different terminology of ‘CO-OP’: ‘…because we cooperate. We come together and share our practice. So it’s about bringing us all together, and so that’s why we cooperate’.

Annie was a member of this CoP as well as being involved in a CoP for research supervisors and a CoP focused on student equity. Our research conversation focused on her faculty CoP involvement.

Sandy and Lucy were both involved as facilitators of a study-focused CoP for Horizon University staff who were also studying. As founding facilitator, Sandy recounted how she had perceived a need for the CoP, sending out a call for expressions of interest via a corporate email channel. She recalled that Alice had contacted her and suggested establishing a CoP. Sandy reported that this was a new concept at the time, adding that CoP status gave the group a structure and resources which enabled it to develop very quickly. She recounted how the CoP rapidly developed a digital presence and senior championship. Following Alice’s advice, Sandy surveyed participants about their needs. This trajectory aligns with McDonald and Star’s characterisation of CoPs as an approach to professional development driven by participants and their needs (2008). It also connects with the notion that facilitators of intentionally established CoPs have a lead role in the group’s definition of a shared sense of purpose and meaning (Garavan & Carbery 2007).

Sandy also reported that the CoP included both academic and professional staff and a mix of genders and ages. This combination of staff types is a notable characteristic of some of the Horizon University CoPs. When I attended an informal lunchtime meeting of Sandy’s CoP I was impressed by the supportive, collegial atmosphere. Despite this fleeting identification, I am conscious that this participation in the
group was minimal, superficial, one-off and passive (Dawson 2013, p. 148). It was primarily observational. I shared a few experiences as a fellow university worker and student (at a different university) but I was clearly given visitor status. What was said was not seen as part of the data in my study, expressly so my participation could be informal. My brief participation in the group was generative in two key ways, however. Firstly, it contributed to the atmosphere in which I have undertaken analysis of data generated in research conversations, the literature and relevant policy documentation. Secondly it led one of the members of the CoP (and a participant in the study) to later contact me to seek information on a professional basis.

Lucy reported that she became aware of the CoP through Sandy and described her keenness to be involved: ‘I didn’t want to be in a … group where I’m just told what to do or … just listening the whole time’. When Sandy put out a call for co-facilitators, Lucy volunteered, becoming one of five co-facilitators alongside Sandy, who commented that she saw this number as a strength because of the different skills that each facilitator brought to the group.

Lyndall described diverse CoP involvement, as facilitator of separate academic development and research CoPs in her area and as a ‘teacher’/mentor in student-focused study skills support CoP. She also reported membership of a CoP for facilitators. Her involvement was largely related to her role as an academic developer in a teaching and learning centre:

*Strangely enough they were both probably just sort of allocated to me [laughs]. And … I’ve only been at the Uni. two years – and so that sort of allocation is, is always well received because it’s sort of like, ‘Yes, this is how I become part of something and whatever.’ So I don’t … see it, in this instance, as being a sort of negative thing at all, it was very valuable.*

Lyndall also identified knowledge management and academic development (in a CoP with this focus) as reasons for her CoP involvement.
Findings about CoPs

Community of practice as a collective structure was a prominent theme at Horizon University. This variation perhaps reflects the extent to which CoPs, as entities, are embedded through integration with institutional processes. For example, CoPs can be part of human resources (HR) processes and formal recognition in the Horizon University organisational structure.

Championship and auspicing

In keeping with the integration of the CoP initiative with other institutional developments, CoP championship and auspicing were significant, with all five facilitators referring to senior championship as a success factor for CoPs.

Laura noted the institutional practice of recruiting a senior executive champion to new CoPs and associated such championship with a CoP’s influence. Sandy also reported senior championship as a positive, associating the involvement of a senior manager as champion in her study-focused CoP with development of the CoP’s identity. Alice theoretically linked the deployment of CoP champions to Wenger’s work and reported that support from faculty leadership was an important aspect of establishing a faculty-based CoP, as did Barbara.

Institutional auspicing of the CoP initiative was reported by three of the facilitators, all in positive terms. Alice reported how CoPs were been linked to other human resources processes, with CoP participation recognised institutionally as a form of professional development. Sandy linked the ready recognition and support for her CoP idea with institutional support. Lucy, a co-facilitator of the same CoP, echoed this sentiment, reporting that the institutional validity accorded to CoPs had not only mandated CoP attendance but also enabled the CoP’s contribution to University culture.

Institutional framework

Laura, Alice and Lyndall all reported the existence of a CoP framework as a key factor in the success of Horizon University’s CoPs. This framework draws on three

Alice summed up the rationale and effectiveness of this approach:

So we use the three elements of community of practice to organise and structure of our meetings. And that was because I’d done my study and was aware of the literature, but also aware that people are so time poor. I said ‘We need to make sure we cover the three elements, but we need to have people feeling they’re getting value for their time.

Laura reported that the framework had alleviated some of the personal pressure she felt, as a facilitator, for a CoP’s success.

Sandy and Lucy spoke about structure in a different but related way. Both identified the recognition of the CoP initiative as part of the institutional structure as enabling the development of their CoP. For example, Lucy commented:

I think by saying it’s a community of practice you’ve almost got recognition, ‘Okay, you’re actually going to talk about something, a specific idea’, keeping it within the structure almost.

Importance of facilitator role

Sandy also noted the importance of active facilitation in a CoP’s success:

The community of practice gave us a structure and things happened very quickly. Like our … [named learning management system] site basically just for [named CoP] members, our website, and certainly recognition from within the organisation, at all levels. but you’ve still got to, to push it and help it grow and make sure that it’s got structure, that it’s recognised…by the organisation.

Laura described successful facilitation as combining individual and contextual efforts:

…it depends on a bit of a climate….It depends on some degree of determination …. And I know that it’s harder, as I said before, in other universities.
Laura’s comments connect to the literature on CoPs, which emphasises the importance of a conducive organisational culture as a success factor (for example, Hort et al.; McDonald & Star; Viskovic 2006; Wenger et al. 2002).

**Engagement**

Three participants talked about engagement. Laura spoke about sharing CoP resources with everyone in her faculty, not only those who had shown interest. This can be seen as congruent with early notions of CoP which characterise social learning through CoPs as a trajectory of participation from the periphery (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1999. She also spoke about the difficulty of CoP facilitation, including the challenge of disengaged staff, which she implicitly associated with organisational culture, suggesting that HR processes needed to ‘tackle’ staff disengagement in ‘a better way than they have up till now’.

Barbara cited engagement of members across campuses as an achievement of her CoP, which aimed to be inclusive. She referred to a topic focus and flexibility regarding engagement as important to successful CoP facilitation.

Lyndall focused on community time as a key aspect of the CoP framework (or ‘recipe’ as she termed it), which added to the enjoyment of the community, despite being ‘organised fun’. This chimes with the literature on cultivated CoPs. For example, Garavan and Carbery describe such a community as being ‘playful’, characterised by a strong work ethic around collective knowledge sharing, mutual challenging and ongoing learning’, with an associated challenge being how to ‘structure spontaneity’ (2007, p. 37).

**Distributed leadership**

Also known as shared or collective leadership, distributed leadership is a model of leadership which distinguishes leadership capacity from organisational hierarchy by recognising that individuals at different levels in an organisation can be leaders and have influence in organisational directions (Bolden, Petrov & Gosling 2008). The CoP facilitator role is associated with leadership (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a) and intentionally cultivated CoPs have been identified as a means for
distributing leadership in learning and teaching (for example, Hort et al. 2008). This is evident at Horizon University. For example, Barbara, an educational leader and facilitator, reported that:

[I]...deliberately sometimes take a backwards step myself in, you know, in sharing what I think is good practice. In letting others take the lead role and share some of the initiatives that they’ve put in place. And so that then empowers them ... to gain confidence that they can actually aspire and inspire others to good things.

Laura, Sandy and Lucy all mentioned shared facilitation as an aspect of CoP success. In this respect their work concurs with Hort et al. (2008) but differs from accounts such as Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), Garavan and Carbery (2007) and McDonald, Star and Margetts (2012a), which focus on the CoP ‘coordinator’ or ‘facilitator’ role in terms of the individual.

A related theme was the involvement of members in deciding the focus and agenda of CoPs, which Laura, Alice and Sandy all spoke about. Both Laura and Sandy surveyed members to find out their needs.

**Joint enterprise**

Join enterprise was reported as a key factor in CoP success, mentioned by four out of seven participants, two facilitators and two members. This affirms Wenger’s proposition that engagement (rather than imagination or alignment) is the form of belonging most associated with work CoPs (2000, p. 228)

Laura characterised the joint enterprise of an educational leaders’ CoP as encompassing teaching and learning related research, professional development, and developing and sharing collective responses to institutional strategy to meet staff needs and capacities.

Barbara emphasised the importance of focusing a joint enterprise:

*And so what we found was by just keeping the focus on [named cohort] and issues there that those strategies, those practices that we recognised as good practice, would help any year level.*
Annie, a member of that CoP, saw the joint enterprise as a strength which helped focus learning based on members’ needs. She favourably contrasted the value of this in comparison with the professional development offered in her School, where such needs were pre-determined without consultation:

_We’re all there to try and improve our, our, our teaching practice ...And so everybody’s there with the same, you know, with the same idea... We have a retreat, a [named discipline] retreat, once a year, but that’s only [named discipline] people. And sometimes we invite, you know, maybe some [different named discipline] people, or whatever it is that we want to learn, that somebody else has decided that we want to learn. Whereas in the community of practice we get the opportunity then to say, ‘Well, you know, like, I really need to know all about whatever and other people say ‘Yeah, that’d be really good. Why don’t we invite expert A..._

In this way, Annie also linked motivation for participation with the joint enterprise of the CoP.

Lyndall canvassed joint enterprise in different ways according to different CoP involvement, respectively emphasising, as Annie did, value arising from self-nomination of learning needs and focus:

...so it’s very, very freely chosen, sort of, it’s not rigidly planned and, and it’s quite flexible. But the idea is that we learn something out of that CoP about a topic that we needed to know some more about and then we also then sort of share our views and issues around that as well.

**Shared repertoire**

Shared repertoire was significant at Horizon University, reported by three out of five facilitators and one member (Lyndall, who also had a facilitator role in several CoPs). Findings suggest that engagement in joint enterprises in Horizon University CoPs had generated shared repertoire (practices).

**CoP identity**

CoP identity was mentioned by Alice in terms of the membership and knowledge domain of a cohort-focused CoP which she co-facilitated. She noted that rather than extending the CoP across the University, members preferred to keep it in-faculty.
because they had, according to Alice ‘a really strong community sense of identity going’, which they wanted to maintain:

So that CoP has actually developed an identity for the members, but also for the people outside looking in. And so now the Faculty managers may ask the community of practice, as a community, to give some feedback on new assessment policy, or new things that are happening. So the CoP has become the [named community] CoP as its stand-alone identity, as distinct from each member having a separate identity… And so I think the members feel that, but also people outside looking in see that CoP as kind of having its own identity as well.

Likewise, Barbara described a collective identity associated with practice sharing:

We pride ourselves, in our learning and teaching in the Faculty…. And we… try and always share some good practices… So I think that, that’s hard to put a value on. You know, in terms of that sense of community within the faculty and the strength and how empowered the individuals feel…

This can be seen as connecting with Wenger’s earlier accounts of CoP identity and individual identity as mutually constitutive (1999; 2000).

Alice also emphasised the importance of unstructured social opportunities as the basis for identity development:

I think that unstructured community time is important to build a sense of identity and sharing, and knowing people within your practice field …

Leadership identity and academic identity were also reported. In the only reference to leadership identity across the sites, Alice mentioned the impact of CoP involvement on a professional staff member:

And so, for a junior staff member, stepping up to that role – and she obviously had the leadership capacity – stepping up to that role and acting in it and then seeing how other people responded gave her a tremendous personal identity boost.

Alice’s story connects with findings from Bolden, Petrov and Gosling’s study of collective leadership in UK universities which associated how we think about our personal, professional and social identity with engagement and experiences of leadership (2008, p. 72).
Annie, an early career academic, associated her CoP participation with a strengthened academic identity:

*I’ve been able to … build my confidence as an academic … I mean universities because of … their culture, tend to have a fairly clearly structured hierarchy … So, you know, it has been very, very good for me, I think, building my confidence as an academic.*

**CoP meaning and definition**

The meaning and definition of CoPs emerged in three different ways at Horizon University.

Laura, the first person I interviewed for the study, spontaneously referred to the ubiquity of the term with reference to an international higher education conference that she had recently attended: ‘CoPs were there a lot – it’s everywhere, you know’, leading her to conclude that ‘There’s a bit of a, a bandwagon’. This can be seen as connecting with concerns about formulaic, generalised usage of the term CoP referred to in the literature, (for example, Amin & Roberts 2008; Burch et al. 2012).

Barbara opened her comments by distinguishing her faculty-based CoP based on its title of ‘CO-OP’, and associating this with the community’s focus on cooperation.

Commenting that ‘some people get stuck on … the community of practice maybe being a very structured thing’, Lucy construed this structure and the associated CoP terminology, as positive, suggesting that the institutionally recognised structure gave the community a validity linked to its purpose. Lyndall echoed this, commenting that the label mattered less than the structured opportunity and space provided by the institutionally recognised CoP initiative.

**Time**

Time as a factor in successful CoP facilitation was a strong theme at Horizon University, where it was referred to by six out of the seven participants. This connects with other Australian CoP studies which have identified the time poverty of staff as a challenge to successfully facilitating and sustaining higher education CoPs (for example, named author et al. 2013; McDonald & Star 2006; 2008).
Sandy referred to the importance of timing CoP activities with reference to members’ schedules and reported co-facilitation as a measure for balancing the time commitment needed to support the CoP. Lucy, who was one of the co-facilitators of the CoP with Sandy, spoke about a willingness to make time to provide support to each other informally, for example, over coffee.

The notion of time poverty was directly associated with the need to demonstrate value in CoP participation by Laura, Alice and Barbara. Alice summed up the importance of participatory value:

> I think you must be always aware of what people can get from it. Because it is time. It is two hours of time. And you must be able to add value for money. So that’s really important to think about all of those things as well.

She linked this notion of value to the CoP framework and the generation of outcomes for members:

> Because members are so time poor, I thought we needed to look at each of the three elements and look at outcomes for members .... the sharing of practice, the time ... saving.

Similarly, Barbara linked the professional development value of CoP participation with the generation of some efficiencies:

> We are all time poor, so how do we find some time to develop some efficiencies. I mean dealing with learning and teaching of large classes, but also try and be productive with the scholarship and the research side of our portfolios as well, as academics.

From the member perspective Annie commented:

> I don’t mean to make it sound like, that we’re just drawn there to have food, but ... it absolutely is something, I think, that is an important part of it, because you know ...what the structure is, you know that you’re going to be able to have lunch and I guess it’s like an investment of time really...

This is supported in the literature on higher education CoPs; for example:

> As noted previously, the significance of personal contact and the establishment of interpersonal relationships during informal interaction, usually with food, should not be underestimated. (McDonald et al. 2012, pp. 77-8)
Along with practical benefits for time-poor participants, the sharing of food (breaking of bread) signals the social aspect of learning which CoPs aim to engender. Lee emphasises food and drink as an essential component of community building, which signalled ‘social time’ (no date, p. 9).

Findings about the participatory value and benefits of Horizon University CoPs

Participants generally characterised the value of CoPs in personal terms, with two exceptions relating to institutional benefits: student outcomes and culture change.

Belonging

The tagline for the Horizon University CoP initiative (Horizon University, 2013) emphasises personal connection as a participatory benefit of CoPs and this broad theme is variously represented in the data across related benefits of networking, belonging, support and personal learning. Of these, I view the relationship between belonging and learning as most significant, concurring with Cousin and Deepwell’s summation of the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999): ‘…participation is the condition for transformation. The central point here is that participation enables learning and learning changes who we are’ (Cousin & Deepwell 2005, p. 61).

Networking, in the sense of meeting colleagues and being able to put faces to names was mentioned by both Alice and Barbara. Networking is associated with networks as distinct sites for social learning, not only encompassing relationships, connections and interactions, but also entailing the use of such connections as a resource for solving problems, sharing information and knowledge, and creating further connections (Wenger, Trayner & de Laat 2011, p. 10). Like CoPs, networks may be sites for social learning. CoPs can be distinguished from networks, however, principally because networks are not linked by a joint enterprise (Allee 2000, p. 6). CoPs are also structurally different, combining a focus on a knowledge domain, basis in practice and fostering of a shared identity linked to the knowledge domain and associated learning (Wenger, Trayner & de Laat 2011, p. 9).
Belonging was a key motivation for CoP involvement by Laura, Alice, Barbara and Sandy. Annie and Lyndall both referred to ‘community time’ as a valued aspect of CoP participation. Lyndall commented that CoPs offered a unique opportunity for interaction, connection and action:

*Because they bring you together ..., you know that’s what you’re trying to do. You know that the goal of them is to come along and interact and do, and it just means you do it. Otherwise you could sit in your office and not do it.*

At Horizon engagement was the primary mode of belonging, involving ‘direct involvement in community practices and investment in tangible and concrete relationships’, as Kanno and Norton put it (2003, p. 241)

For Annie, the value of community time in her CoP was high, and not just confined to CoP interactions, as she also referred to lunch room interactions as beneficial in terms of community time and problem solving.

**Professional development**
Consistent with data across the sites, professional development was the most prominent benefit, reported by six out of the seven participants, four facilitators and two members. Alice and Barbara both referred to professional development as significant in their motivation for CoP involvement. As noted earlier, Horizon University formally recognises CoPs as a form of professional development.

I understand professional development as aiming to 'support people to have authority over their own learning, and the integration of that learning into practice’ (Bolton 2006, p. 208). Also known as faculty development and staff development in higher education, professional development not only encompasses a focus on teaching and learning but other aspects of academic practice, including research and administration. Professional development is associated with improving participants' knowledge and skills and the professionalisation of teaching practice (McLean, Cilliers & Van Wyk 2008). As Southwell and Morgan note, professional development in higher education has associations with corporate strategic agendas (2009) which may be perceived as being in conflict with traditional academic values
of disciplinarity, autonomy and freedom. Quinn finds this attitude prevalent in a South African university in the form of ‘resistance’ discourses. These discourses involved hostile views towards staff development as a form of managerial control which interfered with academic autonomy (Quinn 2011, p. 7) and imposed an unwanted administrative burden (Quinn 2011, p. 12). Further, some academics rejected development around teaching and learning on disciplinary grounds (Quinn, 2011, p. 5). Because of their situatedness and self-determined topic or cohort focus, Nurtured/supported CoPs can be seen as an alternative form of academic professional development which addresses concerns based on perceived threats to disciplinarity and academic autonomy.

McDonald and Star report a number of benefits which they relate to CoP participation. These include increased knowledge in the teaching and learning domain and reflection on teaching practice leading to changed teaching practice, as well as a connection to a community which provides professional support (2008).

Reporting on an academic department’s CoPs, Jawitz finds that individuals have agency in identity formation, with each person having a unique experience. He also reports the possibility of multiple academic identity formation with CoPs (Jawitz 2009, p. 242). This aligns with my understanding of identity formation. As reported on page 35, my theorisation of identity extends Wenger’s notion of identity as a form of becoming constituted in the participation and the development of competence in multiple CoPs. Following Trinh, I view self as a process rather than as a core, and identity as hybrid, dynamic and contextually determined (1992).

**Practice sharing**

Laura, Barbara and Alice all mentioned practice sharing as a key element of professional development. Practice sharing encompassed the development of shared repertoire (for example, approaches to peer assessment and good practice exemplars and feedback mentioned by Laura) and connection across disciplines where participants have a joint enterprise (teaching a particular cohort), which was recounted by Alice. From the member perspective, Annie reported that practice
sharing in her CoP had helped build her confidence to seek help from both within and beyond the CoP:

*So that gave me the opportunity then to feel comfortable to approach people who were more experienced, either in the [named CoP] or outside the [named CoP] ... to learn some ... more skills, even just knowing who to ask for some reassurance about ‘... this is the situation, how do I solve this problem?’ kind of thing ... And ... to learn something, to learn something new that’s – it’s just not an opportunity that without the community of practice, I think, would happen.*

Annie went on to mention learning from encounters with CoP members from other disciplines as a unique benefit of CoP participation.

Laura provided a number of examples of practice developed through the various CoPs that she was involved with, including a course and program review, peer review of assessment and production of a resource to support students’ literacy development. Lyndall also gave an example of practice sharing, describing this as something which could structure ‘a learning opportunity’.

Alice talked about how practice sharing is enabled in CoPs, linking this to CoP identity:

*So ... the shared knowledge and repertoire and the kind of bouncing off fun in-jokes and things, which are great for the members, but if you’ve got a new person coming in, it can make them feel a bit isolated. But that kind of informal making time for fun and sharing does build a sense of identity for the CoP, for the members.*

This connects with Hammond’s account of a CoP in a university School of Education, where she found that ‘This community has developed stories and experiences unique to the community that have become mythologised, enriching community identity and rapport’ (2009, p. 6).

**Knowledge exchange**

Five out of seven participants (three facilitators and two members) referred to knowledge exchange as a benefit of CoP participation. Alice linked knowledge exchange to shared repertoire in the form of a resource that documented ‘corporate knowledge’ being developed by a CoP of staff working in student services. Sandy
talked about external experts who shared relevant topic expertise with her study-focused CoP and mentioned how she had felt encouraged to submit proposals for two knowledge sharing workshops to form part of an upcoming University-wide teaching and learning event. This connects with the structure in an emergent CoP reported by Campbell, whereby participants shared experience through formal presentations followed by reflective discussion (2008). According to Campbell this structure responded to participants’ wish ‘for more formal training and development’ (2008), namely workshops backed by networks to provide ongoing support and development (2008).

Lucy defined knowledge in practice terms and linked this to learning benefits in the same CoP:

*I thought there would be some benefit for the sharing of experience and for getting feedback from the group about what their problems were because that’s when you … learn the most from each other.*

Annie defined knowledge in terms of the sharing of ideas as well as practice and, in keeping with earlier comments, associated both with increased confidence in teaching and learning, in terms of presentations she was giving and in terms of approaching others for assistance. A related benefit, also mentioned by Annie, was the generation of collaborative projects with people from other disciplines who were involved in the CoP. In keeping with more recent accounts of CoPs and boundary crossing practices (for example, Wenger (2000, 2004); Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002)) Lyndall associated knowledge sharing in one of her CoPs with innovation: ‘Well, you either learn something that’s content or technical, or whatever, new … The idea is hopefully something new will come out of that that you didn’t know’.

**Learning**

Knowledge exchange can be understood as a form of learning (Gertner, Roberts & Charles 2011, p. 626) and CoP participation and learning are entwined in the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999). Speaking about her multi-membership of
CoPs, Laura identified ‘life-wide and lifelong learning’ as key motivators for her involvement.

Sandy and Lucy both referred to learning as a key benefit of involvement in their study-focused CoP which they both characterised as formed to support about learning. In keeping with this they both also mentioned support as a benefit of their CoP involvement, with Lucy mentioning the reciprocity of this.

**Identity development**
Identity was most prominent at Horizon University, mentioned by five participants – three facilitators and two members. Participants referred both to individual identity and CoP identity.

As noted earlier, the social identity version of CoP explains individual identity as formed through the negotiation of meaning (in practice) and an experience of self; membership; belonging (‘defined globally but experienced locally’); learning as becoming (identity) and a shared history (practice); and identity constituted and linked through multi-membership of multiple bounded CoPs (1999, p. 150).

In the knowledge management version of CoP, ‘a common sense of identity’ is linked to ‘common knowledge practices and approaches’:

> When people share a passion and are invested in each other, they can form a collective identity around the need for change that will motivate and facilitate individual transformations. (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 157)

Elements of both were reported. For example, Lucy described a dynamic of learning through participation in her study-focused CoP, compatible with the social identity version of CoP which links identity, practice and meaning (experience) (1999, p. 146): ‘but definitely you learn by sharing, you learn by experiencing, and … then you almost …, teach yourself, because you are improving. So I really think it’s great’.
Lyndall, who is both a CoP facilitator and member, linked identity formation explicitly to valued situated learning in a CoP, contrasting this with abstracted ‘academic’ knowledge:

…we talked last night… about that ability to actually become so academic that it doesn’t apply… sometimes. And there’s a role for that. There’s certainly a place in … life for that. But for me … I struggle with that. I need to have that application and life reality … and so perhaps that gaining of knowledge and that sort of … finding your identity in that sort of group … has really just worked.

Alice talked about two aspects of individual identity in practice formation associated with profiling and sharing of individual practice in the CoP she co-facilitated:

And the person presenting realises and gets the feedback that actually what they’re doing is interesting, innovative, significant. And so that helps them. That builds their self-confidence and identity… One of the groups … got a faculty award and then a university award and an ALTC … Citation …

As a new academic Annie linked participation and knowledge sharing in the CoP with learning and identity formation:

…but when I did go to the first one I just found that it was so helpful because I was a new academic and there was a lot of stuff that I didn’t know… again because of the … power structure, that I’d always sort of felt that they had all the answers and that I was probably a bit of a dumb bunny in it all… And to find that I actually wasn’t and that I had … some skills that they were interested to learn.

Annie provided examples of the skills and knowledge she had shared in the CoP. Interestingly, she linked her identity trajectory in the CoP with an egalitarian atmosphere:

And because it was … people who are much more senior to me, we were kind of all on a level playing field and that was what was really good … It was time out from, there was no students to knock on anyone’s door, there was just a level playing field, … And that’s one of the areas of interest of mine, is about that power difference in between those levels. And I think that as a new academic coming in … to that very structured environment, being able to go to something like a [named faculty teaching and learning CoP] … where less of that exists … has been hugely beneficial because then you get to meet people that probably you wouldn’t because people of different hierarchies tend to have meetings that are separate maybe to, to people who … don’t belong to that.
Annie’s account of her experience suggests that an egalitarian communitarian structure can exist within a corporate university environment. This accords with Churchman (2005, 2006), Churchman and King (2009), Churchman and Stehlik (2007) in suggesting that a CoP can provide a collegial space for academic identity formation, but departs significantly in the sense that the CoP Annie refers to is embedded institutionally rather than formed in response to an alienating corporate institutional culture and discourse as in the above mentioned accounts.

Further, Annie’s experience concurs with Jawitz’s account of academic identity formation in a discipline-defined department as being both individually and socially constructed, agentic and unique in trajectory (2009).

It is not possible to determine whether Annie’s experience was representative as she was the only member of the faculty CoP whom I spoke to, although I also spoke to Barbara, the facilitator. Annie’s account suggests a participation trajectory experienced without problematic power relations with ‘old timers’ in the community, which is particularly notable given her explicit recognition of hierarchy and associated power relations in academia.

As I noted in Chapter 2, the situated learning version (Lave & Wenger 1991) and social identity version (Wenger 1999) of CoP have been critiqued for their under theorisation of power relations, particularly in relation to the participation trajectories of newcomers. The knowledge management version (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002) has also been criticised on the same basis, as well as for a tendency to ‘gloss over’ complexities associated with privileging ‘competitive interests’ (Herbert 2005, p. 223). In the higher education context constraints around opportunities for legitimate participation due to academic work practices have been reported (e.g. Warhurst (2006) and (2008)). Furthermore the significance of institutional context and discourse (in a corporate university) for CoP operations is often overlooked (James 2007).
The question of power dynamics and relations in the Horizon University CoPs needs further investigation beyond the scope of this study and the collective story presented here.

