

**Experiences and Stories of Mastering a Craft: The
Embodied Journey of Learning.**

Geraldine McGing

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Head of Department: Dr Majella Dempsey

**Supervisors: Professor Aislinn O'Donnell
Dr Majella Dempsey**

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Clarification of terminology

For the purposed of clarity, the following terms will be used:

Artisan - a worker in a skilled trade, especially one that involves making things by hand.

Artist - a person who paints, draws or practises or performs any of the creative arts, such as a sculptor, film-maker, actor, or dancer.

Craft Master - a skilled practitioner of a particular craft activity.

Craftsperson – refers to a person who is skilled in a particular traditional craft, that involves making things by hand.

Craftspeople – plural of craftsperson

Expert - a person who is very knowledgeable about or skilful in a particular area

Maker - a person or thing that makes or produces something.

Wright - a maker or builder (mainly as second element in playwright, shipwright, wheelwright, etc.).

Abstract

Experiences and stories of mastering a craft: The embodied journey of learning.

The ‘coming-to-know’ experience is identified as lifelong learning that is influenced not only by the craft, but also by an implicit desire to create. This desire to create is synonymous with getting the feel of various tools and materials and how they can be most effectively used, supported by various and diverse communities. This results in a state of implicit knowing that, although difficult to define, is nonetheless real. I explored this ‘coming-to-know’ experience using a blended approach of narrative research and micro-phenomenological interviewing to give an account of key moments in the ‘coming-to-know’ experience of the craftsperson.

I interpreted rich data from craftspeople already recorded, as well as observations and in-depth interviews with craftspeople, to identify key learning moments in their ‘coming-to-know’ and mastery of their craft. In doing so, this thesis shows that their understanding of learning and curiosity are constants, shaped by many factors that contribute to the craftsperson’s desire to create and leave a legacy that is part of a living lineage.

My findings show that a blended methodology is helpful in offering a rich tapestry of data, where micro-phenomenological interviewing is interwoven with narrative data collection to provide a rich account of key moments in the craftsperson’s ‘coming-to-know’ experience. The methodology enabled me to engage fully and critically with the key authors in both the craft literature and the embodied knowing literature, giving a comprehensive description of factors that influenced and supported the craftsperson, some of which have already been identified in the literature, and others which were revealed through micro-phenomenological description.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This study contributes to knowledge about the practice of learning and mastering a craft by identifying the experiences, views and practices of four craftspeople. The aim is to give tangible insight into how the participants used their hands and their minds to develop and perfect their craft, either with the guidance of the apprenticeship model or an alternative. It explores the craftspeople's experience of learning and perfecting their craft, where the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercised as they worked. It also identifies the contribution of the critical aspects of the environment in which they became craftspeople, including the different communities that supported that experience of 'coming-to-know'. From the outset, it became clear that the craftspeople who become experts in their selected crafts are referred to in the literature as masters and their expertise in the main is referenced as craft mastery, emerging over time to the perfecting of craft techniques. Using the term celebrates and is a recognition of the level of craft expertise that is achieved by the craftspeople over time. However, much of the literature refers to craftsmen and their contribution to communities and economies, omitting that women were ever engaged in crafting and in many instances the woman's craft role was seen as completing domestic tasks.

This research project came about as a result of being surrounded throughout my life by people who were experts in their chosen craft, people who spent their lives practising and continually improving their craft skills and were recognised by others for having the expertise that they acquired by 'coming-to-know' their craft over time. I did not recognise or arguably appreciate their expertise at the time, and did not ask the deep, meaningful questions that would lead me to discover what was needed to create the treasure chest of skills and practices to enable them practice their craft. This research captured some aspects of the craftspeople's journey of mastering the craft and their lived experience of 'coming-to-know'.

My research explores how the craft master comes to know their craft and the different influences and moments that contribute to their 'coming-to-know'. This research provides a here-to-fore unidentified aspect of the 'coming-to know' experience and gives a tangible reality to the influences on this 'coming-to-know' experience.

1.1 Positionality and identifying a research question

This thesis specifically focuses on how the craftsperson ‘comes-to-know’ their craft and the different influences and moments that contributed to their ‘coming-to-know’.

To put this research into context, I will give a brief overview of two aspects of the thought process and my experiences that led to it. Firstly, craftspeople fascinate me. I am and have always been curious about how they become so skilled that their craft becomes an integral part of their identity. At first, their mastery appeared to me to be instinctive; it almost feels like they were born knowing how to do their craft. Two people that stand out among these people are my mother Bea McGing (née King) and my life partner Michael Leahy. They were unassuming people when it came to their craft. In my opinion, they were quietly confident in their ability and they always produced faultless pieces of work. Their seamless skill made what they were doing look easy. When it came to their craft, they just seemed to know what to do. I observed them and others who had mastered their craft at work and marveled at how they knew by touching different tools or materials that it was the right one to use to achieve what they wanted. For example, how does the carpenter know by rubbing their hands along a piece of wood, that it is sufficiently planed, or ‘come to know’ the benefits, strength and pliability of the wood they are using? Indeed, how does the artist know that the painting is finished, and they can or should stop? The concept of ‘knowing’ – how do expert craftspeople know – was and is something I am curious about.

I provide here two vignettes, short and descriptive pieces of writing that describe my interpretation of Bea’s and Michael’s craft journeys as a way of describing the genesis of, and motivation for, this research project as I tried to understand *how did they know?*. This collection of memories and photographs in the form of vignettes from these craftspeople now deceased but known to me for many years, who exposed me to their craft mastery was profoundly influential in my undertaking this research, and are an important part of this thesis. They influenced me in selecting the research question and making this thesis a reality. Including them in the thesis means is a tribute to their unassuming skill and expertise. It gives me an opportunity to imagine how I would

have asked them questions and, more importantly, how I would have listened and recorded their answers. It is because of them that this research came to be, and that these research questions were shaped in the way they were. It is because of their expertise that I am now in a position to ask the questions that assist in adding further depth to the ‘coming-to-know’ experience of the craftsperson.

Reference to these memories is peppered throughout the thesis and the selected vignettes are offered below. These two craftspeople completed apprenticeships that supported their ‘coming-to-know’ and their stories are an example of how a person can learn how to master a craft when they have the guidance and support of a craft master in a non-threatening learning environment.

Bea McGing (née King) was my mother.

She was one of the most creative, skilled people I ever saw working with a scissors and sewing machine to make something stylish, that would last for years, and that suited the customer’s body shape. She did not attend secondary school. Her career started with a nine-year apprenticeship under the supervision of her master, Mrs Gildea. Reference is made to Mrs Gildea in a letter dated 19-10-1938 in *The Schools Collection*:

*‘There is a lady-tailor in this district.
Her name is Mrs Gildea, Balla, Co. Mayo.
She has six girls employed.
She sells cloth and she has a shop.
She works in her own house.*

Bea King opened business in 1951 in a small town in the west of Ireland. At the time, the town did not have the availability of a lot of lady's fashion boutiques. In general, ladies got their clothes handmade or went to the city to buy them. In 1951, there were two hospitals in the town, and a Sisters of Mercy convent where the girls who went to secondary school wore uniforms. When she started her business, there was a ready market for nurses’ uniforms, evening dresses, nuns’ habits, school uniforms, christening robes, First Holy Communion dresses and Confirmation dresses. It was not unusual for her to make a christening robe, First Holy Communion dress, Confirmation outfit and wedding dress for the same person. At the time, these sacred

occasions were not only spiritual events, but also a celebration of family, tradition and community. She thought so much of her master that my mother included her name in her first advertisement when she was starting her own tailoring business. Cf. Figure 1, below.



Figure 1: Advertisement appearing in the Connaught Telegraph, 1951

I am fortunate to still have some of the garments she made, and I can see the tangible reality of her work. I also have some photographs of her work, including wedding dresses, baptism robes, occasion wear and day-to-day wear.

Her tools were basic. She had four scissors, long dressmaking shears for cutting fabric, pinking shears for cutting woven cloth, a buttonhole scissors and general scissors. She had manual sewing machine that was placed in the kitchen where she would sit and pedal, a variety of spools of thread, needles, pins, a magnet, a

measuring tape and chalk as well as an enormous collection of Simplicity patterns, handmade patterns and a variety of pattern books. They were all stored carefully in boxes and cases where she was easily able to access them. Her most important book, however, was her measuring book, where she would hold the clients' measurements and contact details. Her further education was her apprenticeship as a tailor. The entire tailoring experience became a part of who she was. She would comment on clothes that she could see were well tailored, and she would equally comment on clothes that were badly made and did not fit the wearer well. When she felt fabric with her hand, she would know how the fabric would fall on the wearer, where it would 'catch', how well it would wash and how long it would last. Her constant refrain was measure twice, cut once.

Michael Leahy was my life partner.

I loved watching Michael work. He was able to imagine things in his head and then, working slowly, he would create the image that was in his head. He also completed an apprenticeship when he left school at the age of 15. He recalled that the main career opportunities for people in his local area were associated with the fishing industry, trade or emigration. Castletown-Bearhaven is located nearby and is a regionally important fishing port. Michael was clear, at no time did he want to work in the fishing industry.



Figure 2: Fishing vessels leaving from Castletown-Bearhaven, 2022



Figure 3: Fishing vessel Ballycrovane, 2022

Michael's only interest as a young person was working with wood, and carpentry as a career choice was supported by his parents. This was influenced, he suggested, initially by his uncle, who was a carpenter and whom he admired, but later by another carpenter, John Quinn, whose workshop was in the village. He recalled cycling to school in West Cork and passing the workshop where he would later complete his apprenticeship with John Quinn, a master craftsman who made everything from cartwheels, coffins, windows and doors from his workshop on the main street in the small village of Eyeries.

These two people were admired in the community as craftsmen, and people spoke highly of their skills. Michael said this influenced his decision to choose carpentry and he often said that he was full of admiration for John Quinn, his mentor, whom he said, 'could make the timber sing'.

The empty workshop is still standing and for many years later, when passing the workshop, he would say, 'hello! John Quinn!'.

He told me that sometimes he thought he knew more than John Quinn, and said, 'but now I put that down to youth, I learnt more from that man than I would ever be able to quantify'. He brought me into the empty workshop one day and his face lit up, showing me where all the tools were kept, and what happened at each part of the workshop 'making everything from cartwheels to coffins'. To me it was a dark small shed. To him, it was where magic happened.

He had great vision and could see things in his head and even though he would make attempts to describe what he meant to me, I could not see what he could see until the project was finished. He loved the feel of wood, the smell of it and he would run his hand along the wood and smell it as he was working it.

Mick had his own hammer (*cf.* Figure 4 below). No one else was allowed to use it and he always knew where it was. I never thought to ask him what it was about that hammer that made it special. I do not know if it was the balance, the feel of the handle, the weight of it, et cetera. When he would take another hammer in his hand, he would tut and say it wasn't a good hammer. Both of his brothers, Terrence (RIP) and Brian, also carpenters, smiled when they spoke about Mick and his hammer. They recognised the value he placed on it and understood that they knew not to use it.



Figure 4: Michael Leahy's hammer

As well as the hammer, he had lots of other tools, every kind of saw imaginable, planes, drills, measuring tapes, angles and lots of pencils. See Figure 6 below for some of Michael's tools. All his tools were treated with respect, stored carefully where they could be found easily and serviced regularly.

At one point, I recall, he made a shed at the back of our house, an attractive piece close to the kitchen. *cf.* Image 5 below. He tried to explain to me what it was going to look like, because it was unusual in that it was built on two different levels. It was not until it was built that I understood what he was trying to explain. When he was putting the ridge on the shed roof, I was amazed when he took a small plate from the kitchen to draw the half circles on the timber that now ornate the ridge.



Figure 5: Image of Shed made by Michael Leahy on two levels



Figure 6: Image of Square rule, measuring tapes, and box of pencils

He was also full of admiration for other people's work. When he saw good stone masonry or carpentry, he would lavish praise on the craftsman and run his hand along the finish to confirm it was good. Sometimes he would say 'it's all in their hand' or 'he/she has a great pair of hands'. I had heard the phrase before and I still hear it when listening to craftspeople. It was assumed that the person he was speaking to understood what that meant, but in hindsight, what did it actually mean? Was it the size of the hand, the shape of the hand, the hand eye coordination? I never thought to ask, but I endeavoured to ask the participants who took part in this research what they understand by the phrase.

I have been interested in honeybees for many years. However, I knew little about the actual practice and craft of beekeeping. Before I started this research project, I decided to enrol and attend bee keeping classes to learn as much as I could about it before I made the decision to commit to getting bees. I kept a journal of my bee keeping learning

experience and regularly took photographs of what I was doing or what other beekeepers were doing. In my journal, I recorded what I learned in class, how I did things, things about beekeeping that surprised me, other people's stories of their experiences, and things that I found interesting. When I visited the apiary to put what we were learning in class into practice, I recorded this visit in my journal. I included what was I learning, how I was learning, and my feelings at that time: for example, what did it feel like to put on the bee suit and the gloves, or to have bees crawling on my suit and on my net, or the sound of the bees buzzing, and finally what it felt like when I took the smoker in my hand and opened the hive.

When I read my journal entries a few years later, I was surprised to notice that the things that were new to me when I was starting out were mentioned lots of times; and as my learning journey continued, they were mentioned less frequently until they were not mentioned at all. Rather, they were replaced by journal entries recording new experiences and reflections on my practice. I thought about this for some time and after much reflection, I could trace my own learning experience through my journals, and wondered would this insight be able to assist me in framing my research question about how does a craft master 'know'? Including photographs in my journal also assisted with this.

I realised that journaling my own learning experience could support and inform how I would approach questions and topics that a craftsperson experiences in their learning journey. This experience could assist me in the conversations I would have with the craftsperson. My reflective journal contributed to the research design used for this data collection because it helped me to develop and phrase research questions that enabled the participants to reflect and consider their 'coming-to-know' experience. This will be considered further in the Findings chapter.

Other observations influenced my research topic of choice. The work of many craftspeople, both men and women, is still recognised today, and it is a true privilege for those craftspeople and their families to know that their ancestors were craft masters, recognised for their expertise and mastery. Their work was not seen as what might be referred to as glamorous or even important, but their work still survives and that is a credit to them. For instance, there was a documentary series on television

when I was a young person called *Hands* that was produced and presented by David Shaw and his wife Sally for Ireland's national broadcaster, *Radio Teilifís Éireann* (RTÉ). They travelled around Ireland recording close-up observation of the techniques used by thirty-seven craftspeople. While the series gave a visually charming demonstration of the artisans' engagement in their crafts, there was little commentary or verbal engagement with the craftspeople. The series was a wonderful visual of the range of crafts that existed in Ireland between the years 1978 and 1989 and gave a meaningful portrayal of the people who engaged in the crafting, such as lace makers, saddle makers, potters, silver smithing and curragh making.

Another influence on my research decisions was the impact of the uilleann pipe player Liam O'Flynn. His respect for the inherited tradition of playing the uilleann pipes as well as his seamless understanding and mastery of his instrument was beautiful to watch and listen to. In a documentary about his life, he said that "...making music was a passion that seemed to be in me for as long back as I can remember... I liked the idea of making music and having an audience" (O'Flynn, 2020). He was totally conscious that he was part of a tradition and when he was presented with the 1985 National Entertainment Award for Traditional Music, he acknowledged this saying "there can't be many occasions when it couldn't be right to pass the buck, but for me I think this is one, and I would immediately like to pass it to all the people who have taught me and the great tradition that made them make me... it's not easy to thank a tradition" (O'Flynn, 2020). The graciousness of the content of this acknowledgement to the teachers and the tradition is almost ethereal, as if his skill is other-worldly, a conveyor of the mastery for the benefit of others. This, as well as the other instances I mentioned, gave me something to admire and respect and instilled in me a profound context for the positionality of this research.

Years later, when I was ready to commence my thesis, I toyed with different areas that might be considered as suitable for my research. I did some research into the educational system and pedagogical methodologies that have been in use for various skill-based learning scenarios. At the start of the research an attempt was made to explore the concept of mentoring in education. This led me to an interest in mentoring through the apprenticeship model of education where a master took charge of an apprentice enabling them to develop their skills until they become an accomplished expert in their craft. This question of how craftspeople make

material judgements about their work kept coming into my head, as well as the role the hand plays in this ‘coming-to-know’. I rewatched some of the *Hands* series and I watched *Field Work* (2020) directed by Pat Collins who recorded folklorist and ethnologist Henry Glassie in an immersive and meditative film set among the rituals and rhythms of working artists in Brazil, Turkey, North Carolina and Ireland. The documentary celebrates artistic expression at local level and gave me an insight into the level of commitment and work that is needed to engage with the craftsperson when trying to communicate their experience engaging in art and crafts. The rich descriptions from the craftspeople influenced my approach and contributed to how I selected my methodology, as it gave me a good grounding that enabled me to understand that in order to have a deep engagement with the craftsperson, I needed to use a methodology that would enable both me and the craftsperson access some of their ‘coming-to-know’ experiences.

Another documentary that helped me to think about my research project is *Making the Grade* (2010), directed by Ken Wardrop. This documentary depicts the relationships between Irish piano students and their teachers. This documentary was reminiscent of my own memories learning to play an instrument and it provided a perspective on the kind of practice that is needed to meet learning expectations and a sense of mastery.

A further influence in refining my research question is the work of Sturt (1963), a schoolteacher, who describes his struggle to carry on and learn the trade carried out by his craft master father and forefathers. However, Sturt was a schoolteacher, and he never became a master craftsman but, thanks to his earlier education, he was inquiring and perceptive. He loved the craft and because of his former job as an educator, he was able to write down what he could see happening around him. The following piece is an example of his observations:

A lumpish cylinder in shape - eleven or twelve inches in diameter twelve or thirteen inches from end to end – a newly turned stock thing – to the eyes, I thought, but more truly to sentiment, for the associations it hinted at. Elm from hedgerow or park, it spoke of open country. Well-seasoned, it was a product of winter labour, of summer care in my own loft under my own hands. Long quiet afternoons it had lain there, where I could glance from the stocks across the town to the fields and wooded hills. I had turned it over and over, had chopped the bark away, had brushed off the mill dew while the quiet winter darkness had stolen through the shed, and at last I had chosen the stick for use, and put it into Cooks’ hands.

And now it lay, butter coloured, smooth, slightly fragrant, soon to begin years of field work after much more skills - the skill of ancient England – had been bestowed on it, though already telling of that skill in every curve.

(Sturt 1963, p. 236)

Although making wheels was the most skilled part of the trade, and gave the craft its name, the wheelwright's shop had to make everything apart from the cast iron axel box. Sturt (1963) gives a full description of each stage of the entire process, beginning with the buying of the growing timber, the work of the pit saws, and the seasoning of the wood for six years. The book gives an insight into the craft mastery required by the wheelwrights. Everything in the workshop was done by hand. It highlights the importance of knowing the local area. For example, it was important to know the kinds of local roads that the wheels would travel on and the land where the different trees they used in the workshop would grow.

So too Kilby's (1972) account of the trade of being a cooper was informative and gives a thorough account of tools and techniques used by the cooper. The coopers were once numerous, and independent craftsmen before they were employed by breweries. Their craft was not only economically vital but was physically demanding and required skill acquired only through years of practice. Many of these barrels are still in use today.

Research written and recorded about Robert Thompson (1876-1955), who was also called Mouseman, provides an interesting perspective on crafting. A tribute documentary recorded in 1948, *Craftsmen of Kilburn*, shows the stages of producing furniture from timber to completed pieces in the workshop in Kilburn in the North Yorkshire countryside. It illustrates the workshop and people woodcarving, making furniture, wood machining and wood finishing. Interestingly, Thompson's family still operate the workshops today, along with the visitor centre located close by. Lennon and Joy (2008) identify some of his famous pieces and give an account of a quiet man who had a business making oak furniture that featured a carved mouse on every piece (*cf.* Figure.7 below).

Lennon and Joy (2008) suggest that the mouse motif came about accidentally in 1919 following a conversation about 'being as poor as a church mouse' that took place between Thompson and one of his colleagues during a carving.



Figure 7: Images of Work by Robert Thompson, Mouseman (<https://www.robertthompsons.co.uk/>)

This chance remark led to him carving a mouse and remained a part of his work from that point on. His work was discovered by leading architects of the day who commissioned major pieces for cathedrals, stately homes, and municipal buildings internationally.

Ruminating after reading Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008) and considering some of the other literature and the television documentaries explored, I began thinking again about how craftspeople 'know'. I ran my hand along the desk and asked the question out loud: how does the carpenter *know* that the timber has been planed enough? What is it about the feel of the surface that tells them to stop? What is the hand telling the person? How do they know? After some further consideration, from an educational perspective, I reflected that in many instances as educators, we make considerable reference to what we understand as learning (for example, learning objectives and learning outcomes) but, yet, in many instances, little consideration is given to the concept, practice and experience of 'coming-to-know'; the material practice of knowing. As a result of this, I realised my research objective was to identify the craftsperson's experience of 'coming-to-know'. My research question coalesced through discussions I had with my supervisors that led me to conclude that

while many craftspeople ‘come-to-know’ their craft using the apprenticeship model of learning, this is not the only way of ‘coming-to-know’.

A brief overview of the apprenticeship model in vocational education is included in the thesis because it has been of significant value to crafting. Some of the participants and the people who influenced me with their craft expertise completed apprenticeships. Equally, people have acquired their craft skills without completing a formal vocational education apprenticeship and their ‘coming-to-know’ is not a solitary exercise, but depends on the influence and contribution of others. My research explores how the craft master comes to know their craft and the different influences and moments that contribute to their ‘coming-to-know’. This research provides a here-to-fore unidentified aspect of the ‘coming-to know’ experience and gives a tangible reality to the influences on this ‘coming-to-know’ experience.

In the initial stages of my research it became clear that the contemporary commercial realities of being a craftsperson have consequences for the craft practice, but after much consideration, I decided that this was an area that should be woven into the project as part of ‘coming-to-know’ and the kinds of communities that have been created to support livelihood.

I also considered including my own journey of learning the craft of beekeeping as a data source in the final project, as I had recorded my learning and ‘coming-to-know’ experience in weekly journals over a period of six years with supporting photographs. However, I made the decision, that while my ‘coming-to-know’ experience was worthwhile and it assisted me in influencing the methodology I used for the research, in this instance, the focus of my research was primarily about engaging with other craftspeople to explore key moments in their ‘coming-to-know’ journey.

I reviewed many research methodologies that might provide the appropriate qualitative data for the study, and I attended three workshops:

1. A Qualitative Research Summer School, which examined Interview Methodology: From Semi-Structured Techniques to Creative Methods.
2. Ethnography Winter School that gave me further knowledge to consider behaviours of people and their interpretation of that behaviour.
3. Certificate in Micro-phenomenology, led by Claire Petitmengin.

Attending these workshops, as well as reading a large volume of literature, informed and developed the skills that I needed for the research. After reviewing many methods, I chose a blended approach of micro phenomenology and narrative research, which will be discussed in chapter 3. The data collected is further supported by a series of vignettes and photographs; although, as noted above these are not a formal part of the methodology, they influenced the research design and research questions. The photographs are, in some instances, part of the data taken during my fieldwork, and in others are used to support memories and to give further illustration of the craft being discussed.

1.2 Idea generation

While mulling over the documentaries and the books and articles I read, as well as thinking about how craftspeople learn, I began to think about the importance of the hand to the craftspeople and the sensory aspects that it entails. Can the sensory aspects of feeling and touch be taught or are they an inherent element of a person's make up? Is attention to these included as a part of learning or is it assumed that one automatically picks it up? How does the craftspeople 'come-to-know' through touch?

The idea for this thesis arose because two people I knew and loved were master craftspeople: my partner, a carpenter, and my mother, a dressmaker. In hindsight, I took their skill for granted and never explored with them how they 'came-to-know' their craft. This realisation was the moment when my personal research question developed into a doctoral research question. I wanted to understand how they came to be the skilled craftspeople they were, and try to understand their worlds more deeply; what influenced them, what motivated them, what made them keep going with their craft? In other words, how did they 'come-to-know'? However, the opportunity to ask them was lost as they are both deceased. My research thus developed into exploring how the craftspeople 'comes-to-know' by speaking with people who are currently practising their craft, while incorporating my own memories and stories of my partner and mother. While the methodology used in this thesis could be applied to the 'coming-to-know' of other professions, the influences on 'coming-to-know' that are identified in this study may be different in other professions. I limited the study to craftspeople because I wanted to put a tangible reality on their experiential journey of 'coming-to-know' while incorporating stories and memories about my mother and

partner. In doing this, I chose to examine different aspects that contribute to a craftsperson becoming a craft master.

The hand is sometimes forgotten as a pedagogical tool and oftentimes is overlooked in preference of the visual senses, where it is perceived that a person sees and then understands, not that they feel or grasp something and then understand. Ingold suggests that the “hand is supreme among the organs of touch, it can tell the stories of the world in its gestures and in the written or drawn traces they yield or in the manipulation of threads as in weaving, lacemaking and embroidery” (2013, p. 112). He continues, ...[R]egarded anatomically, the hand is a marvellously intricate arrangement of skin, bone, muscle tissue and nerves, fed with blood that pulses through the arteries of the wrist. Hands are not instruments operated remotely from a command-and-control centre located in the cerebrum” (p. 112).

Ingold suggests that “the brain does not live inside the head even though it is its formal habitat. It reaches out to the body and with the body it reaches out to the world” (*ibid*). He continues and proposes “thus, right down to the fingertip, and indeed beyond, the hand is an extension of the brain not a separate device that is controlled by it” (*ibid*). The anatomy of the hand, how it is used as a learning tool, and what the relationship is between the hand and the mind in the learning process is explored in the research, drawing on the work of a number of contributors including Sennett (2008), Ingold (1999, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018), Pye (1968, 1978) and Leroi-Gourhan (1993).

Sennett (2008) holds the view that craftsmanship is founded on skill development to a high degree and the best craftsmanship relies on a continuing involvement and can take many years of practice for complex skills of making to become so deeply engrained that they are there, readily available, almost without the craftsmen being conscious of it. His reflections on craft work question what a person is trying to achieve when they work, such as is work a means to an end? and in trying to make a living, have we lost touch with doing things well? He puts forward the view that crafts can come in many guises and offers a reflection that the values of the craftsperson, whether in a potter’s workshop or a hospital theatre, can enrich our lives and change the way we anchor ourselves in the world around us.

1.3 Defining crafting

Sennett suggests that craftsmanship is the special human condition of being engaged in a task resulting in emotional reward for the craftsperson, where people are “anchored in tangible reality and they can take pride in their work” (2008, p. 21). The word ‘craftsmanship’ suggests having an aspiration for excellence and pride in a job well done. It goes beyond technical proficiency to include a set of attitudes that makes the learner both self-sufficient and constantly striving. It means carrying out the job, skill or craft “in such a way that the technique is combined with, even subservient to, a sensibility, a feeling for the materials, a sense of interpretation, or a sense of ‘style’” (Atkinson, 2013, p. 499).

This research argues that it is the practice or skill in using the materials that results in experienced practitioners’ knowledge of the properties of the materials used in the craft, as well as a lifetime of intimate gestural and sensory engagement in a particular craft or trade, that results in finished craft pieces. It explores various influences and aspects that impact on the craftsperson’s experience, including peers, tools (including the hand) and their environment. In many instances, much of the learning has become tacit knowledge that makes it challenging to research without an appropriate methodology: “We can know more than we can tell”, argues Polanyi (1966, p. 4) referring to those ways of knowing and doing that grow through the experience and practice of a craft, but which adhere so closely to the person or the practitioner to be out of apparent reach of explication or analysis. In some instances, a person might know more than they think they know, and this may limit their description and verbalisation of what they know. This research explores the lived learning experience of each of the craftspeople in the study, identifying both specific commonalities and the material particularities that are influential in the experience of learning a craft, some of which may not have been identified before.

In his overview of the historical analysis of apprenticeships, Ryan (1993) outlines the traditional importance of teaching skills and passing them on from one generation to another. He cites Ecclesiasticus, who states that:

[E]very craftsman and master workman, the ploughman, the engraver, the smith and the potter... All these rely upon their hands, and each is skilful in his own work. Without them, a city cannot be established, and men can neither sojourn nor live

there.... But they keep stable the fabric of the world and their prayer is in the practice of their trade.

(Ryan, 1993, p. 1).

Ryan continues to suggest that:

Man, the hunter had very basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and protection. In his wanderings he made use of whatever materials were at hand to fulfil his requirements. He used stone and wood to make implements, skins of clothing, foliage or canvas for shelter. He was probably the original jack-of-all-trades, if he needed something, he made it himself or did without. His children picked up whatever skills he had through demonstration, observation, imitation and oral communication

(1993, p. 7)

Many countries and empires portray objects of beauty and fine workmanship that they could only be the products of well-established techniques and highly skilled craftsmen, and these craft skills must have been passed on and learned through a form of apprenticeship. Examples of this are included in this thesis such as figures 8, 9, and 10 in Chapter 2.

Dorner asks the question, “Why is craft intellectually inconvenient in modern and contemporary art?” (1997, p. 2). He suggests that general definitions of craft “tend to be pretty hopeless...” but suggests two dominant “...sloppy” (p. 5) definitions: “Either craft means ‘studio crafts covering everyone working with a craft medium. This includes procedures of functional ware as well as abstractionist sculptors working in textiles, clay or glass. Or craft means a process over which a person has detailed control, control that is the consequence of craft knowledge. (p. 7)

Greenhalgh cites the founders of the Bauhaus, who proclaimed that “[a]rchitects, sculptors, painters, we must all turn to the crafts... there is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman.” (1997, p. 36). He examined the Woodcraft Folk movement that, in his view, had “little use for art... without recourse to the element of decorative art” (p. 37). He reviews the Women’s Institutes that “passionately promoted the crafts on an amateur and semi-professional level. Craft here was a skilled pastime, or something which was in effect a rarefied form of household husbandry” (p. 37). He further develops his views and states that “craft was premised on the understanding that cognitive and manual activity were effectively the

same” (p. 38). He returned to the view created by the Arts and Craft movement, and states that in his view, “[C]raft stood for the making of things. Artistic expressions through the making process was at the heart of craft aesthetics and politics. For them, skill – regardless of how one characterised it – was part of the infrastructure of making which empowered communities and allowed for the creation of a free, creative society” (p 43).

MacEachern defines craft as “an item that fulfils a function, requires the use of the hands to create, and uses materials identified as natural” (2004, p. 138).

1.4 Methodology

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of the craftsperson’s lived experience. The main aims of the research were to:

1. Identify how they came to choose their craft;
2. Describe the influences on their ‘coming-to-know’ experience, and;
3. Gain further understanding of the embodied journey of knowing their craft.

I explored a number of different methodologies to assess how to best support these aims, and the benefits of using a narrative approach were considered in detail.

However, I identified limitations in this method in terms of accessing often tacit and implicit lived experiences. To gain further insight into the person’s lived experience, I needed to include a methodology that would bring the participant back to key singular moments in their ‘coming-to-know’ experience and that could enable them to verbalise what was actually happening for them in these moments. The methodology and methods adopted for this research is a combination of micro-phenomenological interviewing and narrative research. This blended approach enabled the development of a rich portrait and story of the experience of the craftsperson, one enhanced by photographs and the series of vignettes from memories of two craftspeople in my life. These methods explore the ways in which, through continued practice working with their hands, materials and tools, accompanied by their intimate knowledge of the properties and qualities of each element of each of these, contributed to their ‘coming-to-know’. This, in addition to a lifetime of intimate gestural and sensory engagement in a particular craft, results in finished craft pieces. The benefit of incorporating the micro-phenomenological interview method made it possible to capture what the

individuated *experience* of ‘coming-to-know’ is like for the craftsperson as they engage in learning their craft. This ‘coming-to-know’ did not take place all at once, but rather over a period of time in different stages.

The research identifies aspects and tools that assisted, supported, or enabled their learning, as well as recognising barriers, difficulties and situational factors that had a negative impact on the learning through narrative enquiry. It reflected on their stories in the context of wider discourses about apprenticeships and vocational education.

The craftspeople selected for this study were:

- An uilleann pipe maker
- A knitter
- A leather glove maker
- A wool maker

Over a twenty-four-month period, I spent various amounts of time with the craftspeople, using a blended approach of micro-phenomenology and narrative enquiry in an attempt to draw out their experience of ‘coming-to-know’ and achieving mastery. I accompanied them on their normal outings to explore their everyday settings and routines in their workshops, their kitchens, and their gardens (Kusenbach, 2003; Hall et al., 2008). Since the focus of the project was on the experience and understanding of practitioners, it was informed by approaches that aim to capture rich experiences, including Petitmengin (2006, 2011), Petitmengin et al. (2018), (Vermersch 1994/2017), Polanyi (1966), Ingold (2013), Kusenbach (2003), Hall, Leroi-Gourhan (1993), and Kohn (2013).

The research made clear some stories the craftspeople had about their view and experience of their mastery, their view and experience of using their hand in the craft, and the contribution of education and learning to their mastery. Whilst this is not an ethnographic study in the true sense, there is an ethnographic sensibility that influenced the research and has been incorporated into the findings. To add clarity and further depth to the study, with the participant’s permission, I included some photographs of one of the craftspeople, their craft and the environment in which they live.

I was mindful of the guidelines expressed by Mason (2002) in relation to qualitative research which propose that in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of

interviewing need to uncover the participants' views of their experiences. In this regard, it was important to identify what the craftsperson experienced, and views of their reality including using the hand and the involvement of the hand, tools and materials in their craft. Crabtree, Rouncefield and Tolmie (2012, p. 21) also present a set of sensitising concepts supporting the study of work, including practical action and practical reasoning, interactional work, work practice, and the machinery of interaction before turning to consider the ethnographer's task and the commensurate need to develop what they refer to as "vulgar competence" in a setting's work. They continue:

The point and purpose of ethnography for us is to uncover the machinery of interaction that members employ to conduct and organise their work. The machinery consists of members' methods of work practices. They are known in common, seen and used by members, but usually go unnoticed: members instead attend to the business in hand rather than to the methodical ways in which they go about doing it. If we are to draw them out of the foliage, if we are to notice them, we need first to attend to the modality of action.... we need to attend to the spatial and temporal (synchronous, asynchronous, distributed) character of verbal, material, embodied, and/or virtual action, because the method is in the mode of action's doing. (2012, p. 65)

To support this study, it was beneficial to establish what the craftspeople identified as tacit knowledge, and it could be argued that their craft knowledge is embedded in practice and displays features of a tacit pedagogy with mastery as the outcome. This research explored briefly the apprenticeship model, which has been the traditional pedagogy for crafts, as some of the participants engaged in apprenticeships. However, we can acknowledge through the research, that apprenticeships are not the only means of becoming a craft master.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

This introductory chapter is followed by a short chapter (Chapter 2) on the history of crafting in Ireland. The Literature Review (Chapter 3) explores the literature about perspectives on craft and crafting, tacit knowledge and skilfulness, crafting as an embodied experience, and the influence of place on crafting with specific focus on crafting communities. The literature included in the thesis offers different perspectives on craft and crafting. There is no 'one' view of this, so it includes reflections from craftspeople's own experience of craft and crafting, as well as a variety of

perspectives from an ethnographic and observational viewpoint. The Literature Review then examines the craftsperson's experience of tools and materials used in crafting, with specific focus on the role of the hand in crafting.

The development of craft skills and habits are then reviewed in the context of explicit and implicit knowledge to clarify or establish when the reliance on memory ceases and the person inherently knows how to do something and crafting becomes an embodied experience. The role of the community in supporting craftspeople is then reviewed and this gives a view of the range of different communities identified in the literature that hold and support the craftsperson through their craft journey.

The Methodology Chapter (Chapter 4) gives an overview of the research design used and provides a framework for the collection and analysis of the data. It presents the different research methodologies used in the thesis and the reasons for selecting a blended methodology. The narrative approach enables us to view the background story of the craftsperson's 'coming-to-know' experience and provides an historical, social and cultural context of the craftsperson's experience. The theories and methods underpinning micro-phenomenology are presented, and this give a historical context of how researchers come to examine lived experience. The objective of the micro-phenomenological interview is to obtain detailed descriptions of singular experiences from an embodied perspective, where experience up to that point may not have been identified. This method enables the participant to evoke an experience, recalling it with clarity, including sensory and motor aspects, so as to describe a given experience. Micro-phenomenology is an exciting approach to collecting data and whilst the approach to analysis is not adopted in the research, the micro-phenomenological interviews give great depth to the data and support the research methodology and design.

Chapter 5 presents the Research Findings that were collected from the participants using the blended research approach, centring on the relevance and impact of the findings in the 'coming-to-know' experience of the craftsperson. Some of the findings correlate with the literature, but some new contributions were also identified. There were some similarities in the data from the different craftspeople and some people had unique experiences that were exclusive to them.

Chapter 6, the Discussion Chapter, explains how the use of a blended methodology - narrative research methods and micro-phenomenological interview method, coupled with the philosophical position of interpretivism, facilitated both an exploration of the narrative of their craft journeys whilst also enabling a unique examination of the precise moments that were important in their 'coming-to-know'. The discussion highlights that while the craft community is necessary in supporting the craft masters, other communities that may not be so easily identifiable are also important supporting structures. The experience of using tools and materials and how the person becomes immersed in the process of crafting are discussed.

The conclusion (Chapter 7) gives a synopsis of the benefit of undertaking this research and possible future research opportunities to advance this field of research and practice.

Chapter 2 Historical development of crafting

2.1 Introduction

The literature that explores aspects of crafting tends to focus on the role of craftsmanship, the craftsman and craft mastery, and makes assumptions that women who may have engaged in crafting were really taking on domestic duties such as knitting and sewing. The main way people tended to learn their crafts was by participating in an apprenticeship where the craft master would teach the apprentice the skills needed to undertake their craft, such as knowing the tools and materials to use, techniques and skills, and ensuring there was a market in which the crafts would meet a predetermined need. This section will examine the historical developments of how people engaged in crafting.

The apprenticeship model of education was traditionally used as the method for craftspeople to learn their craft. It seemed appropriate to review the apprenticeship model given its relevance to this research project. Indeed, both Bea McGing (née King) and Michael Leahy whose vignettes are offered in Chapter 1 commenced their craft careers guided by their craft masters using this model.

Traditionally, apprenticeships took on the traditional importance of passing down skills from one generation to another and the following section will give an overview of the importance of the role of apprenticeships as well as an overview of the current apprenticeships that are available in Ireland.

2.2 Apprenticeships

The term apprentice is an ancient institution. Many countries and empires portray objects of beauty and fine workmanship that are the products of well-established techniques and highly skilled craftsmen, and these craft skills must have been passed on and learned through a form of apprenticeship. There are records to suggest that the concept existed for millennia. In his seminal work, Ryan explores the historical aspects of apprenticeships:

There are actual records which prove that the concept existed in the millennium before Christ was born, and probably long before that, in a format very similar to that found today in developed countries. Although a pictorial form of writing is known to have been in use in what is now Iran from 3100 B.C. and although scripts and early alphabets were not developed until the period 1,759 to 1,500 B.C., the probability is

that a form of oral apprenticeship contract existed long before the introduction of writing in whatever form it took

(1993, p 6).

There are records of apprenticeship arrangements in what were the public records offices of towns and cities and in the archives of the palaces of the rulers of the ancient world. These records inform us that there was a wide range of trades and crafts to fulfil the needs of a highly organised society and that the system of training employed and the techniques developed produced workmanship of outstanding quality and splendour (Young, 1989). There is abundant evidence that craftsmanship of a high order was practised in Ireland from the earliest times. Young (1989) catalogues the artistry and craftsmanship of early Celtic metalwork and intercultural contacts and influences are documented. Pins, broaches, rings, bracelets, chalices and other artefacts exhibit similarities of technique and design to those of Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Germans and others, as well as unique features.

Beneath the wild bog lands of North Mayo lies the Céide Fields, the most extensive Stone Age monument in the world with field systems, dwelling areas and megalithic tombs of 5,000 years ago. In architecture and stonework, developments can be traced from the megalithic tomb at Newgrange, dated 3200 B.C. and Dun Aengus on the Aran islands dated 1500 B.C. Four hundred ogham inscriptions are on stone monuments scattered around the Irish Sea, the bulk of them dating to the fifth and sixth centuries. The Cistercian Abbey at Holy Cross and Ballintubber Abbey in Mayo, both dating to the twelfth century. These surviving examples indicate that throughout history a high level of crafting was taking place in Ireland.

2.2.1 Historical influences on apprenticeships

To provide context and to explain the long crafting legacies, many of the crafts arrived in Ireland from other cultures; for instance, metalwork, like agriculture, began in the Middle East, and as the qualities of new materials became widely known, the demand for ore increased. Ireland had an abundance of copper and gold. The Beaker Folk, who emigrated from the Rhineland through Britain to Ireland, around 2,000 B.C., were the first large scale metal workers and in 1500 B.C., were already trading finished goods with Germany and Denmark (Papac et al. 2021). There are many examples of gold ornaments that were made in Ireland during the Bronze Age. For example, there was the gorget, a circular disc of beaten gold worn around the neck as

an ornament, the size of which indicated the status of the wearer. In 1854, gold objects were dug up by railway labourers in Co. Clare (Preagar, 1937). Much of it was sold by the labourers to jewellers and was melted down to make new objects.

Fortunately, plaster casts were made of some neck rings, collars, bracelets and ingots (Armstrong, 1917). The objects date to the Dowris phase of the Bronze Age (900-700 B.C.). Mitchell (1986) describes the hoard of tools found when the Poulaphuca hydroelectric dam was constructed, including axes, hammers, chisels and anvils and suggests that they were the tools of an itinerant bronze-smith and been there for 3000 years.

In the history section of *The Irish Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers* say that “the earliest known evidence in Ireland of woven material dates from about 1600 B.C., as pottery from that period shows signs of woven material in which the clay was placed before firing. A fragment of cloth in the National Museum, found in a bog in County Antrim, is dated from at least 700 B.C.” (np). The arrival in Ireland of Christianity in the 5th Century created new demands and presented challenges to the native Irish craft workers and artists. Christian Ireland heralded the beginning of the Golden Age, with demands for altar furniture, jewellery, gospel books and vestments. As Christians grew in power, wealth and prestige, they began to commission works of art. Among the finest examples of work during this period include the Cross of Cong, the Ardagh Chalice (*cf.* Figures 8 and 9 below), the Tara Brooch, and the Derrynaflin Chalice.



Figure 8: *Cross of Cong*, (1123), Ireland



Figure 9: *Ardagh Chalice* 8th Century National Museum of Ireland

In reference to literature, and specifically to writing and calligraphy, Joyce (1903) explores much of this work, including *The Book of Dun Cow*, *The Book of Leinster*, *the Book of Lecan*, *The Annals of the Four Masters*, *The Book of Derrow* and *The Book of Kells*. All of these display workmanship of the highest order.

The Brehon Laws in the 7th century is the first collection to set down on parchment specifying the colour and ornamental texture of the clothes worn by various grades in society, including braids and borders. This can be seen in more recent work that is still available and includes stained glass windows by Ireland's most renowned stain glass artist, Harry Clarke (1889-1931). His work is included in churches located around the world such as Saint Mary's Catholic Church, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo that contains one of the largest of his collections with sixteen windows (*Cf.* Figure 10 below).

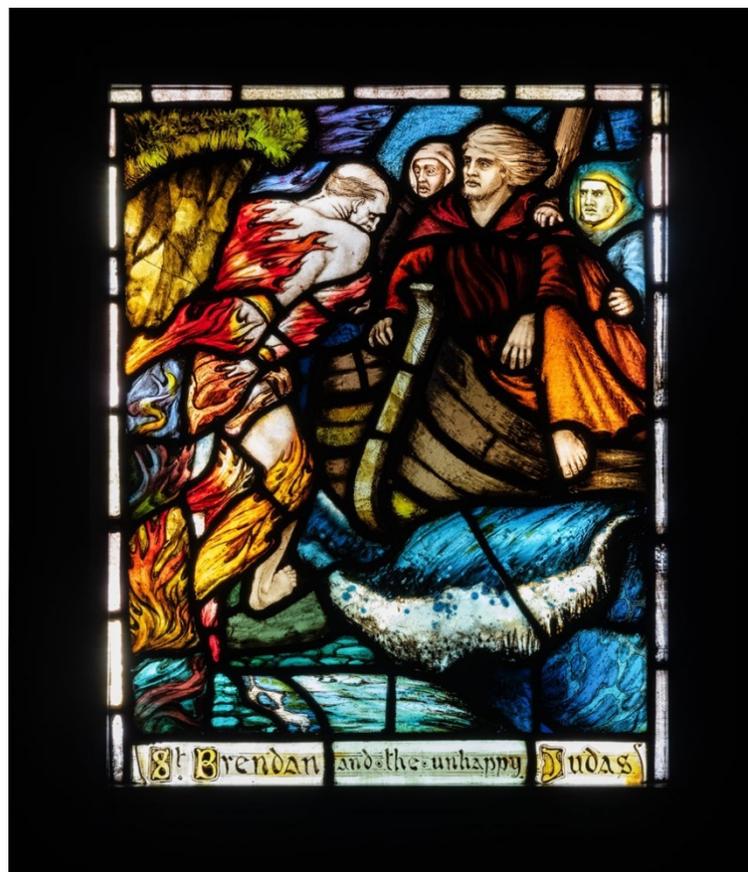


Figure 10: The Meeting of St. Brendan with the Unhappy Judas (1911) by Harry Clarke (CAG.0110), on loan from the Crawford Art Gallery to the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks (December 2024).

The societal organisation that existed in Ireland provided a structure for passing on skills from generation to generation. In ancient laws, in order for families to be recognised as having hereditary rights to an occupation, there were paternal lineages,

where the grandfather and the father of the family would have to practice the craft. Work curated by Young et al., for the Office of Public Works, suggest that the *aos ealadhan*, the elite learned classes, were skilled professionals who served the ruling Gaelic dynasties of their day. They held privileged status and were respected as practitioners of various disciplines, which included medicine, law and poetry. If a person did not fulfil requirements laid out, then their honour, price, and consequently, status, was reduced. From this time, the patriarchy and paternal lineage, along with the exclusion of other forms of crafts, are very evident.

2.2.2 Guilds

Ryan (1993) explores the origins of the Guilds, reflecting their origins in the middle-ages (5th century to the late 15th century). They existed in many states including Ireland and England and were formed to protect the interests of their members, to set standards for the quality and safety of their products, and to share resources and knowledge. The number of handicraft workers in a particular trade had to be kept within limits and the secrets of each craft had to be protected and this resulted in the organisation of the Guilds:

[G]uilds were organised on the basis of three classes of members, the livery, the freemen and the apprentices... The livery consisted of masters who had their own businesses and it from these that the Guild Master, the Wardens and the Courts of Assistants were drawn. They were responsible for the running of the guild, including the fixing of wages and prices. The freemen were the journeymen craftsmen who had served their time and were 'free of the guild' and they could apply to become freemen of the town. If they had the money or the contacts, they could set up as masters, but normally could not work outside the guild without its permission (the term journeyman derives from the French *journee/jour*, a day, and means one who works by the day). At the bottom of the scale was the apprentice bound under contract to his master for a fixed period to learn his trade.

(Ryan, 1993, p. 18)

As civilisation changed, agriculture and industrial activities separated, the farmer ceased to make goods and the craft worker did not work the land. Both produced surpluses, which they exchanged with each other.

The local handicraft worker also had his skill, knowledge and experience and he had to depend on this craft or trade to protect himself from competition. This was how the craft apprentice received their training as a craftsman; his education as a person, his introduction to good citizenship and how he learned to make his contribution to

society. It is important to note that some voices are left out from these accounts, especially women, and some accounts do not take into consideration the poor conditions endured by some of the apprentices. An example of this is noted in Ryan:

In the early days of the craft Guilds, the rules were vague. Initially, it was a private arrangement with a master, who was also a householder to take a young person into his home as one of his family to train in his trade. The period was not fixed; it lasted until the master was satisfied that his pupil was competent. The labour of the apprentice was free to the master, but, sometimes an annual fee in corn, bread or money was due to the master by the parents or guardian... The period the apprentice had to train varied ranging from four to twelve years with seven years being the norm. The age at which apprenticeships started also varied, sometimes eighteen or nineteen years, sometimes not less than fourteen years and sometimes as low as eleven years. (1993, p.19)

The decline and decay of the guilds started in the 16th century and in the 18th and 19th centuries the medieval guilds were abolished and were replaced by the beginning of legislation to regulate work and conditions in the workplace:

In the 17th century, the guilds controlled practically all the trade and manufacture in Dublin but, even at that stage, the signs of decay were there. By excluding from the beginning the native Irish, and later the Catholics, they had, in effect, created a trojan horse for themselves within a City where the great majority were Irish and Catholic. These, being outside the guilds, could not be effectively controlled and worked at their craft 'illicitly'.

(p. 56)

2.2.3 Changes to Education

The development of the educational landscape from the 1800s in Ireland is outlined by Ryan (1993). The funded National School system was set up in 1831 and reduced illiteracy in Ireland from 52.7% in 1841 to 25.2%, as recorded in the 1881 Census. This new system's primary aim was the achievement of basic literacy and numeracy, and consisted mainly of 'The Three Rs'. The *Report of the Commissioners of National Education* (1937) state that the objective was not to teach trades but to facilitate a perfect learning of them by explaining the principles upon which they depend and habituating young persons to expertness in the use of their hands. One of the earliest ventures in this regard was in the area of agricultural education and the establishment of a number of model farms to provide training for national teachers. However, the experiment was not successful and was discontinued in the 1870s. This resulted in the

emergence and establishment of Independent Industrial Schools that were run by religious orders, and a number of Reformatory Schools for young offenders that provided trade, handicraft and horticultural training.

2.2.4 Technical Education

Ryan's research (1993) illustrates that if Ireland was to make economic progress, both industrially and agriculturally, a technically trained and orientated workforce was needed. His work examines the development of the concept of manual skills at primary school level that came to be recognised and accepted. The National Board in 1837 had recognised the requirement for agricultural and industrial education, stating that the object was not to teach trades but rather to explain the underlying principles and encourage the acquisition of manual skills. The *Royal Commission on Technical Instruction* set up in 1881 (Samuelson Commission), and the two reports they published (1982, 1984) outlined developments set up in France for the training of artisans.

The *Technical Instruction Act* (1889) resulted from the recommendations of the *Samuelson Commission*, and Ireland, being part of the United Kingdom, was included in the provisions of this Act. Under this Act, local authorities were empowered to raise a rate of one penny in the pound to provide schemes for technical or manual instruction and to appoint committees to which all powers under the Act, would be delegated. In the period from 1900 to 1927, a system of technical education was formulated (Parks, 1990). It was put in place by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction working in cooperation with local bodies and laid the foundations for the apprenticeship model, complementing the primary, secondary and university sectors.

In 1922 the first Congress was held since the formation of the Irish Free State. At this meeting, deficits in the current apprenticeship model were outlined in O'Reilly's paper, *The Training of Apprentices: Some Necessary Reforms*:

Owing to the selfishness of some employers, the prejudice of some of the older craftsmen, the attitude of the trade unions regarding uniformity of wages and the exceptionally defective primary education of many apprentices, the useful work done by the Technical Schools under the present system of voluntary attendance is only a

small fraction of what would be possible under a system of compulsory attendance within working hours.

(O'Reilly, 1922, p. 135)

In 1926 Ireland had emerged from a ten-year period of turbulence including: World War 1, the 1916 Easter Rising, the War of Independence (1919-1921) and a year of civil war that ended in May 1923. The 1920s was a decade of political change that saw the emergence of partition in Ireland and the creation of a new independent Irish State and "Ireland's chronic problems of emigration, overdependence on agriculture, and a weak industrial sector were accentuated by partition, which removed the most prosperous region and two-thirds of the industrial work force" (Daly, 1992 p, 13).

Among the earliest tasks undertaken by the government were changes to the education system (Walsh, 2016). From the beginning of 1930 to the end of 1950, there were major changes and development in Ireland. Daly (1992) explains that in 1932 the Fianna Fail (FF) party, under Eamonn de Valera, was elected to power for the first time. This was the first change in the political party forming the government since the foundation of the State. It was also a time of great depression with high unemployment and widespread poverty.

2.4.5 Support agencies

The new FF government had a genuine commitment to social reform. Emigration and unemployment were serious problems, and measures were introduced to alleviate the conditions of the poor. The government was committed to a policy of self-sufficiency through balanced growth, based on protection for industry, and, despite an International Depression, there was an increase in employment between 1931 and 1938 (Daly 2011). Barry and Ó Fathartaigh (2012) note that in 1949 the *Industrial Development Authority* (IDA) was set up to support the development of Irish industry. Ten years later, the *Programme for Economic Recovery* was published, marking an historic new departure in Irish economic policy.

Several schemes for recruitment for trades were run by state-sponsored bodies such as *Córas Iompair Éireann* (CIE), the *Electricity Supply Board* (ESB) and *Bord na Móna*, as well as different trade organisations. Examinations in these trades were provided by the Department of Education. Courses in mechanical, electrical and radio were also provided, all certified by the Department of Education. Senior level courses were

provided in Dublin and Cork, with only elementary levels being covered in the smaller urban centres.