**Recognition and reward**
Notably, given the profile and recognition of Horizon University CoPs outlined above, recognition and reward were not strong themes. Only one participant, Alice, the leader of the CoP initiative, mentioned this theme in connection with CoP members’ teaching awards and recognition of leadership potential associated with CoP involvement.

**Scholarship of teaching and learning**
Four out of seven participants mentioned scholarship as a benefit of CoP participation at Horizon University. Scholarship of teaching and learning was first conceptualised by Boyer, who expanded the concept of scholarship with the aim of bringing ‘legitimacy to the full scope of academic work’ (1990, p. 16). In the ‘Scholarship of Teaching’, teaching and learning combine. Teaching is recognised as a scholarly enterprise which encompasses knowledge transformation and extension (Boyer 1990, p. 24).

Laura and Alice referred to publications arising from CoP involvement. Interestingly, Sandy, a professional staff member, was inspired by scholarship around CoPs to re-think the role of her lecturers and motivated to propose two workshops for a University-wide teaching and learning event. Both were engaged with learner identity. The workshop inspired by the CoP paper sought to bring together students and academics to explore teaching and learning at the University. The other was ‘for students to share their various learning journeys’. Lyndall mentioned thinking about publications and research and writing projects as among her motivations for CoP involvement, which included facilitating a CoP focused on teaching and learning scholarship.
Student outcomes
Alice and Sandy mentioned student outcomes in connection with CoP involvement in two quite different ways. Alice referred to data which linked her cohort-focused CoP with improved student academic attainment. Sandy also referred to moves to gather data about outcomes for participants in her study- and learning-focused CoP. Annie mentioned student outcomes as motivation for her involvement in a student equity-focused CoP.

Culture change
Two facilitators, Laura and Barbara, reported culture change as a motivator for their CoP involvement and three out of seven participants linked CoP participation with University culture change. Facilitators Laura and Sandy both reported that their CoPs had contributed to organisational culture change. Laura elaborated that her CoP had exerted influence by bringing issues to light in relation to major university strategies. Sandy proposed that her student-focused CoP, with its collectively shared experiences, had become a voice for student concerns. She also reported that the CoP was collecting data to support its ability to ‘push’ what she termed ‘political agendas’.

CoP member Annie presented a less empowered and optimistic perspective. She concurred in reporting that problems had been identified through a CoP but added that although these were reported to senior staff, this did not lead to any action in response.

Both accounts can be seen as linked to the institutional recognition of the Horizon University CoP initiative. Making CoPs part of the organisational fabric seems to have increased expectations of achieving culture change but could potentially also increase difficulties in realising such expectations. An example of a dance requiring fancy footwork.
Summary

The Horizon University story is unique in several respects. Firstly, it was the only site where joint enterprise, shared repertoire and identity (both mutually constituted collective identity and individual identity in practice) were all reported as being associated with participation in institutionally sponsored CoPs. Likewise it was distinctive in terms of the extent to which shared repertoire and identity in practice were reported. Both of these findings can be attributed to the Horizon University CoP initiative’s guiding framework, which is explicitly linked to Wenger’s account of the three structuring elements of CoPs – ‘mutual engagement’, ‘joint enterprise’ and ‘shared repertoire’ (1999). The incorporation of these elements into Horizon University CoP processes has reportedly generated instances of situated learning in keeping with descriptions by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1999). Further, the findings suggest that the emphasis on connection and social practice encapsulated in the Horizon University tagline (Horizon University 2013), has helped to define communities that enable participants to develop identities in practice (Lave 2001).

As previously noted, the Horizon University CoP initiative is unique in the extent to which it is integrated with other institutional processes and in its prominent profile. On pages 125–127, I suggested that the Horizon University CoPs are constituted by Discourses of collegiality and managerialism. I argued that while academic and managerial values and culture may be in tension, it would be simplistic to assume that they are, by definition and in practice, in binary opposition. The Horizon University story suggests otherwise. It offers a vignette of an institutionally embedded initiative that has generated collegial spaces for social learning, knowledge sharing, professional development and the formation of academic teaching identities. These aspects of collegiality are variously described as enabling ‘connectedness’ (Sandy), ‘organised fun’ and a ‘playground’ (Lyndall), as a ‘level playing field’ (Annie), and the ‘sharing of practice’ to ‘build professional competency’ (Alice). All of the participants characterised the Horizon University CoPs as providing ‘institutionally accepted’ (Lucy) time and space for professional
development. This interpretation aligns with Ramsden’s vision of a contemporary university ‘synthesising strategic vision and developing a shared culture’ (2002, p. 36). Ramsden associates this process with an emerging university type – the ‘Enterprise’ university (2002, p. 32). This form of organisation is arguably more readily attainable by a ‘New University’ such as Horizon, given the University’s vocational orientation and majority distance student cohort, than it might be for a Sandstone university with collegial traditions harking back to an elite system of yore.

The Horizon University CoP initiative is also distinctive in the extent to which it has been actively and consistently led since its inception. Findings suggest that Alice (with others) has been instrumental in the Horizon University initiative’s continuing strength, as well as its development. This aligns with the contention of the knowledge management version of CoP which proposes that a CoP coordinator is critical to the success of an intentionally cultivated CoP (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). The importance of the facilitator role in intentionally cultivated Australian higher education CoPs was also confirmed by McDonald, Star and Margetts (2012a).

There are important limitations to note around my findings. The participant sample is small and concentrated. With one exception (Annie), the dominant perspective is that of the facilitator. Further investigation of the above findings would be needed to provide fuller detail. The Horizon University CoP story is a vignette, blurred at the edges, by no means definitive and illustrative. It is not a ‘formula’ or ‘recipe’ as Lyndall termed the Horizon University CoP framework:

...because the way we try and structure them is there’s opportunity to have that knowledge shared but for us then to share and for people to talk and then some community time, where you do have your coffee and your tea, and your chat. And that formula, or recipe, for the process, accelerates all of that, that learning opportunity.
Part 2: Pioneer University

What I’m saying is that while I’m not actually … as involved, it’s still important … that there’s a … community of people who are talking across faculties, across disciplines, about the same thing … quality learning experiences … for students … (Charlotte, member, Pioneer University)

History

Originating in a civic campaign (Named author et al. 2002, p. 1), Pioneer University began in the 1970s as a regional university established to broaden university access, particularly through distance education (Pioneer University 2014b). The University’s establishment coincided with government policies promoting regional development and expanded educational opportunities (Named author et al. 2002, p. 1). As part of a federal Government policy drive which connected educational objectives with the national economic interest (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 23), a second wave of universities, such as Pioneer, was set up around Australia before 1987. The commodification of higher education led to a segmented Australian market in which Pioneer University can be characterised as one of the less prestigious ‘Gumtree’ universities (Marginson 2006, p. 11).

From the outset Pioneer had an equity focus, offering educational opportunities for women, mature age, Aboriginal and remote students, as well as those with disability. The University also drew students from the metropolitan area (Named author et al., p 2). Originating in a merger between a State College and an Institute of Technology, Pioneer was established on a green-field site, where classes began on April Fool’s Day in the late 1970s (Named author et al. 2002, p. 33). Several mergers followed, adding another regional campus and metropolitan campuses. In the 1990s a further campus was built in the regional town where Pioneer was first established. More recently the original site has expanded to include new research centres, and community-based learning centres have been established in regional and rural areas (Pioneer University, 2014b).
This expansive history influenced my choice of pseudonym, which is more literally true than the pseudonyms I chose for the other sites. Pioneer University has reinvented itself by moving into new territories in pursuit of its perceived role as a ‘real world’ university for diverse students, as the foreword to a history of the university, by a former Vice-Chancellor, asserts (Named author et al. 2002). Indeed Pioneer positions itself as operating on the frontier in terms of openness and flexible delivery of education (Named author et al. 2002, p. 5).

In the 1980s and 1990s Pioneer’s Education faculty established a reputation as a centre for critical educational engagement (Named author 2011, p. 93). A lightly elegiac collection of writings from influential educational scholars from Pioneer promotes this claim and the diffusion of this influence through the appointment of a number of former Pioneer academics to senior posts in Australia and internationally. Positioning the achievements and influence of these scholars, one of the editors claims they made Pioneer University synonymous with critical approaches to education (Named author 2011, p. xv).

Pioneer University built its reputation on distance education, through award winning course materials, Library technology use and innovative online course offerings (Named author et al. 2002, pp. 19-20). By the early 2000s, the University’s research profile was characterised as ‘modest’ in comparison with ‘bigger research universities’ but trending upwards. At the time University leadership aspired to research recognition for Pioneer, seeking to attain a spot in the top 10 Australian research universities within five years (Named author et al. 2002, p 55).

Today Pioneer positions its reputation in terms of excellent teaching, accessibility and student focus (Pioneer University, 2014c). To substantiate these claims Pioneer’s website cites the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and Times Higher Education Top 100 Universities under 50 years of age rankings, Teaching awards, Excellence in Research Australia assessment and national research grant success (2014c).
The site

As outlined earlier, I was, with some mobility, an insider-researcher at Pioneer. Paradoxically, this seems to have made my perceptions of the site less physical and immediate in recollection than the other two, even though my research conversations with participants from Pioneer ranged over a longer period (between August and December 2011) than at the other two sites. These conversations took place in a range of campus locations, including my own office. Strangely, having been on the inside leaves me feeling on the outer. I don’t have sensory detail to anchor the physical experience of the different campuses and interview sites.

In an exploration of the higher education ‘landscape’, Becher and Trowler distinguish landscape from land as needing an observer to define it (2001, p. 16). Perhaps I am too much in and of the Pioneer ‘land’ to find the perspective to view the Pioneer landscape. I can feel the Pioneer Campuses as they were in 2011 but I cannot ‘see’ them. It seems I have internalised them to become an outside-insider. Writing this I find, as LP Hartley famously wrote in The Go-Between, that ‘The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.’ (2009, p. 383). This outside-inness rotates 180 degrees when I come to reflect on the people I interviewed, many of whom I had worked with directly in my role as project manager of the Pioneer University Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI) and a co-facilitator of a CoP. I have indicated specific professional connections with the participants, where relevant, below.

The participants

As at other sites, I have used pseudonyms to protect participants’ privacy and maintain research confidentiality. This is a heightened responsibility at Pioneer, given my insider status. Pioneer, with its larger participant numbers (n=21) had greater gender diversity than the other two sites, with 7 males and 14 females. In keeping with the other sites, however, the higher proportion of women among Pioneer participants reflects the gendered Australian academic workforce, particularly in terms of teaching and learning.
The participants were:

- Yvonne, an academic involved in CoP facilitation and teaching and learning scholarship, formerly an academic teaching in discipline, a facilitator and, informally, my supervisor for several years
- Christine, an academic teaching in discipline, also holding an educational leadership role, and a member-facilitator
- Kylie, an academic teaching in her discipline, a member
- Ian, a senior academic developer in a Teaching and Learning Centre, a facilitator, formerly my supervisor in my PEI role; formerly also an associate PhD supervisor (before joining this study as a participant)
- Sharon, a teaching focused academic in her discipline, a member-facilitator
- Felicity, an academic teaching in her discipline, also holding an educational leadership role, a member
- Michelle, an academic teaching in discipline, a member-facilitator
- Jane, an academic in a faculty-based academic development and teaching and learning scholarship-focused role, formerly teaching in her discipline, a member-facilitator
- John, an academic teaching in his discipline, a member-facilitator
- Adam, an academic teaching in his discipline, a founding member
- Charlotte, an academic teaching in her discipline, a member
- Kevin, an academic teaching in his discipline, also holding an educational leadership role, a member
- Jason, a faculty-based educational designer, a member
- Leanne, an academic teaching in her discipline, a member
- Tiffany, an academic teaching in her discipline, a member
- Elizabeth, an academic teaching in her discipline, a member
- Kate, an academic teaching in her discipline, a member
- Chris, an academic teaching in his discipline, a member
- Keith, an educational leader, a member-facilitator
• Rachel, an academic teaching in her discipline, a member
• Raelene, an educational leader, a member.

Pioneer University CoP initiative

My original intention was to focus on a single initiative, which I will refer to as the ‘Pioneer Teaching Fellowship’. This was a “network” of outstanding educators’ established in 2007 to recognise and promote educators’ achievements, enhance student learning through scholarship and connect expert teachers to enable knowledge sharing to build teaching quality (Pioneer University 2009, p. 6). Funding from the ALTC PEI was provided to expand the group’s impact, from 2008, by strategically linking it with ALTC initiatives and opportunities. Members of the community, known as ‘Fellows’, were provided with the opportunity to apply for PEI funding to support engagement with ALTC programs to recognise and reward good teaching, such as Awards, Grants and Fellowships (Pioneer University 2009, p. 6). As I will describe below, the Fellowship changed its structure, objectives and membership over the period of this study.

Despite my original focus, the overlap between several collegial teaching and learning initiatives at Pioneer University soon became apparent once I began to speak to participants. Unlike Horizon University, where the CoP initiative had a strong institutional profile, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship was one of a number of co-existing teaching and learning initiatives, including two teaching and learning communities with overlapping membership and interests. Most participants did not distinguish their involvement in the Fellowship from other Pioneer University teaching and learning endeavours, both formal and informal. I will describe the two key communities below. In reporting findings I have tried to clarify which initiative participants were referring to when it has been possible to do so.

The Pioneer Teaching Fellowship

The Pioneer Teaching Fellowship was explicitly aligned with the PEI strategic objective of building and consolidating engagement with the ALTC’s agenda and offerings (Devlin et al. 2011). In an ALTC publication showcasing PEI initiatives,
Pioneer University attributed the development of its intentionally established teaching and learning community to progressive culture change aimed at building Pioneer’s leadership nationally in teaching and related research and scholarship (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008, p. 9). Pioneer University positioned its Teaching Fellowship as a means to build relationships between faculties and central teaching and learning support, and between Pioneer University and the ALTC. Participation in the Fellowship, Pioneer claimed, would also enable collaborations in the University’s key areas of strength (flexible and distance education, and professional education) as well as build engagement with ALTC programs (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008, p. 9).

Ian’s account of the Fellowship’s origins and expansion, with ALTC funding, closely follows the written record. This is no coincidence since Ian was closely involved in both the establishment and development of the Fellowship and the PEI proposal which supported this:

So it was agreed in principle to set this up... A little bit slow to get going, for various reasons, but the thing that gave it a very big kick along, was really, well, two things really, was the review of teaching and learning ... and then following up on that was really securing the PEI funding from ALTC. So the review actually recommended, you know, University really nurture soft structures to try and enhance teaching and learning and its objectives and, you know, communities of practice were seen to be a good way of doing that ...

Ian went on to describe how the Vice-Chancellor had endorsed the recommendations of the institutional teaching and learning review. He recounted how external consultants were recruited to contribute to strategic planning and implementation of the review recommendations. Ian was appointed as leader of the PEI project ‘which was really supporting the ongoing implementation of the [Pioneer Teaching Fellowship].’

In a research conversation shortly before he left the University, John, a founding member of the Fellowship and co-facilitator of its second iteration, provided a very different account of the genesis, development and life cycle of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. He recounted ‘a rumour’ that the Vice-Chancellor had instructed the
establishment of CoPs by the central teaching and learning centre after a conversation with a colleague on a plane. He went on to describe and position his involvement, with another academic, as a fellow of the teaching and learning centre, charged with investigating CoPs. According to John:

\[ ... we gave a number of steps ... to take if ... the University wished to have effective communities of practice in place ... And we ran a couple of forums; we had over a hundred people, I think, involved in those. But what we said finally was, 'No point trying to put a couple of CoPs in just like that because you think it's a KPI, because you don't have the infrastructure or the attitude ... within the organisation to make it happen and you don't really understand what a community is.' So everything then fell apart and everything then disappeared from then on... \]

During the period 2008–2012, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship was renamed and reconstituted. It had begun as a formal community with named members recruited in recognition of teaching and educational achievements. As founding member Adam put it, the first iteration of the Fellowship was ‘... a club, as it was originally called, ... of the University’s best teachers’. Adam was involved in both versions of the Fellowship:

\[ Well, I was active in the discussions to set up that club ... and one of my first activities was to get the word ‘club’ dropped and to get the emphasis on ‘best teachers’ ... So over that period of time I became involved both as a member of the interim executive of what was then known as the [version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship] ... and then progressively various mutations onwards. \]

The second iteration of the Fellowship involved a larger group united by an interest ‘in enhancing teaching and learning’ (Pioneer University, 2013). I was the non-teaching, non-academic staff member of a small organising group which coordinated this second iteration of the Fellowship. With the reconstitution of the Fellowship, the group was relocated organisationally and reconstituted with the aims of promoting good practice through information exchange, scholarship and mentoring; contribution to University committees and working parties; acting as a lobby group on teaching and learning issues and raising the profile of teaching and learning (Pioneer University 2013).

Raelene commented positively on the reconstitution of the Fellowship:
Then it morphed into the [version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship]. Now, I felt that that was far more appropriate from the point of view of its, oh, not necessarily constitution, but charter. I thought that it was more inclusive and it accepted the role of disseminating the exemplars in teaching. Now, whether it was effective or not it’s not necessarily for me to measure. I’m sure they’ll do their reporting.

The effectiveness of the community, in any of its versions, is beyond the scope of the present study, except as it relates to participants’ perceptions of benefit. Both Ian and John commented on the value of the Fellowship through its different versions.

Assessing the impact of the Fellowship, Ian commented:

…it’s hard to disentangle a lot of things that have been done. Look, in the last six years we’ve, you know, we’ve had the [named teaching and learning grants] program and the teaching performance incentive funding and, you know, the Awards and the [dedicated teaching appointments]; there’s a lot of things that have been happening … around that whole review of teaching and learning and the more contemporary agenda of action. So there’s no doubt, you know, it drew our good people and it gave good people an opportunity to actively contribute, get recognition and actively contribute. I mean, some of them at the beginning were informally academic leaders, but over time, and you know there are examples of people who really did step into a formal teaching and learning leadership role.

After giving some examples Ian concluded:

There are a number of people I thought who sort of got the institutional profile and then that was recognised and they got the opportunity of moving into some level of formal teaching and learning leadership responsibility.

In response to my question whether the Fellowship was part of that, he answered ‘I think it was part of that.’

In a very different account, John described the further development of the Fellowship from version 1 into what he perceived as the more successful version 2, in which he was involved as one of the co-facilitators:

… the aftermath of the [version 1, Pioneer Teaching Fellowship] and the need to move that to something different, which was initiated by [named Senior Executive] and the development of the [version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching
Fellowship] ... and the fact that it was a committee that was formed, more or less by [named Senior Executive]. ... And the fact that the [version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship] had a coordinator, who was given enough time to coordinate it ... that was a pretty Big Deal, and the potential of that was enormous. And it was a community of practice, regardless of what any individual might think about it ... 

The Pioneer Educational Scholars

In 2008, the same year as the PEI initiative expanded the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, the University established a research centre whose Chair set up a community of scholars and researchers in teaching and learning, higher education research and consultancy. Founding members were also members of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship (Pioneer University, 2009, pp. 30-3). I will refer to this community as the ‘Pioneer Educational Scholars’. The Pioneer Educational Scholars group was set up to support and develop staff at various stages in their research careers, by building capacity in writing, grant application, mentoring and project collaborations (Pioneer University 2009, pp. 30-3).

Current communities of practice at Pioneer University

As noted earlier, my role as PEI project manager evolved into a co-facilitation role in version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. I was the coordinator to whom John refers above. My involvement ended early in 2012 when I moved into a new role at Pioneer University, unrelated to teaching and learning. I no longer have any personal involvement in communities of practice at Pioneer University. Version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship no longer exists. At the time of writing, the Pioneer University website refers to communities of practice as part of its strategic work, citing eight communities – six topic focused, including one that is by invitation only; one aligned to the development of ideas advancing the University’s strategic plan and one cohort based (learning leaders). The CoPs are aligned with university learning strategy (Pioneer University 2014a). Publicly available information is confined to brief descriptions and contact details for the groups.
Delimiting findings

The previous organisational and personal histories reveal four factors which were unique to Pioneer University. Separately and in combination they add complexity to the interpretation and reporting of this data. Firstly, as PEI project manager, and one of the co-coordinators of the second version of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, I was an insider researcher. This undoubtedly influenced what people did and didn’t tell me, what I knew or thought I knew and how I have interpreted the data. I considered these issues in discussion of methodology in the previous chapter.

Secondly, as I mentioned earlier, Pioneer University was home to a variety of co-existing teaching and learning communities of practice, both formal and informal. Although I recruited participants based on their membership of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and made this clear in the recruitment invitation, participants in this study chose to speak about a range of teaching and learning community involvements. These included references to their participation in both versions of Fellowship and participation in the Pioneer Educational Scholars’ group. Some participants also spoke about their involvement in informal CoPs, both within and outside Pioneer University.

A third consideration relates to overlapping membership across the different Pioneer University teaching and learning communities. Unlike the other two sites, Pioneer University did not use the label CoP to describe these various communities. When I asked participants about their involvement in a teaching and learning community at Pioneer, they had a number of reference points which not only included formal and informal communities, but other communal activities such as conferences and fellowships. This could indicate the ‘loose coupling’ of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship (Boud & Middleton 2003, p. 200). The Fellowship was not top of mind for most participants, suggesting that they were not engaged with it and that their participation, or lack of it, had not generated the process of identity development described by Wenger (1999). Pioneer data reflects a range of involvements well beyond the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, which was my original
focus. This is not to devalue the relevance of this data, since participatory value is my focus. It does, however, distinguish the Pioneer data from that generated at Horizon and Discovery Universities, where participants confined their narratives to their involvement in formally established and sponsored University CoPs. To make this distinction plain, I have generally focused on the data as it related (or didn’t relate) to the focus community, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, and the other intentionally established community, the Pioneer Educational Scholars, and indicated the context when reporting findings.

Finally, the narrative approach I took to research conversations with participants manifested uniquely at Pioneer University. I have described earlier how I took an open-ended approach to research conversations with participants, to facilitate a ‘space for their unique stories to lead where they would’ (Olson 2000, p. 349). More so than at other sites, this frequently meant that participants’ stories did not go where I had originally hoped. Instead of telling me about the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, most participants spoke about other communities and collegial involvements. There were just three instances where I prompted participants by referring to their membership of the Fellowship as the initial basis for their recruitment into the study. I have noted these below. Originally I was a little troubled by this diffusion in the data, which I saw as a potential flaw in my research design and findings. Following Lather (2009, p. 19), I have since come to see this ambiguity and variety in the data as offering a richness to the collective CoP story at Pioneer University. My findings have come to reflect an understanding that the unspoken can be as telling as what is spoken (Riessman & Kohler 1993, p. 69). Further, I realise that non-participation in CoPs, as well as participation, is significant to identity formation as described in the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999, p. 164).
Which version? Defining Pioneer University CoPs

The Pioneer Teaching Fellowship can be seen as hybrid according to Australian university CoP typology (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a), showing characteristics of both ‘Created/intentional’ and ‘Nurtured/supported’ CoP types on its evolution from version 1 to version 2 of the Fellowship. I characterise the original Fellowship as Created/intentional because of its top-down leadership, high level of support through the central teaching and learning unit, formal designation of membership, guided themes and agenda (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 22), and explicit link to institutional objectives (McDonald et al. 2012, p. 66). Version 2 of the Fellowship moved closer to the other intentionally established CoPs at Horizon and Discovery Universities in showing more characteristics of the Nurtured/supported CoP type, namely modified bottom-up leadership by a coordinating group of academics and one professional staff; a move to voluntary membership; a self-determined agenda centred on issue-related topics and achievement of outcomes linked to funding support for activities and administration (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 22). As noted in relation to Horizon University, the reconstitution of the Fellowship in version 2 as a Nurtured/supported CoP involved potential tensions between institutional support and community autonomy, objectives and influence: all factors in the dynamics of the cultivated CoP ‘dance’.

Community typology and belonging

A further typological aspect that was uniquely evident at Pioneer is the mode of belonging that was emphasised in the findings. As noted in Chapter 2, Wenger identifies three modes of belonging – engagement, imagination and alignment – and suggests that they are the basis for a typology of communities, as well as being factors in the way individual identities and social learning systems form (2000, p. 228). He also suggests that the imaginative mode can produce identity on its own, but not practice; however, he proposes that when imagination is combined with engagement, it leads to reflective practice (Wenger 1999, p. 217). Thus Wenger’s account suggests that the imaginative mode could be significant in work-based
CoPs. Wenger does not provide an example of a work-based community in the imaginative mode. In discussion of the findings in relation to identity formation below, I find that participation in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship to some extent involved affiliation with an imaginary community. As elaborated in the findings on identity on page 178, there is evidence of this kind of affiliation and imaginative identity formation. On this basis I also find that an imaginative community could be significant in forming identity in practice around university teaching and learning.

Certain types of workplace are more likely to generate imaginative belonging than others. As I discussed in Chapter 3, contemporary universities are subject to a range of influences and pressures, including those associated with the massification of higher education, a burgeoning globalised knowledge economy, reduced public funding and the rise of a quality agenda (for example, Ramsden 2002). The result is that contemporary universities are hyper-discursive sites. One way this hyper-discursivity manifests is through variegated academic identity. A significant element of the Discourse of collegiality surrounding CoPs is the proposition that CoPs can be collegial sites for academic identity formation. This contrasts with what can be seen as the alienating administrative burdens and controls associated with the Discourses of managerialism and excellence in university teaching and learning. Churchman describes how academics form identity in the imaginative mode as participants in a collegial university CoP (2005; 2006). More prosaically, Pioneer University’s multi-campus structure means that many colleagues meet face to face only rarely, increasing the need for imaginative belonging across a spatially dispersed community.

**Involvement narratives**

Because of the large number of participants at Pioneer University, I have not given individual narratives as full a treatment as for Horizon and Discovery Universities. Instead, I have provided a summary below, and noted the few instances when I
prompted participants that my focus in the study was the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.

- Yvonne spoke about her involvement in an informal School-based CoP and her Fellowship, with John, which investigated the establishment of CoPs at Pioneer
- Ian spoke about his involvement in facilitation of versions 1 and 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship
- Christine spoke about involvement in an informal School-based CoP and, after a prompt from me about the community which had led to the invitation to participate; she also spoke about involvement in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship as a member of version 1 and a member-facilitator of version 2.
- Kylie spoke about an institutional Fellowship which generated participation in an institutionally funded project and two related CoPs, including an external CoP facilitated as part of an ALTC project, as well as both versions of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.
- Sharon spoke about involvement in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship as a member of version 1 and a member-facilitator of version 2.
- Felicity spoke about her involvement in informal CoPs in three different universities, including Pioneer, as well as membership of version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.
- Michelle spoke about her membership of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, the Pioneer Educational Scholars, facilitation of a CoP in her School and participation in a broader professional practice community outside Pioneer.
- Jane characterised five different forms of professional development as CoP involvement: 1. her facilitation of a School-based CoP; 2. her experience of being mentored by an academic developer in her School; 3. her co-facilitation of a Faculty-based CoP; 4. her experience of being mentored in the Pioneer Educational Scholars group; and 5. her
membership and co-facilitation of version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.

- John spoke about an institutional Fellowship, with Yvonne, which investigated the establishment of CoPs at Pioneer, membership of version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, and membership and co-facilitation of version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.

- Adam spoke about his involvement as a founding member of version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and a member of version 2 of the Fellowship.

- Charlotte spoke about membership of both versions of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, CoP involvement with academic colleagues and cross-faculty collaborations.

- Kevin spoke about his non-participation in version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship after being nominated to the community by his Head of School.