Courses for operatives were few, and only offered on an *ad hoc* basis to meet local labour demands. The training of operatives was largely undertaken by industry itself, using the traditional method of learning from an experienced operative, under the guidance of a supervisor. For example, CERT (the *Council for Education, Recruitment and Training*) was established in 1963 in order to provide education, recruitment and training services for the tourism and hospitality industry.

At this stage in Irish industrial development, much work was of a repetitive nature and speed was an important factor. In discussing the development of *An Chomhairle Oiliúna* (AnCO), Sheehy (1995) points out that the rebirth of the Irish economy in the late 1950s, and the fear of skills shortages, laid the foundations for the strong economic growth of the 1960s. The role of AnCO was to provide an adequate number of workers to meet employer demands and to allow workers to improve their job skills. Interestingly, crafting was not included in their remit.

The oil crisis in the early 1970s triggered a recession that changed the ground-rules under which AnCO operated, and, indeed, for the remainder of its existence, AnCO was operating in a Recessionary environment. It now was a means of controlling the numbers on the unemployment register by large-scale training and retraining of the unemployed (Sheehy, 1995). Because 55 per cent of the funding was received from the *European Economic Community* (EEC), much of the training that was provided by AnCO tended towards training that was approved by the EEC.

An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) replaced AnCO. This was a State Agency with responsibility for assisting those seeking employment. It was established in January 1988 under the *Labour Services Act* (1987) and was run by a Board appointed by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, composed of employer and trade union representatives. It could be argued that the main purpose of its existence was to try to keep unemployment figures down. Craft education was not the primary aim of FÁS. It was dissolved in 2013.

In 2013, the transfer from FÁS was successfully completed to SOLAS. This is currently the State Agency responsible for *Further Education and Training* (FET) in Ireland. *Education and Training Boards* (ETBs) grant-aided by SOLAS, offer

270,000 places on 20,000 further education and training courses each year. Education and training programmes are co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund (ESF). One of the main roles of SOLAS is to respond to, and anticipate, the future training needs of business and industries in Ireland.

SOLAS is currently responsible for apprenticeships in Ireland and links employers with apprentices to engage in structured education and training, which formally combines and alternates learning in the workplace with learning in an education or training centre. Apprenticeships are approved on the *National Framework for Qualifications* (NFQ). Current apprenticeships that are being actively promoted by the Irish government to meet the needs identified by *The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs* (EGFSN). The EGFSN was established in 1997 and it advises the Government on future skills requirements and associated labour market needs and issues that impact on the national potential for enterprise and employment growth. The main craft trades have been designated by SOLAS and come within the scope of the Statutory Apprenticeship system. This system is organised in Ireland by SOLAS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Skills, employers and unions. Apart from carpentry and joinery, traditional crafts are not included in this system, and for a person who wished to learn a craft, their learning opportunities are reduced.

2.3 Conclusion

The formal apprenticeship model has evolved over the years, and this research will show that, while the apprenticeship model that was the cornerstone of developing and learning craft skills in the past was effective and an important aspect to learning and maintaining the crafting traditions, it is not the only way to master a craft. The traditional craft apprenticeship, whereby the master directed, instructed and approved the apprentice to reach their potential, has been replaced by an alternative framework that is industry and employer led, supported by needs as identified by the European Union and current apprenticeships exist to meet industry and employer needs. In the main, the traditional craft apprenticeship was gender focused with males engaging in most of the crafting outside of the home and domestic crafting was invisible and unnoticed. We recognise that the current apprenticeship models, provided and supported by SOLAS, is highly efficient and meets needs as identified by Irish employers and industry. However, the demand for apprenticeship places in traditional

crafting practices are limited and herein lies a dilemma. For a person who wants to learn and practice the craft of, for example, thatching, tailoring, instrument making or lacemaking as a career, there are currently no SOLAS apprenticeships available. In the context of mastering a craft there are options available to enable a person to 'come-to-know'. However, options do not have the support of the SOLAS-supported apprenticeship model, because the selected craft falls outside of the realm of industrial models of apprenticeships.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature on crafting with particular focus on the craftsperson's experience of using and working with tools and materials and embodied knowing. It will highlight the aspects that relate to the key learning moments in the journey of mastering a craft. The chapter begins with a general overview of what is understood by the terms crafting and craftsmanship. This is approached from two aspects: the theoretical and the empirical. The second section will reflect on writers who have theorised and made judgments about the materials used in crafting and the materiality of crafting, and it will examine the importance of tools and materials, including the hand, to the craftsperson. The next section of the chapter will examine literature about the experience and practice of engaging in crafting. It will create a picture of what it is to engage in the tacit and implicit way of 'knowing' about crafting. Following this, the embodied experience of engaging in crafting will be reviewed. The final part of the literature review will explore the community and the role of relationships in a craftsperson's 'coming-to-know'.

3.2 Perspectives on craft and crafting

There are a range of definitions available that identify and refer to craft, crafting and craftsmanship. Adamson (2007) says that craftspeople learn their craft through exposure to traditional production methods, extensive hands-on-learning, trial and error, and that their work is an embodied practice characterised by emergent qualities. Such practices are revealed through what Sennett describes as the "intimate connection between hand and head" (2008, p. 9). Crawford (2009) suggests that craft entails the application of bodily skills, technical knowledge, trained sensory capacities, and knowledge of materials and stylistic preferences. Through his observations, Glassie (2011) puts forward the view that biographical accidents can present people with opportunities for different crafts that enable self-expression: some people are calligraphers, some people make baskets.

The influences on the environment in which craftspeople find themselves, such as culture, is referenced many times in the literature and the role of communities on craftsmanship is an important consideration. In some instances, there are different

cultural inflections involved in understanding what is meant by craft. For example, in following tradition, Glassie (2011) records that potters in Turkey do not speak of handing things down, but explains that in learning the craft of pottery, the potter, from birth, *breathes* in the environment of absorbing influences, intentionally or not. The air circulates within, mixing with the silt of the deepest self, and when the artist exhales in creation, the result will perpetually emit the air, of a place, a time, a culture, and an enviably unique individual.

Ingold's (2018) writing on craft, crafting and craftsmanship provides a rich interpretation drawing on the various dimensions of what makes something a craft. He argues that in crafting, every work is an experiment, though not in the natural scientific sense of testing a preconceived hypothesis, or of engineering a confrontation between ideas in the head and facts on the ground. Instead, it is in the sense of prising an opening and following where it leads with no predetermined outcome; the person tries things out and sees what happens, with an innate sense of moral indeterminacy at the centre of the craft, where they do not have a guarantee of the outcome. Ingold (2013) reflects on the concepts of making and growing. In looking at the weaving of a coiled basket, he introduces the term skill and more specifically skilled practice when referring to crafting and he considers that skill is not an attribute of the individual body in isolation but of the whole system or relations of the person in their own environment. He considers the point that it is not in the transmission of formulae that skills are passed from generation to generation but through practical hands-on experience. This view concurs with much of the work that has been recorded pertaining to the apprenticeship model of learning a craft, where many geographic areas concentrated on perfecting a particular aspect of crafting that was shared amongst a community, with the master teaching the apprentice through the generations, and ultimately leading to the transmission of the craft skills. Luckman and Thomas concur:

Crafting is a collective activity, drawing upon shared knowledges, resources and experiences. All making activity is inflicted to at least some degree by the histories and skills which come together in craft work. These histories are in myriad ways collectively held even if individually experienced over time and space... It is the collective experience and history in place of craft which is acknowledged in more cooperative framings or authorial identity including the reputations linked with iconic sites and communities of craft production. (2023, p. 1-2)

The hand, and its role in crafting, should not be overlooked. Indeed, the entire body plays a role. Sennett describes the “intimate connection between hand and head” and puts forward the argument that craftsmanship is not something that is easily acquired and it takes much practice over time to become an expert” (2008, p. 9). Following on from this, Lucas (2022) suggests that skills must be considered as an attribute of the body and skills are more than just one form of dexterity, but correspond to the mastery of bodily techniques. This is explored further in this chapter in Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

Sennett (2008) believes that the practice of craft is a basic human impulse. He argues that craft is the desire to do a job well *for its own sake*, and craftsmanship is founded on skill development to a high degree. The best craftsmanship, he argues, relies on a continuing involvement and it can take many years of practice for complex skills of making to become so deeply engrained that they are there, readily available, almost without the craftsmen being conscious of it. Sennett (2008) regularly refers to the quality of the work and proposes that achieving quality is the craftsperson’s mark of identity. From his perspective, the emotional rewards craftsmanship holds for attaining skill are twofold: people are anchored in tangible reality, and they can take pride in their work. In his view, sometimes society stands in the way of these rewards. He suggests in the traditional world of the archaic potter or doctor, standards for good work were set by the community, as skills passed down from generation to generation, but these standards are not fixed. He examines some crafts that over time changed slowly for the better; for example, when the rotating stone disc holding clay emerged for the potter, new ways of drawing up the clay ensued.

Sennett continues to delve further to offer a view on what he identifies as skill. Skill, he suggests is a trained practice. Skill development, he muses, is dependent on how repetition is organised:

This is why in music as in sports, the length of a practice session must be carefully judged: the number of times one repeats a piece can be no more than the individual’s attention span at a given stage. As skill expands, the capacity to sustain repetition increases... As a person develops skill the contents of what he or she repeat changes... the open relation between problem solving and problem finding builds and expands skills, but this can’t be a one-off event. Skill opens up in this way only because the rhythm of solving and opening up occurs again and again. (2008, p. 37)

Sennett reflects on the research on expertise that says:

Ten thousand hours is a common touchstone for how long it takes to become an expert. In studies of ‘composers, basketball players, fiction writers, ice-skaters... and master criminals,’ the psychologist Daniel Levitin remarks ‘this number comes up again and again’ This seemingly huge time span represents how long researchers estimate it takes for complex skills to become so deeply ingrained that these become readily available, tacit knowledge.

(p. 172)

Describing the work by psychologist K. Anders Ericsson and two colleagues at Berlin’s elite Academy of Music, Gladwell (2008) agrees that ten thousand hours is required to achieve mastery. For that study, the psychologists divided the schools’ violinists into three groups: Group 1 in their view were the top students with world class potential, Group 2 were good enough to play professionally, and Group 3 were unlikely to ever play professionally. All the participants were asked the same question: Since you first picked up the violin, how many hours have you practised? Everyone in the three groups started playing at five years of age. In those first few years, everyone practiced two or three hours a week. When the students were around the age of eight, real differences started to emerge. The students who would end up the best in their class began to practice more than everyone else: six hours a week by age nine, eight hours a week by age twelve, sixteen hours a week by age fourteen, and up and up, until by the age of twenty they were practicing, that is, purposefully and single-mindedly playing their instruments with the intent to get better, well over thirty hours a week. By the age of twenty, the elite performers had each totalled ten thousand hours of practice, the good students had totalled eight thousand hours, and group three had totalled just over four thousand hours. Ericsson and his colleagues compared amateur pianists with professional pianists, and other skilled professionals. The same pattern emerged. Interestingly, Gladwell (2008) recounts that in Ericsson’s studies, he and his colleagues did not find any ‘naturals’, musicians who floated effortlessly to the top while practicing a fraction of the time their peers did. Their research suggests that once a musician has enough ability to get into a top music school, the thing that distinguishes one performer from another is how hard he or she works. What subsequently emerged from Ericsson’s study is that it takes ten thousand hours of practice to achieve a level of mastery in a chosen field (Gladwell, 2008, p.

16). Both Sennett (2008) and Gladwell (2008) support the view that there is no ‘fast’ way to master a craft.

A person needs to have ability and then put in hours of effort and work to become an expert. We will learn more about this as we look at the idea of ‘coming-to-know’ that is being examined in this study. This also introduces the concept that repetition involves rhythm. Rhythm is referred to by Ingold (2013), drawing on Leroi-Gourhan’s (1993) *Gesture and Speech*, when he describes how a great many operations he observes entail the regular repetition of certain manual gestures including hammering, scraping and sawing and whether or not the artisan has an idea in mind of the final form of the artefact he is making. The actual form emerges from the pattern of rhythmic movement and not from the idea.

Ingold reflects on the way in which:

Rhythmic repetitions of gestures entailed in handling tools and materials are set up through the continual sensory attunement of the practitioners’ movements to the inherent rhythmicity of those components of the environment with which he or she is engaged.

(2013, p. 149)

Ingold (2013) notes that this view had already been shared by Franz Boas (1927) who was eager to show how the perfectly controlled rhythmic movement of the accomplished craftsman guarantees a certain constancy of form. He quotes Leroi-Gourhan who says during a discussion of the relationship between function and style proposing that “the making of anything is a dialogue between the maker and the material employed” (Ingold, 2013, p.155 citing Leroi-Gourhan,1993, p 306).

Ingold (2013) further refers to rhythm when describing his basket making experience with his class, and Sennett (2008) refers to the skilled craftsperson who has extended rhythm. Lucas draws on Ingold’s understanding of skill, calling it “... simply as a ‘particular application of dexterity’ in contrast to what he calls ‘know-how’, which refers to the capacity of the craftsman to envision forms in advance of their implementation.” (2022, p. 82)

Even if the core idea is the same, the term dexterity is used to critique a mechanical perception of the body, especially as a technique that serves as a vehicle for the idea of repetition: yet, in reference to the work of Bernstein, Ingold (2013) argues that we never reproduce exactly the same gestures. Regular repetition using familiar tools and materials, clearly give a certain rhythm to the craftsperson's skill development. As they become more familiar with what they are doing, they develop a pattern to their work, and they become familiar with how the tools are held and the force and pressure that is required to achieve the desired outcome.

It was interesting for me to discover this the literature, as the craftspeople I interviewed were able to tell me how they got to 'know' and understand their own rhythmic repetitions, and the determinants that influence them. For instance, the experienced craftsperson can recognise that there may be a slow or 'false start' to their project rhythm. Their experience enables them to have a bank of tactics to overcome errors, and ultimately becomes a part of their rhythm so that only they will know the error existed. Baume describes one knitter's experience:

The knitter always makes mistakes, she had told me on the seafront, in the earliest lines of a new knitted garment – and sometimes she pushes on, covering a substantial quantity of ground before noticing.

No one else would even realise, she explained, but as soon as I see the mistake – as soon as I know it's there – I must go back and fix it. I must unpick the whole lot; I must start over again.

The knitter has now accepted, she had said, that every new thing will begin with at least one false start.

(2020, p. 144)

This example tells us a lot about crafting, quality and skill. The craftsperson wants the work to be as good as it can be. In the experience of 'coming-to-know' the craftsperson may make mistakes and their skill and knowledge will assist in fixing them.

In another example, Jones (1989) focused on one wood worker, Chester Cornett, who learned 'chair making' from his grandfather and uncle using the apprenticeship model. Jones explains how Chester began making things by hand as a small child, later operating the turning lathe while his grandfather Cal made chairs and aiding his

uncle Linden as he wove seats. Of the fifteen or more furniture makers that Jones met, or learned from for his research, Chester, in his view, was the most knowledgeable and dedicated. The community were involved in chair making. For example, Hascal, a chair maker, helped Chester's father Verge and Uncle Everett with minor tasks. Another neighbour taught him to use a turning lathe and other equipment, whilst another gave him rudimentary instruction and showed him illustrations of chairs and models. The tradition described is one of:

[L]earning by being under another's supervision rather than that of formal classroom education or reliance on instruction manuals. The process entails establishing a work rhythm, modelling behaviour and immediate feedback (as well as narrating, ritualising, and other expressive behaviour characteristic of first-hand interaction) that communicates and reinforces ideas about the best ways to do things and the appropriated forms to make.

(Jones, 1989. p. 240)

Rhythm, it could be argued, is the outcome of repetition but, significantly, it is a repetition that is led or informed by a craft master, giving immediate feedback that will complement and or improve the work in progress. It is an effective method of 'coming-to-know' for a craftsperson and can be an informative and motivating method that contributes to forming the crafter's view of the best way to do things.

The acquisition of skills in crafting, and the importance of craftsmanship, however, is contested. In referring to craftsmanship, Pye's earlier work (1968) suggests that it means workmanship using any kind of technique or apparatus in which the quality of the work is not predetermined but rather depends on the judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises when they work. He also suggests that for the craftsperson there is risk involved in the making process. He puts forward that it is only with when there is a lot of things to be made that the risk is reduced, "[w]ith the workmanship of risk we may contrast the workmanship of certainty, always to be found in quantity production, and found in its pure state in full automation. In workmanship of this sort, the quality of the result is exactly predetermined before a single saleable thing is made" (1968, p. 20).

Ingold (2018) concurs with Pye's view (1968) that skills involve qualities of care, judgement and dexterity. Lucas suggests that Ingold provides one of the most in-depth

theoretical discussions, identifying some critical dimensions of what he calls ‘skilled practice’ when Ingold says:

Skill is not an attribute of the individual body in isolation but of the whole system of relations constituted by the presence of the artisan in his or her environment. (. . .) rather than representing the mere application of mechanical force, skill involves qualities of care, judgement and dexterity. (. . .) it is not through the transmission of formulae that skills are passed from generation to generation, but through practical ‘hands-on’ experience.

(Ingold 2000, p. 291)

In referring to skill, Lucas (2022) argues that skills must be considered as an attribute of the body and skills are more than just one form of dexterity but correspond to the mastery of bodily techniques. The main interest is to distinguish skills from knowledges and Lucas puts forward the view that “it is not because someone knows something that he is able to use it” (2022, p. 83), in other words, a person may know something but be unable to perform this knowledge.

There are other definitions of crafting including, for example, that of Roberts who states that “it must be traditional, the craft cannot be high class”, often “one man creates and designs the finished product,” and the craft “requires a greater degree of training and skill than does the occupation” (1972, pp. 234-235). Bronner defines craft as “the transference of craft from teutonic root for ‘strength’ or ‘force’ to ‘skill, art, skilled occupation” (2011, p. 138). What we can surmise from exploring the various terms associated with the term craft, crafting and craftsmanship, is that there are common threads that link them all. Concepts such as practice, skill, dexterity and cross generational community learning combined with an element of risk from working with tools and materials, contribute to understanding the terms. The overriding view, after exploring this aspect of the literature, is that there is no single definition and it is a perhaps bringing together diverse authors’ thoughts on the subject that offer a more helpful description or working definition of what it is to engage in crafting.

The next section of the chapter will examine the craftsperson’s experience of engagement with tools and materials in ‘coming-to-know’ and mastering their craft. It could be argued that we cannot make things without embedding ourselves in the making. In craft practice, procedural memory must be combined with physical action

and these cognitive manual skills can only be achieved “[...] through practice or action rather than through theory or speculation” (Wilson, 1993, p. 45).

3.3 Sensing and making the world: The hand, the tool, the material.

This section engages with writers who have theorised and reflected on the materials and tools used by craftspeople in the process of crafting. It aims to show how the craftsperson becomes familiar with and understands the materials that they work with. It will present diverse interpretations of how the craftsperson comes to recognise good, appropriate and suitable tools and materials for them to use in their crafting, including reference to the use and acknowledgment of the person’s hand to their work. Getting the ‘feel’ for the craft is an aspect that is referred to often in the literature. Learning by doing can enable the craftsperson to become so in tune with what they are doing that it becomes part of the core of their being. They become so involved and familiar with the materials and tools they are using in the work they are doing that their knowing becomes implicit.

3.3.1 The hand and ‘coming-to-know’.

The hand is an essential part of crafting. It is referred to in many craft research papers and books. This section of the chapter will explore various accounts of how the hand shapes the craftsperson’s work. In the process of crafting, one of the first tools that we use when thinking about touch is the hand. It supports us to identify hot and cold, rough and smooth, and how to feel our way. It can be used as a source of sensory engagement and cognition, a tool with which to grasp something, gesture at something or somebody. Socially, to meet and greet and the hand is also used as one of our main sources of identity. It is incredible to look at the hand, the way it can move, the way the fingers can interact or stand alone, the function of the wrist, the sensory sensitivities embodied in the hand and how the two hands can work together. Indeed, the hand itself is a work of art.

For the craftsperson, the hand is extensively used in learning and ‘coming-to-know’ and understanding things. It does not work in isolation but rather with other bodily functions including visual and embodied senses. The person may see something and learn from it and ‘come to know’ and understand it, but they may also feel or grasp

something and then ‘come to know’ and understand. Indeed, a combination of senses may be used in the craftsperson’s experience of ‘coming-to-know’. For the craftsperson, the familiarity of the skill and practice of knowing the sensitivity of touch on tools and materials is a key aspect of mastery that informs their judgements about the how the craft is progressing.

One of the influences that encouraged me to explore micro phenomenology as a research approach is Radcliffe who argues that touch has what he terms “phenomenological primacy” (2013, p. 132) and remains “indispensable to a sense of reality and belonging” (p. 148). Accordingly, while loss of some, or all, of the other senses would undoubtedly radically alter an individual’s experience of the world, loss of touch, insists Radcliffe (2013) would strip such an individual of having a world at all. In this regard, it is worth noting the work of Vannini and Vannini (2020) who undertook a film-making project in which they recorded by video camera with audio, the lived experiences of several different craftspeople at work. In it, touch and its effect with the sensitive impact on the body, including the hand, are noted as critical elements to the sense of reality of the work undertaken in the project. One of the participants, Patrick, a guitar maker, had recently been having problems with his sense of sight. Hearing had always been central to his craft, but because of his recent problem with his sight, he had become even more sensitive to touch. “To underline his point, he picked up a thin piece of cedar and showed the camera the unique qualities of the wood’s texture as his fingers delicately combed through the material” (Vannini and Vannini, 2020, p. 871). The guitar maker said, “‘I do everything by hand’ and ‘when you work with your hands you become much more respectful of your materials. I could make an entire guitar out of what’s in the dumpster of a guitar factory’, he revealed with pride” (*ibid*).

The camera person, Phillip, recorded how Patrick’s hands planed his wood and how his hands, elbows and shoulders tired with every movement under the sheer fatigue of manual labour. Interestingly, Vannini and Vannini note:

As Patrick’s hands endeavoured to carefully plane his wood, Phillip’s hands belaboured to move alongside his. As Patrick’s hands, elbows, and shoulders tired with every movement, so did Phillip’s. As Patrick’s back stiffened as the day went on, under the sheer fatigue of manual labour, so did Phillip’s. The camera may have been

shooting a digital file, but there was nothing immaterial about the filmmaking practice...

As the weight of the camera wore down Phillip's hands, arms, and shoulders, the passage of time revealed that to manually film adequately while conserving physical energy required more than ever a sustained capacity for anticipation because whereas a tripod would have restrained the filmmaker's movement, hand-holding had freed Phillip to move around timely...

Holding a camera in the right spot, with a zoom lens opened at the right aperture, with a shot ideally framed and properly focused is something that requires mind, ears, eyes, fingers, wrists, elbows, shoulders, and back to work together harmoniously and quickly.

(ibid).

The dual observation in this case is interesting. Even though the guitar player was initially the subject of the observation, the recordings of the camera person's awareness of their experience of own hand holding a camera and recording the guitar maker at work, offered additional data that adds value to the lived reality of both people. They are both experiencing tactile sensitivities of the 'coming-to-know', which is evidenced in this project, and echoes Radcliffe's assertion about phenomenological primacy mentioned earlier. The experience of the hand 'coming-to-know' does not happen in isolation; rather, it is a part of an overall tactile process in becoming familiar with and understanding the materials and tools with which they work.

To gain more insight into the practice of 'making', Ingold (2013) took some of his students basket-making. He describes the process they used under the direction of anthropologist and craftsperson Stephanie Bunn. The material they were using to make the baskets was willow. He explains how the willow did not want to be bent into shape, sometimes putting up a fight, springing back and striking the weaver in the face. He notes both himself and the students were surprised that as novices in basket making, how little control they had over the precise form and proportion of their baskets and he tells how the weaving involved muscular movements of the entire body, so that the dimensions of the basket related directly to such bodily dimensions as an arm-reach and shoulder height, a perspective of the maker, an aspect they had not considered before they engaged in the project. They laboured for three hours and Ingold notes that they developed a rhythm and a feel for the willow, but what they

discovered was that while they were progressing with the ‘making’, they were unsure about when to stop because there was no obvious point when the basket was finished. External factors that they had no control over indicated when the project was complete. They decided to stop when the light was failing and there was a threat of rainfall.

Ingold remarks that despite each person working with the same material, willow, and each person was under the same instructor’s direction, “each basket was different uniquely reflecting the mood and temperament, as well as the physical stature, of its maker” (2013, p. 23-24). He mentions that despite the challenges that they experienced working with the willow, each person went home proud of the baskets they made. The students expressed to him that they had come to know more from this practical afternoon than from any number of lectures and readings, “above all about what it means to make things, about how form arises through movement, and about the dynamic properties of materials” (p. 24). This example illustrates expression, gesture and how their experience of basket made as a unique experience for each of the group. Each maker immersed themselves in the making of the basket, and the resulting basket was what each person brought to the basket making - their physical body, their rhythm, their tactile feel for the willow, their mood and their pride. No two baskets were the same, because no two people are the same and this unique contribution of the self to the basket making makes the product more intimate and special to the maker.

As handed beings, we are not alone, and the world is not alien to us. Ingold (2013) argues that the hand is supreme among the organs of touch. It reaches out from the body and with the body it reaches out to the world. Thus, right down to the fingertip, and indeed beyond, the hand is an extension of the brain, not a separate device that is controlled by it. He further argues that when compared with the hands of other primates, the hands of human beings are truly without parallel for three reasons:

1. They have flexible fingers that can be moved independently.
2. They have nails that allow greater play to sensitive pads at the fingertips.
3. Every hand has a thumb that can turn.

(p. 112)

Cook (2024) explores the senses of touch, through the craft work of subcultural graffiti artists. He argues that touch plays a significant role in enabling the graffiti artists to engage with their tools and materials:

Touch was an integral part of painting especially when carried out in low light or darkness, under a head torch, streetlamp or other artificial low light source.

Touch became a sense much used and a key information source for meaning.

...He rubs a palm along the wall to judge it - feels its smooth concrete texture, feels its coldness and judges it to be slightly damper lower down. He feels in a pocket for a cap. Too dark to see it. Rolls it in his fingers. Holds the cold can, feels the place to fit the cap. Feels the cap for the nozzle and finger hold to know where the paint will come from.

...Each tool was known and understood through touching it. A cap is small, difficult to feel but unique by shape and form, unmistakably a cap to a writer. Many caps can be known individually by touching them to find their shape, size and form. The assemblage of attributes the cap has, like a woodworker's chisel, means it can be identified through touch and be known for a specific purpose or outcome.