- Jason spoke about his involvement in teaching and learning networks at Pioneer University as part of his educational development role and, after a prompt from me regarding the basis for the invitation to be part of the study, about his participation in version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.

- Leanne spoke about her membership of versions 1 and 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, the Pioneer Educational Scholars, and her membership of an informal CoP within her School.

- Tiffany spoke about her membership of version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and experience of development through the Pioneer Educational Scholars.

- Elizabeth spoke about her involvement in version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship after a prompt from me regarding the basis for her invitation to be part of the study, as well as the Pioneer Educational Scholars, a faculty-based CoP and her School Teaching and Learning Committee.
• Kate referred to her participation in version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, as well as her engagement in the wider Pioneer University teaching and learning community through an internal grant-funded project and participation in internal teaching and learning conferences.

• Chris referred to involvement in version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, the Pioneer Educational Scholars, an internally-funded project with an academic developer and other colleagues, and a cross-faculty, cross-campus CoP.

• Keith outlined his facilitation of a faculty-based CoP, participation in a CoP with other educational leaders and made one reference to the goal of version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, but not to participation.

• Rachel spoke about participation in version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and the Pioneer Educational Scholars.

• Raelene referred to non-participation in version 1 and limited participation in version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.

The majority of Pioneer Teaching Fellowship participants were members by invitation; for nine participants this was based on receipt of a teaching award. Three participants (two in formal educational leadership roles and one in an academic development role) related their involvement to leadership positions that they held – two held formal educational leadership positions, the third was an educational developer. Another two participants relied on colleagues’ recommendations as the basis for their involvement. Three Pioneer participants were distinctive in reporting mentoring (as a mentee) as part of community involvement; two of these also identified themselves as mentors, in terms of involvement and motivation for participation. Describing her motivation for CoP involvement (facilitation of a CoP in her school) in similar terms, member-facilitator Michelle stated the importance of helping others, having been helped herself. This perspective expresses the Discourse of collegiality as it combines notions of social support and knowledge sharing to build professional capacity (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 230).
Findings about CoPs

Championship/auspicing
Given the close institutional ties apparent in both versions of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, the theme of institutional championship was less salient than might have been expected. Where championship did emerge, however, it was associated with strong dependence on senior executive support. Five participants (out of the total of 12 across the three university sites) referred to institutional championship. Expressing the Discourse of Collegiality, Yvonne associated the need for such championship with the collegial and professional development potential of CoPs:

*I think a university, if they take a helicopter view, can see that staff are at least finding sustenance in that collegiality... and ultimately their... sense of self will, and their sense of confidence, will improve or will be more firmly established or you can give a number of connotations to it. And that view of staff development or staff sustainability or staff sense of self, and confidence, is something that the university, from a big picture point of view, should support.*

Keith emphasised the importance of delegating budget and authority to a faculty-based CoP to enable leadership capacity building and identity formation. Three participants emphasised the importance of senior championship to the success or otherwise of an intentionally formed CoP. For example, Ian commented:

*It's got to start at the top. I think if the leadership at the top falls off the idea, the local stuff will always happen and it's really interesting in itself but, look, you definitely need, you know, the senior leadership, you know, strongly supportive.*

Referring to version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, Raelene rather prophetically queried the future of the group, given its recent Senior Executive championship.

In our interview just two days before I spoke to Raelene, John, one of the co-facilitators of the Fellowship, described how the community was ‘left relatively in limbo’ with the departure of the Senior Executive who had overseen the reconstitution of version 2 Fellowship:
... So we had to invent ourselves and invent what we thought we should do ... And I think at the end, towards the end, we had a huge opportunity to say, “Are we a real community? How do we move forward? How do we encourage community within the … teaching and learning environment”? And that we could be a mentor group to a significant growth of communities and therefore culture, therefore self-satisfaction and learning and professional development. And I think that we were unable to get there because, again, I think the University wasn’t proactive in recognising that that was a real opportunity.

This vulnerability can also be seen as expressing the Fellowship’s lack of a framework or structure independent of institutional (particularly Senior Executive) support.

**Institutional framework**

Unlike Horizon University, where CoPs are institutionally embedded with an established structure that one participant (Lyndall) called a ‘formula or recipe’, the notion of CoP structure was conspicuously absent at Pioneer University. Just two participants mentioned CoP structure, in both instances citing it as important. One of these was Yvonne, a very experienced CoP facilitator who has researched and published on CoPs. It is therefore unsurprising that CoP structure would be significant to her. The other participant reflected on her involvement in both versions of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship:

> *I think at the start it seemed a bit, I wasn’t sure how it would work – its first inception – it just seems a lot more structured and has more of a purpose, perhaps, than when it first began, it was more like an acknowledgement of something, a group of people …* (Tiffany, member)

The general absence of reference to CoP structure has two likely reasons. Firstly, it reflects the range of different types of community involvement that people spoke about. Participants did not have a single community of practice with a particular structure in focus. Secondly, it could also be seen as an indication that formal CoP culture (particularly around the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship) was not strong and that where participants did refer to involvement in the Fellowship this was more often in the imaginary mode than the engagement mode.
Importance of facilitator role

CoP facilitation was less prominent at Pioneer than other sites, arguably reflecting the participant profile. Unlike Horizon and Discovery Universities where facilitators formed the majority of participants, at Pioneer the majority were members. Just two were facilitators and six were in the porous category of member-facilitator, which was evident across all three sites. Five of these were represented among those who talked about facilitation – Ian (facilitator) and member-facilitators, Christine, Jane, John and Keith.

Speaking about a faculty-based CoP, which was aligned with the wider institutional and national teaching and learning agenda, Jane who was also a co-facilitator of version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, nominated some key factors for successful CoP facilitation:

*I think the community of practice and the valuing of the teaching and the funding to support professional development and aligning it with institutional approaches to professional development, just really important.*

Keith emphasised the provision of context, resources and authority as critical factors in the success of a faculty-based CoP which he facilitated.

Raelene asserted the importance of combining formal CoPs such as version 2 of the Fellowship with smaller, less formal, more organic groupings:

*If only there was a way to have smaller microcosms throughout the University that could be smaller groups that could meet, not necessarily spontaneously, but with a kindred spirit. As I said, you know, some of the times that these meetings are on I can’t go … but perhaps if there were … smaller satellites of these… So wouldn’t it be an ideal scenario if you had the big picture, being the [version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship], and … a component of that and not to be, not to be discipline- or faculty-based but someone who might be very interested in eLearning or blended learning, or something, something that was a subset but necessarily had to be part of the [version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship] otherwise it would be, just tended to dissipate or just go off on its own and wouldn’t add value to the group as a whole.*

Kylie struck a cautionary note around the notion of CoPs:
I do think that they are good, but they’ve got to be grounded in, in the realities of people’s teaching lives. I think we’ve got to be wary of saying community of practices work full stop. I think they only work in certain conditions.

Findings around engagement reveal that the participatory value of CoPs is critical to what makes CoPs ‘work’.

**Engagement**

Just one of the Pioneer participants who referred to engagement (of 17 in total across the three universities) spoke about her own experience of engaging with a formally established CoP at Pioneer:

> What I got from it the most, however, was people who were so committed … and so engaged – and cared. (Leanne, member)

The only other experiential reference to CoP engagement related to a faculty-based CoP:

> … belonging to this group of excitement, you identify with that; you recognise your passion is being acknowledged in a major way. (Keith, member-facilitator)

One member of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship who had participated in both versions of the community spoke about engagement conceptually:

> For a community to work individuals must be able to identify with it publicly and realise ‘I can contribute and do things to it’ … as well as ‘I can get things from it’.  
  (Chris, member)

Non-engagement was more prominent than engagement at Pioneer University. Three participants talked about the need to broaden participation in the formal CoP (the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship). For example, Sharon a member and co-facilitator of the second version of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship commented:

> I think sometimes it’s very, very positive, all of the sharing and learning that happens and everybody that comes is always really positive about the experience, but they’re all, to me, already people who are good at teaching or wanting to improve … And so I think there’s still that other group … who mightn’t care or think that they can’t improve and if somehow more of it could get to them then that would be even more positive.
Three participants referred to their lack of engagement with the two large formal CoPs at Pioneer. Michelle, for example, spoke about a ‘very strong, sense of a community of practice’ in the School-based CoP which she facilitated. She contrasted that with the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and Pioneer Educational Scholars:

\[\ldots\text{sometimes also those big ones, they’re not as individualised so that your feeling of belonging, if you think about the definition of a community… as somewhere you belong, feel akin to, aligned with and all of that. I don’t necessarily … feel that I have that … same commitment or investment or whatever, in some of those …}\]

**Joint enterprise**

In keeping with the lack of engagement evident at Pioneer University, there was also limited evidence of joint enterprise. For example, Jane, a member and co-facilitator of version 2 of the Fellowship, commented:

\[\text{In terms of what I’ve seen with the [version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship], I mean, I think that’s been a very powerful kind of space for people to engage with somebody – like an issue we have at [Pioneer], and … to think through it in terms of what it means for their own context. Now whether that, and what happens then I don’t know … when they go back to their own environments; but I think overall it does just build a sense of knowing and understanding and expertise around teaching …}\]

Michelle described her connection to the Pioneer Educational Scholars:

\[\ldots\text{and so there was this kind of shared, not even a shared commitment to the same thing, but there was a whole lot of individuals, you know, on a similar journey … that was actually what connected people …}\]

While both participants describe a form of participant engagement, neither offers evidence of a joint enterprise generating the ‘relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice’, as Wenger describes it (1999, p. 78).

More apparent at Pioneer University was a kind of imaginative engagement in the Fellowship around the idea of a teaching and learning community. For example, Raelene endorsed the usefulness of the Fellowship in terms of a common purpose ‘of improving … teaching and learning’.
Charlotte emphasised the importance of the Fellowship as an idea:

*I think it’s that there’s something nice, even though I haven’t availed myself of a lot of opportunities … it’s the feeling that there are, there is a community of people there who share your values … and who, you know, have interesting ideas about teaching and learning. …*

This kind of imaginative engagement can have value in terms of identity formation and learning. For example, Kanno and Norton found that ‘humans are capable of connecting with communities that lie beyond the local and immediate and that investment in such imagined communities strongly influences identity construction and engagement in learning’ (2003, p. 247).

**Shared repertoire**

Given the absence of engagement in practice, it is not surprising that there was limited reference to shared repertoire in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. Just two of the five participants that discussed this theme related their comments to the Fellowship, in both cases, referring to version 2. Jane spoke about the production of artefacts by the Fellowship. Sharon shared feedback on the usefulness of the live sharing of practice:

*Sometimes I feel that what I do isn’t particularly innovative, but it’s obviously effective, from student comments and scores and everything and; and just to be able to share what you do that works, when it is to me something practical and basic and then have people comment later that it was useful … that is something that I felt really positive about.*

Felicity also affirmed the usefulness of engagement in practice but did not relate this to involvement in a particular community.

**CoP identity**

CoP identity was significant, largely in terms of the idea of community (ascribed to the Fellowship) and CoP definitions and meanings. John emphasised the importance of a shared vision of the CoP (version 2 of the Fellowship) to its ongoing success. Two members, Tiffany and Chris, commented on the significance of perceptions of CoP, Tiffany referred to the Fellowship directly whereas Chris spoke conceptually about the idea of community.
CoP meaning and definition
Discussion about the meaning and definition of CoPs was prominent. Participants used, and seemed to understand, the term CoP in a range of ways, but most linked the term with teaching and learning strategy. Four participants (Ian, Sharon, Jane, John) gave teaching and learning strategy as a reason for involvement. All four had some involvement in facilitation of the Fellowship; Ian with version 1 and Sharon, Jane and John with version 2.

Both Kylie and Michelle differentiated large, formally established CoPs, such as the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and the Pioneer Educational Scholars from CoPs in which depth of engagement and associated identity formation would be possible. Michelle did so by referring to the main role of the formal groupings as being ‘knowledge exchange’. Kylie went into further detail:

The idea of a community of practice is something that’s intense; and something that does build that narrativity and identity that you’ve been talking about has to be structured ... if you’re talking about trying to kind of seed ideas and grow... innovation ... So community of practices is something which I think has to be targeted, small, structured, specific, and if it’s not, then I think ... you’re in other territory.

Adam also touched on the use of the term CoP and its implications:

... I sometimes get worried about creating labels ... I just like the ability, I guess, to be able to access what’s around, but I know that to some extent to access things, some effort sometimes has to be put in to actually formally creating those opportunities because ... otherwise you don’t have the ...access, so it’s getting the, the balance right between formal sorts of structures and, and creating the opportunity for discussions to happen, I guess.

In this way he implicitly refers to the tension between formal strategic alignment and community autonomy identified by McDonald and Star (2008), as well as the importance of negotiation and mediation involved in working through CoPs with cross-level leadership in higher education (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 11).
As previously noted, John associated CoPs with the recovery of collegiality in a fragmented academic culture. Chris defined CoP in terms of engagement and identity:

…it’s got to be something where you actually make the effort to do it … You know, it’s not a neighbourhood … in the sense of ‘I just live here’ … I suppose, it’s about ‘I am willing to do something for it’ … and, and generally the communities that are formed that have got visible presence and, and resources, make it easier for people to contribute and to benefit from it.

**Time**

Participants identified lack of time as a barrier to CoP participation. Charlotte’s comment is typical:

…and, you know, there’ll be things I’m interested in but it won’t be the right day or it won’t, I won’t be able to just manage the time for it, so I feel like I miss a lot of opportunities but as I said before it’s just really nice to know it’s there …

One participant (Kevin, a non-attending ‘member’ of the second version of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship) referred to participation in this study as a trade-off for non-participation in the Fellowship:

…I’ve then been a series of, not deliberate apologies but apologies …for the meetings that have been held … when I was asked to participate in this exercise …it was partly out of guilt that I hadn’t been able to do the other stuff …

Referring implicitly to time poverty, Kevin linked administrative commitment, academic seniority and service and noted that he had another meeting scheduled after our research conversation. This combination can be seen as an expression of the Discourse of managerialism whereby the administrative component of academic workload has increased and a ‘count culture’ prevails (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 232). Kevin’s comments can also be seen as linked to collegial academic values in terms of service.
Findings about the participatory value and benefits of Pioneer University CoPs

Belonging
Belonging was a significant theme for participants from Pioneer University. In relation to the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, it was frequently expressed in terms of shared values and ‘like mindedness’, reflecting the dominance of the imaginative mode. For example, Elizabeth characterised ‘like-mindedness’ as a source of connection and collegiality:

Well, mostly because it’s nice to be with other people who you think might be thinking like you… So it’s, it’s that hearing of new things or hearing of different things or even hearing of problems that people have … had in adopting a particular way of doing things or, you know. So it’s kind of an everyday kind of discussion that you have … with people that become your colleagues that you otherwise wouldn’t meet.

Like-mindedness in this sense can be seen as value based rather than synchronised thinking. As I will elaborate in relation to professional development, some participants saw exposure to different ways of thinking about teaching and learning as a key factor in the professional development value of participation.

Keith also picked up on the value of networking among practitioners with shared values and commitment:

… and I guess the [version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship] that the University had coming out of the [version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship] was a bit the same, trying to put those people with energy and passion where they can bounce off one another.

Reflecting the Discourse of collegiality, Yvonne linked a need for connection to motivation for CoP involvement:

And it’s interesting that, even though many people are not seen to be active contributors, they still come, they still come to meetings, they still come to get-togethers so you have to ask yourself why. Why, why is it they come? What is it they’re lacking in their immediate working environment which is not sustaining for them in a sense of they have to reach outside that to come to a community of practice meeting? So I have a strong sense that people are becoming
increasingly isolated – and there’s research that supports that – and the isolation is damaging to their self and has an impact on their confidence, particularly if they’re new academics.

Chris also affirmed the collegial benefit of CoP involvement:

*I think part of the benefits that I didn’t talk about is that you realise you’re not alone… that you’re actually thinking about things, in terms of curriculum, about problems with teaching something or, or whatever and you realise that there are other people that can become a sounding board, that can help you or can learn from you or whatever else; and so that’s really one of the great things about the community ….*

Rachel associated her participation in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship with an improved connection to the University and wider networks, as well as a ‘sense of belonging’:

… *[I]*t’s helped me to feel like *I’m part of [Pioneer] more than I have ever felt before … I would really hope that this, sort of, you know, this collective continues ‘cause it’s just been such … an inspiring part of, you know, being at [Pioneer]. It’s …. changed the way in which I look at …. my role and …. that I know that … what I’m doing is valued; and so I’d really hate for that to disband…*

In the Discourse of collegiality, this kind of connection is often linked with professional development or capacity building. Here Rachel effectively links work-related identity and organisational commitment, both elements of workplace learning. Whereas professional identity is grounded in a profession or vocation, work-related identity describes the relationship between an individual and the organisation (Collin 2009, p. 25). This does not involve the organisation alone; an individual’s perspective on an organisational situation will vary according to their individual life situation. Other aspects of life may compensate for challenges at work (Collin 2009, pp. 31-2). Organisational commitment will be a factor in identity formation and may link to identification with the organisation (Collin 2009, p. 25).

**Professional development**

At Pioneer University professional development was a prominent benefit associated with CoP involvement. Just six out of the 17 Pioneer participants who identified
this benefit linked it to involvement in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, while a seventh, Elizabeth, cited learning as a benefit of her involvement in the Fellowship. An eighth, Michelle, spoke about the developmental benefits of participation in the Pioneer Educational Scholars, particularly in relation to writing and publication in the higher education field.

Unsurprisingly, given his involvement in establishing and developing version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, Ian described its origins as a professional development initiative:

So the idea of working indirectly through building academic capacity and leadership capacity to make a broader impact, I thought, was … a good recent development, and I was really happy to contribute … you’re sort of always looking for a new opportunity to, to demonstrate leadership in the field of, broadly put, professional development, which is … your role…

Professional development was prominent in his summative assessment of the Fellowship:

I think it’s been a pretty good vehicle for drawing out and nurturing and promoting some of our … really top talent. And so in that respect and, you know, it is a little bit of an era coming to an end, I would rate it pretty highly.

Christine described the professional development benefits she gained from participation in version 2 of the Fellowship:

And, in terms of what I get from it … I really find that being in the community makes me think about things in different ways and I’m always able to learn something new about teaching from another example. And I’m a very big picture person, so if someone’s describing something in Maths or Chemistry or Physics, I can easily try to find a way to translate that to another context. So I get a lot from the different forums, from hearing from different people… personally I think I get a lot from being involved in a community and the main benefit to me is …, living outside of School context for a short period of time. Because in Schools people tend to have same issues, or think the same way broadly, but sometimes people at other areas of the university think of things in an entirely different way.

Sharon echoed this view:

… just seeing what other, what other people do. So it’s not just from a practitioner’s point of view, and that learning, the people who are doing things
that you're not; for example, the research in, in teaching. So even though I don't do that, you're aware of what is being done and what has been done and that's been an eye opener as well because I hadn't been involved in that before.

Rachel affirmed the value of exchanging practice and teaching tips across disciplines and beyond:

_I know this still involves the professional learning, but it’s just getting to know other academics, that people who are respected in different fields … that’s actually been interesting, too… finding out who are the … key people in other fields has just been interesting and what they bring as well; but not just … who are the people at Pioneer academics respect … and for what reasons I get to know … this Higher Education sector, more broadly, I think, too…_

Kylie, on the other hand, did not credit participation in version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship with professional development:

_So the [version 1 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship], I mean, obviously I went to a few forums and things and stuff like that, but, yeah, as far as actually seeding the ideas or, you know, no I wouldn’t, I wouldn't nominate them as having a strong influence on my teaching …_

Others linked the notion of ‘lifelong learning’ with professional development, connecting with the Discourse of excellence in teaching and learning. These included Jason, who saw ongoing professional learning as integral to his role as an educational developer. This link between professional identity and professional development was also prominent at Pioneer University, although notably only one of the participants who spoke about identity linked it to participation in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.

**Identity development**

Three participants in the Pioneer Educational Scholars described individual professional identity development associated with their participation; for example, Michelle:

_… And so when you went to those seminars or those workshops, you know, people would be asking really clever questions because, you know, it was as they were seeing it in terms of their lives…and that would often provoke a new sense of what was possible for yourself._
Jane described how a mentor gave her opportunities to publish, enabling her to develop a voice and individual identity within the Pioneer Educational Scholars. Rachel related how a showcase by a Pioneer Educational Scholar from a different discipline modelled practice which affirmed her own:

"You know, I use a lot of hands-on manipulatives ... in my class but it was, you know, as a receiver of that, I'm watching it and going, 'Yeah'. There was, like, a reinforcement that ..."

Two participants associated involvement in informal topic-focused informal CoPs with the contextualisation of practice and the development of identity in practice; for example, Yvonne:

"So your sense of self can grow as you want it to grow without external pressure that relates to the immediate working environment you're in. So it's almost like a pressure release. So I remove myself from my daily context. I go and talk to these other people whom have got a passion for teaching and learning. So do I, but my time is very limited. But I can relax and I can learn from others in that context so my sense of self is that I can make a contribution in a different way to my immediate work environment. So my sense of self as an academic is not bound solely by what I teach. I think that your value as a person individually, as an academic individually, is not always appreciated in the way that you would perhaps like in your discipline. And the contributions you can make outside of that, amongst another group ... could be valued in a different way, meeting another part of your personal sense of self."

Earlier in this thesis I referred to my interest in the relationship between narrative and identity formation in the focus communities. Only one participant, Kylie, made this connection explicit. Notably it was not in relation to my original focus community, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship:

"I've always had support within my area. But I think what really gave me a boost was when, in that lateral sense, so many people believed that that was a really worthwhile thing to do, and to sort of help you and support you in that. And I think, you know, that does, as you say, build identity in narrative. So that, that kind of narrative takes root in a way which is quite, it starts to flourish, you know, because you are getting that kind of wider contextualisation that what you've got to say is actually really quite valuable."

Other participants spoke about identity formation in the imaginative mode, in terms of the kind of practitioner they could imagine being, or not being. Felicity gave an
interesting example, describing good practice she had seen shared by a member of the Fellowship, which she could not have adopted herself because it would not have been authentic to her style.

Keith reported similar outcomes of the faculty-based CoP which he had facilitated:

… to feel part of an overall strategic, developmental cutting edgy sort of stuff has been very important for them. It's raised their own identity as people dedicated around teaching and learning … it’s raised their profile within their Schools and Faculty and it's raised their profile within the University, so I think it's been really successful.

In this way, and in line with Wenger, Keith describes individual and CoP identity as being mutually constituted (1999, pp. 146-7).

Notably, John was the only participant to link involvement in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship with identity in practice:

…if you become involved in the concepts of community and, and what communities of practice means, then practice means something that you're all sharing as an interest and, and, you know there are a lot of people in [Pioneer] who are really good teachers and just sitting with them and talking to them and hearing what they have to say and feeding information backwards and forward makes you better, better advised. And I think that that helped me be a better teacher.

The dearth of findings around identity formation in the Fellowship most likely relates to its origins as a vehicle for recognition and reward.

**Recognition and reward**

Recognition and reward was a prominent benefit cited by participants, with the majority referring to the Fellowship and just one participant, Michelle, referring to the Pioneer Educational Scholars. Interestingly, after describing and rejecting the recognition and reward process at Pioneer as fostering self-promotion, Kevin (member) differentiated version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship as being ‘a bit safer … because it’s … got … no strings attached’. Kevin had not ever attended a meeting or event of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship so this was a notional assessment.
Five participants described their involvement in the Fellowship as affirming; for example, Leanne:

So in one way it was validating me, to make me feel that I felt validated by, first of all, the award and then, of course, the links to other people who were of similar minds.

Again, the notion of ‘like mindedness’ is prominent. Like mindedness here is linked to shared values and belonging relating to academic identity and identification. This seems to centre on the idea of the Fellowship rather than engagement in practice.

**Scholarship of teaching and learning**

Scholarship was less prominently reported at Pioneer than at other sites. Two out of the seven participants who referred to scholarship, related this to their participation in the Pioneer Educational Scholars. None of the other five attributed their scholarly activities in teaching and learning to participation in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. This could be explained by the co-existence of the Fellowship and the Scholars groups. Each had demarcated domains. The Pioneer Teaching Fellowship was positioned as focusing on teaching and learning practice whereas the Pioneer Educational Scholars focused on teaching and learning scholarship among other areas of higher education research. Ian supports this proposition indirectly by suggesting that integration of practice and scholarship:

I mean, aspirationally, the idea of having, you know, your institutional supported community being a very good integration of the research, the scholarship, the teaching improvement all integrated into the one agenda being pursued by one consolidated community would have been, you know, ideal …

The CoP initiatives at Horizon and Discovery Universities took this consolidated approach.

**Culture change**

Culture change was not a prominent theme at Pioneer University but it emerged in two interesting and quite different ways as a function of CoPs. John, a co-facilitator of version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, expressed the Discourse of
collegiality in describing CoPs as a response to what he termed a ‘fragmented’ academic culture:

... the fragmentation and the silos, seem to get in the way. So anybody who comes along and says, “Hey, we’re interested in developing communities of practice ideas and concepts”, I’m going to want to be a part of it.

Sharon, also a co-facilitator of the Fellowship, noted that culture change had motivated her involvement but reported that the Fellowship had not ‘been asked for advice on any big decisions’. Two other facilitators also cited culture change as a motivating factor for their respective involvement in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship (Ian) and a faculty-based CoP (Keith).

Summary

The Pioneer University case presents some unique features. Firstly, it was my home institution and earlier in the study I had a professional role in co-facilitation of version 2 of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. Secondly, Pioneer University established two teaching and learning CoPs with overlapping membership and domains (teaching and learning: the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship; scholarship of teaching and learning: the Pioneer Educational Scholars). Both factors have implications for the findings.

The Pioneer Teaching Fellowship seems to have been stronger as an idea than as a space for professional learning and development. This is borne out by the greater prominence of the imaginatively mode of belonging. A number of participants reported identification with the idea or image of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship alongside minimal and inconsistent engagement.

Where participants spoke about benefits in relation to their involvement in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, such benefits principally related to career, profile and identity within the University. This reflects the strategic intent that drove the establishment of version 1 of the Fellowship.
As well as expressing the strategic impetus for the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, in both versions, this emphasis can be understood as related to the variety of understandings and definitions of CoP evident in the data. As Kylie comments (in line with scholars such as Amin and Roberts (2008), Lindkvist (2005) and Storberg-Walker (2008), the term CoP is sometimes used ‘loosely’ to cover a range of groupings. Unlike participants at other sites, Pioneer participants seem to have had no single ‘top of mind’ CoP concept on which to draw. It is also apparent that where participants had direct personal experience of engagement in CoPs this more commonly related to informal groupings than either of the two formally established communities, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and the Pioneer Educational Scholars. Where this was not the case, CoP was idealised in terms of like mindedness, shared values and collegiality. The Pioneer Teaching Fellowship was closer to being a Network for two reasons. There was little evidence of a joint enterprise (Allee 2000, p. 6) and a shared identity linked to that enterprise, or knowledge domain, and associated learning (Wenger, Trayner & de Laat 2011, p. 9).
Part 3: Discovery University

So it’s more about … like-minded people coming together and seeing what may come from that… (Mary, facilitator, Discovery University)

History

Established in the 1960s, (Discovery University, 2013b) Discovery University, like Pioneer University, is of the second wave of Australian universities which Marginson calls ‘Gumtrees’ (2006, p. 14)

Discovery University publicly positions itself as a research-focused institution with relatively strong research performance (Discovery University 2013b). Discovery University also claims innovation and quality in its courses and teaching, substantiating both with examples of national firsts in bachelor and graduate-entry course offerings and numerous national awards for teaching excellence (Discovery University 2013b).

The site

Discovery University has three campuses, as well as interstate and regional locations. I visited the original suburban campus and had research conversations there. Discovery also has a campus in the central business district of the capital city in which it is located; and a third campus, currently under construction, which is close to the original (Discovery University 2013b).

The original Discovery University campus is expansive and hilly, combining treed and open spaces. When I visited in April 2012 the sprawling green lawns reminded me of the ‘sandstone’ university (Marginson 2006) where I completed my undergraduate study. Despite this nomenclature my ‘alma mater’ was established only a few years before Discovery University on what was, at the time, an open-field suburban site (Monash University 2013).
I recall a feeling of spaciousness while I was at Discovery University. This is despite leaving home in the dark, catching a red-eye flight and launching straight into a full interview schedule. This contemplative state is evident in a note I made during a short break:

*I sit under a yellow-leaved tree by a grey lake. Leaves drop on my face and the water laps softly beside me. I lie with a text open on my knees and feel peaceful and expansive. It is a long time since I lay down outside and noticed clouds drift past without really watching them.*

*Also feel light shades of Newton and his apple as if the gently dropping leaves might inspire a line of flight...This feels like a fruitful space, a space in which things happen. Change is literally accumulating before me as leaves continue to shower me. And uncertainty is okay. Fragmentation, dispersion, proliferation all feel natural, inevitable – a flow, indeterminate, circular, beginningless, endless, always in the middle as Deleuze and Guattari say (1994); always becoming.*

*While we live we are in flux. And, fittingly, the subtitle of the book I’m reading describes CoP as a concept ‘in flux’ (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin 2007).*

It was a rare moment of lucid reading which connected with the way translator Massumi recommends that readers should approach Deleuze and Guattari’s *One Thousand Plateaus* – by treating the text pragmatically, not as a system but as a tool for living, for thinking, feeling, sensing differently (1994, p. xv). In that space, with the memory of my first two research conversations humming in the background, I felt and thought differently as I read and then observed my response, almost as it happened.

In hindsight my perception is that this reflexivity infused subsequent encounters with participants. Although I used the same prompts and narrative technique at the other two universities, I was more relaxed at Discovery University. Listening to the audio recordings, the flow seems a little more consistently conversational than at other sites.

I have imagined myself back under that tree many times since, hoping in vain to recapture the mood and to feel again the temporary mental lightness I experienced there.
The participants

As at other sites I used the following pseudonyms to protect privacy and maintain confidentiality:

- Irene, a facilitator and academic teaching in her discipline.
- Mary, a facilitator of a CoP and member of another cohort-focused CoP and a professional staff working in student support.
- Amelia, ‘institutional mentor’ and academic teaching in her discipline.
- Lisa, founding facilitator of a cohort-focused CoP, of which she was a member at the time of interview, an academic in a teaching and learning centre.
- Susan, a facilitator who distinguished her role from other facilitators by describing herself as a manager, and a professional staff in a teaching and learning centre.

I was familiar with Amelia’s work through her publications on CoPs and several mutual colleagues. I had met Susan several times before I came to Discovery University, at ALTC networking events, and had discussed my study with her. Susan helped to recruit participants by distributing the initial invitation through her networks. Those interested then contacted me directly to make further arrangements.

In keeping with other sites, participants’ gender reflected wider academic workforce trends. It is no coincidence the majority of those involved in this study, because of their leadership of such collaborative structures, are female (26 out of 33 participants). This tallies with an OLT study of the facilitator role in Australian higher education CoPs, which found that the majority of facilitators (74% of a sample of 71 participants) were female (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012c, p. 4).

Among the participants, Amelia’s facilitator role, reflected in the title of ‘institutional mentor’, was unique. She distinguished it as follows:
The thing I’m trying to do is to share my experiences and knowledge and tips and, you know, resources and little bits of wives’ tale that I’ve gathered over time with the people who are facilitating communities of practice here.

The use of the term ‘wives tale’ was notable, given its association with traditional and localised beliefs lacking a factual basis. As I will explore further by theme, there was a gendered discourse about the Discovery University CoPs which was distinctive among the three sites in this study. This showed as a tendency to use feminised (in this case, domesticated) language to characterise CoPs. Like Amelia, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder offer tips and resources for developing CoPs. Rather than relegating these to the low status of wives’ tales, however, they bolster their credibility claims by describing these tips as design principles and positioning them as part of a global corporate knowledge strategy (2002).

Despite this gendered downplaying, Amelia positioned her role as significant, commenting:

…that role as an institutional mentor has been really important for two-thirds of the current facilitators … but not so much, perhaps, the smaller, other group who, for various reasons may have come into the initiative a little bit later, so didn’t get to, to be involved in some of the earlier work I did with them…

For different reasons, Susan also distinguished her role as the facilitator of a CoP for CoP facilitators from the other facilitators’ roles:

I guess I would see my role … more as a manager … I also don’t really think I should have to facilitate [named CoP] other than ‘Here’s a time and really, ‘Here’s what we have to talk about from a management perspective in terms of your budgets’ …but other than that let’s just take it wherever it goes.

As previously noted, member and facilitator are overlapping categories. Three out of five Discovery University participants were members of more than one CoP. Lisa, the only ‘member’, eloquently expressed relationship between these porous categories:

…even as a facilitator of the… CoP I worked quite hard … to try not to have a dominant voice … so I actually always saw myself as a member-facilitator anyway.
CHAPTER 5: CULTIVATING UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING COPs

Discovery University CoP initiative

My first encounter with Discovery University teaching and learning communities was not with the living system, but two-dimensional. I read about it in a PEI showcase publication. Discovery University’s initiative was positioned as part of a strategy that recognised teaching and learning enhancement (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008).

When I first read about the Discovery University initiative I was also a newcomer to the Pioneer University project and to the work of the ALTC. I read about Discovery University’s PEI, trying to understand my own university’s project and its place in terms of the national initiative and the variety of Australian university PEI projects. As I read I noted similarities between the Pioneer University and Discovery University initiatives. Both included a network of national award and grant winners with almost identical names and very similar objectives constructed around capacity building (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008).

The connection between the two was strengthened by document layout, as the initiatives were juxtaposed in the ALTC publication (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008), creating a mirror effect which connected my idea of the Pioneer University and Discovery University PEI projects. As previously mentioned, the literal and metaphorical often blur in my thinking as associations proliferate. This happened with the concept of mirroring, which I later discovered has a special meaning related to engagement and identity formation in CoPs (Gherardi & Strati 2012, p. 41). According to Gherardi and Strati, communities take on identity through mirroring rather than deflection. Gherardi and Strati metaphorically characterise the pursuit of knowledge in organisations as a desire-fuelled quest in which both travel and destination are meaningful (2012, p. 40). To illustrate, they draw on the myth of Ulysses, characterising the wily Ancient hero and his band of sailors as a community of practitioners connected by resemblance and joined by bonds of trust and comradeship (2012, pp. 40-1). Gherardi and Strati use the term ‘mirroring’ to describe how members of a community connect through the celebration of shared skills and achievements. They suggest that communities
of practice develop a collective memory which ‘constitutes a ritual for the fulfilment of desire for reciprocal mirroring’ (Gherardi & Strati 2012, p. 41).

The stated aim of Discovery University’s PEI was to strengthen strategic and staff engagement with the ALTC’s agenda and programs. Along with recognition and reward of good teaching, and faculty-based capacity building, Discovery University also established a named ‘Community’ with a membership derived from national award winners and a named ‘Network’ to find and support potential national award and grant winners. The intention was that named Community members would mentor Network members. At the time, Discovery University reported that the dissemination of innovations in teaching and learning to staff at all levels was a challenge. While Discovery University’s Community and Network were not explicitly described as CoPs, communal capacity building through knowledge sharing was explicit in the strategic intent driving their establishment (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008).

**Development**

The nurture of CoPs at Discovery University from 2009 can be seen as an extension of the Community and the Network and, in common with these groupings, as a response to the strategic challenge of sharing innovative practice to further ‘quality’ teaching and learning.

CoP facilitator, Susan, told me about the establishment of CoPs at Discovery University. She noted that the PEI-funded Community and Network preceded the formal and strategic cultivation of CoPs by a year and reported that some members of the College and Network went on to facilitate CoPs. Although this link existed, Susan rejected the characterisation of either the Community or the Network as a CoP. As will be reported below, defining CoPs and their meaning was a prominent theme at Discovery University, mentioned by four out of five participants.

In close alignment with the published description of the Discovery University PEI strategy (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008), Susan positioned the Discovery University CoPs as ‘cross discipline, cross faculty, cross status … –
academic, general staff ...’, with teaching and learning as the domain. She described their objective as ‘... improving quality...improving teaching and learning in whatever notion that held for the individual involved’.

**Local and national context**

The notion of teaching ‘quality’ is significant in understanding the context in which the Discovery University CoPs have been nurtured. At Discovery University teaching ‘quality’ is foregrounded in the central teaching and learning centre’s mission, which defines quality in terms of learner focus, student engagement, research-informed disciplinary knowledge and pedagogy; reflective teaching practice, including planning and evaluation; and the achievement of graduate learning outcomes and attributes (Discovery University 2013a).

More broadly, Chalmers (2008, pp. 19-21) identifies four dimensions of teaching and learning quality in the Australian university context: institutional climate and systems; diversity; assessment; engagement and learning communities. These reflect the values of the ALTC at the time of Chalmers’ study, the inception of the PEI (2008) and the ALTC’s mission to promote ‘Excellence: through the recognition of quality in its programs and awards and its encouragement of higher education institutions’ recognition of quality teaching and learning.’ (2010a)

Ramsden views policy to recognise and reward teaching as a critical factor in enhancing teaching and learning (2003, p. 240), along with an environment in which teachers try new ideas and want to share these with colleagues (Ramsden 2003, p. 239). Both are reported by participants at all three sites in my study. The Discourse of excellence in teaching and learning (Light & Cox 2003, pp. 3-7) is evident at Discovery University, alongside positioning as a research-focused institution.

Considered locally, Discovery University’s CoP initiative explicitly connects with the quality indicators ‘institutional climate and systems for reward and recognition’ and ‘engagement and learning community strategy’. It also involves recognition
and reward, and the promotion and sharing of innovation. All are reflected in the findings presented below.

**Which version? Defining Discovery University CoPs**

I characterise Discovery University CoPs as ‘Nurtured/supported’ (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a). This is because their leadership is modified bottom-up, their membership is sometimes voluntary and sometimes suggested; their themes are discipline or issue related, with an agenda both self-determined and sometimes steered, and outcomes linked to funding (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 22). The Discovery University CoPs are subsidised and organisationally profiled, and their relationships with the university require ongoing negotiation (McDonald et al. 2012, p. 66).

The Discovery University CoPs are closely linked to what I have termed the knowledge management version of CoP (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). For example, several facilitators of Discovery University CoPs have published a paper about four Discovery University CoPs, using the knowledge management version to conceptualise their CoPs (Named authors 2013).

As I have noted earlier, the knowledge management version of CoPs has been popularised in business and industry, and can be linked to a Discourse of managerialism whereby knowledge management is a competitive advantage in a global knowledge economy. It closely aligns with Discovery University’s own definition of its CoPs:

> *CoPs are groups of people who, through regular meetings share a common area of interest that increases their individual and collective knowledge (Discovery University 2013).*

Susan described the CoPs as a ‘knowledge management strategy’ which:

> …would enable ‘some transition of tacit skills …beyond the discipline and that these people were able to share that with people that wanted to hear and were able to ask some probing questions, hopefully.*
She prefaced this with a proviso: ‘I haven’t really put it out there because, you know, I’m not sure how it would be viewed by the facilitators themselves’. I interpret this as signalling awareness of the debate within higher education about what CoPs are and what they mean. This has principally centred on the applicability of particular CoP versions to the higher education context.

The Discovery University facilitators note the debate about CoP typology in their paper (Named authors 2013). They then perform some fancy footwork. After supporting the proposition that CoP models from business may not fit with higher education, they propose that universities’ collegial management traditions and work practices give the CoP model some applicability when implemented as a ‘craft-based community’ (Amin & Roberts 2008), which is the type they claim for the Discovery University CoPs (Named authors 2013). Can a CoP be conceptualised in terms of the knowledge management version and implemented as a craft-based community? Amin and Roberts developed their CoP typology in response to a perceived formulaic use of the term CoP. They associated the craft-based type with early CoP versions (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 358), which involved the development of embodied knowhow through socialisation into group practice (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 358). As the authors of the Discovery University paper note, there is a growing body of literature which affirms that CoPs can be intentionally initiated (Named authors 2013). The findings I have already presented provide further support for this proposition. What is less clear, despite the Discovery University CoP facilitators’ claims (Named authors 2013), is whether a strategically aligned CoP with knowledge management lineage can generate the kind of knowledge attributed to craft-based communities. That is, knowledge embedded within individuals and sociocultural context and drawn from experience, tacit knowing, embodied know-how, continuous learning and 'kin(aesthetic)' awareness (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 358). My findings do not support this at any level, from how participants came to be involved in a CoP at Discovery University through to the experiences and outcomes of such participation which they recounted.
Involvement narratives

As at other sites, I opened my research conversations at Discovery University by asking participants about how they came to be involved in a CoP(s). In asking this question I was looking for insights into institutional culture and organisational history, as well as personal experiences and narratives. All are required, along with connections to the wider social context, to develop a meaningful collective story.

Susan entwined personal and organisational histories in talking about her CoP involvement. She remembered that the CoP initiative began with a call for facilitators. Initially this went out to members of the PEI Community and Network described earlier. Contacts were invited to become involved in eight proposed CoPs:

*And my recollection is that … some of those … were selected by the facilitators and others were put out there with a request for facilitators to run. …when I came in it was more firming up … who the potential facilitators were. They then went through training … there was a presentation, then there was a workshop and there was …, from memory, quite a bit of overlap between the two; and that was really on how [named facilitators’] model had worked. As a result some people decided they weren’t going to continue … and they weren’t interested in facilitating and others went ahead; and we ended up with three communities of practice that formed.*

Susan related that her supervisor was keen for teaching and learning centre staff to be involved in CoPs, either as facilitators or active participants, so the centre remained aware of developments. As a result, Susan was asked to support the facilitation of a meta-CoP established for facilitators of the other Discovery University CoPs, to be co-facilitated by her supervisor in the Centre and Amelia, the institutional mentor. To meet an expectation that facilitators would be paid time release for their involvement the Centre found funding for three hours per CoP meeting during the first year of the University’s CoP initiative. Funding was also provided to CoPs to support their activities.

As noted earlier, Amelia was instrumental in the Discovery University CoPs through her unique role as institutional mentor. A national teaching and learning grant and award winner, she was co-facilitator of an award winning CoP before
joining Discovery University (Office for Learning and Teaching). Amelia drew on previous experience in performing her mentoring role for facilitators at Discovery University.

Irene spoke about how she came to be the co-facilitator of a cohort-focused CoP:

... so there was a small amount of seed money for that. But independently the University also had a bit of a push on communities of practice ...we had [named academic] who'd recently taken up a position, I think, at [Discovery University] around about that time, and so there was an advertisement out for staff about people, whether people would be interested in being involved in various communities of practice that people had put up. And so I actually became involved in a number of those as well...

Mary became involved when it was suggested that a CoP be established around a topic she worked in. This replaced previous forums, which she had found uninspiring because of negative group dynamics. The CoP appealed because she saw it as a more positive approach to sharing common interests with staff from a range of disciplines and areas to improve practice and outcomes for students. This broadening out of membership across the University offered an incentive for Mary too.

Although Lisa was not actively facilitating a CoP at the time we spoke, she had been the founding facilitator of a sustained cohort-focused CoP. She reported being inspired to found the CoP after attending a workshop facilitated by Amelia. Lisa facilitated the CoP for 12 months before leaving Discovery University for a six-month period. On her return she re-joined the CoP, now facilitated by someone else, as a member.

**Findings about CoPs**

**Institutional framework**
The initiation and support of Discovery University CoPs is centrally coordinated through the teaching and learning centre and, like the precursor PEI groupings, linked to the strategic objective of promoting teaching and learning practice across disciplines and faculties (Discovery University 2013). Hinting at the ‘dance’, the
CoPs at Discovery University are explicitly tied to both a Discourse of collegiality and a Discourse of managerialism. Discovery University claims that CoPs promote collegiality and trust; are voluntary, multi-disciplinary, explicitly without institutional expectations, not siloed (‘not limited by disciplinary or staff classification boundaries’); and driven by members, including in relation to knowledge creation and outcomes (Discovery University 2013). As noted earlier, however, the University also links the CoPs to the knowledge management version.

Amelia, who had been involved in CoPs at another university as well as Discovery University, reflected on the significance of organisational culture to CoP success:

…whereas here is much more decentralised, so people are, kind of, I think more suspicious of institutionally-run initiatives … in a way, so it has been very different to kind of work with what has been a very different culture as well as a different group of people.

Amelia made further comparisons, commenting on Discovery University’s commitment to the CoP initiative:

... they embraced the idea very readily … very happily threw money at it with no strings attached, which certainly wasn’t the case at [named university]. And they didn’t ask for any specific outcomes or outputs, though, I think last year the facilitators were asked to … report on what they thought the good outcomes were, but … nothing was dictated. So I think in that way they were quite hands off … and were quite happy to see where it went.

Susan independently affirmed Amelia’s assertion that there had been no institutional dictate around CoP outcomes. In talking about this she reversed the conventional managerialist value hierarchy for CoPs as a knowledge management tool – institutional benefit, individual benefit and community benefit (as, for example, in Wenger, et al., 2002, p.12):

We wanted people to get something out of it for themselves and have that opportunity and space to discuss something that was of importance to them …and in a teaching and learning realm, and that’s therefore important to the institution.
Likewise, people came before institution in Irene’s statement about the benefits of her cohort-focused CoP: ‘Benefit to the individual …benefit to the School, benefit to the students’.

Elaborating on her comparison of CoP initiatives, Amelia reflected that the Discovery University CoP initiative ‘doesn’t have … a visibility and profile entrenched here … in the way it does at [named university].’ As to why, she commented ‘…part of it’s about the nature of the institution and part of it’s about the way the initiative is being run differently by the two institutions’.

Amelia also noted that it was harder to cultivate CoPs at Discovery University than at [named university] because Discovery is larger and also ‘… takes itself more seriously as a research institution than a teaching institution …’

Further, Amelia commented that Discovery University had made a smaller resource commitment than her former university, with CoP facilitation and support forming only a small part of staff roles, whereas at the other teaching-focused university, funding enabled commitment of more staff time. Amelia attributed the stronger role of academic staff in running her former university’s CoP initiative as another differentiating factor that had contributed to its greater success.

**Sustaining CoPs**

In McDonald, Star and Margetts’ typology, Australian higher education CoPs evolve through a renewable life cycle which may travel from beginning, through development to consolidation and outcomes (2012, p. 24). In keeping with this process, Irene characterised her CoP as ‘sustained’, commenting that ‘we’re the only community of practice, really, that commenced in 2010 that has continued to sustain and that has had the impact that we’ve had’. Irene defined ‘sustained’ in terms of bringing people together and other measures such as ‘tangible outcomes, seen as a resource for others’. Susan also commented on the evolution of the Discovery University CoP initiative. Since the inception of the strategy in 2009 some CoPs had been sustained but others hadn’t. When we met in 2012 she reported a recent renewed interest in CoP formation, citing a ‘new wave of people thinking
‘Well, we perceive value in forming a CoP’. Susan’s outlook on the CoP initiative was positive: ‘… it’s nice to know there’s people discussing the notions of new CoPs’, which they will drive, with financial support from the teaching and learning centre’. I consider financial support further in the summative findings below on page 235.

In October 2013 Susan updated me on the Discovery University CoP initiative. She was ‘happy to report’ the establishment of two new CoPs, a total of four CoPs with a ‘strong network’ and another that is ‘still finding its feet’. Further, she noted that one former CoP had ‘morphed into a quarterly forum/interest group’ (email, 21 October 2013). In December 2013, I shared early findings from my study with the Discovery University facilitators’ CoP. They were a small but engaged group, which included two male academics. The extent and animation of discussion and questions suggested a healthy culture of facilitation and a positive outlook for the Discovery University CoP initiative.

The importance of the facilitator role
The importance of facilitation and support to CoP success was a leading finding at Discovery University, mentioned by all participants. In one way this is unsurprising, since they had all been involved to some extent in CoP facilitation, either in the past or at the time they spoke to me. Amelia had also had considerable CoP facilitation experience at another university. The prominence of facilitation and support as themes can also be seen as an expression of the Discourse of managerialism. Discovery University CoPs are conceptualised in knowledge management version terms, which emphasise the importance of CoP cultivation.

Participants canvassed the idea of facilitation broadly, conceptually and in application, across ontological, epistemological and pragmatic dimensions.

Authenticity was uniquely significant at Discovery University, conceived and discussed in distinct but related ways. For example, Lisa focused on the epistemological aspect, linking practice with professional credibility:
... it was about doing something in my role ... in a Centre for University teaching, doing something in my role where I was working with [named cohort] staff who work with [named cohort] students, that I could see that would be helpful to them on their terms ... And so it was trying to work out a way of working, getting people to hear real stories as well from each other, you know, ... because in my role I could be seen as a bit removed from the coalface...

Irene also referred to practice-based credibility, adding the ontological dimension of personal connection to the realities of a situation:

I’d had a lot of first year teaching on the ground, had built a lot of relationships with other staff who are teaching there, and so I think that personal relational culture was really important in getting people to join in with us...It wasn’t as though we were strangers coming in from outside. And I think we both had a fair amount of credibility in terms of teaching and learning issues...

Reflecting on the strengths of the CoP initiative which she had been involved in at her former university, Amelia also referred to credibility, linking this to discipline as well as the teaching and learning domain, and expanding ontologically on the idea of ‘personal’, to add individual commitment as a further aspect of authenticity:

So what we brought to it was one was the … traditional disciplinary academic perspective…and a learning and teaching designer perspective, which I think was really useful.

... so I think that’s why sometimes there are struggles when it’s only a ... teaching and learning expert ..., because they don’t bring that .. same perspective about ... how do I make this work so that the academic’s able to take it seriously, b) find it useful and c) won’t see it as a waste of their time. So I think that was part of the success was having those two perspectives on it.

... I also think that there’s a whole other set of factors, which on reflection afterwards have occurred to me, that are about ... being authentic to what you’re doing ... I also think that ... you still have to find a way where making appropriate time and space and effort for it ... because I think if you start to lose ... that authentic commitment to it, the members can feel it ... and they know it; and if you’re not taking it seriously, why should they?

The leadership aspect of the facilitator role also received some attention. Irene, Mary and Lisa reported that they needed to take a lead role in facilitating their CoPs. This connects with the literature around cultivated CoPs, which gives facilitators a
Joint enterprise
To foster a joint enterprise, participants emphasised the importance of focusing on agreed topics and sharing facilitation on topic expertise. For example, Lisa related that ‘each member of the CoP now takes responsibility for a focus around an area…rather than it being the responsibility of the facilitator, which I think works a lot better’.

Mary takes the same approach in her topic-focused CoP, drawing on expertise from within and outside the CoP to facilitate meetings focused on agreed topics of interest. Susan also picked up on the importance of topic to engaging participants, commenting, ‘And I guess if there’s a really poignant topic, people will get there’.

These findings link with literature on Australian university CoPs. Campbell, for example, finds that members of an emergent academic CoP grew frustrated with ‘the cyclical nature of discussions that often came back to exploring fundamental questions of purpose for the group’ (2008). Campbell reported that such discussions were not seen as sufficient, particularly by ‘practitioner academics’ who wanted more structured, formal development (2008). As at Discovery University, Campbell’s community also evolved by developing a topic focus (2008).

CoP meaning and definition
Another manifestation of the institutional dance at Discovery University is the emphasis given to CoP meaning and definition. With the exception of the institutional mentor, Amelia, all participants mentioned this. For example, Irene commented:

Well, I think the lines are very blurred … but the reading that I’ve done … is very much that it’s more organic rather than top down … and the more … top down a model is, ‘Right, we’re having meetings on this date … and, you know, this is what we’re going to do, and outside speakers are coming in’, whatever, or ‘We need to do this agenda, we need to …’, as soon as we start getting into decision making or anything like that I … see that diverging from that sort of
Wenger-type communities of practice model ... but I'm entirely practical, and so what I'm on about irrespective of ... what you call it ... is how can we get people together ... how can we build relationships that will be useful personally and professionally; so ... people will be able to connect so that they'll be able to work together ... personally, professionally and relationships that are stimulating ... and how can we allow people to interact in ways that are more than just talkfests or venting sessions ... but can produce something that's of benefit ... that can be built on.

Mary characterised CoPs similarly, but placed higher value on conversation:

... my understanding of a CoP is that it's organic ... so ... you don't necessarily come together with ... 'At the end of this we will have achieved that goal' or ... so it's not necessarily about a succinct goal per se ... but it's more about conversation and, like you say, the narrative. So it's more about ... like-minded people coming together and seeing what may come from that.

Mary also commented on facilitation challenges around group dynamics, which she associated with the organic nature of CoPs. The open-endedness of Mary’s definition echoes Susan’s earlier comment about taking CoPs wherever they go (page 190). It also connects with the formal definition of Discovery University’s institutionally supported CoPs as coming without expectations (Discovery University, 2013).

Lisa also referred to dissonances in CoP concepts. Speaking about her early involvement in founding a CoP, she referred to a variance between what was presented institutionally about CoPs and:

... how they should be run and how they operate, that didn’t really go with the literature that I was reading around it ... there seemed to be a disjuncture. And then I read other literature that said other things...

This prompted Lisa to develop her own definition and understanding of CoPs based on lived experience and what she valued as a ‘learning cycle’, both as facilitator and member.

Similarly, Susan noted variety and evolution of conceptualisations given the CoP label:
... in my opinion, it doesn't really matter what they're called ... if the notion is you can get together, have some space to talk about anything that you want, within reason [half laughs] ... Well, really, you can't harness that. You can't stop it going somewhere you don't want to ... unless the group doesn't want it to ... so I like that notion.

The OLT study on CoP facilitation affirmed the significance of the facilitator role as a factor in successful cultivation of CoPs and noted challenges related to negotiation and work ‘with cross-level leaderships in higher education’ (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 11). Some of the tensions attendant on this negotiation can be seen in terms of the interaction between a Discourse of collegiality and a Discourse of managerialism. For example, Susan commented:

And it is a tension, there is a tension ... particularly between this Unit and the independence of the CoPs ..., particularly when it’s learning and teaching: what role do they have and is there any cross purpose to what’s happening? ... that tension does exist ... with some people ..., not with everyone and obviously it hasn’t stopped or hindered some, but, yeah, ... that’s an interesting line to walk.’

Although Discovery University participants reported that there were no expectations set for CoPs there were, however, notions of teaching and learning quality and institutional priorities relating to research, and teaching and learning. As I will discuss below in relation to findings about the value of CoP participation, participants at Discovery University placed a notable emphasis on value as a concept, which they characterised in tangible terms.

**Time**

Time was strongly associated with CoP success, in keeping with findings from other sites, as well as the literature on higher education CoPs. Susan summed up the issue, ‘there’s always more that we’d like to do, but time constraints etcetera’. Similarly the authors of the paper on Discovery University CoPs that I mentioned earlier, also identified time as a challenge for successful CoP facilitation. They referred to ‘ongoing dilemmas about competing demands on staff” which limited CoP participation before concluding optimistically that ‘responsive’ University leadership and support for CoPs had enabled staff to constructively respond to sectoral change despite time poverty (Named authors 2013).
Findings about CoP value and benefits

Conceptualising value
At Discovery University participants conceptualised CoP value as well as speaking about particular benefits related to CoP involvement. This connects with the knowledge management version of CoP, which includes the design principle ‘focus on value’ (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002).