The cap is how the writer controls the paint and is therefore a key material object, an understanding of which can be gleaned through touch. Touch provided a writer with data about tools that were utilized for craft work.

(2024, p. 128).

This work, and the work of Vannini and Vannini (2020), show how the craft form can provoke strong practitioner feelings of touch and sensory engagements linking the senses to the craft.

Reflecting on the hand, Ingold (2013) discusses the concepts of grip and touch, outlining lists of what scholars suggest the hand can do, for example, grip, grasp, and grab. He refers to Leroi-Gourhan (1993) who describes wounding with the fingernails, grasping with the fingers and the palm, gripping between the fingers and when leverage is exerted by hand and forearm working together, throwing a spear. Ingold (2013) asserts that while these are uses for the hand, they do not include additional uses such as milking cows, squeezing laundry and kneading dough or clay. He surmises that while these are indeed uses of the hand, they are not exhaustive as there are additional uses that are not included, such as an individual's method of holding a pen, playing an instrument, carpentry and stonemasonry.

Gallagher (2013) puts forward the view that hands and brains need to be understood as part and parcel of larger dynamic systems that reach out into the world. Hands matter, not just because they facilitate gestural communication, but also because they

enable us to make sense of the intentions of others. He argues that the hand can be such an ingrained part of the physical being and proposes that the hand is faster than conscious vision, but not necessarily faster than unconscious vision. As an agent reaches to grasp something, the hand automatically (as well as manually) shapes itself into just the right posture to form the most appropriate grip for that object and for the agent's purpose. The hand does not do this blindly; it requires the cooperation of the dorsal visual stream to provide visual information about the shape of what he is about to grip and where in the nearby environment it is located.

From this, ideas pertaining to touch are further explored by Gallagher (2013) who puts forward the opinion that hands play an important role in rationality as part of a more holistic system, rather than just on their own. Ingold (2013) wonders how the hands or the fingertips feel. For example, a musician playing a string instrument must be able to feel as they stop the strings with their fingertips, or the pianist who strokes the keys with fingers, must feel the keys with their fingers. To look at this further, Ingold explores the work of Heidegger, who argues that “‘modern man’, ‘writes ‘with’ the typewriter. Ingold imagines Heidegger as frowning upon the typewriter because the “typescript is inhuman because the words spelled out upon the page are devoid of manual movement and feeling” (2013, p. 122). He also notes that Heidegger is “an incorrigible pessimist who missed no opportunity to moan about how technology was eating away at the very foundations of our humanity” (p. 122). Ingold makes reference to Leroi-Gourhan, who shared with Heidegger a profound respect for human craftsmanship, but who acknowledges that with technological progression leading from manipulation with bare hands and the hands working machines “undoubtedly represents a very important social advance” (p. 158): something is lost as well as found.

The key issue here is to ask whether it is important that the hand or fingertips can feel in other activities. Ingold puts forward his view:

But does the driver of a forklift truck feel the weight of the load he is lifting?

Does the parquet machine operator feel the bite of the saw as it slices the wood?

Does the typist feel the different shapes of the letters she is typing?

If the answer, in each case, is ‘no’, then the touch of the finger, however sensitive and precise, is without feeling.

The fingertip interacts with the machine, through the ‘interface’ of button or key, but its gestures do not correspond with the material movements or traces that ensue.

The finger is but a ‘prod’ and its contact with the interface a ‘hit’. As in eye-to-eye contact, the hit establishes a relation that is optical rather than haptic, rational rather than sentient.

(p. 123)

In considering the hand as a tool in the craft process, these views are worthwhile and contribute to our understanding of touch and feel. Rather than limiting our views and dismissing that these sensations no longer exist because there is no direct contact, one might consider that while there may be no direct feel from the hand and fingertips, the sense of feeling does exist. The feeling may take place when the operator interacts with the button or key whilst working the machine, and that ‘hit’ is optical rather than haptic. There may be a sense of feeling, an understanding, a familiarity or an intuition of the expectation and anticipation of the feel in each case and the telling by hand that traditionally was experienced by direct contact of the hand or fingertips with a subject is now being enhanced to a deepened sensitivity by transmitting through another layer of material or machinery.

Ingold acknowledges the verb ‘to tell’ has two related senses. “[O]n the one hand, a person who can tell is able to orally recount the stories of the world. On the other hand, to tell is to be able to recognise subtle cues in one’s environment and to respond to them with judgement and precision” (pp. 109-110) and he suggests that for those who listen, watch or read, things can be pointed out to novices so that:

... They can discover for themselves what stories the stories might hold in the situations of their current practice... Making their ways in the company of those more knowledgeable than themselves, and hearing their stories, novices grow into the knowledge of their predecessors through a process that could best be described as one of ‘guided rediscovery’, rather than receiving it ready-made through some mechanism of replication and transmission

(2011, p. 162).

To tell, in short, is not to explicate the world, to provide the information that would amount to a complete specification, obviating the need for would-be practitioners to inquire for themselves. It is rather to trace a path that others can follow (Ingold, 2013, p. 110). Ingold acknowledges that each of the senses have a role to play, “we have eyes to watch and look, ears to listen and noses to sniff the air” (p. 111). He explains that the hand is unique because:

Compared with eyes, ears and nose on the one hand, and the voice box on the other, the hand is unique in so far as it combines telling in both of its aspects. The more eloquent the eyes, the less they see; the more they see, the less they give away. But with the hand there is no such trade-off. Not only is it supreme among the organs of touch, the hand can also tell the stories of the world in its gestures and in the written or drawn traces they yield, or in the manipulation of threads as in weaving, lacemaking and embroidery. Indeed, the more gesturally animate the hand, the more it feels.

(p. 112)

Another example of ‘telling by hand’ is provided by Martin (2021) who, when writing about his experience as an apprentice, describes the way that at certain times, craftspeople - in his case, boat builders - paused and ran their hand across the piece on the workbench, feeling for some detail on the surface, the expression on their face indicating how they judge progress to be unfolding. Touch, and how the craftsperson as Martin (2021) describes, gets ‘the feel’ for something is an important aspect of crafting but is only apparent to craftspeople with extensive experience. This will be explored in more detail in the next section on tacit knowing.

Like Martin (2021), Sennett (2008) looks at how craftspeople work - namely musicians, cooks and glassblowers – in order to explore how their hands become highly trained. He shows how certain skills can become habits and sometimes, the habits need to be ‘untapped’ to develop new skills or ways to create new outcomes in each of the crafts. In a similar way to Ingold (2013), Sennett (2008, p. 151) focuses on grip and touch as the key capacities that make hands human and outlines some of the basic ways to grip things as suggested by Marzke (1997). These include pinching between the tip of the thumb and the side of the index finger, cradling an object in the palm and moving it around with pushing and massaging actions between thumb and fingers, and holding the object in a rounded hand, with the thumb and index finger placed on opposite sides of the object. The problem with gripping, especially for people who develop an advanced hand technique, is also the problem of letting go, which is, knowing when to let the tool, or material go. Sennett proposes that:

One of the myths that surround technique is that people who develop it to a high level must have unusual bodies to begin with. As concerns the hand, this is not quite true... All hands can be stretched out through training so that the thumb forms a right angle to the first finger. A necessity for cellists, pianists with small hands can likewise develop ways to overcome this limit. Other demanding physical activities like surgery do not require special hands to begin with—Darwin long ago observed that physical endowment is a starting point, not an end, in any organism’s behaviour. This is

certainly true of human hand technique. Grips develop in individuals just as they have developed in our species.

(2008, p. 152).

He writes at length about the ‘truthfulness’ of touch at the fingertips, suggesting that while in principle, habit should have ingrained accuracy, it is not always that case but that by “believing in correctness drives technical improvement; curiosity about transitional objects evolves into definitions of what they should be” (p. 159). So, for example, a musician who hears a piece of music played correctly will aspire to repeat the sound, “the musician has an objective standard to meet: playing in tune ...and the sound itself ‘is the moment of truth’” (*ibid*).

Both Sennett and Ingold are cellists. It is not surprising then, that they look at musicianship as part of their analysis of craft. Sennett (2008) suggests that when a musician plays a piece correctly, they search for the means to repeat and reproduce the piece, but that is not easy to do and may involve trial and error to play again the piece in a way that they are happy with. In playing string instruments, he makes reference to the calluses of thickened skin at places on the fingers that constantly are rubbing against the strings, in a similar way that people who go barefoot develop calluses. Rather than deadening or reducing the sensitivity and touch felt by the person, it is in fact quite the opposite: calluses allow greater sensitivity as they make the act of probing or treading less hesitant. For example, the cellist can bring their fingers down on the fingerboard with assurance and really commit to the strings, because their fingers are not deterred by the anticipation of soreness. Further, they can also lift the fingers with the same poise, thus ensuring a note that is pure. This highlights the importance, to the musician in this instance, of touch to the finished musical piece.

One might think that a person doing the same thing over and over again might find the task boring. However, Sennett (2008) explains that for people who develop sophisticated hand skills, it is nothing like this, and while the substance of the routine may change, metamorphose, improve, the emotional payoff is one’s experience of doing it again and the skilled craftsperson has extended rhythm to the hand and the

eye. For one of the craftspeople, he explained how the hand and eye learned how to concentrate:

The frame for this learning was the critical moment in the craft of glassblowing when molten glass is gathered at the end of an extended narrow pipe. The viscous glass will sag unless the pipe is constantly turned.

In order to get a straight bead, the hands have to do something akin to twirling a teaspoon into a pot of honey. All the body is involved in this handwork. To avoid strain when twirling the pipe, the glassblower's back must incline forward from the lower rather than upper torso, like a rower reaching for the beginning of a stroke.

This posture also steadies the craftsman in drawing back molten glass out of the furnace. But critically important is the relation of hand and eye.

(p. 173)

He concludes that when this craftsperson was doing a new project, “[s]he was no longer conscious of her hands, she no longer thought about what they were doing: her consciousness focused on what she saw; ingrained hand motions became part of the act of seeing ahead” (p. 176). The repetition and practice, as discussed in the previous section, is important to ingrained hand motions and central to what crafting is about.

Baume reflects on her father, and she recounts that her dad, from whom she inherited a propensity for handiwork, had hands that “were permanently calloused and oil-stained; he held even his knife and fork as if they were tools” (2020, p. 71). She continues and states “I have my Dad’s hands – the length of his fingers, the width of his knuckle bones... rough skinned and muscular, calloused and stained” (p. 80).

Saramago, says “in each of our fingers, located somewhere between the first phalange, the mesophalange and metaphalange, there is a tiny brain” (cited in Baume 2020, p. 90). In an attempt to maximise the benefit of her hands, Baume states “I am aware: that hands appraise separately and exceptionally, that smothering them in latex would only compromise the fluidity of their thoughts” (p. 90).

This section shows how the craft hand becomes ingrained in the crafting process such that the person can become so involved in the crafting that they are not conscious of the process, and it may not be until their consciousness is alerted to something that they reconsider each of the elements of the process again. It may be that that they have advanced to a new level of consciousness, and their focus is concentrating on

new aspects of the craft that have now become a priority as they achieve and continue to advance their craft mastery. The craft hand is a vital part of the craft process.

3.3.2 Tools and materials

Many craftspeople use very simple tools to engage in crafting, for example, needles in needlework, hammers, scissors, sewing needles in leatherwork, paint brushes and paint for painting, hand and chisel used in sculpture. Jones' (1989) descriptions of hand-made chair making looks at the simplicity of the tools that are used in the process and explains that at the time he did his study, many of the tools used were made by the craftspeople themselves.

Ingold (2011, 2012, and 2013) differs in this as he sees tools and materials as part of a complex assemblage of relations. He suggests that making reveals a broad process through which people acquire knowledge. Working with materials, feeling them, watching them, listening to them and thus paying attention to what they can teach is revealing of what people can learn in virtue of openness to the world. Knowing, Ingold writes "is a process of active following, of going along" (2012, p. 1) with the materials themselves. Knowing, in this sense, is a type of movement, a moving with forces and materials, following their lead. Craft makers "think through making" by engaging in a form of enquiry that "continually answers to the fluxes and flows of the materials" with which they work (Ingold, 2013, p. 6). He also suggests that making, as a concept, is sensitive to the unscripted and non-determined process through which skilled practice unfolds as a type of learning as you go (*ibid.*). Vaninni and Vaninni say that, "The concept of making highlights not only the activities of makers (see Coe 2013) but also the aliveness of materials themselves; how they enable and constrain, and how they grow and change and become entangled in specific assemblages of production and consumption" (2020, p. 866).

Sennett gives much consideration to the tools used in crafting. He explains the evolution of tools used and suggests that as tools became fit for purpose, they became more difficult to use as they were made specifically for a purpose, for example he describes how:

Ordinary surgery famously made use of the barber's razor; these razors were made of primitive iron and thus difficult to keep sharp. In the late 1400s knives appeared made

of better-tempered iron, an iron now mixed with the same silica used for glass; these knives could be finely sharpened thanks to blocks of composite stone that replaced the traditional leather strap. The modern scalpel was a product of this technology. Its blade was smaller, its shanks shorter than the cooking knife. Scalpels came in varieties fit for the particular purposes of dissection and surgery, some sharpened only at the tip for cutting membranes, others hooked but dulled around the curve to lift up blood vessels. The bone saw and bone scissors became practical tools in the early sixteenth century; though these devices had existed before in crudely tempered iron, their edges were so dull that they must have mashed as many bones as they separated. (2008, p. 197).

However, he further notes that the refinement of tools enabled the crafting to elevate in quality, for example “with the new scalpel, a small vein could be lifted from its marbling of tissue, for instance, the vein then analysed and discussed as a distinct object” (p. 199). Sennett (2008) highlights the importance of tool maintenance and the relevance of repairing tools, suggesting that it is in repairing tools, that a person understands how they work. The sociologist, Douglas Harper believes that making and repairing form a single whole; and those who do both possess the “knowledge that allows them to see beyond the elements of a technique to its overall purpose and coherence. This knowledge is the ‘live intelligence, fallibly attuned to the actual circumstances’ of life. It is the knowledge in which making and fixing are parts of a continuum.” (cited by Sennett, 2008, p. 199)

Put simply, Sennett argues that “it is by fixing things that we often get to understand how they work” (p. 199). He develops this point further and explores different technical ways people use their hand with tools, reviewing how the various tensions used in the hands, wrist and forearm influence the outcome achieved by the craftsman using their tool. He shows how craftspeople establish a baseline of minimum necessary power when using tools and how they learn to let go. His analysis highlights the importance of the craftsman’s continued practice that ultimately results in self-control over the body which in turn results in accuracy of action rather than sheer brutal force that is counter-productive to handwork.

Continuing with Sennett’s example of the scalpel development, he describes how surgeons struggled using the new tool:

In the first generations of the scalpel's use, surgeons had to deduce by trial and error how they could best control it. The very simplicity and lightness of the scalpel was a challenge... These finer tools, proved harder to use; the very precision of the scalpel challenged the hand technique required of the doctor or dissector.

(pp. 197-198)

Sennett cites the experiences of Andreas Vesalius, a Brussels doctor, who published his *De humani corporis fabrica* (On the fabric of the human body) in 1543. The work marked an event in handcraft as well as in the understanding of the human body, for Vesalius drew on "repeated observation of cadavers that he had dissected with his own hands" (p. 197). Vesalius sought more exact information, such as precisely how blood vessels were marbled into the fabric of muscles and organs. To get at this data, Vesalius's investigation required virtuoso hand technique in using the scalpel. To achieve this, movement of weight and emphasis within the body had to change, where the "emphasis had to shift to the fingertips, as less shoulder and upper-arm effort was required to get inside the body... and the very sharpness of the scalpel meant that the slightest misstep of the hand would ruin the dissection or cause disaster in operations on living bodies" (p. 198).

There is a certain familiarity in using tools that one has been accustomed to. New tools require new practices and the example here illustrates that even though the hand may be holding the tool, other body parts are also engaged in the process of using it; when there is a change to what has been a familiar practice, this change impacts the entire bodily movements and the effort that goes into using the new tool. Ingold (2013) offers a distinct perspective and suggests that the way of the craftsperson is to allow knowledge to grow from the crucible of practical and observational engagements with the beings and things around us. He says that, in general, we are accustomed to think of making as a project. That is, we start with an idea in mind of what we want to achieve, and with the supply of raw materials and tools needed to achieve it. We therefore assume the project is finished at the moment when the material takes on the intended form.

To illustrate this, Ingold describes an experiment he did with some of his students. He asked them to gather a selection of random objects that they found lying around and to bring them to class. They came to class with "a motley assortment of odds and ends:

there were coins, paper clips, drinks cans, cigarette butts, a rubber ball, the feather of a seagull and much else besides” (2013, p. 36). They put everything into a heap in the middle of the floor and picking up each item in turn:

...examined it, investigated its form, interrogated the finder on where it was found and why it had caught his or her attention, and attempted to reconstruct the story of how it had fetched up at that particular place. The coins, for example, told of pockets and purses and of countless transpositions from hand to till and back. The paper clips once fastened the documents of a busy official, while the cans – previously filled with liquid – had been held to thirsty lips through which, only moments before, had been [*sic*] inhaled the smoke of smouldering tobacco. From the tooth marks on its surface, it was apparent that the rubber ball, recovered from a sandy beach, had been the plaything of a dog, while the feather had once graced a bird in flight, high in the air. All of these objects, in short, evidenced other lives – human, canine, avian. And yet in becoming objects they had broken off from these lives – like fallen twigs from a tree – and were left lifeless, as so much bric-a-brac stranded on the riverbank.

(p. 37).

To further the experiment, the following week, he asked the class to return to their project sites and bring along to class a selection of materials from the sites. Once again, the class obliged and came with containers full of stuff like sand, gravel, mud and leaf litter. They used containers “because, as we found as soon as we emptied out the contents, materials do not, of themselves, stay in place or hold to the bounds of any form, and have an inherent tendency to run amok” (p. 37).

He then describes how they got their hands dirty touching the materials and this he explains offered them “an experience of tactility that could not have been more different from the clinical detachment with which we had examined the objects of the previous week” (p. 18) and he suggests that in examining the things collected in the first week:

[I]t was as if we had worn protective gloves, to ensure that there should be absolutely no exchange of substance between the object and the hands that held it. Nor should it be bent, broken or squashed. Our concern had been exclusively with the stillness of form, and like detectives, we were at pains to handle every object delicately, so as not to tamper with the evidence or compromise its value as data

(*ibid*)

He continues and relates the experiences of touching the materials and compares the two experiences:

[T]he experience of tactility was all about grain and texture, about the feeling of contact between malleable substance and sensitive skin, about dry sand cupped in the

palm and running through the fingers, wet mud sticking and caking as it dries out, the rough abrasion of gravel, and so on.

This offered an experience of tactility that could not have been more different from the clinical detachment with which we had examined the objects of the previous week.

(p. 37).

The experiment continues when Ingold brought some glue and hardboard to the class and they began mixing the materials however they wished and put them onto the board:

The result was a rather astonishing series of artworks. I think what was most astonishing about them was the way in which they registered the traces of movement and flow: on the one hand the manual and bodily gestures of ourselves, as practitioners; on the other hand the particular flow patterns of the mixtures we had made

(p. 38).

At the end of the experiment, Ingold ponders about what would have happened if the class thought about the objects they brought in as materials, and, instead of thinking of each object as finite, examined the properties of the object or the relationships with the objects, for example, hammering the coin or “heating it up and seeing what happens when you put it in a flame... In every case, by treating these erstwhile objects as materials we rescue them from the cul-de-sac into which they had been cast and restore them to the currents of life” (p. 19). He says:

I want to think of making as a process of growth. This is to place the maker from the outset as a participant in a world of active materials. These materials are what he has to work with, and in the process of making he ‘joins forces’ with them, bringing them together or splitting them apart, synthesising and distilling, in anticipation of what might emerge.

(p. 21).

Even if the maker has a form in mind, it is not this form that creates the work. It is the engagement with materials. And it is therefore to this engagement that we must attend if we are to understand how things are made.

(p. 22).

These experiments assist us in understanding that in many instances the craftsperson cannot judge what the results of the engagement of the hand, tools and materials will be. The way in which the person views the materials they are working with will influence creativity, and the experiments highlight the importance of observation, feeling and paying attention to what the person is working with. This is not to

undermine the concept of risk when working with things, as the materials may not take on the intended form. The next section will examine risk as a factor in making.

Pye (1968) was an architect, industrial designer and craftsman. He had a keen interest in viewing things from the point of view of the craft worker. He explains that design is what can be conveyed in words and by drawings, whereas workmanship cannot. In practice, the designer hopes the workmanship will be good, but the ability/skill of the workman determines whether it shall be good or not. He proposes that whether the quality is good or not also depends on the environment and that no designer can make bad workmen produce good workmanship. In referring to the environment, Pye (1968) refers to material that can be worked by craftspeople, and he suggests that unless workmanship, that is, craftsmanship and the environment in which they work comes to be appreciated for the art it is, our environment will lose a quality as we have known it.

Ingold (2010) is aware of this concept of risk, and alludes to makers who work with materials have to work in a world that does not stand still until the job is completed, with materials that have their own properties that might not automatically fall into shapes required of them. He also acknowledges that there is a difference between design and creation. Referring to Brand (1994), he says that an architect, the designer of a project, sees the finished building whereas the building contractor sees it as a sequence of events, including building a foundation, frame and roof that need to be created to make the design happen.

Ingold offers another example of working with materials with his students in the University of Aberdeen. Using fabric, matchstick bamboo, ribbon, tape, glue and twine, working indoors and on tables, each of them made a kite. “It seemed that we were making an object. But as soon as we carried our creations outside, they leaped into action, twirling, spinning, nose-diving and, occasionally flying” (2010, p. 95). The materials put together on the table inside jumped into life when brought outside and the wind caused the kite to come into life. Referencing the philosopher Heidegger, the thing presents itself “in its thinging from out of the worlding world. It is a particular gathering together or interweaving of materials in movement. Thus, the

very 'thinginess' of the kite lies in the way it gathers the wind into its fabric and, in its swooping, describes an ongoing 'line of flight'" (p. 96).

These examples led Ingold to propose that, in a sense, the only way a person can really know things is through a process of self-discovery and that "to know things you have to grow into them, and let them grow in you, so that they become a part of who you are" (2013, p. 1). Making is a process of growth that is impacted by the self, the body, tools, materials and environmental factors, all of which have an impact on the finished craft piece.

Like Ingold (2013), Hunt (2011) suggests that through the crafter's deep understanding of raw materials, tools and methods and their mastery of technique, the aesthetic potential of a work can be realised. She examines the craft of stone-crafting from the perspective of the carvers, paying attention to what they know and what they value. Many of the stone carvers in the study came from a lineage of carvers where it was an integral part of each of their lives. To start their learning, they recounted being handed a hammer and a chisel and then they cut. The secret for them, however, was their apprenticeship, watching other people who were better at aspects of carving than they were. They watched one, then watched another and by observing they developed their own technique. They were motivated by the competitive aspect of being recognised for their skill and they highlighted the importance of pride in their work. Methods of carving varied according to the type of carving and the kind of stone being worked. The actual design and drawing created by the architect is important to the outcome, but so too is the stone that they are using to create the piece. They noted too, however, that they are not the designers, they are following the drawings set out by the designer, also noted by both Ingold (2013) and Pye (1968). Yet, like other craftspeople, they refer to the saying: measure it twice, cut it once. The high degree of risk inherent in their craft shaped the carvers' approaches and attitudes to their work, requiring not only great manual dexterity but also patience and care (Hunt, 2011).

To avoid misrepresentation, it is not to say that mistakes are not made in 'coming-to-know'. Making mistakes is a part of the learning process. Learning about the tools and materials is inherent to the experience. Sennett, when describing the musician's learning, proposed that "I experience error – error that I will seek to correct... I make

mistakes... I have to be willing to commit error, to play wrong notes, in order to eventually get them right” (2008, p. 160). Despite the errors, the evidence is clear that practising and repeating actions over and over again, is instrumental to achieving mastery and as such is instrumental to attaining true craftsmanship. The importance of self-discovery, repetition and taking risks are essential aspects to the learning process of ‘coming-to-know’ and making mistakes is a part of this process.

Holtzberg (2011) recounts a story of a happy confluence of place, tradition, family legacy, and individual skill. She describes how traditional shipbuilding methods were kept alive in a town where people had been building ships since 1630. The materials used to build the ships and the skills learned over generations are instrumental to the ship’s construction. Fifteen shipyards launched fifty vessels a year up to the late 1940s when the industry collapsed due to the manufacture of steel ships. However, a few shipwrights continued to build vessels such as lobster boats and pleasure crafts. Harold A. Burnham spent his youth watching and learning from these shipwrights, before going to sea as a naval officer. Several years later he was commissioned to build a schooner, the first of many sawn-frame, trunnel-fastened vessels built in the town in fifty years. Because there were so few wooden ships being built, there were very few suppliers of ship timber. Therefore, he had to cut and mill much of the timber – white oak and locust – used in the ships himself. Holtzberg (2011) tells us that in Burnham’s view, while many of the skills used in building the ships are important, it was his skill as a mariner that made these boats uniquely seaworthy. His experience of years at sea enhanced his skill and enabled him to judge where to put the wood in the vessel, or how much to put in. Traditional ship building methods are an art form that have taken years to develop to enable people to understand them and complete them efficiently and effectively.

Supporting the points made above, Martin argues that “skilful manipulation of materials and tools entails seeing, feeling, or otherwise recognising features of the work that are only apparent to craftspeople with extensive expertise in a particular field” (2021, p. 2). His research explores the claim that if the skilled craftsperson sees a wealth of detail in the equipment they use, where the outside observer does not, it follows that these objects change in the eyes of the learner as he or she becomes acquainted with new workshop practices. In an attempt to give further credence to this

view he decided to experience it himself and joined a craft workshop where he learned a practical trade in the same way as apprentices do, by observing and participating in everyday work. His selected area was wooden boat building. In his work he records how, by turning his lens inwards on to his own learning experience, he was able to record changes in his perception of tools and materials, and how by recording his experience he was able to see details that previously had been invisible to him. He describes how craftspeople, from experience, get ‘the feel’ for doing things correctly and when they are asked how they know, they are unable to give an articulate answer. He refers to Lum (2009) who suggests that the practical setting in which objects are used defines how the objects are perceived. He proposes that skilled practitioners see, hear, and feel the world in ways that outsiders to their respective fields do not, and suggests that skills are situated within the social settings in which they take place and among the people who employ them.

A rich tapestry has been woven here highlighting what it is to be fully engaged in crafting with specific materials, how mastery is achieved in working with these materials and the importance of the hand to the craft achieving know-how. Further, getting ‘the feel’ for the materials and learning about the materials’ characteristics assist the craftsperson. The crafter’s use of tools, techniques and materials to create something of value to themselves that is influenced by their background, history, interests and dedication to perfecting their skill so that it becomes an embodiment of themselves.

The next section will explore how the body comes to know and will examine tacit knowledge and skilfulness. Following on from this, crafting as an embodied experience will be explored.

3.4 Tacit knowing and skilfulness – How the body comes to learn

This section of the chapter will explore writers who have views on tacit and explicit knowledge, that is, both unconscious and conscious knowing, and it will create a portrait of what it is to engage in the tacit and explicit way of learning and knowing about crafting. This section will look specifically at repetition and habit in respect of the development of skill and habit. When a person ‘comes-to-know’, there is a certain point in which relying on memory goes from explicit to tacit and the person is just

‘there’. They just know. It is like riding a bicycle. The person knows how to ride the bicycle, but they may not be able to explain it in words. The person does not have to think about it or recall the motions; they just ride the bicycle unconsciously so that the task becomes an embodied thing rather than a recall thing. In instances where the person overthinks the actions in a moment of self-awareness, their actions become efforts. To avoid this and resituate themselves in the embodied experience, they need to go back where their sense of duality disappears, and they are embodied in the knowing. Sennett (2008) suggests that once the musician hears a piece of music there is an objective standard set that they will be able to play in tune. But the question is: How do they know? How does a person know things that have become so embodied that they do not have to think about the action or actions involved in doing them?

There are a number of both theoretical and research-informed perspectives arguing that people can have knowledge that they are unable to articulate. It may be that they are not aware of their acquired knowledge, or they have not identified their know-how and skill, as ‘knowing’. This section will review writers who seek to understand the unconscious knowing that has been acquired and is evident in practice, of which the person may have little or no conscious awareness or ability to articulate. It is an interesting aspect for the craftsperson and builds on the sections already included in this literature review. Michael Polanyi (1966) developed the idea of tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge explores the way that abilities and unstated habits are as equally formative to our intellectual understanding as those more formal things we learn; we can know more than we can tell. For Polanyi, tacit knowing is an unconscious process. The terms tacit, implicit, or unconscious knowledge are used to refer to cases in which people exhibit knowledge to which they lack conscious access; that is, where a person knows something or knows how to do something but has little awareness of how they came to know it.

In contrast, explicit knowledge can be conveyed in formal systematic language; that is, the knowledge is there for people to read and communicate. Polanyi does not consider whether, or how, tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge. Instead, he puts forward the view that the knowledge may be explicable, that is, if one considers the experience, one can be specific and explain it and can thus verbalise the

explanation. Polanyi suggests that there may be personal knowledge involving an “active comprehension of things known, an action that requires skill” (1958, vii). His account of personal knowledge is an attempt to overcome the traditional opposition between objectivity and subjectivity by showing that the only coherent account of objectivity is one in which the personal plays an essential constitutive role and that it involves active understanding between skill and ability. For example, a person might be able to distinguish between a good orchestral performance, but may not be able to identify what exactly were the finer points that led to the excellent performance; that is, they may not have the expertise to explain why it was a good performance, because they may not have the appropriate skills or expertise that would enable an expert or master to identify exactly where the strengths of the performance lay. Furthermore, in Polanyi’s (1966) view, there is also the subjective aspect of the knowing. Since personal knowledge and ability are aligned, the particular person is an important part. The person may hold subjective views that might explain why we can know more than we can tell, such as, for example, a person’s interpretation and understanding of their life experiences and the value of the experiences to that person.

In their work, Gascoigne and Thornton (2013) argue that there is a distinction between practical knowledge - or knowledge-how - and theoretical knowledge – knowledge-that which seems to be encoded in a semantic distinction. Citing Moore, Gascoigne and Thornton suggest that:

[A]scriptions of knowledge - how are answers to an implicit question of how something was done. But just as there can be such “how” questions, there can also be questions as to when, where, whether and why something was done: The familiar use of “knows” alongside an interrogative arises because states of knowledge, by their very nature, can be pressed into service in addressing questions, whether formulated or unformulated, whether theoretical or practical. Hence “knows when”, “knows where”, “knows whether”, and “knows why”. “Knows how” is just another member of this list.

(Moore, 1997, p. 167 cited by Gascoigne and Thornton, 2013, p. 57)

Gascoigne and Thornton continue:

[I]f one knows when something happened, for example, there is no need to have a special non-propositional knowledge (knowledge- when, perhaps) rather than simply knowledge that it happened at such and such a time. Such knowledge - when is simply knowledge - that. Similarly, to know how something was done can simply be to know that it was done in such and such a way so that such knowledge- how is an instance of knowledge- that.

(2013, p. 67)

Ingold recognises that “skill is the ground from which all knowledge grows, that imitation is shorthand for processes of attunement and response” (2018, p. 159). The literature leaves us in no doubt that skill, practice and pride are essential elements that contribute to craft mastery. For example, Ingold proposes that skill is the ground from which all knowledge grows and puts forward the following in respect of skill and craft:

The assumption here is that skill is all about having a feel for things, which is nevertheless impossible to put into words. It has become almost a cliché in the social sciences to say of such feeling that it is embodied, as though it belonged to the hand rather than the mind...

Skilled practice, since it entails both movement and feeling, is never still or silent. Indeed as a mode of thinking-doing that is indissolubly visceral and intellectual, skill is intrinsically sonorous. If anything condemns practice to silence, it is surely the logic of explication which, in specification, breaks movement into predetermined points and, in articulation, replaces the improvisatory feeling-forward of going along with their linear connection. It is the explicit that is tacit.

(pp. 159-160).

In his work, Crevels draws attention to the bicycle example used by Polanyi, and identifies that what is meant by ‘skill’ is often obscure and how under-examined the notion of ‘skill’ is, saying, “Classical epistemology has dwelt little on the concept, understanding that it accounts only for the application of knowledge, without a proper instance of knowing” (2023, p. 16).

In Crevels’ view, it is by experience that the craftsperson gets the ‘feel’ of things and through this feeling, understanding is constructed, and theoretical knowledge can be associated with practice. He supports the views presented by Ingold (2018) and suggests that his views “make it possible to theorise skill as something other than the mere application of knowledge” (*ibid*). He gives an example of blacksmiths and how their ways of knowing are that of the exploration of the world and its phenomena. In this example, repetition and habit are crucial. They measure the temperature of the steel that they are working with by colour, and gauge the transformation it allows, without the need for a scientific explanation of the quantum mechanics and chemistry involved:

Across centuries of exploration, blacksmiths came to know the phenomena of quantum mechanics and chemistry in action without knowing them in descriptive terms.

They know it because they use it, insofar as it is a component of their craft, and they slowly developed the mode of perception that allows this engagement.

As Marchand argues, “the process of learning through exploration, experimentation and reflection brings about new knowledge or a new way of knowing (or getting to know) something”

(Crevels, 2023, p. 20).

Essentially, the craftsperson can know the properties of the material and be able to access the qualities of it, without knowing the scientific aspects of the material. This ‘coming-to-know’ the materials, as well as the properties of the tools, can offer the craftsperson agency. Commenting on the work of Kuijpers, Crevels says:

Craft is not a set of fine products or even a set of skills; it’s a way of ‘exploring and understanding the material world’...

Tools mediate skilled practice by being simultaneously perceptive and transformative. As such, they can be understood as extensions of the body that allow one to perceive the material according to the conditions of its transformation.

Tools provide a way of sensing that it is directly coupled with the possibility of action; a chisel allows one to ‘feel’ the wood in its resistances (and affordances) to being carved; a hammer, to ‘feel’ the steel in the way it bends to a blow

(p. 23).

This is why, in his view, skill and craftsmanship are by nature tacit. The relationship established between maker and the world is one that is developed under the terms of their encounter in practice, which is repetition of their practice:

Being modes of perception, skills are built on personal experience and are simultaneously shared among a community of practice and particular to each individual. The specific character of a person’s body, their ways of thinking and cognitive capacities, and the condition of their particular situation in action – say, for example, their mood – will define their relationship with the material world, influencing their craftsmanship and their relationship with the material world

(p. 24).

Crevels’ (2023) arguments are holistic and encompassing, developing the views put forward by Polanyi (1966) and others in order to support a deeper understanding of tacit knowing and skilfulness and how the body comes to learn. This was also evident in work completed by Sturt (1963), a young school master who took over his father’s

craft business, and observed in his work that despite the fact that he personally can document what the craftspeople are doing, he is just not able to do instinctively what they are doing and achieve the same results. In his view, where technicalities were concerned, there was no substitute for learning by doing and the mistake was to imagine that this know-how could be taught directly from books.

This section of the chapter examines the claim that ‘coming-to-know’ is a process involving tacit knowledge. It is a combination of different activities that are part of a bigger system that incorporates learning skills, repetition, forming habits and is not isolated to using one part of the body. Learning and getting to know may take place over a period of time and is a different journey for different people.

The next section will examine crafting as an embodied experience and will examine the affective experiences that the craftsperson experiences on their craft master journey.

3.5 Crafting as an embodied experience

The concept of doing is an integral aspect of crafting, whether the craftsperson is a craft careerist, an artisan, a career changer or a returner. However, questions remain: how did the craftsperson come to choose their craft, what does it mean for the craftsperson to ‘come-to-know’ and can the tangible reality of the craftsperson’s experience be explained? Barad asks the interesting question, “How did language become more trustworthy than matter?” (2003, p. 801). She argues that not everything can be construed into words and that “performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real” (p. 802). Her thought-provoking work adds a lens to aspects of reality that may heretofore have not been recognised in the context of ‘coming-to-know’. Indeed, she rethinks the notion of discursive practices and material phenomena and puts forward the view that perhaps discursive practices are not human-based activities but maybe they are ways in which things can be explained and that can be easily understood. She proposes that to be and to know are both bound together and concludes: “[w]e do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because “we” are of the world” (p. 829). Her theories offer a different perspective to the concept of how we interpret the embodied experience and ‘come-to-know’.

Barad's (2003) view is somewhat different to that expressed by Bourdieu (1990), who writes that "a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools is transmitted in practice" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 87). Ways of speaking, acting, and holding oneself are instilled in the individual's body as he or she observes and unconsciously mimics the bodies of others. This practical mimicry that Bourdieu describes "speaks directly to the motor function" without the learner being conscious of the habits that he or she is adopting (*ibid*).

Barbour's (2011) portrayal of her experience of embodied knowing is insightful and the experiences of O'Connor (2007) and Atkinson (2013) provide thorough examples of their different experiences of 'coming-to-know' glass blowing, including the importance of themselves to the craft, their choreography of body movements, the use of heat, breath, tools and materials so that it became an embodied experience. Their experiences are detailed and show an awareness of different interpretations of 'coming-to-know' glassmaking.

New materialist theory looks at a more integrated approach that considers materials and immaterial, biological and social aspects as interconnected processes rather than distinct, stand-alone entities. Research undertaken by Bell and Vachhani (2020) suggests that craft work relies on affective organisational relations and intensities that flow between bodies, objects and places of making. Their work drew on empirical data from a qualitative study of four UK organisations that make bicycles, shoes and hand-decorated pottery. Their research assists in the understanding of the flow between the maker's body, the objects that they are working on, the materials they are using, and the work practices they perform. In their work, they reference many scholars, such as Strati (2007); Hindmarsh and Pilneck (2007), and Yakhlef (2010), and suggest that practice-based studies highlight the importance of the body and embodied knowing as sites of knowing.

Bell and Vachhani (2020) specifically explore crafting and embodied knowing and examine a number of views that are of interest such as the idea that it may be possible that the craftsperson is more interested in what the material they are using can do, rather than understanding the exact composition of the material. Their research focuses on exploring the making process in its entirety via observation, interviews,

field notes, documents and photographs in different organisations. Their findings suggest that:

Embodied technique focuses attention on what connects and structures bodies and other matter in concrete moments of practice...

Practising embodied technique requires skill and takes considerable time to acquire. It relies on practice, the rhythm of routine repetition and willingness to commit error.

This enables craft workers to discover specific material possibilities and repeat them with a degree of reliability...

(2020, p. 690)

New materialism creates possibilities for more diverse ways of thinking about objects and bodies as sites of knowing and feeling in organizations by focusing on the affects that are generated through relational encounters with matter. This enables an understanding of the vitality of materials and objects of making and the affective intensities that flow between makers' bodies, objects and places in craft work practices (p. 698).

What makes these findings interesting is the fact that even though the crafts are different there are commonalities between the embodied experiences in the different samples such as time, practice, rhythm of routine repetition, so much so that a generic set of findings could be drawn. It is not to say that the findings are exclusive, but they are a solid basis for further research. Their findings were also reflected in the stories told by the craftspeople in this thesis.

In a reflection about how he came to understand embodied knowing and self-discovery, Ingold (2013) describes advice he was offered when he worked as a novice field worker. He was unsure how to proceed with a task and at first he thought his colleagues were being unhelpful in not divulging what they knew, but after a while he realised that in fact his colleagues wanted him to understand that the only way one can really know things – that is, from the very inside of one's being – is through a process of self-discovery. He states that in his view “[t]o know things you have to grow into them and let them grow in you, so that they become a part of who you are... It is, in short, by watching, listening and feeling – by paying attention to what the world has to tell us – that we learn” (2013, p. 1).

Other writers, for example O'Connor (2007) and Atkinson (2013), also explored the embodied perception of objects in the workshop and the concept of tools blending into the sense of the user's body. Their observations support the points made by Ingold (2013) of how the whole body was involved in the making. In this section I will present some illustrations of how the tools and objects can become embodied. The craftsperson is so in tune with what they are doing with their body when they are using the tools and materials, they have become so familiar with using them with their bodies, that they almost become an extension of their bodies.

O'Connor examines embodied knowledge during her experience of glass blowing. For her, "[e]mbodiment characterizes our experience of the world. It is through embodied relations with the world, tacitly understood, that we accrue practical knowledge" (2007, p. 184). For her research project, she situated herself in the field of craft, hoping to unearth and access in practice itself the tacit understandings of practical knowledge rather than pursuing purely aesthetic debates. Six months before the research project commenced, she started blowing glass and had garnered a basic set of glass blowing skills. However, she knew that by attempting to blow a goblet, she was required to "combine learned with unlearned skills, a situation which afforded me the opportunity to evaluate how glassblowing is read by the glassblower, in varying stages of proficiency, and to reflect upon the ebb and flow of sensations, techniques, and modes of consciousness" (p. 185).

Although, she had received instruction and explanations about the various steps of the process, as well as practical demonstrations, her experience identified that it was not just a case of linking together these successive actions. When 'gathering' for her goblet, she:

[d]id not consciously decide to continue twirls when removing the blowpipe from the furnace, only sensed that, the deep, the gather had been proficient for the purpose of blowing.

This is a marked progress for the novice, who, accustomed to instrument, finds the instrument through techniques actually part of her...

I had what Polanyi terms a subsidiary awareness of the blowpipe.

(p. 188)

She details that her tutors' instructions as she was glass blowing "had consistently encouraged a shift towards this lived type of awareness... By bringing the technique into focal awareness, we could hone it" (p. 189). The tutors, issuing instruction as the glass blowing was taking place, directed her attention towards the technique at that moment of the process in which she was embedded in the action. As her proficiency improved, she notes, that so too do the specificities and the need for instruction.

She became more familiar with how to bring the blow pipe into correct positions with her body and body reactions to the process; for example, as she did more glass blowing, she no longer had to think through the handling of the pipe, its weight, length and red-hot tip. She knew to let the pipe swing into a near vertical position before her body when removing it from the warming rack by "gripping the cool steel just under the plastic tip with my right hand while lightly using my left to support the pipe from the middle" (p. 185). When she dipped the red-hot tip of the pipe into the water bucket to remove any carbon, it sent small streams of steam to her knees from the sizzling water. In her interview with Gus Jenson, a glassblower at New York Glass 22 April 2004, he casually commented that "[g]lassblowing has to become something that's in your body and not something that you're thinking about and that only comes from doing it. It doesn't come from thinking about it. And that's why it is important to go through the process again and again" (O'Connor, 2007, p. 191).

Her work documenting her experience is thorough, and gives a proficient, practical view of her journey. Even though she was eager to make the glass, she is clear that while her vision of the finished glass was real, so much so that she could see the Barolo swirling in the goblet, she recognised that "this anticipation is possible only when the practitioner understands the world's immanence in which she operate and is therefore able to act immediately: the novice, though able to adapt, is not able to anticipate" (p. 200). Her review of her glassblowing experience illustrates how important she herself is to the glass blowing process. Her physicality, the way in which she holds the blow pipe, the instructions that were given to her and the way she responded to them, and the physical effect on her body when she dipped the pipe into the water bucket are unique to her and are embodied with the anticipation of Barolo swirling in the goblet, illustrating the anticipation and joy from the result of the glass blowing.

Atkinson describes his embodied experience of a day-long class in glassblowing at a studio in London. His observations note the phenomenon of the heat, the nature of the glass he was working with, the feel of the glass on the pipe, the weight of it and the fact that the glass is always being manipulated or worked at arm's length, except for when one is manipulating it directly with a tool, a block, or one's hand through paper. The lack of direct touch with the glass and the properties of the glass are noted; for example, how it "seems to go rapidly from being so soft it is in danger of slipping off the pipe altogether, to becoming quite stiff and intractable in a short space of time" (2013, p. 399).

Interestingly, he notes the role of body posture in the process of activities in glass blowing stating:

I realized how important one's body posture and the techniques of the body are... while I was heating my glass in the glory hole, I was unnecessarily hunched. My shoulders were raised and were unhelpfully taut... Holding the iron or the pipe at the right angle (for marvering, for instance) is aided by an appropriate stance...

Rather than, say, bending one's knees to lower the iron, it is easy [sic] to bend over at the waist and—again, hunch over the work. Of course, this does not render the work impossible, but it has several consequences.

In the first place, poor posture is tiring. When the glass is heavy, then poor posture makes it even more difficult to manage the iron; it also leads to backache.

Second, it can make one's movements clumsy.

...Third, if one's movement is clumsy or restricted it can make it hard to keep working the glass consistently— so it can get droopy and off-center. So working the angles depends on one's physical self-management.

(p. 401).

He continues and makes further reference to "smooth and effective movement" (*ibid*) and explains that while working with a hot furnace, hot irons and glass, safe and productive work "in the hot shop requires a certain kind of choreography" (*ibid*), asserting that the practised use of the body using an appropriate posture "[a]llows one to blow predictably and in a controlled way" (p 402).

Atkinson's experiences are based on a one-day visit to a glass blowing studio, and it appears that every single detail is recorded in Atkinson's work, from the names of the

people in the class to his initial introduction to the workshop, heat, weight of the glass and body posture. Whereas, O'Connor had been learning basic skills for six months before recording her experience in the workshop. She can write about the about the “warmth” of the glass and the sensory, embodied response to the heat of the glass, translated into a practical appreciation of its technical possibilities. She notes the difference in the kind of instructions she received, for instance, “Rob and Paul’s instruction, intentional or not, had consistently encouraged a shift towards this *lived* type of awareness” (2007, p. 130).

Both experiential reviews are important in giving an overview of their embodied experience. Atkinson (2013) enables a view from the commencement of the craft journey, on day one, whereas O’Connor (2007) gives a view from a more experienced practitioner. Their reviews refer to the body, movement, heat and breath and the joy of making something with glass.

Barbour gives a considered reflection on what embodied knowing means to her from a dancing and craft perspective. She studied philosophy before training as a dancer, and this gives her views a different frame upon which to lay out her argument that embodied engagement is crucial for creative practice. In *Dancing Across the Page: Narrative and Embodied Ways of Knowing* (2011), Barbour explores the work of Iris Marion Young (1980) in particular her attempt to develop an understanding of women’s lived bodily experience, drawing on the ideas of philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968) and Simone de Beauvoir (1972). Barbour concludes by quoting Young:

An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living with the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject’s intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention.

(Young, 1980, p. 154, cited in Barbour, 2011 p. 64)

Barbour takes the view that Young’s (1980, 1998a, 1998b) work set a precedent for the feminist study of women’s experiences of movement. Her own work became a basis on which she undertook research into women’s dance -making experiences. She refers to the work of Sheets-Johnstone (1999) who argues for the primacy of movement over the primacy of perception and that humans learn about themselves

and others initially through moving, by attending to bodily sensations of movement, rather than by looking and seeing what is moving. Sheets-Johnstone comments that perception results from movement and so movement is “the originating ground of our sense-makings” (1999, p. 161, cited in Barbour, 2011, p. 66). Because of her background in philosophy, Barbour has given considerable thought to the way in which she has ‘come-to-know’ her dance:

As a dancer, I have long been engaged in creative choreographic processes. A crucial part of my change from artistic practitioner to dance researcher has been in engaging in academic research processes alongside my choreographic processes, and in articulating how it is that I come to know. I appreciate that my epistemological strategies as choreographer are different from traditional ways of knowing.

I realize that I come to know through other ways, as well as the traditional methods for establishing propositional knowledge (knowing that) and procedural knowledge (knowing how) (Butterworth and Wildschut 2009; Pakes 2009; Risner 2000).

There is much that I know as a dancer that is tacit (that is, knowledge in action), that I am unable to translate directly into words and that is better expressed through movement

(2011, p. 88).

Her philosophical reflections identify that, in her view, “embodied knowledge is developed from experiencing knowledge as constructed, contextual and embodied” (p. 95). Her work puts forward the view that people should:

...value our own experiential ways of knowing, such as dancing or paddling or playing the violin, and that we can work towards reconciling knowledge gained from these experiences with knowledge gained through other strategies, in a personally meaningful way as we live out our lives.

In this sense, we individuals, using an embodied way of knowing, attempt to understand knowledge as constructed or created rather than existing as independent truths ‘out there in the world’ and, more importantly, as embodied, experienced and lived

(*ibid*)

Her view suggests that “embodied knowledge arises in the lived experience of combining different ideas through experimentation” (*ibid*), and that creative people, in many instances are required to deal with issues that cannot be solved rationally or through intuition, but rather “through embodying and living out the possibilities” (p. 96). In this way she suggests that “embodied ways of knowing foreground knowing as creatively living in the world” (*ibid*).

Barbour's portrayal of experiences of 'coming-to-know' are articulated in a manner that makes them profound on one hand and on the other hand they are a recollection of very real lived experiences. They add great momentum and gravitas to the other examples included in this section supporting the view that crafting is an embodied experience and the experiences that the person encounters, such as learning, joy and pride, are all very real in 'coming-to-know'.

The literature presented thus far pertaining to learning a craft supports the concept that indeed crafting is an embodied experience. It could be argued that because it is an embodiment of hours of experience including self-discovery and engagement, repeated practice, correcting errors and observing craft masters at work, the craftsperson may not realise how much they have learnt because the learning is like one building block on top of another over many years.

If the craftsperson is asked to make their learning explicit, that is, as suggested by Collins (2010), to make it communicable, this is challenging when the learning has become embodied and tacit and the person may not be able to articulate their learning fully. The craftsperson may actually know more than they think they know. It may indeed be that "we know because we are of the world" (Barad, 2003, p. 829) and this reflects the view of this thesis from the craftspeople who talk about their 'coming-to-know' experience.

The next section of this literature review will explore the role of the various communities that impact on the craftsperson's journey in 'coming-to-know' and how they influence the craftsperson's journey.

3.6 'Coming-to-know' together: The role of communities and relationships in the practice of crafting.

The previous sections have reinforced the multiple factors that influences the craftsperson's journey of 'coming-to-know'. Another aspect that cannot be overlooked is the influence of the craft community and relationships associated with the practice of 'coming-to-know'. This influence can come in many guises and can take on the role of relationships with family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and the local community in which the person resides. There are mutual benefits of 'coming-

to-know' together: with the crafting community learning from each other and the shared wisdom, knowledge and experience that exists within the community, and the community benefiting from the skills and crafting expertise of the craftspeople. This section will look at both aspects of this practice of crafting.

Hunt (2011) recognises the importance of the community to the stone carvers in her study. When recounting how they learned their craft, the stone crafters spoke about being immersed in it – it was a part of their community. To be a stone carver was to belong, sharing common bonds of knowledge, skills, values and heritage. Holtzberg (2011) explains vividly how important the skills in the local town were to Burnham's practice as a craftsman. His own knowledge and experience working with the materials, his enthusiasm to revive the town's ship building heritage, and his experience on the seas made him an innovative craftsman who has revived the local wooden boatbuilding tradition of the town.

In his work, Glassie (1982, 1993, 2000, and 2020) highlights the importance of the community in learning crafts, including rug makers in a remote Turkish village, potters and statue makers in Salvador and North Carolina, and Irish storytellers. He is of the view that crafting can be seen as work done by ordinary people, and the potential everyone has to be an artist. The time he spent with the different craftspeople, watching what they do, observing each part of the craft process, studying what they created and asking them questions about what has influenced their work, and their lives, gives an intimacy to the crafting process. In each of his projects, he resided in and observed the local community and the influence it had on the crafting in the area.

The *Craft in an Age of Change* (2012) Report, commissioned by the Crafts Council, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Wales and Craft Northern Ireland highlights findings drawn from makers and other craft professionals who reside in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Whilst this report did not utilise narrative research to identify influences on selecting crafting as a career, research undertaken by Luckman and Andrew (2020) did. Their work identifies categories that craftspeople or makers fit into within the crafting community in Australia, and they describe many examples of scenarios that research participants identify as influential

in selecting crafting as a career. The authors suggest that much of the findings reinforce the key understandings underpinning Bourdieu's (1993) work, "which the dispositions (including language and narratives) that we use to make sense of our world and inform our negotiations through it, are not formed in a vacuum, but are precisely the result of our habitus" (Luckman and Andrew, 2020, p. 54).

To support this, some of their findings identify formative influences, for example, a key finding from the Luckman and Andrew (2020) study was the correlation between wanting to pursue making as a living and early childhood exposure to it, which was identified as playing a formative role in the desire to do creative things. They note that having direct family experience of running a creative business was what enabled the craftspeople to move directly into opening an economically viable business. Their work identified that parents, grandparents or significant adults played a catalytic role in many of their lives enabling and inspiring the development of their creative passion. They mention that this exposure took many forms, such as observing, or working alongside their parents, grandparents or other adult. The participants in the Luckman and Andrew study note that while many of the adults in their younger lives were creative, this did not mean that they practised creativity professionally as a fulltime occupation, but that they had skills to "support an attitude of self-sufficiency" (p. 45). This exposure to tools and materials, and people who were not afraid to use them, influenced many of the craftspeople as well as the exposure, encouragement and impact of formal education, with some of the sample referring to a "great teacher" that they had (p. 50).