The prevalent notion of CoP value privileged tangibility over less tangible interactions such as ‘talkfests’. Interestingly, in the findings at other sites and in the literature (for example, Haigh (2005)), conversation is associated with professional learning.

Irene epitomises this approach in describing her ‘pitch’ to members:

…and we, we sold, in inverted commas, the …idea of the community of practice, on how can we get together, support each other; what can we do to make our lives easier as [named cohort] staff? And so it was, it was very much how can we support you, how can we help you by producing materials, sharing materials, rather than let’s just get together so we can talk about teaching.

She went on to report that the principal form of value that members identified involved tangible evidence of the benefit(s) of being involved:

…it became pretty obvious to us that people wouldn’t make it a priority unless they could see some real, tangible outcome.

Lisa also linked tangibility in the notion of CoP value:

I got a definite sense that some people were getting nothing from the meetings because they, they saw them as a little bit airy fairy … it was a bit too, you know, ‘Oh, we’re just sitting around and having a conversation but there’s nothing tangible that’s coming out of this’ and for me, and I think for other people, and for other people in the meeting what was tangible was the sharing of concerns and ideas…but for some people … it was just not working. So what I ended up doing was trying to get more focus to the meetings by identifying some of the reports that came out… as potential discussion topics for the CoP. And that, that was really interesting because more people came when they saw the meeting as something that was specifically focused on … a question or on a resource or on something …
I evaluated the … first year that I ran the community of practice … to determine whether or not people wanted to continue it the following year … and the … comments were it was great having those few months where we just sort of sat around and navel gazed if you like … but it was also much better once we got concrete stuff that we could focus on and work with.

This differentiation between different kinds of value indicates the gendered discourse surrounding Discovery University CoPs; for example, Irene commented that:

…we felt that the soft things that were happening, the communication, the opportunity to share and talk and even just connect with each other was really important, but the others weren’t valuing it. So we … looked for how we could get some early runs on the board…

This focus on tangibles as ‘hard’ evidence could be seen as a bid for legitimacy in ‘hard’, masculinist managerialist terms. For example, managerialism in higher education privileges a ‘counting mentality’ (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 234) and characterises collaborative structures such as CoPs as ‘soft’ (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 239). In the gendered Australian academic workforce, teaching and learning is literally ‘women’s work’. Although CoPs benefitted from the prioritisation of collaboration by the national teaching and learning agency and funding body, the ALTC (McDonald et al. 2012), Irene positions collaboration as a means rather than an end, hinting at the need to ‘manage up’, which is also prevalent in the Discourse of managerialism.

Rather than being discounted, the emphasis on collaborative knowledge seeking could have been positively constructed with reference to the ‘feminist pedagogy model’ proposed by Statham, Richardson and Cook (1991, p. 142), which I referred to in Chapter 3. Like a CoP approach, this is cooperative and relationship oriented, and at risk of being perceived as ‘soft’.

**Professional development**

As at other sites professional development was cited as a key benefit of Discovery University CoP involvement. All the Discovery University participants mentioned
it; four out of five also referred to professional development among their motivations for CoP involvement.

Professional development came up in a range of ways. Irene spoke about the development of shared repertoire (practice) in the form of common teaching approaches and resources informed by scholarship. This was also picked up by Lisa in terms of ‘the sharing of resources and ideas and understandings, and the sharing of problems’. Similarly, Mary reported value in knowledge exchange, in hearing about different approaches in different disciplines and areas, having conversations about what people were doing and how it was working for them.

Amelia linked CoP participation to changes in practice, based on research she had done into a CoP she had facilitated at her previous university.

Susan expressed the opinion that participants ‘would have got something out of CoP participation’ with the proviso that it was difficult to quantify benefits for individuals. This tempered response can be differentiated from the other facilitators, all of whom are involved in CoPs around a particular knowledge domain, due to Susan’s involvement with a facilitation CoP and her self-described, and self-prescribed, managerial role.

Three participants mentioned shared learning as an aspect of professional development for facilitators, including learning through challenges. For example, Lisa reflected:

\[\ldots\text{and that whole learning cycle is all part of what I think I've found valuable as }\ldots\text{being both a participant }\ldots\text{and someone who facilitated a }\ldots\text{community of practice.}\]

In relation to professional development my findings connect with two publications about the Discovery University CoPs. The paper I referred to earlier reported professional development as an outcome of CoP participation and described this in terms of meeting a stated challenge, informal benchmarking, development of shared resources and common administrative processes, language around shared problems, along with the sharing and production of tacit ‘ways of knowing and doing’ (Named
authors 2013). Among the last they reported CoPs as spaces ‘of significant sharing of teaching practice’ where ‘novices may benefit from the experience of others’ (Named authors 2013). This connects to an earlier paper about a Discovery University CoP, among those included in my study, which found professional development had occurred as ‘instances of social learning in meeting members’ expressed needs in relation to their practice’ (named author and named author, 2012).

Two limitations in my data are important to note. Firstly, the number of participants from Discovery University in my study was small. Secondly they were all, or in one case, had been, facilitators. Even allowing for the overlap between CoP members and facilitators, the significance of professional development as a benefit of Discovery University CoP participation needs further investigation with a larger group including CoP members.

**Networking**

As I have noted earlier, networking is closely related to professional development in my findings at all the sites in the sense that it couples personal relationships, connections and interactions and their use as a resource for solving problems, sharing information and knowledge and creating further connections.

Two participants focused on relationship building. Mary reported that meeting people from across the University was a valuable aspect of CoP involvement. Susan echoed this and suggested that CoP involvement had given participants the opportunity to meet ‘other people they didn’t know or, you know, might have known of but never talked to’. Speaking about her involvement in a CoP which, as noted earlier, expressly links its value to student outcomes, Irene commented:

\[I\ \text{like to build relationships where I can -- and build networks -- and because I had many of those networks already in place, when someone said to me, ‘Why don’t we all get together and talk about this?’ it just seemed, you know,’ Well, obviously, let’s do it’}\]
Identity development

Individual identity was expressly mentioned by just one participant. Speaking about research into a CoP she was involved in at her previous university, Amelia reported that identity-in-practice as a teacher had emerged among participating academics. The absence of local references to individual identity formation could be read as suggesting that this theme was not present in the Discovery University data. When the participant profile (four current, one former facilitator) is taken into account, however, there is another possible interpretation. Identity-in-practice could, in fact, be seen as evident in the focus on authenticity (or credibility), as related to practice credentials rather than domain credentials, which I reported earlier on pages 197–198. In this sense Irene reported domain-related practice experience as an asset. Amelia also related credibility to disciplinary practice. Whereas Lisa described practice credentials as a potential perceived deficit (based on her non-‘coal-face’ role in a teaching and learning centre). Similarly, her colleague Susan, also based in a teaching and learning centre, disavowed her own practice expertise in relation to the facilitator CoP:

…I use the word ‘facilitate’ loosely … I didn’t want to facilitate … in a [named academic] role … because I … had done a bit of study on what communities of practice were, but I was only half time and I didn’t feel that I had the necessary, the requisites to run something like that.

Another factor in the reticence of identity-in-practice as an explicit theme at this site may be the nature of the Discovery University CoP initiative as an instantiation of the knowledge management version of CoP applied in its institutional context. Perhaps the quality of participatory experience in a community convened to steward knowledge is inflected by the previously mentioned hierarchy of organisational benefit, individual benefit and community benefit (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 12). If this version of CoP is, as claimed, a ‘welcome home for identity where practitioners can connect across organizational and geographic boundaries and focus on professional development …’ (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 20), the resulting identity, particularly for a facilitator, must, by definition, be very different and, arguably more mobile, than an identity founded in participation.
in a tightly bounded craft-based community, defined and enabled by a sociocultural tradition of practice competence rather than a market-driven institutional strategy.

Although the previously mentioned paper on Discovery University CoPs typifies the University’s CoPs as craft-based (Named authors 2013), it reports only on the development of a collective identity and voice for CoP members. Interestingly, the collective identity is linked to practice development associated with CoP participation, as well as a shared identity and collective voice around ‘policy and cultural change within the University’ (Named authors 2013). Perhaps certain Nurtured/support CoPs, because of their institutional genesis and in spite of their autonomy, more readily generate collective identities. Perhaps these collective identities relate principally to mobile institutional affiliation, making identity formation in such communities distinguishable from the earlier situated learning (1991) and social identity Wenger (1999) versions of CoP. Or perhaps, given the limitation of the Discovery University participant profile, the focus on collective identity reflects a distinctive facilitator perspective?

In my study only one participant at Discovery University mentioned CoP identity. Irene referred to her CoP’s profile as an ‘exemplar of best practice’. This supports my hypothesis that the Discovery University CoPs are geared to collective identity generated from the shared, and contested, space where the strategic imperative guiding an institutional initiative and personal experience meet. This dynamic can be seen as a feature of the ‘Nurtured/support’ CoP’s relationship with its institutional sponsor. As dances go, it is demanding, requiring the dancer to not only follow her internal rhythm but also respond in time to external cues without losing momentum, a quickstep which calls for deft footwork on a mobile dance floor.

Recognition and reward
In keeping with the Discover University CoP initiative’s origins, recognition and reward were prominent benefits, mentioned by four out of five participants in a range of ways. For example, Mary linked her CoP participation with a mutual increase in respect for academic colleagues:
I think being a part of these things has … made us a little bit more in the forefront of academics’ minds and I think it just builds respect. I mean, I certainly feel respect for other people … because you know what they’re doing …

Irene and Amelia associated their CoP involvement with rewards including teaching and learning awards and grants, related to CoPs and also to individuals.

CoP involvement had enabled work and expertise to be profiled. For example, Lisa commented:

> I became known as, as someone who has a genuine passion and concern around the [named student cohort] … known across the university as someone in that, in that role and as somebody with a bit of expertise in the area …

Irene and Amelia characterised CoPs as a platform for academic career progression. Amelia reflected that:

> … it also was a bit of a … career building thing, that there was that ability to, to be able to run projects and do things which caught people’s attention, which developed the CV, etcetera. And I guess moving here to [Discovery University], part of the reason that I moved was about career progression … and was about having more time, more space, more money for my research.

Notably, Amelia stated that her research focus would be disciplinary in future.

Irene linked her CoP involvement with educational leadership opportunities:

> … as a result of my work in that I’ve been appointed [named academic role] for this Faculty, and my project is about … could we see if we could move what we’re doing here, in this [named] community of practice more broadly across the Faculty? So that’s been a jumping off point for me to step into a … position of educational leadership.

At the time of interview, Lisa had recently won a continuing position dedicated to working with the cohort on which her CoP is focused. Although attributing this career milestone to more than one factor, she commented ‘the fact that I was also part of the CoP also helped’.

**Scholarship of teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning scholarship was a related benefit associated with CoP involvement. Amelia, Lisa and Irene reported publishing in relation to their CoP
involvement. Irene also relied on teaching and learning scholarship to inform the approaches generated in the CoP that she facilitates, including the co-production of course materials informed by, and explicitly linked to, relevant scholarship.

**Student outcomes**
In keeping with the prioritisation of tangible benefits evident at Discovery University, Irene, Mary and Amelia identified student outcomes as a benefit of CoP involvement.

As noted on page 196, the CoP which Irene co-facilitates has focused on producing tangible student-focused resources, such as course materials, reflecting a common approach to teaching and learning for the target cohort.

Mary reported how a group from her CoP had collaborated to review inherent course requirements from the student-focused perspective of making informed choices. She also reported a related benefit, being able to influence culture change, as part of the value of her CoP participation.

Reporting on a CoP she facilitated, and evaluated, at another institution, Amelia was confident that CoP involvement had changed participants’ practice and that this was reflected in student experience surveys:

*I know the way that group worked, you know, I did interviews with those participants. I know what they said that they changed … and how their students reacted and I saw the trends in the student satisfaction surveys … So I know that there was that direct link there…*

My findings about student outcomes connect with a previously mentioned paper on one of the CoPs in my study. This reported the cohesion of individuals into a team and benefits for student outcomes in relation to the CoP (Named author and Named author 2012).

**Summary**
The tensions and challenges involved in the institutional dance of facilitating ‘Nurtured/supported’ CoPs at Discovery University are evident. Findings also
suggest that participants have found a valuable collegial space in Discovery University’s institutionally sponsored CoPs.

As noted earlier, a recent paper about four Discovery University CoPs concluded that Discovery University CoPs have supported staff to respond constructively to change in the sector, even though they are time poor (Named authors 2013). My findings raise a question about the extent to which time poverty, sectoral change and other challenges facing staff working in teaching and learning are symptoms of the Discourse of managerialism which has also generated the Discovery University CoP initiative. Meanwhile, in the space where institutional strategy and personal experience meet, Lisa captures the participatory value she has found in her CoP involvement as both facilitator and member:

It's just being able to move in a different space … that's more collegial … and less pragmatic … but can be pragmatic if you want it to be …

In a range of accounts of academic identity formation in a corporate university, Churchman and others recognise the value of communities of practice as collegial sites for identity formation (Churchman 2005; 2006; Churchman & King 2009; Churchman & Stehlik 2007). Describing an environment in which public organisational stories are in opposition to authentic private stories, Churchman and King envisage a preferable alternative where:

The presence of the corporate story does not necessarily have to be at the cost of the personal stories shared by academic staff, rather a recognition of these stories and the existence of safe institutional spaces to share them could facilitate a more diverse and collegial set of academic voices. (2009, p. 514)

Findings suggest that Discovery University CoPs are spaces where the Discourses of managerialism and collegiality interact. Spaces where ‘what may come from’ the convening of ‘like-minded people’, as Mary put it, includes the nurture of authentic and multiple identities in practice. This is an area needing further inquiry with a larger pool of participants than reported here. This pool would need to include participants without experience of CoP facilitation and members with a range of membership experiences spanning the Discovery University CoPs.
Part 4: Findings

I conclude this chapter by presenting summative findings by theme with reference to my three research questions:

1. What are the notions of value or benefit reported by participating community members and facilitators?

2. What do these notions of value or benefit say about community, professional learning, knowing, identity, and teaching and learning practices in Australian universities?

3. Do the reported values and benefits seem to support the propagation of communities of practice in higher education? If so, how and why? Which model/typology?

A kaleidoscopic view of higher education CoPs

I introduced the working metaphor of kaleidoscope in Chapter 1 and used it in Chapter 4 to describe and explain my methodology. I have taken a kaleidoscopic view of CoPs in presenting the summative findings that follow. The social identity version of CoP encapsulates a dynamic and social process of situated learning and growing competence involving the interaction of three constituent elements – mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1999). A kaleidoscope, like a CoP, is also the container for a dynamic process. The small colourful pieces that form its constituent elements combine when the kaleidoscope is turned; they temporarily form patterns and disperse, only to recombine into new patterns at the next turn, before dispersing anew. The CoPs in this study can be seen as kaleidoscopic in the sense that they are multifaceted and dynamic. CoPs are sites in which different Big D discourses, or beliefs, values, ways of talking, acting and interacting in social groups (Gee 2010, p. 151) combine and interact to shade meaning in complex and variable combinations, and in sometimes unpredictable ways. Even when universities use the same version of CoP as the basis for their
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CoP initiatives, this generates different applications, or variants. These variants are changeable even when their constituent elements remain consistent.

In the introduction to this thesis, I referred to Wang et al.’s useful deployment of the metaphor of kaleidoscope to investigate teacher education (2011). They liken teacher educators to kaleidoscope makers because teacher educators can’t produce consistent and ‘pleasing’ patterns in quality teaching practice ‘across contexts with different students, teachers, subject matter, and curricula, among other characteristics’ (Wang et al. 2011, p. 338). Wang et al. contend that quality teaching is either too ‘complex’ and ‘nuanced’ to reduce to measurement according to a ‘unified pattern’ or that new theories of teaching and teacher learning are required to deduce such a pattern (2011, p. 338).

My findings suggest that higher education CoPs also defy categorisation into a single, unified pattern. There is some evidence of social processes and identity-in-practice formation occurring, to varying extents, in all of the CoPs in this study. Considering these CoPs kaleidoscopically offers insight into how they ‘work’ as socio-culturally and historically situated communities of individuals engaged in a social process of learning, knowing and identity formation without seeking to generalise findings and implications. As sites in social learning systems (Wenger 2000, p. 229), CoPs are impossible to standardise let alone understand without insight into the socio-cultural and historical context in which they are situated. Social learning and identity formation are dynamic processes constituted through changeable interactions of constituent elements. For these reasons I present my findings for kaleidoscopic reading, as a glimpse into variable, and situated, processes in motion.

What are the notions of value or benefit reported by participants?

Participants associated multiple benefits with CoP participation (see Table 3 on page 117). These related to social benefits, the development of professional practice and the development of professional identity. These three themes can be seen as
directly related to the structuring elements of CoP in the social identity version (Wenger 1999). Social benefits connect with mutual engagement, interaction and socially negotiated meanings related to practice (Wenger 1999, p. 73). Participants variously referred to social benefits such as belonging (connection), networking, support and a sense of equality. Practice development aligns with the development of a shared repertoire encompassing activities, relations, ways of doing things, tools, stories and other repositories of practice (Wenger 1999, pp. 82-3). In my findings practice development also encompassed culture change, knowledge exchange, problem solving, the generation of collaborative projects and teaching and learning scholarship. Professional identity evolves with participation in a communally negotiated joint enterprise. Such an enterprise is more than a shared goal; it is associated with mutual relations of accountability which infuse a CoP’s practice (Wenger 1999, p. 78). Participants tended to entwine accounts of professional practice and professional identity (or identity in practice) development.

Recognition and reward was also a prominent participatory benefit reported across the sites. At Horizon and Discovery Universities this was primarily linked to external mechanisms such as national award and grant schemes, and career opportunities. At Pioneer University this also connected with personal values.

**Social benefits**

Participants variously referred to social benefits related to CoP participation, such as belonging, networking, a sense of equality and support. Belonging, in the sense of connection, was reported as a benefit at both Horizon and Pioneer Universities, with findings relating to two of the three modes of belonging described in the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999, pp. 173-80) – engagement and imagination. As noted earlier, overcoming isolation was an explicit objective of the Horizon University CoP initiative, where belonging, in engagement mode, was closely linked to CoP participation. At Horizon, participants described CoPs as spaces to come together, as a ‘playground’, to quote Lyndall, a multi-member and facilitator. At Pioneer, stories of imaginative belonging were emphasised rather than stories of engagement, although Yvonne, a facilitator, also spoke of overcoming isolation as
a key benefit of CoP participation. Imaginative belonging was associated with a common value for teaching and learning. Five of the 12 Pioneer participants who spoke about belonging described it as a similar way of thinking or ‘like-mindedness’.

Networking was an equally prominent benefit, recounted by participants at all three sites. This was described in terms of social connection for professional gain. For example, at Horizon, Alice, a facilitator and academic, described this benefit as ‘being able to put faces to names of people who are doing a similar job’. At Discovery University, Mary, a CoP facilitator and professional staff in a student support area, commented, ‘I really like meeting people from across the University … I mean, that’s the big thing’ before going on to give an example of a productive relationship formed with colleagues from a particular discipline. At Pioneer University networking was positively associated with personal connections formed across disciplines, by members of both the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and Pioneer Educational Scholars. For example, Leanne commented:

> And the other thing that the [Pioneer Educational Scholars] did was to go across disciplines and actually across faculties and, as a result, I think I’m up to three or four different groups that I work with that are cross-faculty – and I love it. That’s part of what I wanted from it.

In the social identity version of CoP this kind of interaction is described as a ‘boundary encounter’ where practice is shared and meaning negotiated (Wenger 1999, p. 112). Leanne would be considered a ‘broker’, a person who connects different CoPs by bringing aspects of one practice into another. As Wenger puts it, ‘Brokers are able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination, and – if they are good brokers – open new possibilities for meaning’ (Wenger 1999, p. 108).

Participants at all three sites mentioned support as a participatory benefit of CoPs. This took the form of moral support or encouragement in a particular CoP at Horizon University which involved two participants who were also students. It also included practical support, at Discovery and Pioneer Universities, for teaching
academics negotiating work-related challenges. At Pioneer University, in keeping with the greater emphasis on imaginative belonging rather than engagement evident at that site, Chris noted that ‘there is a very strong support mechanism … which goes across the University and now goes across geographical distances’. CoPs can be virtual as well as physical (for example, Amin & Roberts (2008)); however, in the examples provided and in the social identity version there is an emphasis on face to face CoPs.

One participant each from Horizon and Pioneer Universities mentioned the notion of equality. Annie, an early career academic from Horizon, spoke about how a CoP had been an egalitarian space (‘a level playing field’) which was distinctive in a generally hierarchical academic culture. At Pioneer, Rachel, an active member of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and Pioneer Educational Scholars, commented:

And it doesn’t matter what level you’re at either … it’s across the board, it’s not this, sort of, ‘Oh, they’re professors’; you don’t even know when you’re in there, you know, in a way, there’s everyone just sharing their ideas

As with the notion of belonging evident at each institution, participants’ language emphasises different modes of belonging and community. At Horizon, engagement is again emphasised in terms of a ‘field’ in which action can happen. At Pioneer, Rachel’s reference to the sharing of ideas connects with the imaginative mode.

Considered across the sites the reported social benefit of CoP participation encompasses emotional connection through the notion of belonging and the provision of both moral and practical support. It also includes the development of networks which can span boundaries. CoP membership potentially also offers access to an egalitarian space which transcends traditional hierarchies and organisational structures. In the introduction to this study I emphasised the link between personal and professional in professional learning. This is also evident in the relationship between social benefits of CoP participation and professional learning. For example, a recent study of knowledge sharing acceptance across two scientific CoPs in Germany and Romania found that it was important for academics to get to know each other to enable knowledge sharing (Nistor et al. 2014, p. 15).
This was evident in the significant impact of socio-emotional interpersonal knowledge on acceptance of knowledge sharing (Nistor et al. 2014, p. 14). Aspects of such socio-emotional interpersonal knowledge include knowledge about others’ personal beliefs, values, personalities, emotions and personal environments (Nistor et al. 2014, pp. 7-8). These findings connect with my findings insofar as my study affirms the emotional character of professional learning (which includes knowledge sharing – for example, Gertner (2011)) through prominent participatory values associated with CoP involvement, such as belonging, like mindedness and support.

**Professional development**

In the Horizon University story in part one of this chapter, I defined professional development as professional learning directed towards practice development and referred to literature on higher education CoPs which identifies and reports on such CoPs as effective sites for professional development. Connecting with this literature, professional development was the most prominent form of participatory value identified by participants, quantitatively (28 out of 33 participants) and qualitatively. Participants mostly related value to practice sharing and the development of shared repertoire, reflecting an outcomes focus in the intentionally created CoPs in this study. At Horizon and Discovery Universities, this focus on outcomes related to the development of shared repertoire. At Pioneer and Discovery Universities the outcomes focus related to capacity building and leadership, including, in one instance, the development of personal facilitation and leadership skills. Yvonne, a member-facilitator at Pioneer University, described an informal CoP in which the emphasis was on sharing tools to develop personal teaching repertoire rather than outcomes and attentive to personal style and preferences rather than institutional strategy:

> It was ... like, ‘Here it is, try it if it suits your particular, your style’, but not every person can be happily videoed or interviewed, it’s not people’s natural style. So because there was no force involved it was persuasive. It was sharing. It was, in the case of those who were hesitant, it was demonstrating how it could work, what functionality it could have. But it was not a set agenda where you’d had to achieve something by the end.
Interestingly, at the same university, Michelle, a member-facilitator associated a similar approach with the Pioneer Educational Scholars, one of two intentionally created CoPs:

*I could always go to the ... workshops and know that the information that was given was not being given with any other agendas other than, ‘This is the possibility if you want to kind of take it up’. And so you, that gave me the opportunity, I guess, for personal development, for personal development and to have a bit more faith in the institution that I was working in.*

Practice sharing was commonly reported as a factor in professional development through CoP participation. One participant, Christine, a member-facilitator from Pioneer University, explained:

*And I told the story of how I got to be involved in that [subject] and the history of it. And then painted a picture of my feelings, frustrations and how I was going to deal with it, then brought in the, the literature, and then the actual practice itself and then closed with evaluations and the, the future for that [subject] and how you could embed the change. And that ... approach is definitely the best. I've tried in other ways and that it doesn't work as well ... Yeah, the other way is, in telling the story I would demonstrate, so while I'm talking I might demonstrate a practice that I'm using... I think stories are always going to be a way through to people because it, it knits together the emotion with the facts and the statistics about performance on the course...*

Christine was the only participant who explicitly referred to a relationship between narrative, identity formation and meaning-making in the CoPs studied (which I term narrativity). I noted in the introduction that this was a key interest. My use of an open-ended narrative research conversation style gave participants some space to set the conversational agenda, increasing the likelihood that the data generated better reflects their notions of CoP value (or otherwise) and their experiences than if I had taken a more directive, structured approach to our conversations. My narrative research approach has also left some areas of interest needing further investigation elsewhere, including the role of narrativity in CoPs. For example, and as elaborated below, participants cited knowledge exchange as a significant benefit of CoP involvement. More importantly, they demonstrated the potential significance of storytelling as a currency for practice sharing by telling stories in which practice sharing occurred. In this way they implicitly linked storytelling and
practice sharing. This suggests scope for research which explicitly investigates the role and legitimacy of narrative and narrative practice (storytelling) as means for sharing practice in intentionally created higher education CoPs. The absence of direct references to storytelling as a form of practice among participants in my study may reflect a bias towards positioning CoP involvement in terms of tangible outcomes which was evident in the findings.

At Horizon University and Discovery University, participants who recounted changes to teaching practice linked this change to professional learning in an institutionally supported CoP. Whereas at Pioneer University there was some variation. One participant stated that her participation in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship had not changed her teaching practice, while several others reported that participation had influenced practice through professional development. As with other findings this variety reflects the presence of overlapping teaching and learning communities and development initiatives at Pioneer University, as well as signalling differences in the extent to which some participants engaged with the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship.

Several participants from Horizon and Discovery Universities linked improved student learning outcomes with their CoP participation. At Pioneer University, two participants referred to this in relation to informal CoP involvement.

As noted earlier, Southwell and Morgan found little evidence of impact on teaching practice or student learning outcomes associated with participation in formalised learning communities (2009, p. 53), which would include groupings of the kind investigated here. They did, however, note improvements reported by participants in terms of changes to attitudes, skills and satisfaction (Southwell & Morgan 2009, p. 53). Other scholars have reported that CoP participation can have an impact in terms of the development of identity-in-practice, that is, learning to become a university teacher (for example, McDonald and Star 2008; Viskovic 2006; Warhurst 2006).
Across the sites participants associated CoP participation with the generation of teaching and learning scholarship through CoP-related publications. Participants at Horizon and Pioneer Universities also linked their CoP participation to the generation of projects.

**Professional identity development**

Participants at all sites reported professional identity development as a result of their participation in intentionally established CoPs. As reported on page 179, several Pioneer University participants also described this in relation to informal CoPs.

Identity development was principally linked with teaching practice. At Horizon University, CoP champion Alice reported how feedback provided through CoPs helped participants recognise the significance of their practice innovations leading to a corresponding growth in confidence and professional identity. At Discovery University Amelia also reported this with reference to research she had conducted with participants in higher education CoPs:

> I guess for me there are really interesting things about impact … listening to people talk about the way it’s changed the way they think about themselves … as an academic or as a teacher … and I always thought it was really interesting to hear about people talk about their identity as a teacher … because lots of academics don’t see themselves like that … and a lot of participants when they talk about this do …So they’ve started to take on, you know, that identity as a … person who’s a professional who teaches … which is interesting…

Felicity, a participant from Pioneer University, linked identity formation, practice and authenticity. She referred to another’s practice which she saw as exemplary but could not have adopted herself because of her different personal style:

> … it’s beautiful work and it’s grounded in … good literature and stuff, but I just knew it was performance work that is not me. So inherently I knew … I would be faking it if I tried to do that. So the gem was there that I took and made it into my own little way … but the actual replication of that work, no, because it’s not me. It has to be authentic to me and the way I operate, so that is probably some of, one of the examples that stands out that was excellent work, but I just don’t do it because I know it’s just not … my particular style.
In summary, although identity development was reported as a benefit of participation at all three sites it was most evident at Horizon University and least evident at Pioneer University, where it was not strongly associated with the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship (or the Pioneer Educational Scholars). My findings from Discovery University did not support the association between CoP participation and the development of university teacher identity which Amelia reported. This may reflect limitations in the participant profile. Further investigation of the issue with teaching academics who are also members of a Discovery University CoP is needed.

**Recognition and reward**

At Pioneer University, member-facilitator, Michelle, summed up the different aspects of recognition and reward found across the sites:

> I think everybody needs to know that somebody values what they do and somebody wants to invest something, be it time, money, interest, whatever, in them…

Beyond national grants and teaching awards, other forms of ‘investment’ related to this theme included time buy-out, profile building, career development, employment opportunities and promotion.

Participants at Horizon and Discovery University linked the receipt of teaching citations with work first profiled through CoPs. Findings were different at Pioneer University. Members of the first iteration of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship were recruited from national teaching award winners. This was reflected in the findings, with five participants from Pioneer referring to recognition of the value of teaching as a benefit of their CoP participation in addition to external recognition and reward in the form of a national teaching award. One of these, Tiffany, a member of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and the Pioneer Educational Scholars also associated her award with an academic promotion.

Pioneer was distinctive in fostering two overlapping communities, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and Pioneer Educational Scholars among other related
teaching and learning initiatives. This emerged in the findings, particularly in relation to external recognition and reward of teaching and learning. For example, Jane, a member-facilitator, identified individual teaching leaders and processes to support grant and award applications as more significant in achieving successful outcomes than the two institutionally supported CoPs. Another, Kylie, credited a fellowship which bought out teaching time to enable her to focus on developing particular expertise early in her career as leading to subsequent national project involvement and national teaching awards.

These findings in my study connect with the broader Australian higher education context in terms of national policy and funding, and gender. OLT support for collaborative structures and CoP development and participant demography are both key factors. As previously noted, the OLT (and its predecessor the ALTC) provided support for collaborative structures (McDonald et al. 2012) and funding for the development of CoPs (Hort et al. 2008, for example), including CoP initiatives in this study (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008). Two participants (one each from Discovery and Pioneer Universities) linked receipt of an ALTC grant with CoP involvement.

Gender is a factor in understanding the focus CoPs and findings because the Australian academic workforce is gendered. The majority of participants in the study were female academics in less senior roles with teaching responsibilities, reflecting the wider composition of the Australian higher education workforce (Southwell & Morgan 2012, pp. 7-12). Internationally, gender is also one of several characteristics associated with structural inequalities in academia (Becher & Trowler 2001, pp. 149-53). Twenty-two out of the 28 academic participants in the study were women. Several participants (all based at Discovery University) reported career progression which they linked to external recognition in the form of national teaching awards or grants. One associated recognition with a move to a research-focused position, another with appointment to an educational leadership position, while a third mentioned CoP involvement as among factors in a cohort-focused role linked to expertise she had been able to showcase through CoP
involvement. Recognition and reward as participatory benefits were only mentioned twice in relation to professional staff, who were in the minority in the study (five out of 33 participants). Alice, a facilitator at Horizon University, reported how CoP participation had enabled a junior professional staff member to display leadership capacity. Mary, a facilitator at Discovery University, related CoP involvement to increased profile with academics, as well as respect based on better understanding of others’ work.

At Pioneer University, participants differentiated external recognition from personal values. Two male participants disavowed external mechanisms for recognising and rewarding teaching. Kevin, a non-participating member of the second version of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, rejected a culture of self-promotion which he associated with the institutional system of teaching awards in favour of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship as a form of recognition of teaching. As noted on page 180, Kevin’s idea of the Fellowship (as opposed to experience) was that it had ‘no strings attached’ and was a ‘safe’ space in which practice could be showcased. John, a founding member of the Fellowship, cited ‘affirmation’ as a benefit of participation. Yvonne, a facilitator, offered a personalised notion of recognition and reward based on feedback about her contribution to others’ development in an informal CoP she had facilitated at Pioneer University:

… and then there’s a, a knowing-that-you’ve-made-a-difference viewpoint. And the knowing you’ve made a difference doesn’t need recognition; it’s personal satisfaction that comes from a job well done.

Reflecting the importance of alignment of personal values with professional life Rachel commented about the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship:

I can’t speak highly enough of it really … it has just been fabulous … on so many levels, of just fulfilling on the professional side … you want to value what you do as a job and, and I feel that that’s valued in these sort of forums…

In summary, CoP involvement at Horizon and Discovery Universities is associated with external recognition and reward of teaching by the ALTC (now OLT) and career progression. Profile raising was also reported for and by professional staff at
those sites. At Pioneer University, where membership of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship was originally recruited from among national teaching award winners, recognition and reward of teaching as a participatory benefit of CoP involvement tended to be related to personal values. This reflects a connection in the Pioneer University findings between value for teaching and learning and like-mindedness.

What do these notions of value or benefit say about community, professional learning, knowing, identity, and teaching and learning practices in Australian universities?

Across the sites participants reported the focus CoPs as collegial spaces in which identity-in-practice, corresponding with growing competence as a university teacher, could develop. This finding connects with the Discourse of collegiality described earlier. Firstly because it combines social support and knowledge sharing to build capacity (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 230). Secondly because it supports the nurture of academic identity founded in universities’ scholarly and educational traditions in contemporary universities where the influences of market ideology and corporate values can be seen as hostile to such identities (Winter 2012, pp. 340-1).

Market ideology and values are linked to two other Discourses significant in the findings – a Discourse of managerialism and a Discourse of excellence. The Discourse of managerialism is associated with academic management and increasing administrative requirements (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 234) and with the characterisation of CoPs as a strategic knowledge management tool (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). The Discourse of excellence in university teaching and learning is framed by competition, efficiency, quality and accountability, and is associated with greater administrative demands (Light & Cox 2003, pp. 3-7).

In findings across the sites, the Discourse of collegiality co-existed with the influences of the Discourses of managerialism and excellence. At Horizon University, social connection and knowledge sharing were the most prominent benefits of CoP involvement reported. At Pioneer University, profile raising and
career development were strongest, reflecting the strategic intent behind the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship of linking participants with the agenda and opportunities provided by the ALTC. Professional development in the social identity CoP sense was most evident at Horizon University. It was also reported at Discovery University where it was seen as co-existing with strategic imperatives towards academic development, and teaching and learning quality.

Community
The notion of community in the sense of belonging was prominent across the sites. At Horizon University it was also explicit as a constituent element of the CoP initiative. As reported earlier, the CoP initiative began at Horizon University because of a perceived need for teaching academics to connect with each other and overcome disciplinary and social isolation. This has carried through the initiative’s development and expansion, and is explicit in communication of the initiative, which emphasises connection through CoP participation.

At Horizon University more than the other two university sites, belonging in engagement mode was reportedly strong and a sense of joint enterprise was prominent. Both were linked to professional development based on needs identified by members rather than determined institutionally. At Discovery University participants also reported networking, relationship building and meeting colleagues from across the university as benefits of CoP participation. Again these were framed in terms of belonging in the engagement mode, that is, on developing practice through such connections.

At Pioneer University belonging in the imaginative mode was more evident, with participants referring to ‘like mindedness’, shared values and connection with wider networks beyond an individual discipline. These were associated with a ‘sense of belonging’ and connection in relation to common curriculum and teaching challenges. The idea of a teaching and learning community was strong and expansive among Pioneer University participants, who referred to connection with transdisciplinary networks beyond the institution, as well as across it. The
difference between Pioneer University and the other two universities can be related to the strategic origins of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, which were more explicit than at the other two sites and to the co-existence of a number of other somewhat overlapping teaching and learning initiatives. The Pioneer Teaching Fellowship did not have the same profile or generate the same engagement reported for the Horizon University and Discovery University CoPs.

At both Horizon and Discovery Universities, where the CoP initiatives were linked to the strategic development of teaching and learning practice, participants reported freedom from the need to deliver institutional outcomes and greater evidence of practice development through CoP participation. At Pioneer, developing teaching and learning capacity was only one of a number of objectives of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. Building leadership in teaching and learning, recognition and reward of teaching and learning and a strengthened connection between the Fellowship and OLT (then ALTC) programs were guiding strategic objectives of the Fellowship. These strategic objectives are reflected in participants’ principal reference to benefits such as recognition and reward and developing networks rather than practice development or engagement around work practice. Consequently the idea of teaching and learning as a valuable and collegial activity is far more prominent at Pioneer University than engagement in practice.

Community was also significant in the way the CoP initiative is structured at Horizon University, where ‘community time’ is understood as an important part of the CoP ‘recipe’, as member-facilitator Lyndall described it, and where participants reported that CoPs had provided a unique opportunity for interaction, connection and action. This suggests that a focus on structure as identified in the social identity version of CoP can translate into participatory value; however, as with other Horizon findings, needs further investigation with a bigger group of participants, including larger numbers of members, whose perspective would be potentially have closer links to personal benefit than facilitators, who were more likely to have a range of motivations for CoP involvement, strategic as well as personal.
**Professional learning**
As noted earlier, professional learning, as part of professional development, was the most prominent participatory benefit reported across sites. This reflects a strategic emphasis on professional learning associated with a greater emphasis in national policy on university teaching and learning quality ((Biggs & Tang 2011) (Ramsden 2003)). A teaching and learning quality focus can be seen as an expression of the Discourses of excellence with its emphasis on quality and accountability (Light & Cox 2003) and managerialism (for example, Deem and Brehony (2005)).

Alongside this strategic emphasis on teaching and learning development, personal style and preferences were also significant in the findings. I interpret this as signalling the persistence of traditional academic values associated with collegiality such as ‘ideas of individual academic freedom, disciplines as frames of reference, separation from external pressures, conservation of special knowledge, and academic professionalism’ (Ramsden 2002, p. 23). This supports the co-existence (and co-evolution) of the Discourses of collegiality, managerialism and excellence. The implications of professional learning also need to be considered in terms of university teaching and learning practices, discussed below.

**Knowing**
Across the sites different kinds of knowing were viewed as a participatory benefit of CoPs. Horizon University participants reported knowledge exchange as a significant benefit of CoP participation and, in keeping with the emphasis on engagement, connected this to the development of a shared repertoire. This manifested in different ways, from resource development through to presentations and workshops. At Pioneer University one facilitator connected ‘a sense of knowing’ in the Pioneer Teaching Fellows with its joint enterprise of university teaching and learning, along with the sharing of practice and production of resources. In a paper about some of the Discovery University CoPs the authors characterised the CoPs as craft-based (Named authors 2013), claiming that they enabled the sharing and production of tacit knowledge and ‘significant sharing of
teaching practice’ where novices benefit from other’s experience (Named authors 2013). As noted earlier, my findings did not support this claim. This may reflect a delimitation of the focus of my study and a limitation in terms of the participant profile. Either way, my findings suggest this claim warrants further investigation.

Both Horizon and Discovery Universities define their CoP initiatives in terms of the knowledge management version of CoP (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, pp. 4-5). This positions CoPs as a knowledge management tool and source of competitive advantage in a global knowledge economy (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, pp. 6-7). Reflecting the significance of discourse in higher education CoPs and competing Discourses of collegiality, managerialism and excellence surrounding them, Susan, a facilitator at Discovery University, commented that she had not described the Discovery CoPs in those terms to facilitators, even though she saw them that way (see page 192).

**Identity**

As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, I came to my study with a particular interest in identity formation in the focus communities, especially as this might relate to narrative. In the social identity version of CoP which frames my conceptualisation of CoP in this study (with extensions), knowing, learning, meaning and identity are entwined (Wenger 1999). I anticipated that this relationship would be strongly mirrored in data across the sites but this was not the case. There were variations. In the social identity version of CoP, individual and CoP identity are mutually constituted (Wenger 1999, p. 146), and participants, to some extent reported both. At Horizon and Discovery Universities such identity formation linked to the intentionally established CoPs, whereas at Pioneer University, there was more reference to identity development in relation to informal CoPs.

Individual identity formation through CoP participation was most significant at Horizon University. There a number of participants reported that CoP involvement had contributed to the development of learner identity, a more confident academic
identity and increased professional competence. At Discovery University, one participant, Amelia, mentioned identity in practice, reporting the development of teacher identity among academics based on some research she had done. As I noted earlier in the Discovery University findings, my findings did not affirm the development of teacher identity among participants. What they did reveal was a concern with authenticity as a facet of identity (see pages 197–198) which could be related.

At Pioneer University identity in practice formation was generally related to informal CoP participation, through profile raising and exposure to opportunities for development. One participant referred to the possibility of narrativity in a CoP. Another touched on the imaginative aspect of identity in practice, reporting how an exemplary performative teaching practice would not work for her as it would not be authentic to her personal style.

CoP identity was more consistently reported across the sites. At Horizon one facilitator reported that a faculty-based CoP was formally consulted due to its institutional profile and another described the pride in teaching and learning associated with a different faculty-based CoP. At Pioneer, CoP identity was most prominent quantitatively. Two participants referred to CoP identity, in the sense of profile or visibility, as a success factor. Chris commented that having a visible presence and resources made it easier for participants to contribute and benefit, while John mentioned a shared vision as important to the success of the second version of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. At Discovery University the emphasis was different again. In a published paper about some of the Discovery University CoPs, the authors reported the development of a collective identity and voice in policy and cultural change at their university (Named authors 2013). Just one participant in my study made this connection by describing the CoP she facilitated as an exemplar.

My findings suggest that distinctions between individual identity in practice formation (reported at Horizon and Pioneer, principally in relation to informal
CoPs) and the collective identity reported at Discovery University may relate to typology and discourse. Although the Discovery University CoPs seem to be of the Nurtured/supported type and report autonomy and freedom from the need to generate institutionally designated outcomes, they are also strongly linked to an institutional strategy predicated on teaching and learning quality, a Discourse of excellence (Light & Cox 2003) and a knowledge management strategy (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). This combination seems to have generated a collective (or shared) identity more powerfully than individual identity in practice. Further investigation, with a larger sample from Discovery University, including greater numbers of CoP members, is needed to explore this further.

**Teaching and Learning practices**

Findings in my study reflect an increased emphasis on university teaching and learning in national policy and funding in Australia. My findings show that the growing strategic importance of university teaching and learning was a significant factor in the development of the CoP initiatives in this study. This was particularly so at Pioneer University which included recognition and reward of teaching and learning, enhanced student learning informed by scholarship of teaching and learning, and the exchange of practice through a network of expert teachers among its objectives for the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship. The initiative used ALTC funding to link the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship with national programs and opportunities to build capacity and leadership in teaching and learning, which was also an outcome reported by a number of participants in relation to both the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and the Pioneer Educational Scholars.

At Discovery University, the CoP initiative was driven by the strategic challenge of advancing teaching quality. The CoP initiative linked with Quality interventions identified nationally, including engagement and learning communities and fostering an institutional climate and systems for reward and recognition (Chalmers 2008, pp. 19-21). As noted above, the Discovery University CoP initiative was also associated with strategic knowledge management.
Across the sites, there is evidence of the effects on university teaching and learning practice of factors noted in chapter 2 and associated time pressures. These factors include an emphasis on teaching and learning quality and teaching effectiveness (Biggs & Tang 2011), associated by some with an increased administrative burden on academics (Ramsden 2003, p. 219). At all sites, lack of time was identified as a barrier to CoP engagement. In an example of both aspects, Alice, a champion of CoPs at Horizon University, cited practice sharing (with associated time saving) as central to the value of the CoP initiative for members, along with overcoming isolation, whereas she focused on student outcomes in her ‘pitch’ to senior executive. As I noted in the findings about the Discovery University CoPs, a paper written by Discovery University CoP facilitators concluded that the University's support and 'responsive leadership' had allowed CoPs to support staff to respond constructively to change in the sector, despite time poverty (Named authors, 2013). In a research conversation with me, Amelia, a facilitator from Discovery University, unfavourably compared the level of staff time given to support Discovery University CoPs with an initiative she had been involved with at another university.

Do the reported value and benefits seem to support the propagation of communities of practice in higher education? Which model/typology?

As I analysed the implication of findings for propagation of communities of practice in higher education, I became very conscious how readily the concept of CoP reifies. Throughout this study and thesis I have conceptualised CoP in terms of the social identity version which understands learning as a social process that combines belonging, becoming, experience and action (Wenger 1999, p. 5). I have viewed this concept of CoP as heuristic, treating CoP as an approach, a means for facilitating learning rather than an end in itself. In this study, I have seen CoP kaleidoscopically, as a space for a dynamic process of meaning-making rather than as a label for a group. What I found in the data overall, however, was a tendency to conceptualise CoP more concretely as a structure, even when it is proposed as an
approach. This reflects the conceptual evolution of CoP as a movement from a process to a thing (Burch et al. 2012, p. 5).

When CoPs are tied to strategic imperatives, it is probably inevitable that they will be conceptualised as a tool, in keeping with the knowledge management version of CoP (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). As already noted, this version influenced the Horizon and Discovery University CoP initiatives. Findings also suggest that a managerialist conceptualisation of CoP can co-exist with autonomy at the group level and collegiality. Some of the CoPs in this study were social sites for support, professional learning and professional identity development. In other words, they were spaces for the dance which was referred to by Amelia in the opening to this chapter. The dance describes the interplay between organisational strategy and personal experiences of professional development and identity formation.

The CoP dance manifested in distinctive ways. At Horizon University, where CoPs seemed most ‘embedded’, participants also offered the strongest accounts of mutual engagement at the level described in the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999). At Discovery University, there was recognition that institutional strategy and professional autonomy may be in tension, alongside reports of a ‘no strings attached’ institutional approach and collegial value in participation. At Pioneer University, the value participants placed on the institutionally-backed Pioneer Teaching Fellowship tended to reflect an imaginative connection to an idea of a collegial community rather than personal experience. Participants at Pioneer associated informal groupings with collegial professional learning and identity formation of the kind envisaged by the social identity version of CoP. There were also notable differences in the two versions of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, with greater participatory value in terms of professional development and higher engagement associated with the second less formal version of the Fellowship. This was funded by Pioneer University after PEI funding (Australian Learning and Teaching Council 2008) finished.
Some of these variations signal specificities in institutional framework and culture as well as differences in CoP type. Most significant is the distinctive interplay between the Discourses of collegiality, managerialism and excellence evident at each site.

**Significance of CoP championship**

Across the sites facilitators emphasised the importance of having senior executive and academic leaders as champions of CoPs. Alice, who was instrumental in establishing the Horizon University CoP initiative, and can be seen in that sense as a champion herself, identified the importance of senior support as a factor in CoP development and linked this to her reading of the CoP literature. The knowledge management version of CoP underlines the importance of having both sponsors (to provide legitimacy and funding support) and champions who provide funding and other support for CoP development (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, p. 212).

While this support can be a ballast for CoP initiatives, findings from Pioneer University suggest that institutionally sponsored CoPs are also vulnerable because of their Senior Executive links. For example, Raelene, an educational leader and member of the second iteration of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship queried its future on the basis of ‘how vulnerable these groups are to changes in senior executive interests’.

**Structure**

My findings suggest that reification of the CoP concept is most evident in relation to CoP structure and associated typologies. As discussed earlier, the social identity version of CoP identifies constituent elements of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire in the social learning process (Wenger 1999). There are reflected, to varying extents, across the sites. Interestingly, at Horizon University, those elements were both explicit in structuring the CoP initiative and reported as elements of the participatory value and success of CoPs, in terms of ‘value’ according to Alice (see page 132) and in terms of learning, according to Lyndall (see page 135).
The social nature of CoPs was considered significant by participants at Horizon and Pioneer Universities. As noted earlier, community time is integral to the structure for the Horizon CoP initiative, and often accompanied by food. Yvonne, an experienced CoP facilitator at Pioneer elaborated, speaking about an informal faculty-based CoP which she had facilitated:

*Now in communities of practice …. the formation of the community and the building of the trust relationships often is associated with food …I’d always bake something. I mean this is something I like to do, and we would get together as a group, it was almost like a little social event … So we … because we all teach at different times, and hardly ever saw each other … if we could have this opportunity and structure it around …, almost like a professional development learning session … we didn’t have any guilt attached to it. We were actually doing something, but we were actually getting together as well.*

For some participants the informality of the gathering was part of its appeal. For example, one participant from Pioneer who spoke positively about the participatory value of a range of CoP involvement, including the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship in both iterations and the Pioneer Educational Scholars, concluded that informal CoPs worked the best, particularly, in her case, including the community of disciplinary scholars with whom she shared a corridor.

Regardless of a CoP’s formality, it will have a life cycle. This was most evident at Pioneer University where the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship evolved and was disbanded during this study, and at Discovery University, where sustainability was a focus and a concern for some participants, alongside a report of some growth by another.

**Facilitation**

Findings suggest that facilitation is also a significant factor in fostering engagement and professional learning (including through knowledge exchange) in Nurtured/supported higher education CoPs. This chimes with the literature (for example, Garavan & Carbery 2007; McDonald et al. 2012a).

Across the sites successful facilitation is associated both with resourcing and staffing. Resourcing can be seen in terms of ‘institutional climate’ or ‘institutional
determination’ as Laura, a facilitator and educational leader from Horizon University put it, as well as time, financial support and staffing.

At Discovery University, Irene cited building a common vision and relationships with participants as key success factors in facilitating her cohort-focused CoP. This echoed the importance which Alice from Horizon University ascribed to establishing ‘ground rules’.

Keith, an educational leader and facilitator from Pioneer University, summed up well the requirements for successful CoP facilitation:

> So, again, I think it’s that resourcing that’s an element of communities of practice or networks or groups or … collegiality or whatever, I think you – we can’t just say ‘Go off and all work together’. I think we need to know that that takes time, energy … and the best way of doing that is to provide some resources and context, some context.

Keith was describing a faculty-based CoP which he had cultivated at Pioneer University, rather than the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship or Pioneer Educational Scholars, but his comments connect with findings from the Horizon University and Discovery University CoPs. Among the resources Keith identified were funding, autonomy, and staff support for the development of teaching and learning scholarship, which was a focus in that CoP. Speaking about the second version of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, John identified the appointment of a staff to support facilitation as a factor in the initiative’s success. At Discovery University, Amelia noted the importance of disciplinary expertise as well as teaching and learning expertise in the successful facilitation of a cohort-focused CoP.

Facilitator Amelia from Discovery University affirmed the importance of institutional resourcing, including provision of staff time, and contrasted her experience at Discovery with previous experience facilitating a successful CoP at another university where more staff time for CoPs had been provided.

In keeping with the social basis of CoPs, staffing resources, including skilful facilitation, were considered significant across the sites. Co-facilitation was evident
across the sites. At Horizon and Pioneer Universities this involved more than two facilitators sharing the role. The emphasis on facilitation can be seen, at least partly, as a reflection of the significant numbers of facilitators among the participants at Horizon University and Discovery University. Further investigation is warranted into the challenges of facilitation as these relate to contextual factors such as the relationship to institution, and the financial and staff resources provided to CoP initiatives.

**Engagement**

Across the sites, engagement emerged as a challenge in CoP facilitation and as a success factor for CoPs. Engagement was least apparent in the formal CoPs at Pioneer University. Interestingly, Chris from Pioneer University summarised the stakes of engagement without using the term itself:

> You know, it’s not a neighbourhood ... in the sense of ‘I just live here’ ... I suppose, it’s about ‘I am willing to do something for it’...

Mutual relationships are critical to engagement as described in the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999, p. 77). How to foster such relationships was a concern across the sites. The need for focus, either on a topic or a cohort, was the prominent response to this challenge. For example, at Discovery University, Irene, a facilitator, positioned prioritised focus above interaction (talking) and connection. Member-facilitator, Lisa, noted that it was important for the community to identify its own focus and topics. Some Discovery University participants also reported the need for practical outcomes along with a topic focus. Participants at Discovery and Pioneer Universities referred to ‘venting’ about common problems as a challenging aspect of the social dynamic. Jane, a member-facilitator from Pioneer University, reported that members went through a period of complaining about challenges before shifting their focus to the CoP’s joint enterprise.

Tiffany, a member from Pioneer, linked having a purpose (beyond recognition and reward of teaching and learning, which had been an earlier focus) to greater value in the second iteration of Pioneer Teaching associated with networking, sharing and
opportunities. At Pioneer University two participants mentioned the large size of some CoPs as a barrier to engagement, with one suggesting it inhibited a sense of belonging and another distinguishing between active participation and subscription to a mailing list. The knowledge management version of CoPs envisages a variety in CoP scale, including CoPs of up to 1000 geographically dispersed participants (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). By contrast, faculty learning communities, a US variant of higher education CoPs involving academics topic and cohort-focused, set size limits of 6–15 members, with 8–12 recommended (Cox 2006, p. 98).

Acknowledgement of passion was characterised both as of value and as a challenge, with more than one participant identifying the need to engage those without a passion for teaching and learning and with a greater need for professional development.

Across the sites and, as previously noted, in keeping with the CoP literature, academic participants mentioned lack of time as a barrier to CoP engagement. From Pioneer University, Christine, an academic teaching in her discipline and an educational leader commented:

..the negative is it is a time, it is a huge drain on time and … particularly as an organiser, it does take a significant amount of time to organise a community and to also … have your finger on the pulse of what’s needed to be done in that community …

A further barrier may be changing priorities and greater priority given to research than teaching and learning. Kylie from Pioneer and Amelia from Discovery both reported early career opportunities and profile-raising associated with teaching and learning which had helped them to develop careers with a disciplinary research focus.

**Significance of discourse surrounding CoPs**
The significance of discourse surround CoPs is the most important finding of my study because it is a factor which has not previously had much attention in the literature on higher education CoPs. What CoPs mean and how they are defined
proved prominent across the sites, literally from the very beginning. Laura, from Horizon University, the very first participant I spoke to, referred to a CoP ‘bandwagon’ when talking about an international higher education conference she had recently attended, commenting that the term was ‘rolling off people’s lips’.

Across the sites participants tried to resolve ambiguities associated with the CoP ‘label’ which is often ‘unclear or muddled’ (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 15) by linking it to a defining conceptualisation. For example, at Discovery University, Susan, a facilitator and professional staff, suggested that CoP conceptualisation matters more than the label itself, which she viewed as mobile:

...I like the notion of CoPs. I think people get a bit tied up in the name and I know this is...probably against what many of my colleagues feel, in that the names are important ...

But I also think ... the term’s morphed ... I think it’s grown and developed ... in my opinion, it doesn’t really matter what they’re called ... if the notion is you can get together, have some space to talk about anything you want, within reason ...