One research participant selected nursing as a career for seventeen years, whilst also having her own fashion label, says:

I grew up with mum sewing, making our cloths and just being really crafty. We always made things at home, whether it was fabric or leaves...

Dad had his own business as a wood maker...

I learned a lot just watching Mum and Dad working really hard...

(p. 34)

Another participant in the Australian project states that:

I've a good broad education and I really think my education in arts has come from experience of being in his active workshop from the age of ten and learning about it from a really young age ... I have a wealth of knowledge in my Mum and Dad, I can

turn around and say why has this happened... He's got a lot of resources there that he can offer me too, reference books and stuff that we look stuff up [sic]

(p. 41).

Whilst another participant said:

I made my first button-up shirt at the age of 11 and I have not stopped sewing since. I've got two sisters. When we turned 21 we all got the choice – do you want a big party, or do you want a sewing machine?

(p. 41)

For other participants, who did not have an education “rich in the arts... there was often an event in life that was a catalyst for them to focus on their crafting” (p. 35).

The examples outlined above highlight the importance and relevance of formative exposure to the craftsperson and to the development of their skill set. When the craftsperson is exposed to tools, materials and the act of doing at an early age, the research indicate that there is an increased likelihood of them pursuing a craft, either professionally or as a hobby. However, it would be remiss to not also include the fact that the personal situations the person finds themselves in may mean a career in crafting is not financially viable.

In work undertaken by Gu, it is stated that despite the globalisation of local crafts market:

[M]aking is still a local phenomenon... there is a strong sense of being ‘plugged in’ to a scene. The pleasure of being ‘part of something’ is a promise of being true to oneself and one’s ambitions, to continue to be an active player in a world one has made one’s own.

(2018, p. 20).

The crafts sector has a reputation as a cottage industry with most of the work carried out in-house by the makers themselves and the “reason many people decide to engage in crafting is because of doing something because it is ‘good’ and giving something back to the local community” (*ibid*). Gu suggests that the organisational structure for craft economy is social networking, where local communities come together and can meet and exchange ideas. She also puts forward the view that craft communities and craftspeople have an ultimate desire to defend their commitment to a certain level of craft skill and the commitment to doing the job properly “is rooted in a social context

as is the recognition of the craftsman's skill and his/her valuation as an ethical model" (2018, p. 21).

All of these points are important to the craft community's survival and are further explored by authors who contribute experiential reflections in Luckman and Thomas's (2024) work. This collection explores craft as a highly collective activity, drawing upon shared knowledges resources and experiences. This is a well thought out collection looking at multiple angles of the craft community. For example, McCollough (2024) writes about the pleasure of engaging in paper crafting communities. Yarwood identifies the tension that exists between craft communities and the commercial production of goods. He acknowledges that the sale of craft materials is big business with "[m]ass produced goods, sold through networks of stores and online sites, provide the material basis for many craft activities and communities" (2024, p. 40). Despite this, individuals can involve themselves in "imaginative craft practices and, significantly, engage with new craft communities, be it online or across a gaming table" (p 48). Mann, Thomas and Luckman (2023) takes a different perspective and examines the potential of craft working with technology not only for the longevity and relevance of craft skills but also for a continuation of crafts' reputation for resisting capital market forces.

Forstner (2024) writes about the social dimension of group-based craft production, emphasising the importance of associations in supporting artisans through joint purchase of raw materials, training programmes and marketing of the finished products, whilst Rathnayake et al. (2023) illustrate how community values and cultural attributes shaped the brassware industry over time in Kandy, Sri Lanka, with these values and traditions strongly linked to religion and spirituality, social strata, and other long-established community practices.

Hackney, Figueiredo and Loveday (2024) identified craft groups located in Falmouth, Birmingham and Dublin. They recruited these craft groups as co-researchers to work alongside a team of art and design practitioners, practice-based researchers, and external partners in order to develop strategies for community coproduction through creative making. Their purpose was to explore how the value of often overlooked skills, knowledge, and expertise, embedded in amateur craft practice, might build

community engagement through training, volunteering, or social enterprise. They included a caution in their conclusion, that whilst the participant had fun and enjoyed the experience, the process of collaboration and discovery through making, prototyping and discussion was what they valued most, as “practical maker based skills do not always equip people for social situations (Sennett 2012) and creative crafting is not in of itself politically progressive (Black and Burisch 2021)” (2024, p. 128).

Twigger Holroyd’s (2024) contribution explores her experience as an accomplished professional designer-maker of knitwear. She holds Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in fashion and textile design. She began to offer workshops to support other people’s making to run alongside her craft business. She discussed her experiences as a facilitator with another craftsperson, a textile artist, Rachel, who also facilitates workshops. Together, they agreed shared experiences that their role as facilitator and workshop host provided. They both enjoyed the activity of delivering the workshops and they agree that there was great satisfaction when it finished, but there was always a sense of trepidation the night before a workshop commenced, in relation to meeting the participant’s hopes and aspirations. They both agreed that they learned a lot from their participants and that there was a need for them as facilitators to demonstrate ‘authority’ to the participants, either by showing samples of their published work or samples of their finished work and identified that a participant, attending a workshop, in effect is getting a chance to live the professional experience, in a studio, in a professional workshop and are now “stepping into a space of production, rather than consumption” (2024, p. 18) and concludes that while the sharing of skills from the outside may look straightforward, “there is in fact, a delicate balancing act taking place as the professional seeks to integrate this activity within the other elements of their practice” (p. 20).

This collection of views presented in Hackney, Figueiredo and Loveday (2024) is a very comprehensive international look at crafting that enables us to view the crafting community from multiple perspectives and to conclude that crafting is a shared activity that engages individuals and groups of people in their quest to create. The selection included here adds great depth to the reality of ‘coming-to-know’ together and the different influences the community has on the craft maker, including learning

environments and facilitation, community values, community engagement and supports, the pleasure of engaging in crafting and the challenges facing crafting, reframed as potential opportunities.

Jones, Van Assche and Parkins (2021) argue that craft can still enable exploration of different versions of local revitalisation. In their work, they looked at three cases where communities became involved in reviving and continuing local crafts in areas. To make these craft cases successful, there has to be strong leadership and ‘buy in’ from the community to enable the practice of crafting to continue within the community. In a region in British Columbia, the Okanagan Valley, wine making commenced as an industry in the 1970s, in an area where making wine was full of economic challenges, from the short and unpredictable growing season to the availability of land for growing. However, the community prevailed and the ‘Okanagan’ was officially created as an appellation, a geographical indication of where grapes are grown, with two sub appellations also officially recognized. Local learning networks developed quickly and focused on the growing of grapes, the production of wine and its marketing, which resulted in what is seen today as a success story for the community.

Interestingly, the second case they identified as a craft was a community forestry. The motivation for this was to reconnect communities to their surrounding forest landscape in ways that can facilitate multiple forest use, sustainable production and the sustainability of local communities and livelihoods rather than the industrial forest model. The new mode of forestry emphasised local niche markets and smaller operators. One vendor in the local log market notes “they’re [buyers are] so into where the wood comes from that we’ll provide a map of where the wood came from, photos, and a story as to the tree’s journey” (2021, p. 7). Another part of this story involves relationships, and the interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous users of the forest. In strengthening relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people, joint ventures “erased a whole bunch of issues going on for centuries, racism, and the ability to help know each other, and the ability to help each other in hard economic times. The community forest is more than a forest license to us” (p. 8).

The third case looked at was a community garden. This was a 1.5-acre mixed vegetable and fruit garden run by a network of volunteers and mentors. Though

traditionally gardening may not be identified as a craft, there is no doubt that successful gardeners have skills and techniques acquired from practice. The community garden had a wide range of objectives: to create learning opportunities for aspiring gardeners and farmers; to provide quality food to the community through a small market and donations to communities in need; to experiment with new methods of cultivation; and to preserve a prairie garden landscape in a city that is growing and densifying. The cases identify an engagement with materiality, and authors conclude that:

[C]ommunity development does hinge on materiality in different respects: landscape, soil, climate, infrastructure, ingredients, or other inputs connected to the physical landscape. The landscape as a whole can be an asset ...while individual engagement with the materials in craft production can add a layer of meaning for both craftsman and customer and therefore in the branding of both product and place...

(Jones, Van Assche and Parkins, 2021, p. 9).

They suggest that there needs to be a sense of learning and adaptation within the community and localism plays a big part in community crafting, especially if it can be identified as leading to a form of community stabilisation. All of this can only take place provided that it has the support of local government.

From the literature, the community 'come-to-know' together and the role of the community and relationships is seen as positive. It is almost as if it is 'owner led' and because of this, people are more willing to participate and support community engagement. Millegan et al's (2016) work explores societal trends that emphasise craft, such as the Men's Sheds movement, that are found to have positive impacts on individual health and well-being. As well as this, there is a sharing of skill sets and active community engagement for the common good. The growth in Sister Sheds aims to do the same for women in communities.

Overall, this section aims to give an insight into the value of crafting to communities and the value of different communities to crafting. An interesting aspect of this is how the sharing of skills and experience can benefit both the craftsperson and the community and that exposure and practice of craft skills at an early age has great value to an individual and by default to the community.

The role of the teacher and facilitator to the learning is highlighted and their experience illustrates that the craftsperson's learning journey is never over. Many of

the authors write about the sense of belonging that engaging in crafting generates amongst people, and one could argue that with community engagement, government supports, and a shared vision, great achievements can take place. For example, the recent pandemic has drawn closer linkages between craft and communities with restaurants, bakeries and pubs reflecting the anchoring effect of these establishments on the development of streetscapes, neighbourhoods and identities, where for example, some streets were pedestrianised to create a focal point, with the support of local authorities and the public, to enable ‘safe’ dining.

3.7 Conclusion

The literature review is compiled from several points of view such as observation, participation and ethnographic persuasions and it gives an underpinning to support the research questions. Older work is inviting and gives a different perspective on what it was to engage in crafting such as Sturt (1943) and work outlining the Craftsmen of Kilburn that documents crafts from carpenters to coopers, work that is still in use today. Many theorists and researchers documented their view on aspects of this with some parts of studies focusing on the body itself, or on specific parts of the body, including the hand, and how the body communicates and how consciousness is extended into the physical world through skillful use of tools (Sennett 2008; Radman, 2013; Bacarine and Maravita 2013; Farmer and Tsakiris, 2013; Heidegger, 1978; Holmes 2013; Jones, 1989; Rothe, 2012; Baume, 2020; Martin 2021).

Other studies pay particular attention to the materials that craftspeople use, and how the materials can unfold and reveal themselves to the craftsperson as they use or experiment with them (Jones, 1973, 1975, 1989; Sennett, 2008; O’Connor, 2007; Frayling, 2017; Ingold, 1992, 2000, 2006, 2011, 2013; Korn, 2017). This combination of repeatedly using the person’s body and senses, under guidance with tools and materials, ultimately enables the craftsperson to acquire a set of embodied skills and competencies to enable them to engage in their craft.

Getting the feel for the craft is an aspect that comes up often in the literature. Learning by doing can enable the craftsperson to become so in tuned with what they are doing that it becomes part of the core of their being. They become so involved and familiar with the materials and tools that they are using, that the work they are doing and their

knowing becomes implicit. Ratcliffe (2013), Depraz (2013), Husserl (1989, 2001), Ingold (2013), Sennett (2008), Cook (2024), and Vannini and Vannini (2020) examine how craftspeople make sense of the world, and this is further broken down in the literature with authors who research the role of the hand to crafting, such as Gallagher (2013), Martin (2021), Baume (2020) and work included in the works edited by Radman (2013). All of this gives a very in-depth view of the tools and materials used, including the hand, in crafting.

The experience of the hand ‘coming-to-know’ does not happen in isolation, but rather it is a part of an overall tactile process in becoming familiar with and understanding the materials and tools with which they work. Research completed by authors such as Vannini and Vannini (2020), Ratcliffe (2013), Sennett (2008) and Ingold (2011, 2012, 2013) have made this a core aspect of understanding what it is to engage with and work with tools and materials.

Repetition and practice contribute to becoming familiar with the tactile sensitivities of using the hand in the craft process, and is an aspect that may, in instances, be overlooked, but the way the hand is used is an inherent craft skill. Using the tools and materials is also an acquired skill. Introducing a new tool requires time and practice, but when the craft master is familiar with their tools, they can master them, knowing when they need servicing and repair, adjustments and replacement. It is this familiarity that comes from watching others at work, and patience and care using the tools over time. Using the hand to become familiar with the quality of the materials (Sennett 2008; Hunt 2011; Ingold 2013) indicates the importance of becoming familiar with materials and what the materials can do. This comes about from practice and repetition and being aware of the feel of the materials and learning about the materials characteristics and limitations.

Writers researching the embodied experience of ‘coming-to-know’ by engaging in crafting include Bell and Vachhani (2020), O’Connor (2007), Atkinson (2013), Ingold (2013) and Barbour (2011). To illustrate this at a practical level, research undertaken by Bell and Vachhani (2020), for instance, uses new materialist theory to explore the role of affect in embodied practices of craft making. This is a very interesting aspect of the exploration of ‘coming-to-know’ and has greatly assisted my understanding

because it puts the embodied experience into the context of understanding the connections between things and offers a further dimension to the holistic aspect of ‘coming-to-know’ and this adds further depth to this thesis.

The experience of embodiment described by O’Connor (2007) and Atkinson (2013) in their experiences of glassblowing, provide a reduced-speed slide show of what was happening when they were in the moment of glassblowing, and their accounts put a lens on their experience of being in the moment, to enable the reader to comprehend the embodied state where they as craftspeople were in the moment, and all they could do was be in the moment. Barbour’s (2011) account of what it is to be a dancer, where the embodiment of dance means creatively living in the world offers a different angle on what it means to be in the moment and dancing. The idea of living in the moment and doing only what the person can do at that moment in time with the tools and materials they have at that moment in time, highlights, in the context of crafting, that each moment is different, different influences will impact that moment, such as state of mind and physical environment. The embodiment of each of these moments can only be real in these moments. Once past, they are memories and may be difficult to repeat. This might be one of the challenges. Over time, and with repeated practice the moments become so embodied that they are effortless, and are completely embodied, so much so that it is difficult to recognise a time without those skills.

The role of the community and its impact on crafting is enormous. The literature illustrates, for example, how important it is to have community ‘buy in’ in attempting to achieve goals for the common good for the benefit of local revitalisation, connecting creativity and innovation within the community, acknowledging that craft and community development cannot recreate old societies, but that with innovative thinking and a high level of ambition, the traditional craft skills can be reinterpreted to meet current demands (Jones, Van Assche and Parkins, 2021). The sharing of skillsets, and active community engagement explored in Millegan et al’s (2016) work highlights the importance of participating in an active community for the common good. The literature also highlights that the craft community is important for the craftsperson, knowing people who are engaged in similar crafts, or watching craftspeople doing similar crafts can add value to the craftsperson’s skillset (Twigger Holroyd 2024; Holtzberg, 2011; Martin, 2021; Hunt, 2011).

Overall, it can be concluded that there are rich sources of research and scholarly literature available that have examined different perspectives on craft and crafting. Work from authors including Pye (1968), Dormer (1997), Sennett (2008) Glassie (2020, 2011, 2000, 1993, 1982), Ingold (2018, 2016, 2015, 2013, 2011, 2010, 2007, 1999), Jones (1989), Barbour (2011), Martin (2021) and Frayling (2017) have invited notable attention to the topic.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Traditionally, many crafts were learned using the apprenticeship model, whereby observation and practice culminated in an apprentice becoming an experienced practitioner of the craft, with some people advancing to become craft masters. As outlined in the literature review, the existing literature on craft learning can be broken into two parts: one that explores apprenticeships, and another that studies the embodied experience. It is the embodied experience of learning a craft that is the focus of this research and thus what informed the methodological decisions made in collecting data to answer the research question.

Sometimes, hindsight can obscure what happened, for instance, we forget certain events took place, we might not see the relevance of some instances, and sometimes we can exaggerate and/or make up what we remember, or there are elements of experience that are unrecognised or unnoticed. To ensure the research findings for this thesis were as accurate as possible, I needed to use methodologies that enabled me to establish a reliable account of the lived experience of crafting as the craftsperson knows it, including what the craftsperson identifies as key learning moments. Therefore, I used a research approach that includes narrative story telling of the person's lived experience as well as aspects of micro-phenomenology to enable the craftsperson to tell me about their lived experiences of making.

Many researchers have explored crafting and what it is to learn a craft (Dewey, 1934; Jones, 1989; Adamson, 2007, 2018; Sennett, 2008; Ingold, 2013; Pye, 1968, 1978; Glassie, 1982, 1993, 2011, 2020; Baume, 2020; and Martin, 2021). In learning to craft, there is an emphasis on repetition. This repetition includes working with materials, tools, and parts of the body. The learning journey illustrates many aspects that are important to the craftsperson and their personal drive for perfection including skilfulness, the personal impact of achieving perfection, and the pressure and risk of dealing with errors and mistakes that may spoil the final piece. The relation to time is also a consideration for the craftsperson's learning including the length of time needed to learn a craft and master it. A further important consideration is the

environment that the craftsperson finds themselves in when they are learning their craft, their relationship with their teacher(s) and the other influences on their learning experience (Martin, 2021; Glassie, 2011; Jones, 1989).

In mastering a craft, a competency develops whereby the person can see and understand the significance or relevance of aspects of the craft process, and it is the 'whole' craft that is understood rather than any of its constituent parts. Using various kinds of learning including seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, reading, doing, practicing and repetition, the craftsperson forms greater overall connections with the 'whole', forming stronger overall connections with the process from start to finish, enabling the craftsperson to store the relevant information as it applies to the craft. This process can then be replicated.

The literature presented a rich tapestry of becoming a craftsperson. These embodied experiences are not easy to explain, because they have become almost a part of the person and, as such, are difficult to extract or separate from the person. In some instances, the craftsperson might not remember or might choose not to remember a time when they did not have these skills because they have become so engrained in them. This research aimed to make a concerted effort to try and extract some of the key learning moments from the craftspeople whose skills have become embodied. The rationale for this is to enable the reader to understand further the constituent parts that contributed to the craftsperson's journey of 'coming-to-know'. To do this, the narrative design opened up the participants' lived experiences, including some key environmental influences as they learned their craft. To assist the participant to revisit specific key moments, a different research method was used. I selected aspects of micro-phenomenology to enable the craftsperson to tell me in detail about specific moments in their lived experience. Whilst micro-phenomenology is increasingly used in research in areas such as neuroscience, meditation, clinical studies, there is a dearth of research using it in the field that I am examining. Further, in my view, this thesis has added a new depth to the research findings that explore how the craftsperson comes to know their craft mastery, and the influences on their experiences. One reason I was motivated to do this research is because I wanted to unpack or identify whether there was a 'thunderbolt and lightning' moment for the craftsperson that inspired them or influenced them in their 'coming-to-know', and another was whether

there is a series of moments that culminated in them becoming an expert and their acquired skills are now embodied.

This chapter describes the methods used to identify both the craftsperson's experience of 'coming-to-know' and their key 'coming-to-know' moments in their journey of mastering a craft. The overall methodological design involved a blended approach of narrative and micro-phenomenology, and the philosophical position adopted is interpretivism. To add further richness to the project, I included a selection of vignettes in Chapter 1. These short pieces gave an image of Bea and Michael's apprenticeships and the influences on their 'coming-to-know'. I also include a series of photographs throughout the thesis in order to illuminate the findings. The vignettes and photographs enhance the research but are not core aspects of the methodology used in this thesis. I considered including my own personal journal entries that captured my own experience of learning the craft of beekeeping as part of the research. However, while the reflective journals influence the research questions and trajectory, I decided that, for this research, I would omit my own experience of 'coming to know' and concentrate on the participants' stories.

To start the chapter, I will first describe what an interpretivist framework is. This will then be followed by a description of the methodology. I used a blended approach for this research that included narrative inquiry and aspects of micro-phenomenology. This blended approach establishes an account of the lived experience of becoming an expert, as the craftsperson knows it, and is a critical aspect of obtaining the information that contributes to understanding the journey of mastering a craft and the experience of 'coming to know'.

4.2 Interpretivism

Research philosophy is guided by the ways in which the researcher understands truth, reality, and knowledge. It outlines the beliefs and values that guide the design, collection, and analysis of data in a research study; these choices embody philosophical principles. The philosophical position adopted for this study is one of interpretivism. Erickson (1986) uses the term 'interpretive' to refer to the whole family of approaches (for example, qualitative research, case study, ethnography, et. cetera.) in which researchers participate in the activity to be studied. Erickson (1986)

proposes that interpretive research presumes that meanings-in-action are shared by members of a set of individuals who interact recurrently through time. In their work, McChesney and Alderidge (2019) suggest that the goal of interpretivist research is to understand the lived experience from the point of view of the person who is living it, and the products of interpretivist research are not universally applicable theories or laws but, rather, rich and contextually situated understandings. In most instances, interpretivism uses qualitative, rather than quantitative, data research methods that focus on individuals' beliefs, motivations, and reasoning in order to gain understanding of social interactions. Myers (2008) suggests that researchers who follow the interpretivist philosophy gain access to reality through social construction such as language, consciousness shared meaning and instruments. Alharahsheh and Pius, in reviewing the work of Myers (2008), Saunders et al. (2012) and Bhattacharjee (2012) state:

Interpretivism considers differences such as cultures, circumstances, as well as times leading to development of different social realities. Interpretivism is different from positivism as it aims to include richness in the insights gathered rather attempting to provide a [sic] definite and universal laws that can be generalised and applicable to everyone regardless of some key variables and factors.

(2020, p. 41- 42)

In her work, Ryan suggests that:

Interpretivism argues that truth and knowledge are subjective, as well as culturally and historically situated, based on people's experiences and their understanding of them. Researchers can never be completely separate from their own values and beliefs, so these will inevitably inform the way in which they collect, interpret and analyse data.

(2018, p. 17)

I considered the views expressed by the authors, and I was very aware that as a researcher my values and beliefs were going to be a part of the collection and interpretation of the research data. I was also conscious that the aim of the research was to capture richness from the participants' insights. The philosophy became more important as I prepared for the interviews, and subsequently the data analysis, and I was mindful of the fact that it was the participants' stories of their experience that I wanted to hear. Josselson (2004) stresses how easy and tempting it may be for an interviewer to take the role of creating a coherent story for the person that they are listening to, and they may, by default, create the participant's story. I was very

conscious, therefore, to listen to the participants and let them tell me about their experiences, rather than attaching my views and beliefs to their story, considering carefully Smith and Watson's statement about those "who write about other people's lives document and interpret those lives from a different point of view external to the subject" (2010, p. 5).

Because of this, I had to acknowledge my own limits and ensure that my interpretation of the participant's story in the data analysis reflected what the person said – the actual story that was told. Using aspects of micro-phenomenology assisted me in this regard as part of the micro-phenomenological interview technique required that I restate back to the participant what I heard to confirm what I heard was what the participant said. Restating what I heard back to the participant ensured the data reflected accurately what the participant described as their experience. In doing this, the participant was able to confirm that the story they told reflects their experience of their recollection. If it did not, they could change any aspect of their story to more accurately reflect what they recollected as their experience.

4.3 Research design

This section will explore the rationale for the research project. The interpretative framework can be used when there are several different research methods used. It is especially useful when there are different layers of data, or a number of sources of data where the insights or findings might be difficult to decipher or see. In their work, Alharahsheh and Pius argue that:

[A]doption of the interpretivism paradigm can provide in depth understanding of certain contexts such as cross-cultural studies, factors influencing certain development through collection and interpretation of qualitative data leading to deep insight and conclusions that may differ from others as argued by (Myers, 2008; Saunders et al., 2012). Adoption of the interpretivism paradigm would lead to [the] generation of high-level validity in data as it is based on personal contributions with consideration of different variables (Myers, 2008).

Using this framework supports the reader to recognise or unveil meaning from the data that might otherwise be lost.

(2020, p. 42)

Narrative inquiry enabled the construction of learning narratives and micro-phenomenological aspects sought to identify commonalities in the craftsperson's' experiences, as well as describing different understandings within the experiences of 'coming-to-know'. Learning from ethnography helped to understand the behaviour of the participants and influences on that behaviour, such as their family and community.

Blending the approaches created a richer understanding of the craftsperson's recollections enabling the construction of a portrayal of their key learning moments. It assisted in capturing and translating for the reader, the first-person account of the craftsperson's learning experience, which was supported by a series of stories and memories that added colour, texture and depth to the translation of the key moments. This research aims to provide different lenses that will unpack/reveal generic structures of key learning moments that craftspeople experience as they master a craft. Micro-phenomenology taps into the experience, and the narrative approach enables access to the significance of the experience.

The Husserlian influence on micro-phenomenology plays an important role in seeking to find a method that could identify generic structures of the experience. Another influence from the phenomenological tradition is that of Merleau-Ponty (1945, 1966). Rather than seeing the perceiving mind and the acting body as separate, he argues that they are interconnected. Coupled with this is the interpretive aspect added by researchers in social sciences who followed authors including Heidegger (1975, 1978) and Gadamer (1977, 1982). They put forward suggestions for qualitative research that explores the lived experience where one sits within a tradition and situates within a context. This research utilises both of these phenomenological lenses: micro-phenomenology captures the science of consciousness embodied; interpretation within the context through narrative captures the significance of the experience. The selected methods facilitate a deeper understanding of the various aspects of experiences that are important in the epistemology of becoming a craft master. By using the interpretive stance, supported by an awareness of the phenomenological tradition, allows a view through different lenses.

4.3.1 Narrative inquiry

This section will explain the reason why narrative inquiry was selected and will describe how attending to and acting on experience, and co-inquiring with people who interact in and with crafting (living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience) can give the story of the key learning moments in the journey of mastering a craft. The narrative approach was adopted to enable a tapestry to be woven that described the craftsperson's story of their journey of mastering their craft in order to begin to make some of these experiences visible and the practices explicit, insofar as possible, but also to communicate the significance and meaning of that journey for them.

At the start of this research project, I met with some researchers who had completed research using narrative enquiry. Their account of the methodology that they used was informative, and it contributed to informing me of my methodology. I also met with some craftspeople I knew and had a general conversation with them about what I was planning to do. This was a very worthwhile exercise, because it emphasised for me the importance of having a well-thought-out research plan as well as prepared research questions. Otherwise, the conversation with the craftsperson could go in any direction, and I might not have the information I need to answer the research questions. Upon reflection after these meetings, I decided that the best place for me to meet the craftspeople would be in their place of work, where they would be comfortable and would be able to show me different practices. I also decided that audio recordings of our meetings would be the best way to record the meetings.