At Horizon University, member-facilitator and academic Lyndall echoed that perspective:

the formalised terminology of CoP is quite well embedded, but we do also have some ... groups which ... function with the philosophy of a CoP, but they call them other names.

Lucy, a professional staff and co-facilitator at Horizon University, elaborated on the embeddedness of CoP terminology, to paraphrase Lyndall, by perceiving it as validating:

...but giving it a name of community of practice, you’re actually putting it into a basket or, not even a structure because structure’s almost formalised, but you’re actually saying ... ‘We have something to discuss... and let’s get together as a group’.

In response to ambiguities around CoP, including the variety of versions and variants apparent in higher education, a number of academic participants defined CoPs. To some extent this can be seen as related to CoP type, or variant. Earlier I suggested that the Horizon University and Discovery University CoPs could be
characterised as ‘Nurtured/supported’ in the Australian higher education CoP typology (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a). Although formally recognised by their sponsoring institutions, such communities are largely defined by members. Created/intentional CoPs can be distinguished from ‘Nurtured/supported’ in terms of the extent to which institutional objectives guide and determine the CoP themes and agenda (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a). The first version of the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship could be characterised as Created/intentional, based on Ian’s comment (which referred to the Fellowship):

… there really are two types of communities of practice. There are those which just naturally occur – they’re organic, grassroots, they’re always happening; staff are always getting together to actually help and share and resolve problems and so on. But, you know, what I’ve been involved in is something that was really corporately supported as part of the strategic endeavours of [Pioneer University].

Incongruence between the CoP label and conceptualisation was seen as problematic. Kylie, also from Pioneer University, suggested that disconnection between a participant’s ideas of what a CoP means and actual experience could impair a CoP’s participatory value:

… some of them are just membership groups. Some of them are little more than just an email mailing list … I think that’s one of the loose ways in which these things are used and, you know … I just think that they might be fine on a certain level but … when you go into something broader … should you be calling it a community of practice if it isn’t, if it’s just a membership list … you’re just disseminating information?

John, an academic and facilitator at Pioneer University distinguished conceptualisation of CoP as applied in business and industry from CoP in higher education, which he saw as having a very different culture. Others took a more optimistic view, characterising CoPs in higher education as an approach to promote collegiality. For example, Yvonne, a facilitator from Pioneer University, commented:

… it seems to be that communities of practice is a partial response to diminishing collegiality in higher education, that time to sit and talk … about what you do and how you do it, all being in the one place at the one time … is
something that is slowly diminishing in higher education. So the communities-of-practice approach is kind of like a step towards reintroducing some form of collegiality.

Lisa, a member-facilitator from Discovery, expressed a similar idea:

I suppose I was trying to develop a collegial group – and where ... I believe the community of practice element comes in is in the ... sharing of resources and ideas and understandings, and the sharing of problems ... it was about coming together and having a space where anybody could say anything about a particular topic ... and you'd brainstorm what solutions might occur ... to that problem.

Three out of the four participants who viewed CoPs in higher education as sites for collegiality, were currently facilitators and the fourth has previously played a facilitator role. In the Discourse of collegiality evident in the data, CoPs are physically located, social spaces offering support and knowledge sharing associated with professional benefit. This is consistent with the literature where CoP is a means for building collegiality in higher education (for example, as a site for an authentic academic identity (Churchman & King 2009; Winter 2009) and for building knowledge (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 231). What is less evident in the data is evidence of collegial professional learning identity development based on members’ direct personal experience of CoPs. In part this reflects the over-representation of facilitators among those participating from Horizon University and Discovery University, where the Discourse of collegiality was most prominent.

As noted earlier, negotiating the dance between institutional strategy and personal experience can be a challenge. Across the sites findings illustrate that Nurtured/supported higher education CoPs can be spaces for meaning-making, affording the insight that discourse is a form of practice in hyper-discursive university settings. This encompasses discourse surrounding CoPs and discourse within CoPs. The term ‘space’, which more than one participant used to describe CoP involvement, is significant and links to broader conceptualisations of social meaning-making beyond CoP. Gee, for example, rejects the notion of community in CoP, claiming it has ‘baggage’ through its association with group membership (2005, p. 216). Using gaming as an example, he illustrates related concepts of
‘semiotic social spaces’ and ‘affinity spaces’ to show that social meaning-making can be characterised in terms of space rather than group membership (Gee 2005). This connects with the findings to the extent that they characterise CoPs as spaces for making meaning rather than groups defined by membership. For example, member-facilitator Lisa, from Discovery University, came up with her own definition of CoP based on lived experience:

...Well, it strikes me that what a community of practice really is, is a space that people can get together and have meaningful conversations… about an area of focus … If there’s a problem they may be able to come to some sort of a shared understanding of how to resolve the problem.

In a single institution study of South African academics’ attitudes to professional development (termed staff development), Quinn identifies discourse surrounding development as significant to participation, as a barrier, in the form of ‘resistance discourses’ and, potentially, also as an enabler (2011). Among the discourses Quinn identifies are a disciplinary discourse and discourse of performativity, both of which are relevant to CoPs as sites for professional development. The disciplinary discourse equates academic autonomy and freedom with disciplinarity and views teaching and learning as potentially threatening because of its cross disciplinarity and, in some cases, association with a Quality agenda (Quinn 2011, pp. 6-7). The discourse of performativity relates to pragmatic and strategic motivation for participation in professional development (Quinn 2011, p. 12). Both discourses connect to the findings in my study. Disciplinary discourse as a resistance discourse which equates academic development with Quality and accountability agendas can been seen as a variant of the Discourse of managerialism and the Discourse of excellence, through express rejection of managerial values and practices associated with Quality assurance, accountability and competition applied to university teaching and learning. The discourse of performativity was evident in the negative response several participants in my study (all male) had to recognition and reward mechanisms for university teaching and learning.

The CoPs in this study are primarily physical; however, because the notion of community in CoP is situated in practice rather than being physical located, space
in CoPs may be conceived in a range of ways. This means that knowledge can be generated in a variety of ‘situated spaces’, including those which are ‘trans-local’ (Amin & Roberts 2008, p. 367).

The findings demonstrate that CoP is conceived, used and applied in different ways across the three Australian university sites. They show that the evolving CoP term remains ambiguous. Sometimes this is because it has slipped its conceptual moorings (Amin & Roberts 2008; Storberg-Walker 2008). Sometimes this is because CoP is a pot pourri of CoP versions. The Nurtured/supported CoP (McDonald et al. 2012; McDonald, Star and Margetts 2012a), for example, may combine elements of earlier (Wenger 1999) and later (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002) CoP versions.

Big D discourses permeate the findings, foregrounded by a Discourse of collegiality which co-exists with a Discourse of managerialism. As Becher and Trowler note, the impact of change in higher education on ‘academic cultures’ and ‘work conditions’ is unpredictable and dependent both on context and individual agency (Becher & Trowler 2001, p. 16). Rather than being ‘monochromatic’, it is shaded (Becher & Trowler 2001, p. 16). The interaction between the Discourses of collegiality and managerialism in the higher education CoPs in this study is complex and unpredictable, even within sites. At Pioneer University, for example, Ian and Kylie reported very different perceptions of the participatory value of the same CoP.

My findings connect with the literature by demonstrating the ambiguity of CoP in application and by revealing a Discourse of collegiality related to higher education CoP formation. They depart from the higher education CoP literature in Australia by finding relatively little personal experience of professional identity formation in the focus communities. They add to the literature by revealing the significance of discourse in and around CoPs as a window into understanding and developing higher education CoPs. My findings also provide some context-dependent evidence of the participatory value of CoPs of the Nurtured/supported and
Created/intentional type, showing that discourse is a form of practice which can affect the value participants assign to CoPs and potentially also the viability of such CoPs.

**Summary**

In summary, the results of this study add to the existing literature on higher education CoPs, particularly in Australia, in several ways. Firstly, they affirm, to a variable extent across the sites, the potential value of intentionally created higher education CoPs as collegial sites promoting professional learning and development, with related identity formation, which may emerge in context-dependent forms. Secondly, by revealing a strategic focus on CoPs and obstacles to engagement, they reflect combined challenges related to contemporary universities: changed governance, structure and strategic imperatives associated with time poverty for academic staff; the imposition of a Quality agenda on teaching and learning; disjointed academic work practices and related identity stresses. Thirdly, through CoP applications, findings provide evidence about the outworking of, OLT and predecessor bodies’ policy and funding agendas relating to collaborative approaches, and the recognition and reward of university teaching and learning.

My findings offer a significant and original contribution to the literature, opening up a new area for investigation by suggesting that discourse, about and within CoPs, is a significant factor in the participatory value and, potentially, the viability of intentionally established higher education CoPs. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, previous studies of higher education CoPs and related typologies have not given due consideration to discourse. After returning to the research questions and identifying further lines of enquiry generated by the findings, delimitations and limitations in this study, my thesis concludes, in the next chapter, with a proposed adaptive model of higher education CoPs. Building on previous CoP typologies, this model proposes that discourse, epistemology (Amin & Roberts (2008); Lindkvist (2005)) and typology (McDonald et al. (2012); McDonald, Star and Margetts (2012a); Wenger (1999)) are all factors in the realisation of CoPs, as
spaces for collegial professional learning in hyper-discursive contemporary Australian universities.
Chapter 6: Between a map and a kaleidoscope: findings and further lines of enquiry

... [Y]ou never forget where you’ve come from ... if you’ve been enabled you should always enable others ... And even in a place which isn’t very nice at times – you know universities can be quite fierce – if there’s a bit of heart it goes a long way. (Michelle, member-facilitator, Pioneer University)

In this thesis I have explored the relationship between professional learning (development), identity, community and narrative in intentionally established teaching and learning communities at three Australian universities. I have done so with reference to what I have called the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999), which is the starting point for my conceptualisation of the communities in this study. Learning, in the social identity version of CoP, is a social process which involves belonging (through community), becoming (as identity), experience (meaning) and doing (practice) (Wenger 1999, p. 5). By conceptualising discourse, and narrative, as forms of practice, I have usefully extended the social identity version to elaborate the relationship between identity and experience, or becoming through doing.

In the previous chapter I presented the key finding of my study, the significance of discourse for the realisation and viability of the focus communities. By realisation I mean the lived experience of participation. Viability, in the sense I am using it, relates to participatory value, development and sustainability. My study builds significantly on previous accounts of higher education CoPs and related typologies by providing some evidence that discourse, about and within CoPs, is an important element to consider in fostering and facilitating such communities. Because my findings are drawn from participants’ narratives of their university teaching and learning CoP experiences, they offer some complex insights into how to realise spaces for collegial professional learning in hyper-discursive contemporary university contexts. As noted earlier, collegiality encompasses values such as academic freedom, independence from external influences and pressures, a sense of community and ‘ownership’ of academic affairs (Ramsden 2002, p. 23). The
related Discourse of collegiality emphasises social connection (Churchman 2005, pp 18-20) and knowledge sharing which builds capacity (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 231).

My study adds to the literature on higher education CoPs in providing support for the growing profile, and potential value, of intentionally created higher education CoPs as collegial spaces for professional learning. The most significant contribution of my study is the development of an adaptive model of higher education CoPs which reflects and responds to the complexities, tensions and stresses of the university work environment. The model recognises that the effects of a teaching and learning quality agenda, disconnected academic work practices and lack of time provided both the motivation for, and barriers to, CoP participation. The common motivation for CoP participation, which I have summarised as a ‘leaning towards collegiality’, was prominent at all three university sites.

In this chapter I revisit my key findings and propose further lines of enquiry. I present and illustrate my model of higher education CoPs. This adaptive model extends previous CoP typologies by focusing on discourse, along with epistemology (Amin & Roberts (2008); Lindkvist (2005)) and typology (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a); Wenger (1999)). The chapter concludes with the finding that intentionally established communities of practice can be collegial spaces for professional learning and identity development, and offers an adaptive model to help guide the further (embodied) development of such CoPs in higher education.

**A metaphorical journey**

The metaphor of journey is routinely used to describe doctoral research (for example, Mackenzie & Ling (2009), Batchelor & Di Napoli (2006)). As a description of a process which transforms and transports an individual, it works well. Like all metaphors, it has the potential to restrict meaning as well as expanding it. I struck the limits of the research journey metaphor early, while first reviewing the literature. The more I read, the less I knew. Having lost my bearings I was figuratively stuck between a map and a hard place until I accepted (experientially as
well as intellectually) the realisation that a researcher’s journey is less a package tour and more like a seafaring voyage in the era before Global Positioning Systems. Having cast ‘off into the unknown’ on a ‘voyage of vulnerability’ (Batchelor & Di Napoli 2006, p. 13) I found that the researcher-explorer creates her route as she ‘discovers’ it and that such discoveries often lead to further journeys without producing mappable coordinates, let alone destinations. In presenting this conclusion I am conscious that my research voyage is not complete but I do have a map, temporary and changeable, represented as this thesis. I have recognised it as such in hindsight, after ‘...observing, describing and listening, reading, writing’ in a process ‘accumulated and embodied over the years’, linking with Tangaard’s description of research as experienced, rather than the research process as conventionally described and taught (2013, p. 410).

**Mapping the study and findings**

This thesis is a map because it is a situated and two-dimensional representation of a research journey. As a map, this thesis does not try to claim the terrain it describes. It aims to retrospectively show the route taken and plot some contour lines to enable future journeys. Seymour uses a number of statements about maps to discuss and reflect on university teaching and learning practice (2007). Having been struck by this coincidence of subject and metaphor, I have drawn on five of these to conceptualise my thesis as a map.

‘Maps are a way of understanding, describing and conveying to others a particular territory’, ‘More than one map can be used to describe or explore the same territory’ and ‘A map does not relate the truth about the landscape, rather it is a representation of the landscape’ (Seymour 2007).

This thesis represents my study and findings as a collective story (Richardson 1997). As explored in Chapter 3 and considered below, it is only one possible version of this story, opening up the possibility of other stories, as well as being constrained by delimitations and limitations of my study.
‘Maps contribute to the shaping of landscapes of conversation and identity (that is, what it is possible to see, imagine and talk about)’ (Seymour 2007). Seymour’s statement points both to the discursive nature of this thesis and the context in which I have developed it. As noted earlier, my key finding is the significance of discourse as a formative factor in relation to CoP experiences and development. The previously discussed Big D Discourses, of excellence, collegiality and managerialism, are important as sources of insight into and as ways of understanding the focus communities in their contexts. As a form of practice, discourse can affect the lived experience of CoPs and, by extension, their participatory value. In both ways discourse can add to understandings and the future development of higher education CoPs. My thesis also contributes to the Big D discourses mentioned above.

‘Maps are not fixed in time. Maps change, often significantly, over time and in response to political events and interests’ (Seymour 2007). During the period of my involvement in the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship, there were three different incumbents in the Senior Executive role responsible for teaching and learning. Neither of two strategic communities, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship and the Pioneer Educational Scholars, still exists. The CoP initiatives at Horizon University and Discovery University have continued to evolve. The collective story I present in this thesis is a glimpse into a socio-historical moment.

A kaleidoscopic study
The thesis is a two-dimensional, and fixed, representation of a study which is dynamic (or kaleidoscopic). As I have previously described, the metaphor of kaleidoscope has structured the way I have thought and lived this study, as well as providing a lens through which the data can be viewed. In the introduction I offered this thesis for kaleidoscopic reading. A kaleidoscope offers an ephemeral perspective, a temporarily patterned view of a dynamic process. The findings and propositions of this concluding chapter offer such a glimpse for kaleidoscopic reading.
Key findings

Professional learning
Findings affirm the value of CoPs as sites for professional development, in the sense of professional learning for practice development. Practice sharing is a key aspect of development, which participants linked to the development of shared repertoire (Horizon and Discovery Universities) and to capacity building and leadership (Pioneer and Discovery Universities). Knowledge exchange, as a form of professional learning, and practice sharing was also prominent. Findings also provided evidence that contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning, through publications and projects, was associated with CoP involvement.

Recognition and reward of teaching and learning was also a prominent benefit of participation in the focus communities. For facilitators, in particular, CoP participation was linked to profile raising, rewards such as grants and teaching awards and opportunities for career development. Two participants, at different universities, reported development opportunities linked to recognition of teaching and learning early in their careers. In both cases this raised profile generated opportunities to focus on disciplinary research, which both had chosen to focus on at the time we spoke. In a finding specific to Pioneer University, several participants distinguished personal values from external recognition and reward measures. This suggests the influence of collegial academic values and points to recognition and reward systems for university teaching and learning as sites, like CoPs, where Discourses of collegiality and managerialism meet and compete.

Community
The idea of community was strongly associated with CoP initiatives at all three universities, and social benefits such as support and networking. Through the notion of belonging, community manifested in varying ways. At Horizon and Discovery Universities, participants linked belonging to doing things together (Wenger 2000, p. 226), or engagement around practice. At Pioneer University there was stronger evidence of belonging in the imaginative mode (Wenger 2000, p. 228),
demonstrated in participants’ ideas of like-mindedness or shared value for teaching and learning.

Some Horizon participants referred to ‘community time’ as an important structural element of the CoP initiative. Horizon findings suggest that structuring CoPs in line with the social identity version of CoP successfully translated into lived experience. Community was not only significant structurally at Horizon University, it was also integrated into communication of the initiative, encapsulated in a tagline which emphasised social connection as a benefit of CoP involvement. This suggests the significance of discourse in shaping lived experience of CoPs. At Horizon University, where CoPs are more institutionally embedded than at other sites, the strong influence of a Discourse of collegiality was evident in participants’ accounts of engaged professional learning.

CoP identity also appeared strongest at Horizon University, both within and outside the university, with some participants (all facilitators) reporting that CoPs had contributed to organisational culture change. Notably, one participant (a member) reported CoP involvement which had not translated into organisational change.

Identity
As previously noted, in the social identity version of CoP individual and community identity are mutually constituted (Wenger 1999, p. 146). Findings affirmed identity development as a benefit of CoP participation, primarily through recognition of individuals' skill, or teaching and learning innovation. Again, this was most evident at Horizon University, where a number of participants linked CoP participation to identity development. There was also evidence of CoP identity formation across the sites.

My study generated two significant findings in relation to identity in cultivated higher education CoPs. Firstly, variations around identity pointed to the significance of discourse alongside typology. Although the Horizon and Discovery Universities were of the same Nurtured/supported type (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a), individual identity development emerged strongly at Horizon University but not at Discovery University, where the notion of collective identity
was more strongly associated with CoP involvement. This was accompanied by a concern with authenticity that I interpret as signalling individual identity formation in a contested space. From this I surmised that participants’ CoP experiences at Discovery University were influenced by the interaction of Discourses of excellence, managerialism and collegiality. Secondly, as previously mentioned, I expected to find an explicit link between identity and narrative. As I will now discuss, this remained tacit, even in participants’ CoP narratives.

**Narrative**

I began this study with an interest in the relationship between narrative practice, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity (through narrativity) in the focus communities. In the literature on higher education CoPs, storytelling is linked to academic identity (Churchman & Stehlik 2007), CoP identity and professional development related to teaching and learning (McDonald et al. 2008). This link was not explicit in my findings. Only one participant made a direct connection between storytelling and practice sharing. From this I argue that while narratives about CoPs are a key source of data in the case, narrative as a means of fostering professional development remained implicit in the data and findings. In our research conversations participants demonstrated, through narrative practice, that storytelling is an effective way to construct and share experience, but they generally did not make the link between this and the processes of practice sharing which they described. Thus the value of storytelling as a means for sharing practice to enable professional learning remained tacit.

Similarly, the potential link between identity development and narrative was evident in participants’ narrative practice. Participants told me stories about how their CoP participation had fostered identity development and how their CoPs had gained a profile or identity. Again, however, no participant explicitly linked storytelling with these developments. Although participants were using story to construct and convey identity, they did not seem to think of their practice in this way. Consequently, the connection between storytelling, identity development and practice needs further exploration, particular the use of storytelling as a means for sharing practice and developing identity within CoPs. As detailed in Chapter 4, I
took a narrative approach to research conversations with participants. This meant our discussions travelled in many directions, in which I consciously refrained from intervening, apart from several instances noted in the findings in Chapter 5.

**Propagation of communities of practice in higher education**

Both the social identity (Wenger 1999) and knowledge management (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002) versions of CoP were evident across the three sites, manifesting, in application, as CoP variants.

This variation supports the notion that CoP is most valuable in higher education as a heuristic. This is partly due to specificities of academic work and culture and the higher education context (Nagy & Burch 2009). It also reflects the character of CoP as a mid-level theory (Anderson & McCune 2013, p. 284) and analytical tool (Wenger 1999, p. 125). The social identity version of CoP can enable understandings of social processes in terms of individual agency and wider structures (Barton & Tusting 2005, p. 3), but it is not an applied theory which can be operationalised (Storberg-Walker 2008, p. 567).

To varying extents, all three sites presented some evidence of social learning processes. The relevance and value of the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999) was most prominent at Horizon University, where participants reported mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, and these three elements were explicit in structuring the CoP initiative.

In the higher education context, the social identity version of CoP can be seen as a useful framework (McDonald & Star 2006) for understanding and developing CoPs, along with typology (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a). I draw on both in proposing an adaptive model of higher education CoPs below. CoP typology alone does not account for variances in experience recounted by participants. Discourse is another important factor. Variations in the mode of belonging and depth of participant engagement across the sites relate to the influence and interaction of Discourses of collegiality, excellence and managerialism. Similarly, barriers to engagement, such as time poverty, can be seen as a manifestation of pressures and tensions associated with greater administrative burdens linked to the demands of
the Discourse of excellence, such as competition, efficiency, quality and accountability (Light & Cox 2003, pp. 3-7). Time poverty is also a manifestation of the effects of the Discourse of managerialism, such as performance indicators based on ‘hurdle numbers’ (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 234). As Kylie, a member from Pioneer University commented in relation to CoPs, ‘I do think that they are good, but they’ve got to be grounded in … the realities of people’s teaching lives’.

Further lines of enquiry

Professional learning
As noted earlier, findings show a relationship between CoP involvement and career benefits associated with the recognition and reward of university teaching and learning. This was most evident for facilitators, reflecting a limitation of the participant profiles at Horizon and Discovery Universities, where facilitators were in the majority. It would be useful to explore this relationship with members as well.

Two related areas need further investigation. Firstly, the relationship between gender and career development through teaching and learning recognition and reward structures warrants further enquiry. The high proportion of women among the participants in this study, in careers focused on teaching and learning, reflects broader academic workforce trends. As noted earlier, the Australian academic workforce is ‘feminised’, with more women entering as males retire (Southwell & Morgan 2012, p. 11). Women academics are more likely than their male counterparts to be employed in lower status teaching-only positions (Southwell & Morgan 2012, p. 9). Two participants, whose careers had developed due to early career involvement in teaching and learning initiatives, had shifted their focus to disciplinary research, given the opportunity, implicitly reinforcing the perception that research is a more senior and valued activity than teaching and learning.

The role of academic values and Big D Discourse in initiatives to recognise and reward university teaching is another area for further enquiry. A possible tension between the two was evident at Pioneer University, where several participants distinguished their personal values from formal recognition and reward structures.
Finally, the extent to which participation in CoPs changes teaching practice remains an open question. Participants reported practice development, along with changed attitudes and understandings about teaching and learning. How this translated in practice and with what outcomes was beyond the scope of my study because of my focus on perceptions of value and benefit rather than outcomes.

**Community**

I reported earlier that CoP engagement emerged strongest at Horizon University. Although member and facilitator have appeared as overlapping categories in this study, further investigation would be needed with Horizon University CoP members regarding the strength of member engagement in CoPs and its possible association with the CoP structure, particularly community time. The relationship between power relations and group dynamics, and member participation and engagement in Horizon University CoPs would be part of such an investigation.

More broadly, the issues of engagement and community connect with questions about CoP facilitation and structure that call for further consideration of CoP typology and the discourse surrounding higher education CoPs. Both are elements of my proposed adaptive model for higher education CoPs, which I present below, along with an illustration of its application drawn from selected findings.

**Identity and narrative**

In my findings the relationship between narrative and practice sharing to enable professional learning remained implicit, as did the possible link between narrative practice and identity development. This may reflect reservations about the legitimacy of storytelling in professional practice or as an outcome of CoP involvement. Earlier I introduced the concept of narrativity, which is concerned with how subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are narratively constructed (McQuillan 2000, p. 8). Narrativity is also a means for analysing how stories are built, shared and received and how these elements interact (Gubrium 2010, p. 387). To build on indications in my findings, further enquiry is needed which explicitly focuses on narrativity in strategically established CoPs to develop university teaching and learning. This needs to investigate discourse surrounding CoPs alongside
consideration of practice sharing and university teacher identity development. Such further enquiry should focus on members’ narratives of their experiences. Along with narrative interviews, other research methods, such as focus groups and journalling, could be used to encourage collective story telling through facilitated sharing of experiences and personal storytelling as a form of reflective practice.

**Propagation of communities of practice in higher education**

Findings from Horizon University and Discovery University indicate that organisational support, resources and climate are contextual requirements for supporting viable CoPs. At Horizon University, the CoP initiative was the most organisationally embedded of the three, and engagement was also most prominent. An important further line of enquiry concerns the relationship between participants’ engagement, organisational support, along with how, and to what extent, a CoP initiative is resourced. While the facilitator perspective would be important, it would be critical to also investigate members’ experiences to ensure that participatory value, along with facilitation, remained in focus.

**An adaptive model of higher education CoPs**

Gee includes ‘coverage’ as a factor in validating the trustworthiness of discourse analysis. Coverage concerns the ability to apply analysis to a range of data retrospectively and predictively (Gee 2010, p. 185). That has been my objective in developing this model of higher education CoPs. Along with my findings, the proposed model is informed by Nagy and Burch’s re-conceptualisation of CoP as CoP-in-Academe, which emphasises the significance of the specificities of work practice and culture relevant to higher education CoP applications (2009). Current higher education CoP typology relates to group structure and organisation as factors shaping the social learning process. My model provides an original way to expand on the CoP typology developed through the OLT project *Identifying, building and sustaining leadership capacity for communities of practice in higher education* (McDonald et al. 2012; McDonald, Star and Margetts 2012a) by also encompassing epistemology (Amin & Roberts 2008; Lindkvist 2005) and discourse, as described below. I offer my model of higher education CoPs as a heuristic for adaptive,
kaleidoscopic use in the hope that it will prompt nuanced insights into higher education CoPs and inform the future development of such communities.

**Typology**
In my proposed model typology encompasses the social identity version of CoP (Wenger 1999) and McDonald, Star and Margetts’ CoP typology which categorises and characterises CoP types based on their leadership, structure, how membership is defined, themes and agenda, and outcomes (2012a). Both Nurtured/supported and Created/intentional CoPs are described as modified CoP (or M-CoP) in the sense that they depart from early accounts of organically emerging CoPs (termed ‘Wenger-CoPs’ or ‘W-CoPs’) by virtue of being formally recognised, led and structured (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, pp. 20-1). The risk of reifying the CoP concept is greatest in relation to typology. In identifying a higher education CoP as a particular type (Organic, Nurtured/supported or Created intentional) after McDonald, Star and Margetts (2012a), it is important that structuring elements for CoPs are viewed as instrumental in a social learning process rather than as ends in themselves; for example, as a formula for CoP success.

My model considers typology heuristically with reference to questions such as: What is the relationship between the community and its host organisation? How is the community organised? How is membership defined? What modes of belonging are evident in the community – for example, engagement, imagination, alignment (Wenger (1999) and (2000)? What are its structuring elements – for example, are mutual engagement, joint enterprise or shared repertoire evident?