Clandinin (2019) suggests that both reflective inquiry and narrative inquiry claim Dewey's notion of experience as a foundational concept. Dewey's (1934) two criteria of experience are continuity and interaction. Dewey understood that we each live in and on our own experiential middle grounds. While Dewey considered continuity and interaction part of all experience, he believed a particular kind of thinking to be best suited for living in the midst of experience and as such capable of increasing the overall value of any experience. Clandinin sees personal practical knowledge, grounded in Dewey's pragmatist view of experience as "tentative, subject to change, and transient rather than fixed, objective and unchanging... In line with the Deweyan

view of experience, the conceptualisation of personal practical knowledge is rooted within continuity and interaction in enacted situations” (2019, p. 6).

Clandinin (2019) continues and suggests that stories are not just about experience but experience itself; we live and learn in, and through, the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of our stories (see also Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquirers do not live outside of the three-dimensional inquiry space but rather live in it, alongside and in relation with their participants. Narrative inquirers tell stories about the stories they and others live and tell, keeping in mind how their own stories shape how they understand and tell the stories of others. This is the interpretive aspect of the narrative inquiry. They understand the story as the fundamental unit of experience, one that cannot be broken down into smaller pieces without a loss of the wholeness of the life that produced it. It is a sum of all the parts. The narrative inquiry was selected as appropriate for the thesis because it records the experiences of the craftsperson and contributes to the revelation of their lived experience describing their journey of mastering a craft and their experience of ‘coming-to-know’.

Robinson and Hawpe (1986) propose that narrative thinking permits open-endedness, construction, and varying kinds of uncertainty, through which stories are created. They suggest that narrative thinking makes possible the interpretation of events by putting together a causal pattern that blends what is known about a situation (facts) with relevant conjectures (imagination). They put forward the view that no rigid formula can be established as to what constitutes a story, although there is some commonality in judging the relative goodness of a story.

Others have written about narrative inquiry including Crites (1971), Mitchell (1981), Carr (1986), Polkinghorne (1988), Connelly and Clandinin (1990), Kerby (1991), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Denison and Rinehart (2000), Ellis (2004, 2007), Markula (1997), Speedy (2007), Riessman (2008), and Huber et al., (2013). In their writings, explanations are offered about how narrative inquiry has been used to describe and record experiences as lives unfold. Huber et al., (2013) suggest it is the process of listening to, honouring, constructing, and reconstructing stories about the depth and breadth of human experience.

Narrative inquiry as a methodology is not just about collecting stories or telling them; it is an overarching principle where data, analysis and representation are all narrative in form (Conle, 2000). As a methodological approach, it is particularly congruent with the purposes of educational research, as “educators are interested in life. Life, to borrow John Dewey’s (1934) metaphor, is education” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. xxii). As a methodology, it is used in many disciplines wherein people are the focus of the study, and it contributes to what influences and shapes people. A narrative inquiry is a process of collaboration and, as such, it involves mutual storytelling and includes the skill of both listening and telling the stories. Reflecting upon the writing of these authors illustrates that narrative inquiry is a living research, it is taking place in the moment, it does not stand still, and it could be argued that it is a theory, practice, and reflection cycle that enables the researcher to record what the participants said and this enables readers understand the participants’ stories.

Stories are a central component to narrative inquiry. It is a widely held view that everyone has a story to tell. Stories are important. They are how much of our history has been recorded. They enable us to put a frame on who we are, and where we come from. Many writers explore the relevance of how stories connect us. In different ways, writers such as Glassie (1982) and Lee (2017) reveal how narrative transcends temporal, contextual, cultural, and social boundaries. Although, “we can know more than we can tell” argues Polanyi (1966, p. 4), referring to those ways of knowing and doing that grow through the experience and practice of a craft, but which adheres so closely to the person or the practitioner they can remain out of reach of explication or analysis, which is why micro-phenomenology complements narrative inquiry.

Stories should not be treated lightly, as they both carry and inspire significant obligations and responsibilities. They should be cared for as they are at the heart of how history is recorded, and they make meaning of our experiences of the world (Huber et al., 2013; Glassie, 1982, 2020). Le Guin (1980) reminds us of the ageless nature of storytelling, describing how people sat at the campfire telling stories and how these stories become part of the lives of the next generations as a reminder of lives that were lived. Silko (1996) expands further about this to illustrate how stories can enable us to belong, from the youngest in the family to the eldest, sharing, listening, telling and remembering all experiences. Her work has a particular focus on

the land, and the relationship people have with the land. Places on the landscape, Silko writes, serve as reminders of the events of stories and show ways to survive physically and spiritually, on both inner and outer landscapes. This is an important consideration to this thesis because the stories that were told by the craftspeople refer to the influence of the place where they craft has on their work.

Lopez (1989, 1990) continues this theme and states that it was through stories that he became more connected with the lives of animals and the landscape itself, thus deepening his experience and his understanding. Trinh Minh-ha (1989) emphasises that a story, once told, cannot be taken back, but instead finds its way into other stories; it is a part of a bigger story. Denzin and Lincoln (2017) have written and edited extensively about qualitative social science research. Views expressed in their work are current and point to how discourses of qualitative research, not widely accepted or practiced today, can be used to imagine and create a free and democratic society. Their work adds to the understanding that our societies are always changing, and telling stories puts a frame on the context of the changes.

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) found that by using narrative inquiry, that there was a change in the relationship between the researcher and the researched. They propose that because the subjects in human research are no longer treated as fixed in place, the researcher tends to view and understand the roles and interactions of both themselves and those researched. They highlight that understanding stories as data, including multiple ways of knowing an individual's experience from the stories that they have lived and thus tell, is central to the research process. They suggest that interactions are embedded in context, and that people, cultures, and events have histories that affect the present. Findings from one setting cannot be effectively decontextualised and researchers need to provide accurate descriptions of these characteristics of the research experience for, without them, it becomes impossible to understand and use the findings from a project. Therefore, each craftsperson's context is shared in this research.

Barbour (2011) described her experience of dance, illustrating ways of knowing cultures and environment that she experienced through a narrative exploration of embodied ways of knowing as a means of living creatively in the world. Her work

includes journaling, photographs, and short descriptive vignettes (short stories) that are used throughout her work as data, in order to illustrate and enrich the descriptions to which she alludes. She argues that the written language can never fully represent or convey lived experience, and that research and writing are a subjective construction that cannot be legitimated by objective, universal standards as proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2017).

Similarly, Stinson (1995), like Barbour (2011), explains that when she was trying to describe her experience of dancing, she looked for words that did more than communicate abstract ideas. She wanted to use sensory-rich images in the hope that the reader would feel the words and not just see them on the page. She comments that through the cultivation of the kinaesthetic sense and using evocative kinaesthetic words in stories, the dancer may be in a position to represent dance and research experiences and ultimately offer the reader a better understanding of embodied ways of knowing. This embodied way of knowing is echoed by Adams et al. (2015). They describe culture and explain how the telling of stories enable people to live and to live better, and that stories allow us to live more reflective, more meaningful, and more just lives.

The collection of lived experiences included in this research offer us the opportunity to hear, share, and reflect on the key moments of the participant's learning journey. This research focused and interpreted key moments as recorded data, a reflection of lives lived, and every attempt was made to give accurate descriptions of the research experience. The emphasis on stories weaves a tapestry that paints a description using life stories of their experiences learning their craft. Some of the stories are recollections, and others are explicit identifications of key moments that the participant viewed as pivotal to their learning experience. The blended approach to gathering the stories gives this research a unique lens that enables the reader to have a tangible view of the important learning moments, experienced by the craftsperson.

I acknowledge that words are not the only way to record a person's story and that, in some instances, words are not enough to capture the experience. Other methods can also be included in research. I took this into consideration when choosing a blended approach for my methodology.

4.3.2 Micro-phenomenology

Aspects of the micro-phenomenology research method were chosen to complement the narrative approach as an interviewing approach rather than using micro-phenomenology as a pure methodology. Micro-phenomenology is a relatively new scientific discipline that enables us to explore our lived experience in detail with recent research showing that we can learn to describe our experience very accurately and reliably, and discover its ordinarily inaccessible dimensions, through appropriate methods.

Depraz, Varela, and Vermersch (2003) explore how a person comes to examine what they live through. The three authors came from different backgrounds, and this gives this material an interesting perspective as each person brought their own life stories to the interpretation of what they define as their understanding of the experience.

Petitmengin (2019) asserts that it takes time to gather real descriptions of intuitive experiences and considerable effort is required by the interviewer to maintain the interviewee within the limits of their experience, and that a level of firmness and gentleness is sometimes required to guide the subject. She suggests that sometimes people find it difficult to describe exactly what they are experiencing, and they contribute comments and add-ons to the actual experience. When the subject stops fleeing to abstract levels, she suggests, they are able to live, or relive in the present, a singular intuition.

Petitmengin (2019) describes how, from her experience, interviewees frequently begin by stating: “I’m not doing anything” or “I don’t know what I’m doing”. However, in her view, when the subject “lets go”, gives up their representations, beliefs, and judgements about intuition, and begins speaking slowly, from the place inside them, where they are in contact with the lived experience, the words they say seem extremely precious, in their smallest detail. The objective, Petitmengin (2006) argues, is to obtain detailed descriptions of single experiences from an embodied perspective, where experiences that heretofore may not have been identified are now recognised and described. To enable this to happen, the participant is invited to evoke a specific experience, recalling it with sensory aspects such as visual, auditory, internal aspects such as temperature or pressure, and motor aspects such as movement, or other activity to describe a given experience. In this way, a general description of the

experience is avoided, and the description of the evoked experience is more real and embodied. It also avoids superlatives, judgements and beliefs, or theoretical knowledge that the participant may have, but instead enables the description of the embodied experience of the singular experience as the craftsperson recalls it. Using this methodology is exciting because it gives us a view of what it was like to experience specific moments.

The description pertains to both a synchronic aspect enabling the description at a specific moment in time and a diachronic aspect that refers to how the experience emerged and developed. The analyses of the interviews rely on the structure that guides the study and the authenticity of the process that generated it. Therefore, every step is recorded to enable the data analysis to take place and to enable the reader to understand the procedure. The micro-phenomenological interview method aims to trigger specific experiential acts, by using specific prompts and questions, that will support interviewed subjects become aware of the unrecognised part of their experience and describe it precisely (Depraz et al., 2003; Petitmengin, 2006, 2007, 2011; Petitmengin and Bitbol, 2009; Bitbol and Petitmengin 2013; Petitmengin et al., 2013). In their work, Petitmengin et al. (2018) state that the micro-phenomenological interview method starts from the observation that a large part of our experience remains usually unnoticed. Whether we are touching, seeing, listening, imagining, remembering, understanding or deciding; whether we are performing a concrete or an abstract activity, a large part of this activity, although lived through subjectively, is not immediately accessible to reflective consciousness and verbal description. We experience it, but in an unrecognised, unnoticed or pre-reflective way.

The micro-phenomenological interview is outlined in further detail later in this chapter. The reason it is included in this research is because the method aims at triggering lived unnoticed experiences through a series of prompts and questions in order to help the interviewee become aware of the unrecognised part of the experience and describe it precisely. The aim of using it in this study is to bring the craftsperson back to the initial concrete experience of crafting and ask them to recall their key experiences working with their hands, materials and tools. Micro-phenomenology

interviewing will give a new depth to the field of understanding the ‘coming-to-know’ experience of the craftsperson.

4.4 Sample

In deciding on the study sample, the primary consideration was to capture a deep understanding of experiences held by the participants. This focus reflected the interpretivist quest to understand participants’ experiences and perspectives (Willis, 2007). Purposive sampling was used to select a sample that reflected the experiences of a range of craftspeople. Although it could be argued that the sample size is small, every effort was made to ensure that the sample size would be sufficient to provide a view of the moments in the learning journey as experienced by the participants. Stories and memories from two craftspeople known to me were also included as sources. Ten craft masters were approached to participate in the interviews, and four people agreed to participate. The craftspeople that were interviewed in this study are masters and have been refining and developing their skills over many years. Two of them were known to me at the start of the research, and I was familiar with the work of the other participants.

Each person was first contacted by email, with a follow up telephone call that explained the research project to them and asked if they would be interested in participating. Once they confirmed their desire to participate a welcome letter with an information sheet and consent form for the participant to sign was sent to them. The signed consent form was scanned and stored securely on my password-protected computer along with all of the other documents relevant to the research.

To facilitate the craftsperson and make this research as easy as possible for them I accompanied the craftsperson on their normal outings, exploring and capturing their everyday settings and routines. Their workplace was an ideal location because there was a reduction in third party distractions, noise and miscellaneous activity that might interfere with the participants’ stories. I also engaged with them by telephone. Each interview was capped at 90 minutes. This gave the participant time to reflect on the open-ended questions and was long enough to enable the person to reflect on a key evoked moment and relive the moment in detail, while at the same time it did not take too much time out of their day.

4.5 The Micro-phenomenological interview

In research, we understand that the person(s) selected to provide answers for research questions is one of the key decisions to data collection. Interviews are important and they are commonly used in narrative research because it is understood that participants will tell stories based on their experience and knowledge (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007; Mueller, 2019). It is critical to have good interview skills that could evoke responses meaningful enough to generate stories that inform my research questions. To make the interviewing effective, it is worth noting that the researcher comes to the interview seeking the information, and the participant is the one who has the information. Mairs (1993), Bochner and Ellis (2006) have identified that listening and engaging in others' stories is a gift and it is a privilege to be trusted with telling the untold stories of the participants.

Micro-phenomenology, especially the work of Petitmengin, influenced how I prepared for the interviews, the questions I used when engaging with the craftspeople and the kinds of prompts I used to enable and encourage the participants to think back on their key learning moments. Petitmengin (2019) suggests that the lived experience is the most personal and intimate thing to any person, and that for many people, the lived experience remains unnoticed and unrecognised. She proposes that the main reason for this lack of awareness is that the majority of our attention is absorbed into the content, the 'what' of our activity to the detriment of the activity itself: the 'how'. She suggests that many of our activities are lived like this, and, in general, are not open to verbal description. This, however, does not mean that our lived experience is out of reach, but rather that accessing it requires particular expertise which must be learned. This expertise consists of carrying out specific actions.

Micro-phenomenology is a particular style of interviewing that stays focused on descriptions of one moment of a person's lived experience, grounded in ethics, listening and ongoing consent. This technique aims at triggering these moments through a series of prompts and questions to help the person become aware of the unrecognised part of the experience and describe it precisely. This precise description facilitates the study of the experience in a systematic and rigorous way.

At each stage of the interview, the researcher needs to be focused and guide and support the interviewee to concentrate on the selected singular experience chosen for the interview. This is one of the most important parts of micro-phenomenology interviewing, and considerable care and attention were given to the structure and preparation of prompts and questions to support this research. Recognising that people, by nature, can go off topic, my role during the interview was to ensure the participant stay on point. The point: to transport them back to their evoked experience, so that they could describe it precisely as best they could, in words that they were familiar with, from their recollections of the experience.

Figure 11 on the following page illustrates the structure of the micro-phenomenological interview. This is followed by a full explanation of the process by Petitmengin (2019).

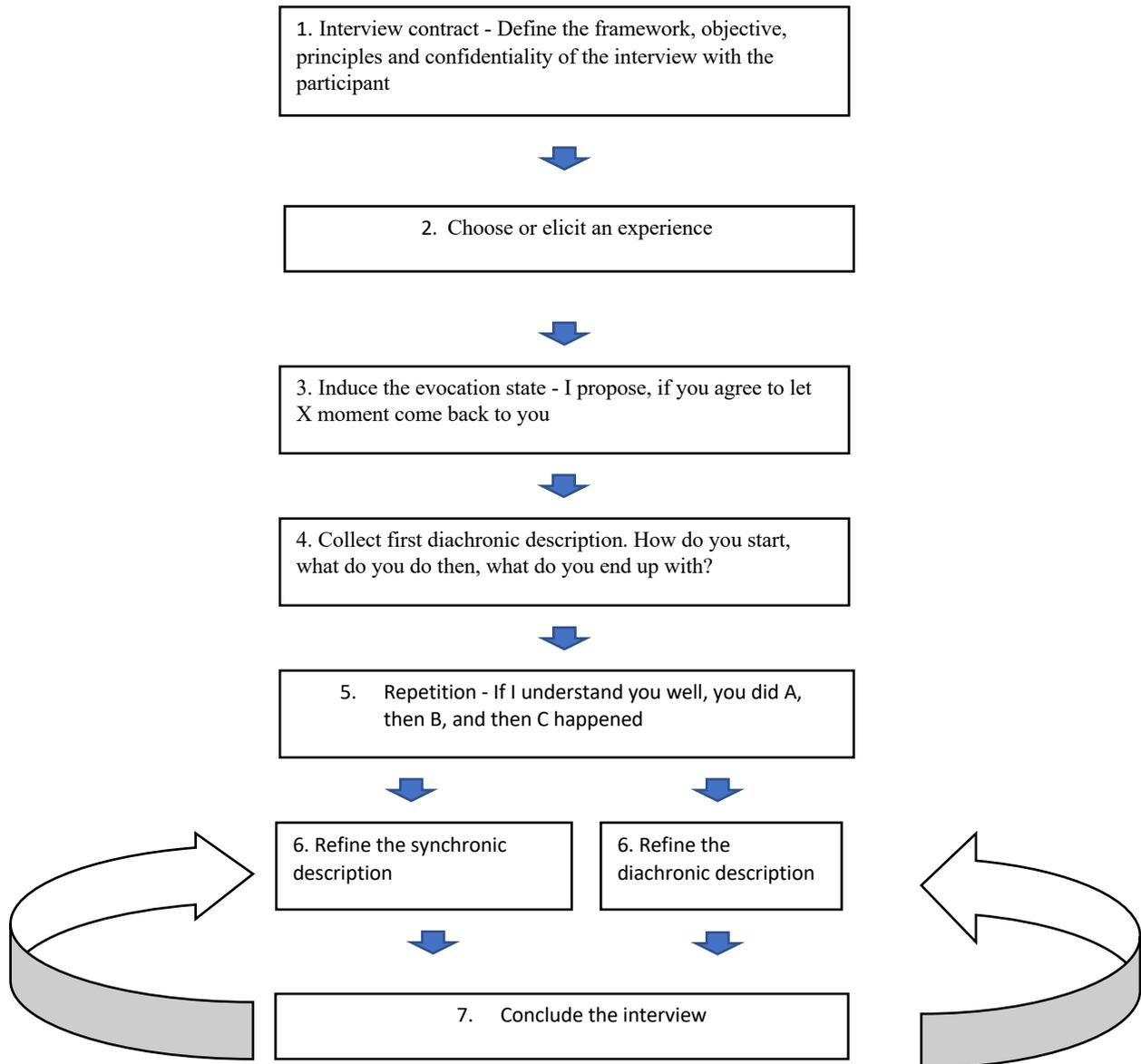


Figure 11: Structure of a micro-phenomenological interview (Petitmengin, 2019)

The contract or agreement between the interviewer and interviewee is the first stage in this process. The following were agreed in advance of proceeding with the interview:

- The objective of the interview
- The timeframe for the interview
- The interview process.
- *Elicitation* of an experience. The interviewer invites the interviewee to select an experience and give a sign to the interviewer when they have selected the experience.

- *Evocation* of the start of the experience. The interviewee is then invited to give a first overview of the experience.
- *Finer exploration*. The interviewer will help the interviewee describe in further detail aspects of the experience.
- *Repetition*. The interviewer will repeat what has been said back to the interviewee, including gestures, to ensure that the interviewer has understood the interviewee correctly.
- *Corrections*. The interviewee can add or correct what has been repeated to them:
 - a. *How*. The main focus of the questions will be on how the interviewee did something.
 - b. *Stop*. At any time, the interviewee can stop the interview, and they do not have to answer the questions that they are asked, if they so wish.
- *Confidentiality*. In instances where the interviewee selects not to be identified, confidentiality will be agreed.

The second stage of this method, Petitmengin (2019) suggests, is to become aware of an experience, and that the easiest way to identify it is to choose a single one. Choosing a single experience enables a person to become aware of that single, lived experience. If the type of activity being explored is easy to reproduce, there is an experiential protocol that can be followed that will assist the interviewee to both carry out the exercise in the here-and-now and then to describe the experience. This, for Petitmengin, is a ‘provoked experience’.

Petitmengin reminds us, however, that even if the interviewee has chosen a singular experience, that they can shift quickly in their description from the actual experience toward the verbalisation of comments, beliefs, judgements, explanations, and theoretical conceptions about the experience. These descriptions are referred to as the ‘satellite dimensions of the experience’ and the role of the interviewer is to identify in which dimension the interviewed person is at, at any moment, and assist them refocus on the actual experience. For example, with regard to resistance, the interviewer needs to reformulate the comment or explanation to the interrogative form by inviting the interviewee to describe the concrete action that underlies the term. If the experience

being studied cannot be reproduced at will, the researcher assists the interviewee to retrieve the past from the experience, thus creating an invoked experience.

The third stage of the micro-phenomenological interview, as outlined by Petitmengin (2019), is to help the interviewee evoke a past or just-past experience. An evocation is a form of memory that is well known to the participant, which consists of recalling a past situation with its sensory and emotional components to the point that it becomes more present than the present situation is. She suggests that we are indeed always in the process of memorising what we live, but involuntarily, without being aware of memorising. At any moment, a person is not memorising voluntarily, for example, the colour or the texture of the walls, the number of windows in the room, the number of participants in the room, the colour of the tables or the sound of a speaker's voice. But after the moment, in the evening, the next day or in one month's time, the person may be able to remember them. This process involves passive memory and takes place without one knowing it, so we sometimes do not know what we know. For example, in this project, if a craftsperson was asked how they learned to use a particular tool, they may have difficulty answering the question. They may be using it for so long that they may have difficulty remembering a time when they took the tool in their hand for the very first time and did not know how to use it. Using the tool has now become an implicit part of their skill set, so that they may not be able to recall a time when they were not able to use it.

Passive memory recall can explain why, at the beginning of an interview, people sometimes begin by saying, 'I don't know what I did' or 'I don't remember anything'. However, the information that has been passively memorised can be awakened. To deflect from any awkwardness Petitmengin (2019) puts forward the following examples to illustrate how to engage with the participant to accurately recall the specific moment: "[M]ay I ask you the following question, what was the first thought you had when you woke up this morning, give a sign to me when you have retrieved this thought, what was your first thought this morning when you awoke?" (np).

Pentitmengin hypothesises that:

In order to identify this thought, a person has no other way of identifying this thought unless the person goes back to their bed and retrieve the contact of the sheets, the light through the curtains, the sound of the alarm clock, or the aroma of the coffee. A memory that has been memorised passively cannot be deliberately set off through any

thought. However, it is possible to foster its energy by rediscovering the sensations, as featured with the experience (2019: np).

This was a very helpful tool to have in my toolbox when the interviewing process was taking place.

The fourth stage of the interview process Petitmengin (2019) puts forward is to help the subject inside the evoked experience loosen the focus of attention on *the what* in order to let *the how* emerge, to realise a phenomenological conversion. This is a key part of the process. The unfolding of *the how* has two distinct dimensions, the diachronic and synchronic dimension. The diachronic dimension corresponds to the unfolding of experience over time. It is the succession of actions, perceptions, thoughts, and emotions that we live in, in each situation. The synchronic dimension is characteristic to the experience at a given time, for example the mode of attention at a given instance. Petitmengin (2019) suggests it is like we stop the video of the experience and create a ‘freeze frame’ of a moment in a given experience. These ‘freeze frames’ cannot be described under the form of succession. This approach has two main characteristics. Firstly, the questions do not concern the content of the experience, but its structure – structure driven, or content empty, or content free - three ways to say the same thing, draw the interviewees attention towards the structural characteristics of the experience without inducing any content. For example, Petitmengin suggests we know, or we hypothesise, that whatever content being described, the experience unfolds in time as a succession of moments – time is a structural characteristic of experience. Therefore, Petitmengin et al say that to collect the diachronic description of the experience, the interviewer asks questions that guide the interviewee’s attention towards the various moments of the experience without suggesting any content; for example, how did you start or what happened then, or what did you end with? (2018, p.695). This mode of questioning “enables the researcher to obtain very fine-grained diachronic descriptions without infiltrating her own presuppositions” (*ibid*). In this case, the questions are limited to asking questions about the various moments of the experience. The researcher also relies on any clues of implicit information they can detect and then make this information explicit. The clues of implicit information may be both verbal and non-verbal, for example gestures, or body language. The researcher can ask questions about these acts, for

example if a person rubs their head or strokes their chest when they are giving an answer, the interviewer might ask, what is that like for you when you rub your head, or how does this feel for you? Indeed, she suggests that the skill in asking these questions is in asking very simple questions, and the simple questions appear to be more powerful in helping the interviewee to become aware of their experience and in describing it.

In Petitmengin's et al's view, "micro-phenomenological interviews have an iterative structure which can assist the interviewee repeatedly evoke the experience to be described, while guiding the attention to a progressively finer diachronic and synchronic mesh" (2018, p. 695). They suggest that recording an experience that happened in a few seconds requires one hour of interview. This process results in very fine-grained descriptions, notably of the usually unrecognised micro dynamics of the experiences that seemed initially instantaneous.

This directly impacted on my research plan as there was a time limit on the number of meetings I could arrange with my participants. Indeed, it focused my interview strategy into attempting to identify the key learning moments that the participant could recall and encourage them to describe *the how* of each of these in as much detail as they could recall. In some instances, the key moments were small, but they were turning point moments in the learning experience of the craftsperson.

In the context of micro-phenomenological interviewing for this research, I met each craftsperson three times and at each meeting the craftsperson identified a singular experience. While they were explaining aspects of their craft, they identified an experience that they identified as important to their 'coming-to-know'. Following the guidelines set out by Petitmengin (2019), with their permission, I induced the evocation of the specific moment and collected the diachronic description that I repeated back to them. Each of the interviews was audio recorded. The transcription of each interview explored what was said, word for word, but also information such as changes in pace of speech, silences, hesitations, repetitions, stammering, and any other verbal incidences. All of this aimed to support the state of evocation and the intensity of the evocation and the effectiveness of the process of becoming aware of the experience and verbalising it.