**Epistemology**
Epistemology relates to knowledge work in a community. In the proposed model I consider CoP epistemology at the group level (Lindkvist 2005) and in terms of types of knowing in action (Amin & Roberts 2008). Questions related to epistemology include: What kinds of knowledge are shared and generated in the community? Is knowledge in the community situated? Is knowledge decentred, embodied and practice-based? Is knowledge in the community acquired through participation and enculturation? As Lindkvist puts it, such ‘knowledge will reveal itself only during
practice, and practising together is the way newcomers may learn the tricks of the trade’ (2005, p. 1197).

**Discourse**

Discourse refers to the meaning-making horizon in which the CoP operates and the ways meaning is made in the community. Discourse is a form of practice which structures meaning making and construction of the self at macro (discourse-in-practice) and micro (discursive practice) levels (Holstein & Gubrium 2000, p. 94). My principal analytic focus is Big D discourse:

> ways of enacting and recognizing different sorts of socially situated and significant identities through the use of language integrated with characteristic ways of acting, interacting, believing, valuing and using various sorts of objects (including our bodies) in concert with other people. (Gee 2010, p. 151)

Questions related to discourse in CoPs include: Do members define the CoP or is it defined some other way? If members define the CoP, how do they define it? What kinds of beliefs, values, ways of talking and other actions are evident in the community? What kinds of identities are available in the community? Are some valued more than others? (Gee 2010). How do CoP discourses shape success and limitations on learning and participation? How are meanings contested in the CoP? Which are given priority and which are excluded? (Lea 2005, p. 186). Do participants have a shared repertoire of ‘routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions’ (Wenger 1999, p. 85) which have become part of the community’s practice?
CHAPTER 6: BETWEEN A MAP AND A KALEIDOSCOPE: FINDINGS AND FURTHER LINES OF ENQUIRY

Figure 3: An adaptive model of higher education CoPs

Discourse
• Big D discourse (Gee 2010)
• Discourse as a form of practice (Holstein & Gubrium 2000)
• Shared repertoire (Wenger 1999)

Epistemology
• Knowing in action (Amin & Roberts 2008)
• Community or Collectivity of practice (Lindkvist 2005)

Typology
• Dimensions of community (Wenger 2000)
• CoP version (Wenger 1999; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002)
• CoP type: ‘Organic’, ‘Nurtured/support’ or ‘Created/intentional’ (McDonald, Star & Margetts, 2012)
• M-CoP (modified CoP) (McDonald, Star & Margetts, 2012)
Bringing the model to life
To fit the thesis format of A4 output, Figure 3 represents my proposed CoP model as a two-dimensional cross-section. Hinting at the steady scrape of surgical steel on cold skin, a cross-section does not seem to have much connection with the three-dimensional, embodied and messy world of lived experience. I will draw on the CoP story presented in this thesis to illustrate the model by comparing typology, epistemology and discourse across the three university sites. I will make this comparison with reference to a key finding from Horizon University, the extent to which participants’ narratives signalled the social identity version of CoP, alongside the development of distinctive CoP profiles and identities and a higher degree of organisation embeddedness than at the other two universities. In making this comparison across the university sites, I have focused on the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship because it shares strategic origins (despite differences in implementation) with the Horizon University and Discovery University CoP initiatives. As discussed in Chapter 5, however, the Pioneer Teaching Fellowship was just one of a number of communities which participants from Pioneer University spoke about.

Horizon University teaching and learning CoPs are structured by the three elements of the social identity version (Wenger 1999): mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. The explicit inclusion of ‘community time’ literally gives space for engagement and was reflected in participants’ accounts of their experiences. Communication of the CoP initiative emphasises social connection to build capacity, including a tagline that reflects the initiative’s origins, the goal to overcome isolation among academics teaching a common student cohort. At Horizon University, CoPs, to a significant extent, have a ‘face’. Although not the only staff involved in the propagation of CoPs at Horizon, Alice was acknowledged as a leader in the space. Her ongoing promotion and support for the initiative over a number of years have embodied the Discourse of collegiality, while her expertise in CoPs and teaching and learning has explicitly linked social and professional learning.
Typology alone does not explain the distinctive Horizon University findings. With some minor variations, Horizon University and Discovery University CoP types are very similar. I have detailed this in Appendix C: Comparative CoP typology on page 305. Higher education CoP variants cannot be explained by typology alone. My findings and model affirm the importance of avoiding strict categorisations and emphasise the limitations of language as a means for representing thinking and action. As Trinh suggests:

*Non-categorical thinking sees to it that the power to name be constantly exposed in its limits. You are always working in this precarious space where you constantly run the risk of falling on one side or the other. You are walking right on the edge and challenging both sides so they cannot simply be collapsed into one. This is the space in between, the interval to which established rules of boundaries never quite apply.* (1992, p. 173)

Likewise, comparison of epistemology (as detailed in Appendix D: Comparative CoP epistemology on page 308) does not significantly differentiate the Horizon University CoP initiative from the Discovery CoP initiative. This again reveals a limitation of typology, as both the epistemologies referred to in my proposed (and adaptive) model are organised by type.

It is through Discourse, the third element of my proposed higher education CoP model, that the Horizon University findings can be differentiated. As previously discussed, the three Big D Discourses I identified during analysis related to collegiality, managerialism and excellence. The Discourse of collegially links social support (Churchman 2005, pp 18-20) and knowledge sharing to build professional capacity (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 234). It is also associated with the nurture of academic identity in contemporary universities (Churchman & King 2009; Winter 2009), based on values such as academic freedom; disciplinarity; independence from external pressures; special knowledge and professionalism; and a sense of community and autonomy (Ramsden 2002, p. 23). The Discourse of managerialism is associated with the effects of managerialism in universities, such as the spread of business language (Deem & Brehony 2005) and a ‘counting mentality’ linked to performance indicators based on ‘hurdle numbers’ (Nagy & Burch 2009, p. 234). Managerialism is ideological, privileging management over
professional autonomy. It entails performance monitoring and targeting linked to external agendas such as Quality Assurance (Deem & Brehony 2005, p. 220). The Discourse of excellence applies similar drivers to university teaching and learning, with effects including a focus on competition and efficiency, quality and accountability, associated with an increased administrative burden on academics (Light & Cox 2003, pp. 3-7).

As discussed in Chapter 5, there is evidence of the interaction of the Discourses of collegiality, managerialism and excellence across the university sites, playing out in a range of ways. Such interactions are contextual, complex and not necessarily predictable. Findings indicate that they affect the lived experience of community participation.

The evidence of the social learning version of CoP at Horizon University can be linked to the dominance of the Discourse of collegiality at that site. This Discourse of collegiality manifests in the CoP structure, alongside the communication and championship of the CoP initiative by Senior Management and by a perceptibly dedicated and influential staff with teaching and learning and CoP expertise, and her colleagues.

In support of my proposed model, this brief comparison illustrates that discourse needs to be considered alongside typology and epistemology to understand the participatory value of strategic CoPs to enhance teaching and learning and the development of viable future communities.

**Conclusion**

The collective CoP story presented in this thesis affirms the potential for realisation of the social identity version of CoP in higher education (Wenger 1999) as a social process in which professional learning, community, narrative and identity are dynamically related. Findings also reveal some of the tensions and stresses of contemporary hyper-discursive university contexts, which both motivate and obstruct the realisation of such communities. As well as being spaces where collegial professional learning can flourish, institutionally cultivated teaching and
learning CoPs can also be spaces that engender a little ‘heart’, as Michelle says at the beginning of this chapter. Spaces of the kind that Richardson describes as ‘sacred’, where people feel safe to be who are they are and who they are becoming; where they are connected to each other and to community; where people feel passionate and believe they are making a difference, recognising and appreciating their ‘safe communion’ (1997, p. 185).

Richardson describes a wish to transform ‘ordinary sites into sacred sites’ (1997, p. 185). To some extent that can be seen as the goal of nurtured university teaching and learning CoPs. Fostering such spaces and social learning processes, where participants can build identities around shared practice, is easier said than done. I offer my model of higher education CoPs as a heuristic for adaptation in the future development of such communities. Even so, I am conscious that mapping terrain, as I have tried to do in this thesis, doesn’t stop the world from moving or prevent the landscape from changing. This thesis is a partial and contingent representation of professional learning, community, identity and narrative as I found them in the focus communities. Lather described one of her studies as ‘constructing an audience with ears to hear’ in preference to presenting a ‘linear tidy narrative’ (2009, pp. 18-9). I offer my study to any reader who has figurative ‘eyes to see’ as a glimpse-in-time of a temporary pattern, which will change with the next turn of the kaleidoscope.

*Figure 4: Series of views through a turning kaleidoscope (Carroll 2014b)*
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Appendix A: Scope of the literature review


I searched the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) website, ALTC Exchange and Australian Universities Quality Agency websites for relevant material, using various combinations of the terms noted above. Another key source of references were those which appeared with high frequency in bibliographies of relevant material. I consulted methodological literature, beginning with edited works on narrative inquiry and proceeding via searches of the terms ‘narrativity’ and ‘narrative’ using Google Scholar. From these sources I assembled and annotated an EndNote library of 190 references directly relevant to the search terms and scope and proposed sites for my research.

Since this preliminary literature review in 2010, my principal source of further references has been leads identified through the bibliographies of relevant papers. I have narrowed the scope for ongoing review, primarily focusing on the search terms ‘communities of practice’, ‘higher education’, ‘academic identity’, ‘discourse’ and ‘discourse analysis’. Prompted by subscriber alerts, I have continued to review key journals for relevant articles, including Higher Education Research and Development, Studies in Higher Education, Narrative Inquiry and Qualitative Inquiry. I have subscribed to the email list for CP Square (‘the community of
practice on communities of practice’ (CP Square: The community of practice on communities of practice 2014)) and regularly review relevant resources posted on that site. I have undertaken ongoing review of resources available on the Australian Government websites of the Office for Learning and Teaching (formerly ALTC) and the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Authority (formerly Australian Universities Quality Agency) and those for the universities in my study. In searching these resources I have focused on the terms ‘teaching and learning’, ‘community of practice’ and ‘communities of practice’, ‘academic identity’, and ‘higher education’. From 2010 to the time of writing I have also reviewed proceedings of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, First Year in Higher Education and Australian Association for Research in Education conferences, using the above search terms.

From these varied sources I have compiled and annotated an EndNote library of 374 references, principally peer reviewed scholarly papers and books which form the theoretical background to this thesis.
Appendix B: Recruitment messages, plain language and consent forms

Doctoral study: Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities (Pioneer University)

You are invited to participate in a study of the impact of communities to enhance teaching and learning at Australian Universities. Focusing on individual educators’ identity and practice development, this research is being conducted by Deakin University PhD candidate Juliana Ryan under my supervision. Further information about the study is included in the plain language statement and consent form attached.

Juliana will be known to many of you through her roles with the [named group] and [named area]. Juliana has been well briefed on her ethical obligations in the proposed study. She will exercise particular care to ensure strict separation of her role as researcher and as a member of Deakin University staff by scrupulously segregating research data. As a researcher Juliana will not access any information at Deakin University that she would not be able to access at the other institutions participating in the study.

Your participation is voluntary and would involve answering open-ended questions about your participation in the [named group] in a face-to-face interview with Juliana for up to 90 minutes, at a time and date to be arranged. The interview would be recorded and transcribed and you would be sent the transcript for approval. Any information that you provided would be strictly confidential. The [named group] would not be named and you would not be identified in any publications about findings.

If you would like to participate in the study please complete your details below and return to me by reply email.

Name........................................................................................................................................

Position....................................................................................................................................... 

Email...........................................................................................................................................

Phone...........................................................................................................................................

Best contact times..........................................................................................................................
I confirm that I would like to participate in the doctoral study *Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities*.

I would like Juliana Ryan to contact me as shown above to arrange a suitable time for interview.

Regards,

Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs  
Senior Lecturer - Warrnambool Education Coordinator  
Deakin University, Warrnambool Campus, PO Box 423, Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia 3280.  
Phone: 03 55633240 International: +61 3 55633240  
Fax: 03 5563534 International: +61 3 5563534  
Email: bernadette.walker-gibbs@deakin.edu.au
Doctoral study: Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities 
(Horizon and Discovery Universities)

You are invited to participate in a study of the impact of communities to enhance teaching and learning at Australian Universities. Focusing on individual educators’ identity and practice development, this research is being conducted as a PhD study in the School of Education at Deakin University. Further information about the study is included in the plain language statement and consent form attached.

Participation is voluntary and would involve answering open ended questions about your participation in a University Teaching and Learning Community in a face-to-face interview at [university location] with Juliana for approximately 30 minutes, at a time to be arranged. The interview would be recorded and transcribed and you would be sent the transcript for approval. Any information provided would be strictly confidential. The University Teaching and Learning Community would not be named and you would not be identified in any reporting of findings.

If you would like to participate in the study please complete your details below and return to me by reply email.

Name………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Position……………………………………………………………………………………………

Email……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Phone……………………………………………………………………………………………

Times available for interview at Named University:

I confirm that I would like to participate in the doctoral study Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities.

Signed……………………………………………………………………………………………

Regards,

Juliana Ryan
PhD candidate, School of Education
Deakin University
1 Gheringhap Street, Geelong 3220
Phone: 03 5227 8156
Email: juliana.ryan@deakin.edu.au
TO: Members of a university teaching and learning community

Plain Language Statement

Date:

Full Project Title: Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities

Principal Researcher: Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs

Student Researcher: Juliana Ryan

Associate Researcher(s): not applicable

This Plain Language Statement and Consent Form is 6 pages long. Please make sure you have all the pages.

1. Your Consent

You are invited to take part in this research project because you are a member of a community to enhance teaching and learning at a university. This Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

Please read this Plain Language Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a relative or friend. Feel free to do this.

Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form below. By signing the Consent Form, you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

You will be given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep as a record.

2. Purpose and Background

The establishment of cross-disciplinary, collegiate communities of practice has emerged as a strategy to enhance teaching and learning in Australian universities. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact on individual identity in practice of participation in such communities. Conducted in two phases, the research will focus on:
1. individual staff who have played a significant role in establishing an exemplary university teaching and learning community

2. members of teaching and learning communities at Australian universities.

With a focus on individual narratives, the study will investigate:

- the implications for practice development of university teaching and learning communities through semi-structured discussions with staff who have played a key role in their establishment
- the individual implications of participation in university teaching and learning communities on members’ identity in practice through semi-structured discussions with members of such communities.

The study will also include analysis of the narratives in pertinent national and institutional policy documentation.

This project is being conducted towards a PhD.

It is anticipated that a total of up to 62 people will participate in this project.

3. **Funding**

This research is funded by Deakin University.

The researchers have the following financial or other interests in the funding organisation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Funding organisation</th>
<th>Interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juliana Ryan</td>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>Fixed-term employee in the Higher Education Research Group, Deakin University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PhD candidate, School of Education, Deakin University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs</td>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Deakin University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Procedures**

Participation in this project will involve participating in a one-on-one discussion for up to 90 minutes about your involvement in a community to enhance learning and teaching at an Australian university.

You will be asked open-ended questions such as:

How did you come to be involved in a community to enhance teaching and learning at an Australian university?
What motivates you to participate in that teaching and learning community?
Has your involvement been personally beneficial? How?

The discussion will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be sent the transcript of interview for approval. The researcher will write up your conversation in the form of a narrative. With your agreement, the researcher will contact you to seek clarification or elaboration of your comments. The researcher will also send you a draft of the narrative developed out of your discussion and will ask you to approve it as an authentic representation of the views you expressed in discussion. Subject to legal requirements, the information collected during the discussion will not be shared with a third party and information collected cannot and will not be used in a way that could identify you without your permission. If any material related to you is proposed for publication, it will not identify you individually and you will be given the opportunity to review any such material before publication. All stages of the research project will be monitored by the researcher’s principal supervisor, Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs, an experienced educational researcher.

5. Possible Benefits
A possible benefit of the study would be the development of narratives of collegial teaching and learning practice development which could inspire practice development and be contextually adapted to help enhance university teaching and learning across a range of disciplines, particularly in an Australian setting.

While we cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any direct personal benefit from participating in this project it is possible that your involvement may benefit you by providing the opportunity to reflect on your involvement in a university teaching and learning community, and to share your story with other interested people in a form that does not personally identify you.

6. Possible Risks
There are no anticipated risks, side effects and discomforts anticipated to arise from your participation in the study; however, there may be unforeseen or unknown risks.

7. Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information
Any information obtained in connection with this project and that can identify you will remain confidential. Information will be stored within a secure database located on the researcher’s Deakin University home drive, which is password protected. To improve security the password is regularly updated. Information will be given an identifying code which will be kept in a separate location within the same secure database. As required by the Deakin University “Code of Good Practice in Research” information will be kept for at least six years after the date of the last publication based on the research. Back-up files will be stored in a portable storage advice that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s home office when not attached to her personal computer. If the researcher left Deakin University she would continue to comply with privacy and confidentiality requirements for the research information. Such information would also be retained by the School of Education and confidentiality maintained in accordance with School policy. Information about you would only be disclosed with your permission, subject to legal requirements. If you give us your permission by signing the Consent Form, we plan to share and discuss the results within the research team and to publish these in a form that does not personally identify you in a PhD thesis and related publications.
8. **Results of Project**

Any results of the research will be reported in a way that does not identify participants. You will be offered extracts from the thesis-in-progress to read that relate to information you have provided and a copy of the completed thesis, if you would like one, for your records.

9. **Participation is Voluntary**

Participation in any research project is voluntary. **If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to.** If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage until all research data has been processed or until your identifying details have been removed. Any information obtained from you to date will not be used and will be destroyed. Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University or the research team.

Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Sign the Consent Form only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify a member of the research team or complete and return the Revocation of Consent Form attached.

10. **Ethical Guidelines**

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

The ethics aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University. If you are employed by a university other than Deakin University, the Human Research Ethics Committee of your university has also approved this research project.

11. **Complaints**

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact: The Manager, Office of Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, Facsimile: 9244 6581; research-ethics@deakin.edu.au.

Please quote project number DUHREC 2011-017.

12. **Reimbursement for your costs**

You will not be paid for your participation in this project.

13. **Further Information, Queries or Any Problems**

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the research team.
The researchers responsible for this project are:

**Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs**
Associate Professor, School of Education
Deakin University, Warrnambool Campus, PO Box 423, Warrnambool, Victoria 3280, Australia
Phone: 03 5563 3240 (BH), 0418 393 674 (AH)

**Juliana Ryan**
PhD Candidate, School of Education
Deakin University, Geelong Campus at Waurn Ponds, Piddons Road Geelong Victoria 3217 Australia
Phone: 0423 772 563
TO: Members of a university teaching and learning community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consent Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Project Title:</strong> Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant's Name (printed) ……………………………………………………………………

Signature ………………………………………………………………………

Date ………………………………………………………………………

Juliana Ryan, School of Education, Deakin University, Pigdons Road, Geelong Victoria 3217 Australia
TO: Members of a university teaching and learning community

Revocation of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date;

Full Project Title: Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University.

Participant’s Name (printed) ………………………………………………………………………

Signature ……………………………………………………………….Date ……………………

Please mail this form to:

Juliana Ryan
School of Education
Deakin University
Pigdons Road
Geelong Victoria 3217
Australia
Phone 03 5227 8156 or 0423 772 563
TO: Facilitators or convenors of a university teaching and learning community

Plain Language Statement

Date:

Full Project Title: Narrativity and identity in university teaching and learning communities

Principal Researcher: Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs

Student Researcher: Juliana Ryan

Associate Researcher(s): not applicable

This Plain Language Statement and Consent Form is 6 pages long. Please make sure you have all the pages.

1. Your Consent
You are invited to take part in this research project because of your involvement in the establishment of a university teaching and learning community.

This Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

Please read this Plain Language Statement carefully. Feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a relative or friend or your local health worker. Feel free to do this.

Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form. By signing the Consent Form, you indicate that you understand the information and that you give your consent to participate in the research project.

You will be given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep as a record.

2 Purpose and Background
The establishment of cross-disciplinary, collegiate communities of practice has emerged as a strategy to enhance teaching and learning in Australian universities and significant national funding has been allocated to support the development of such communities since 2007. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of such communities on
teaching and learning practice development. Conducted in two phases, the research will focus on:

1. individual staff who have played a significant role in establishing an exemplary university teaching and learning community

2. members of teaching and learning communities at three Australian universities.

With a focus on individual narratives, the study will investigate:

• the implications for practice development of university teaching and learning communities through semi-structured interviews with staff who have played a key role in their development

• the individual implications of participation in university teaching and learning communities on members’ identity in practice through semi-structured discussions with members of such communities.

The study will also include analysis of the narratives in pertinent national and institutional policy documentation.

This project is being conducted towards a PhD.

It is anticipated that a total of up to 62 people will participate in this project.

3. Funding

This research is funded by Deakin University.

The researchers have the following financial or other interests in the funding organisation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Funding organisation</th>
<th>Interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Juliana Ryan             | Deakin University    | Fixed-term employee in the Higher Education Research Group, Deakin University  
                          |                       | PhD candidate, School of Education, Deakin University                      |
| Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs | Deakin University   | Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Deakin University                  |

4. Procedures

Participation in this project will involve participating in a one-on-one discussion for up to 90 minutes about your involvement in a community to enhance learning and teaching at an Australian university.

You will be asked open-ended questions such as:
How did you come to be involved in a community to enhance teaching and learning at an Australian university?

What motivated/motivates your involvement in that teaching and learning community?

Has the teaching and learning community been beneficial in terms of that motivation? How?

The discussion will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be sent the transcript of interview for approval. The researcher will write up your conversation in the form of a narrative. With your agreement, the researcher will contact you to seek clarification or elaboration of your comments. The researcher will also send you a draft of the narrative developed out of your discussion and will ask you to approve it as an authentic representation of the views you expressed in discussion. Subject to legal requirements, the information collected during the discussion will not be shared with a third party and information collected cannot and will not be used in a way that could identify you without your permission. If any material related to you is proposed for publication, it will not identify you individually and you will be given the opportunity to review any such material before publication. All stages of the research project will be monitored by the researcher’s principal supervisor, Dr Bernadette Walker-Gibbs, an experienced educational researcher.

5. Possible Benefits

A possible benefit of the study would be the development of narratives of collegial teaching and learning practice development which could inspire practice development and be contextually adapted to help enhance university teaching and learning across and range of disciplines, particularly in an Australian setting.

While we cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any direct personal benefits from this project it is possible that your participation may benefit you by providing the opportunity to critically reflect on your involvement in the development of a teaching and learning community, and to share your story with other interested people in a form that does not personally identify you.

6. Possible Risks

There are no anticipated risks, side effects and discomforts anticipated as arising from your participation in the study; however, there may be additional unforseen or unknown risks.

7. Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

Any information obtained in connection with this project and that can identify you will remain confidential. Information will be stored within a secure database located on the researcher's Deakin University home drive, which is password protected. To improve security the password is regularly updated. Information will be given an identifying code which will be kept in a separate location within the same secure database. As required by the Deakin University "Code of Good Practice in Research" information will be kept for at least six years after the date of the last publication based on the research. Back-up files will be stored in a portable storage advice that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office when not attached to her personal computer. If the researcher left Deakin University she would continue to comply with privacy and confidentiality requirements for the research information. Such information would also be retained by the School of Education and confidentiality maintained in accordance with School policy.
Information about you would only be disclosed with your permission, subject to legal requirements. If you give us your permission by signing the Consent Form, we plan to share and discuss the results within the research team and to publish these in a form that does not personally identify you in a PhD thesis and related scholarly publications.

8. Results of Project
Any results of the research will be reported in a way that does not identify participants. You will be offered extracts from the thesis-in-progress to read that relate to information you have provided and a copy of the completed thesis if you would like one for your records.

9. Participation is Voluntary
Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage until all research data has been processed or until your identifying details have been removed. Any information obtained from you to date will not be used and will be destroyed. Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with Deakin University.

Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Sign the Consent Form only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify a member of the research team or complete and return the Revocation of Consent Form attached.

10 Ethical Guidelines
This project will be carried out according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

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Signature ………………………………………………………

Date ………………………

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Signature …………………………………………………………………………..

Date ………………………

Please mail or fax this form to:

Juliana Ryan
School of Education
Deakin University
1 Gheringhap Street, Geelong Victoria 3217 Australia

Phone 03 5227 8156   Fax: 03 5227 8129
### Appendix C: Comparative CoP typology

#### Table 4: Comparative CoP typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CoP version</th>
<th>Community dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Nurtured/supported’ CoP type (McDonald, Star &amp; Margetts 2012a, p. 22)</td>
<td>Knowledge management (Wenger, McDermott &amp; Snyder, 2001) version explicit in formal definition of CoP initiative</td>
<td>• Enterprise: learning energy – work together to address knowledge gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modified bottom-up structure</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mutuality: social capital – Trust developed through community interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Voluntary/suggested membership</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Repertoire: self-awareness – shared experience, language, artefacts, histories and methods accumulated over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discipline or issue related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-determined/steered agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-determined and funding-related outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May have institutional visibility and support and will need to negotiate relationship with institution (McDonald et al. 2012, p. 66)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Pioneer Teaching Fellowship

|---|---|---|---|
| • Top-down structure  
• Support provided  
• Membership encouraged  
• Guided issues and cross discipline  
• Guided agenda based on theme  
• Linked to institutional objectives and outcomes expected (McDonald et al. 2012, p. 66) | • Modified bottom up structure  
• Voluntary/suggested membership  
• Issue related themes  
• Self-determined/steered agenda  
• Timing for outcomes self- determined and funding related  
• Has institutional visibility and support and will need to negotiate | | • Enterprise: learning energy – visions of community potential guided by thought leaders and contextualised in wider picture of world  
• Mutuality: social capital – Knowledge of other members and meaning of community participation in broader lives  
• Repertoire: self-awareness – representations that enable the community to see itself in new ways; language to talk about community in reflective mode |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
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| | ‘Nurtured/supported’ CoP type (McDonald, Star & Margetts 2012a, p. 22) | | |
### Appendix D: Comparative CoP epistemology

#### Table 5: Comparative CoP epistemology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Group level epistemology</th>
<th>Type of knowing in action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizon University CoPs</td>
<td>‘Knowledge community’ (<a href="#">Lindkvist, 2005, p 1194-5 and 1205</a>)</td>
<td>‘Craft-based’ (<a href="#">Amin &amp; Roberts, 2008, p 357</a>) reported:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social dimension: ‘tightly knit’, ‘affect laden’, ‘dense’ relationships of mutuality</td>
<td>- Aesthetic, kinaesthetic and embodied knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cognitive dimension: ‘high degree’ of shared understandings and repertoire</td>
<td>- Communication is face to face and knowledge demonstration is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge is ‘decentred’, located in practice, and experience based (<a href="#">Lindkvist, 2005, p 1197</a>)</td>
<td>- Long-lived and apprenticeship-based, developing socio-cultural institutional structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Interpersonal trust and mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Customised, incremental innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Managed hierarchically, but open to new members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Project or task-based grouping</td>
<td>- Specialised and expert knowledge, including standards and codes; exists to extend knowledge base through temporary, creative coalitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Knowledge is ‘distributed’ and individualised</td>
<td>- Social interaction based either on spatial or relationship proximity. Communication may be face to face or by distance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Goals define knowledge needed</td>
<td>- Trust based on reputation and expertise; social ties are weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Knowledge is explicit and developed through problem solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Version 2 has ‘Knowledge community’ characteristics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery University CoPs</td>
<td>‘Knowledge community’ characteristics</td>
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