When they could access the evocation state, they described *the how* of their experience to me with as much precision as they could. I was able to assist with some prompts, such as ‘and then what?’ or ‘what happened next?’ It can take up to one hour to capture a few seconds of an experience and I wanted it to reflect exactly what the craftsperson recalled, so once they said what they recalled, I repeated it back to the craftsperson to confirm what they said, and what I heard was an accurate recount of the experience. They were then able to clarify any points, make corrections, or add additional descriptions. I included any sensory aspects as I observed them, and I supported the interviewee to rediscover precisely the sensory context of the situation that they are remembering to the point that it became more present than the interview situation. Another aspect that I took note of was nonverbal clues, such as body language or when the craftsperson held a steady gaze into the distance or appeared to be miles away looking into space. At the same time, sometimes words were replaced by gestures, the person started to have a self-dialogue, or indeed, there were periods of long silence. When they took place, these moments were moments in time that stood still, or as Petitmengin suggests, ‘Freeze moments’, where the person had gone back to relive the experience once again as they did when they first experienced it. When they took place I asked the craftsperson, ‘how is that for you?’ Because it took so long to capture the experience, I wanted to ensure what was captured was a good description of the key moment they were recalling, striving to give truth to their story of their experience. However, accessing the evocation state can be very challenging in micro-phenomenological interviews, and one participant in particular struggled with this, reverting instead to a narrative approach to the interviews.

4.6 Data analysis of micro-phenomenological interviews

In this section I explain how the data collected was analysed to answer the research questions. When I was deciding what data to include to support this research project, I looked to my research questions, my research objective and my research plan. Then I considered if my memories, stories or vignettes be of value in understanding any of the stages I was exploring. My goal was to use these snapshots as additional support and add value to the interpretation of the data. It was based on this exercise that I selected which ones to include in this project.

The quality of the micro-phenomenological interview method is that it focuses on a singular experience and makes it possible to identify experiential invariants which constitute the structure of the experience under study. Micro-phenomenological analysis proceeds by unfolding and refining the structure of the experience under study from the description of singular lived experiences. The initial meeting began with a narrative interview and gave an overview of their journey of 'coming to know'. The subsequent meetings were focused on achieving a more in-depth understanding of their 'coming-to-know' experience and followed a micro-phenomenological structure. At the start of the micro-phenomenology interviews, I was mindful that I could not have a prepared set of interview outcomes or predefined categories that were supposed to characterise any experience, as this would inhibit the extraction of abstract categories.

In some instances when the participant evoked the experience for the first time, they provided a large description of the experience. The person had to go over the experience a few times, with my support and prompts until we arrived at a finer description of the events that made up the experience. At the end of this reorganisation stage, my contributions were removed, and the experience was presented in a series of interviewee statements organised in moments and sub moments to describe the experience. This was replayed back to the participant for approval. This took a lot of time and was one aspect of the process that any further research will have to be mindful of, as it takes an hour or more to record a few seconds' experience.

There is no question that the experience being described was in the past. Because of this, it was impossible to say absolutely that what the participant said did in fact happen. However, with the help of the research of Petitmengin et al., we can evaluate the process that generated these statements, through a series of clues informing us about the reliability or unreliability of the interviewees and interviewer's acts (2019, p. 697). These clues took the form of using the present tense to describe, for example, body language, hand gestures, eye movements and posture.

As soon as the interview was complete, I thanked the interviewee for their time and sharing their experiences. I then read the notes I had taken at the interview. As I was

reading the interview notes I made additional comments in my journal. After three days I reread the notes and made further notes from the interview. After one week I listened to the recording that was made and transcribed it entirely. This process enabled me to become familiar with the interview from an analytical perspective and to record the intensity and quality of the participant's evocation.

Following on from the transcription and taking heed of the experience of Petitmengin et al. (2018), I numbered each line of the document. This gave me the structure to reference the original order of the interview and to find the source the utterances used in the original interview. During this process, it was very important to distinguish between the general statements made by the interviewee and the exact statements used to describe singular experiences, termed descriptive statements. I was able to identify the "satellite dimensions" of the experience, namely statements of commentaries, beliefs, judgments, explanations and theoretical preconceptions about the experience, and made decisions as to which ones should be highlighted or discarded, as they were not being used in the analysis.

I then listened to the recording while reading the transcription. This helped me to identify subtleties in the description, for example where the craftsperson emphasised a point, or paused in their description. Each of these was noted as they were important to understanding the meaning of the transcription. Regarding evaluating the reliability of descriptive statements, and since the initial experience is definitely in the past, it is impossible to evaluate directly the correspondence of the content of the experience with the content of descriptive statements.

However, micro-phenomenology advocates a "performative" view of the reliability of these statements, as opposed to a "correspondentist" view (Petitmengin and Bitbol (2009); Bitbol and Petitmengin, 2013). What this means is that when the craftsperson verbalised their evocation using micro-phenomenology interviewing, they were not just presenting a piece of information, but that what they were telling was the truth as they knew it. There was no onus on them to prove that it was factually correct.

Following the advice of Petitmengin et al. (2018) the questions and answers were numbered. In instances where answers were long, each part of the answer was

numbered. The numbering made it possible to never lose track of the concrete experiences from which abstract categories emerge. It also made it easier to retrieve the concrete descriptions that give meaning and body to each category.

Once the structure for detecting and unfolding the collection of precise data was in place, I was confident that it was possible to compare and contrast different experiences from the interviewees and I was confident that because I was using the micro-phenomenological interview as practised by Petitmengin and Bitbol (2009), Bitbol and Petitmengin (2013) and Petitmengin (2017) that this method would give me reliable data that would support me to answer my research question.

Each interview was transcribed line by line and included in a table. This enabled me to see what common elements, if any, were emerging from the data. This supported the analysis of the data and highlighted the specific structure of each experience as described by each participant. Verbatim statements describing singular experiences rather than general statements are distinguished. General statements were removed and only statements that describe a singular lived experience, characterised by a concrete and detailed vocabulary, the use of the pronoun 'I', and the reference to specific moments and places were kept.

A sample of the interview analysis outline I used can be seen in Figure 12 below.

Participant								
Line by line MP Interview transcription								
Line Number	Exact Content	Statement Describing Experience	First Time Stated	Second Time Stated	Third Time Stated	Change of Voice? Speed? Pitch? Emphasis?	Change of signs Hands? Feet? Eyes?	Other
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								

Figure 12: Micro-phenomenology interview analysis

Following the guidance of Petitmengin et al. (2018), the data analysis process starts once the series of interview statements are approved with the participant. These data are what they recall as being their experience. Using Figure 12, the data were chronologically reorganised into a structure of descriptions of singular experiences, in which implicit elements were systematically detected and made explicit through the interview questioning, and from which satellite dimensions such as beliefs, preconceptions, judgments and commentaries about the experience were removed (*ibid*).

In micro-phenomenology, the interpretation by the researcher in the analysis is reduced. This is because the interviews did not focus on the content of the experience but on its structural elements and distinguished between the description of the experience and the preconceptions, judgments and comments about it. This enabled a detailed level of description where most implicit elements of the experience were made explicit (*ibid*). In this research, there was an emphasis on the structural elements of the experience that was described by the craftsperson, and this enabled the identification of common threads in the data and subsequently the delivery of an analysis of results.

A micro-phenomenological analysis relies on the transcript of the description of a given experience resulting from an interview, highlighting the specific structure of the description of the experience, as told in the interview. Therefore, to make this possible, I had to build in a description of the structure's process of detection. This

meant that for every experience that the craftsperson described and in order to give agency to the craftsperson's voice, I had to observe and be mindful of every step of the description on which the detection of the diachronic and synchronic descriptive categories relies, and the structural operations enabling this detection. The synchronic analysis gives a description of an event in a moment of time. The diachronic analysis consists in identifying the evolution over time (Petitmengin et al., 2018, p.714).

4.7 The Interview process

Storytelling was the other method used to garner the lived experience from the participants. I reflected for a long time on the views expressed by narrative enquiry researchers and from a micro-phenomenology approach, primarily on work by Petitmengin et al., (2018) and Petitmengin (2019) and considered how this blended approach would impact on my questioning style. The purpose of the interview was two pronged: engage with the participant and support them as they recalled specific moments, some of which they may have forgotten, as well as enabling them to tell their general story. To be completely true to the research, I did not want to enter into the conversations with the craftspeople with assumptions, or predetermined answers. Adams et al. offer many examples of questioning techniques they have used during their own personal research projects, and the impact these answers had on their research outcomes. One in particular that stood out for me was when Carolyn, while doing research with a holocaust survivor, Jerry, asked questions where she reflects on Jerry's sense of meaning and his reluctance to claim agency in his survival (2015, pp. 35-36). Her expected responses from Jerry did not match his actual responses, and this gave her further material for consideration in her research project.

Narrative work by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), Barbour (2011), Adams et al., (2015) Mueller (2019) enabled me to think about approaches that would best assist me in planning for the meetings with the craftspeople, that would ensure I would be able to answer the overall research questions and

1. Identify how they came to choose their craft,
2. Describe the influences on their 'coming-to-know' experience and
3. Gain further understanding of the embodied journey of knowing their craft.

Barbour (2011) had a particularly strong influence as she included her own experience, vignettes and photography in her reflections on the research journey, in a similar way that I have in this project.

Drawing on the comprehensive description of micro-phenomenology by Petitmengin (2019) and Petitmengin et al. (2018), I put a questioning protocol in place to support the participant. I also prepared a series of prompts to support the participant to recall their experience in their evocation. The participant and I agreed on a specific experience they were going to describe in advance of the interview. The interview initially commenced using the narrative approach, with a recollection of a general description of their experience. To capture more in-depth detail about a specific moment, and with the participant's permission, I invited the participant to invoke details about a particular moment. As they started to engage, I invited them to focus on specific moments that they described to rediscover the details and sensations they could recall. I was mindful of the sensory controls they displayed; their verbal clues, body language and their gaze as they spoke. I asked them questions such as 'can you describe what that moment was like for you?' or 'can you recall how that felt like for you when you did that?' in an attempt to to loosen the focus of attention on the 'what' in order to let the 'how' emerge. This aspect was more challenging than I anticipated, as it required me to keep quiet and wait on their answer. In hindsight, I expected them to know the answers to my questions immediately, and I had to give them time to describe their experiences.

What I ended up with was a succession of moments that I was able to use to answer the research questions. The interviews were full of rich descriptions. While they may have taken between sixty and ninety minutes to capture, each description provides a rich insight to the craftsperson's experience of 'coming-to-know'. In some instances, they chose to show me what they were describing, speaking through the process and this gave an opportunity to them to describe how they were doing something with great precision. I had some prompts ready, in case there was a lull in conversation, but as it turned out, each person was enthusiastic to tell their story. However, in one or two instances, the person's conversation or description went off topic, and even

though what they were saying was interesting, the prepared prompts were useful in assisting them to refocus on describing the experience.

The research remains faithful to the interviews and documents as clearly as possible the craftsperson's experience. There had to be an interpretive element and what emerged was an accurate detailed description of a moment that contributed to their craft expertise. The micro-phenomenological interview method enabled a fine-grained collection of data to take place as it follows a specific method. It is a strict, highly directive protocol. The interviewee stated their experience. It was restated back to them to confirm what they said. This ensured what they said was what they meant to say about their experience. If it did not reflect what they said, or meant to say, the participant had an opportunity to change what they said. The dialogical approach enabled a further clarity by restating what was said to check with the craftsperson that what they said was what they meant to say and the image portrayed was what they wanted to portray, and ultimately, it was not my story but a precise recollection of their experience.

On reflection, I note that an important aspect of the conversations was the language used. Each craft used different terms and expressions to describe things that are only known or understood within the craft. I made every effort to be familiar and understand what the terms meant in advance of the meetings, to avoid continually asking the person to explain the terms. I was also conscious as Petitmengin (1999) suggested, that sometimes to maintain the interviewee within the limits of their experience, a level of firmness and gentleness was required to guide the subject. Sometimes people find it difficult to exactly describe what they experienced and that sometimes what they are describing may not have taken place at all. I endeavored to make the experience as real as possible, in an attempt to generate a true recollection of their experiences by speaking slowly, really listening to what they were saying with full engagement, to capture their lived experience from the words they said. As noted above, one participant was not able to access the evocation state and engage in the interviews, and the others did engage though to varying degrees. This is not unusual in micro-phenomenological research.

4.8 Ethical considerations

The narrative methodology used for this research included stories and memories of people known to me and meeting with a sample of craft masters. For each of these I considered my ethical responsibilities to those who are identified or potentially identifiable. In her work, Ellis, (2007, 1995a, 1995b) describes a number of research projects she completed and discusses narratives she wrote, that include stories about experiences interwoven with tales of family members and friends who were part of the stories. Her discussion relays ethical considerations in writing about those who are alive and those who died, in each case considering ethical responsibilities to those who are identifiable. She describes ethical dilemmas she faced when doing her research and she describes her own role as the researcher in the process and how her stance influenced the research projects. Her work gave me a good insight into possible conflicts or situations that might arise and because of her observations I was able to adjust my methods in advance of commencing the data collection. Work by Mairs (1993) and Bochner and Ellis (2006) influenced my ethical considerations also highlighting that listening and engaging in others' stories is a gift, and my role is to answer the research question and identify the journey of mastering a craft and the experience of 'coming to know' through interviewing the participants.

While discussion about ethical principles in social research, tend to revolve around certain issues that recur in different guises, they have been usefully broken down by Diener and Crandall (1978) into four main areas:

1. whether there is harm to participants;
2. whether there is a lack of informed consent;
3. whether there is an invasion of privacy;
4. whether deception is involved.

The participants who were a part of this research were integral to this research, and I was very aware that I had a duty of care to their stories. Some of their stories about their experiences were easy to recall, and the narrative interview method was used to document these. However, the micro-phenomenological interview method helped the person become aware of the unrecognised part of the experience and describe it precisely. There was an element of trust included in this data collection that enabled the participants to disclose and describe their experiences. Some of the descriptions were intimate and the participants chose not to be identified, and of course this wish

was respected. I did consider anonymising all of the craftspeople, but I recognised that if I did this, I would not be able to include photographs of the people who gave me permission to include images of their work or of them practising their craft, and who wished for their identities to be disclosed with their consent.

Essentially, what I wanted at the end of the research was new stories that would give an additional lens and paint a new layer of information to that which is currently available. The aim of the research was to give both myself and the reader a deeper understanding of the experiences and stories of mastering a craft and the embodied journey of learning. I respected the participants and their stories and described their journey as accurately as possible. I was very open to receiving unexpected information from the craftspeople, because I wanted to discover new aspects of their specific experiences that would help me and the reader understand their experience of 'coming-to-know'.

The photographs that are included with the research are with the participants' consent, apart from the photographs supporting the vignettes which are my own personal photographs. I selected the photographs that are included in the thesis from a large collection of photographs that illustrate and support key findings.

The vignettes I included are my own personal memories. However, considering the work of Ellis (2007, 1995a, 1995b) regarding the vignettes I spoke with my mother's sister, my Aunt Josie Fallon (née King), to confirm details about my mother's apprenticeship and how she 'came-to-know' her craft as well as confirming details of my mother setting up her business. My aunt and my mother shared accommodation at No 2 Brownville Flat in 1951. Material and stories I included about my life partner Michael were also personal, but I did confirm aspects of his earlier life, getting to know his craft, going to school in the local Tech, his apprenticeship and later setting up in business with his brother Terrence Leahy (RIP). His other brother Brian Leahy did his carpentry apprenticeship with Michael and in later years worked with him. The two brothers confirmed my own memories such as for example, how Michael went about his crafting projects, caring for his tools and materials, his relationships with the people he worked with and other influences on his mastery.

There was no harm to the participants and informed consent was collected before I met with them, there was no invasion of privacy and there was no deception. The questions phraseology was non-biased and non-judgemental and worded in a manner that was easy for the participant to understand. No vulnerable person took part in this research.

4.9 Research limitations

Using a blended approach to collect the data for this research was without question a very useful method for the collection of qualitative data about specific moments of the lived experience. However, there were some limitations that should be acknowledged. I selected to use micro-phenomenological interviewing, a skilled practice that takes time for the interviewer to become accustomed to using. It is also a different style of interviewing for the participant and requires time to build rapport and trust between both the interviewer and the participant that will enable the participant to be at ease and describe their lived experiences accurately and reliably. One participant was not comfortable using micro-phenomenology and indeed resisted it, despite many attempts and prompts to encourage them give detailed descriptions of how they came to be experts in their craft. Instead, I worked with this person and used narrative inquiry to record their experiences. As noted above, it can be very challenging to find a way of accessing the evocation state, and the experience as once lived.

Micro-phenomenological interviewing takes a lot of time. Processing the micro-phenomenological transcripts also took a lot of time. Firstly, the interview is transcribed following the guidelines given in Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vásquez-Rosati (2019). This transcript also includes non-verbal clues, for instance, silent moments, stressed words, gestures, eye movements, body language. The required data is identified and extracted, which involves deselecting what is referred to as satellites, a term used to describe all contextual information, comments, or reflections that were not part of the moment being described. These satellites must be saved as they may be necessary in the interpretation stage of the description. Then the remaining aspects are organised to give an accurate reflection of the moment that is being described.

Defining the diachronic structure, which is a succession of moments over time, from the synchronic structure which is the description of a single moment also takes time and accuracy.

However, the effort was worth it, as this interviewing style supports participants who are able to engage with it, to describe subtle, forgotten, or hidden aspects of their experience that they might not otherwise have recognised, remembered or recorded. Because of the time associated with undertaking the micro-phenomenological interview as a research methodology, it would be difficult to have many participants included in the data collection without the support of a large research team who are skilled in the practice.

One limitation that I may have avoided with greater foresight was the difficulty confirming participants to engage with the research. I approached ten craftspeople at the start of the research. One person did not acknowledge my invitation, another person declined. Four other people who agreed to participate, could not due to family crisis, ill health and unexpected circumstances.

4.10 Description of participants

The following section will introduce each of the participants that participated in this study. Tom, Rob and Anne are pseudonyms and Carina Coyne is fully identified with consent.

4.10.1 Uilleann pipe maker

Tom is an engineer, designer, musician and uilleann pipe maker. He was born and raised in Dublin, to what he describes as a ‘creative’ mother who was always making clothes and soft toys and his ‘hobby carpenter father’. As a child, he recalls, he and his sisters were always drawing. As a city guy, he was into rock music and bands such as Dire Straits, Led Zeppelin and Madness. Irish music was heard on Radio na Gaeltachta, and it was a radio channel he skipped over when looking for more rock and popular music channels, ‘because it was Irish, and we didn't bother with any of that kinda stuff... I was into rock bands... And I didn't want to be listening to some kind of scrappeey [sic] fiddle on Raidió na Gaeltachta’. He described an event that changed his musical taste when one night, as a 16-year-old, he found himself lying in bed, listening to the radio programme, Mark After Dark, when the DJ, Mark Cagney, announced he was going to play a piece of music by Moving Hearts which featured an uilleann pipe solo, a slow air by Davey Spillane. He had heard of the pipes because

one of the lads who lived around the corner from his home played the pipes, but at that time he had not bothered to find out about them 'because they were a bit uncool'.

The piece of music started, and it was slow air called a Tribute to Peadar O'Donnell.

Tom says:

Literally...

The instant it started...

I was hit by lightning.

It was, what the hell is this?

It was like literally; something woke up inside me, and I didn't know what it was.

He was so excited that the next morning he went around to his friend's house and asked him to show him the pipes. Tom didn't realise at this time that the full set of pipes has a lot more equipment than the practice set the friend handed him with bellows, a bag and a chanter. He put on the pipes, put the bellows under one arm, the bag under the other and his two hands on the chanter, in a similar way to playing the tin whistle. He had learned how to play tin whistle whilst in school, so he was able to play the scales and some basic tunes. His friend was surprised he was able to get the notes out of the pipes on the first go.

Tom described then how the two of them went to classes each Saturday where there were groups at different levels, beginners, intermediaries and advanced. The teacher would either teach them individually or a few people at the same level in a group. They went through whatever tune they learned the previous week and played it for the teacher. Then they were given a new tune for the following week. He explained that his parents were delighted that he was showing an interest in music and that he was buying LPs such as Planxty or The Bothy Band. After a few months using his friend's practice set, he decided to buy a set of pipes. It turned out there was a pipe maker close to where he lived. His name was Davy Spillane, the piper he heard on the radio, who introduced him to the new instrument. 'I couldn't believe it - he was my new hero, he was Elvis Presley to me, and he lived down the road and he made pipes'. Tom got the pipes as a Christmas present in 1985 or 1986, *'they were one hundred and eighty pounds, just to put that in context, they'd be at least ten times that now for a beginner set today'*.

Tom explained that all he really wanted to play at this time were tunes he heard groups such as Moving Hearts or Planxty play, so he had no real concept of the depth of history of the music. On the back of the albums, they were all LPs in those days, the groups would have referenced who they had been influenced by, names such as Seamus Ennis, Willie Clancy, and Leo Rowsome. At the time, he did not understand the influence these people had on Irish music, but later as his interest grew, he recognised that these were great pipers who had kept the uilleann pipe tradition alive for future generations.

After the Leaving Certificate, Tom, went on and studied mechanical engineering and then a master's degree in industrial design. He recalls that he was pursuing a successful career in product design, playing music as a pass time, when unexpectedly, he was made redundant at the age of forty. Up until then, while he played the uilleann pipes, he had not considered making them. He has several sets of pipes, one of which he bought from an uilleann pipe maker based in Dublin. He described the person as 'a master craftsman' that he knew well, who also looked after the maintenance of the pipes.

In an interesting twist of events, the pipe maker heard that Tom had been made redundant and he telephoned him and said he needed some help making pipes. He had just been awarded a contract to make eight practice sets of pipes for Na Píobairí Uilleann, and while he knew Tom did not know how to make them, he assured him that if he was interested and willing, he would teach him some basic pipe making. Tom recalled he was reluctant and told the craftsperson that he had an engineering degree, but it was all on computers. He also told him, that he wouldn't know anything about a lathe and that one afternoon in first year in college out of four years was all his class did on a lathe. He said his engineering experience was all theoretical, and the course he did was not a practical course. He laughs a little as he remembered he told the man that 'he would only get in his way.' After some cajoling, Tom agreed to help, and commenced a five-month unofficial apprenticeship with the master pipe maker, one he describes as a '*big fast learning curve*'.

He recognises Na Píobairí Uilleann are great promoting classes on reed making, videos, learning the pipes. He acknowledged the advantage of the pipe making

community and the benefit of keeping in touch with the makers located in Ireland and around the world. While each of them makes different pipes, he recognised that, *‘There are a few pipe makers I would be very close to... I could ring any of them and they would happily share information with me...’* This community spirit among the pipe makers is a positive thing. It has changed over the years because of the efforts put in by Na Píobairí Uilleann to promote and encourage uilleann pipe playing and making because, demand still exceeds supply.

In the past, back in the 1800s, pre-famine times, there are stories that if a person called to a maker and said ‘I need a new reed’, the pipe maker would come out of his workshop, lock the door behind him, take the chanter from you, wave you goodbye, tell you to come back tomorrow, go back into the workshop and lock the door again, protecting the pipe making and reed making secrets. That is not the current situation, with piper makers happy to support each other.

Tom’s workshop is in a quiet, remote part of the west coast of Ireland beside the sea. He lives alone in a small cottage close to his workshop. Since his early 20s, he has been a regular visitor to this area, playing music, engaging in water sports and in general, having an enjoyable time so there was a strong familiarity with the people and the place. It was fortunate that the place is still steeped in Irish traditional music and there is a strong emphasis on keeping the tradition alive. Because of this, Tom was able to link in easily with the musicians in the area. It was also fortunate for Tom, that he had sold his house in Dublin and had enough money from the sale to enable him buy somewhere to live in the area.

When he was made redundant, in an attempt to decide what he would do with his life, he recalled contacting a friend he had worked with, who was now a life coach. He gave him some ‘self-help’ exercises to do. One asked him to break his life into a wheel.

‘There are eight sections in the wheel, family, relationships, romance, career, location, hobbies, health, pass times, various things like that and you rate them out of ten, and that will give you an idea of where you are and what needs a bit of work. I did that exercise and the next exercise was write an exercise called My Perfect Life, write it with each of those eight headings, write a paragraph for each one or as long as you want, and describe as if you are living your perfect life, in the now.’

If your perfect home is a huge castle in the Bavarian Alps, you don't say, 'but I couldn't afford it' – forget about the 'But' –

Just write, I live in a huge castle in the Bavarian Alps and then describe it in as much detail as you want. So, I did that exercise and wrote the paragraph for each thing, and I think I typed it on the computer, and I told him I had that done. He said, 'I don't need to see it' and I said, 'OK, right so', and I saved it on the computer somewhere and that was that.'

A few years later, he found the file on the computer called 'My Perfect Life' and he opened it because he could not remember what was in it. There he had written, 'I would love to make pipes and live by the sea'. He continued and said, 'I nearly fell off the chair when I read it and here, I am now making pipes, living by the sea... Sometimes, you just after to put it out there into the universe and believe that it could happen'.

However, Tom works alone in his workshop. He receives feedback from people who buy his pipes, and he said, 'When I am designing there is a great sense of satisfaction when I come up with an idea that works. I don't need anybody else to tell me, I just know when it will work. Pride, it's a very rewarding feeling, knowing I've done a good job, and other people can see that as well. It's not just me, but other people can also see it and recognise it as a good job. When they play the pipes, they know they are good'.

Tom also says he is fortunate that when Ireland entered the 2008 recession, he had just moved to 'sale agreed' in his house in Dublin, and this took the financial instability out of his crafting venture. He plays different sets of pipes. One set he plays were made in 1924 by Willie Rowsome who was Leo Rowsome's father. Leo Rowsome had been the piper who had kept pipe making going right until his death in 1970. At that stage there might have been only one other uilleann pipe maker in Ireland, so he was an important man to keep the whole thing alive. He had learned from his father Willie. To add to the legacy, this participant owns and plays a set of pipes made by Willie for a man whose name is engraved on the pipes, Seán O' Laoghaire, Inis Córthaidh, dated 1924.

4.10.2 Wool maker

Carina Coyne came to be a wool maker years after having a career in a different industry. After leaving school, she followed the apprenticeship route and did an apprenticeship as a metal work fitter, a job she enjoyed for many years. However, it was when she settled down and got married and had a family that she recognised that she wanted a change where she could work from home. She lives on a rural farm on

the Mayo Galway border in a picturesque area overlooking Loch na Fooley, surrounded by the mountains of Galway to the south and Mayo's Partry mountains to the north in an area called Ballinacorrige. The area is sparsely populated and at different times of the year the area takes on different colour palettes depending on the cloud cover and the vegetation. In winter time it can be bleak and beautiful and in autumn, the area takes on a mantle of gold and red, with rivers cascading down from the mountains to the lake, or in spring and summer, plants including heather, fuchsia, gorse lichens and moss with the wind moving through sallies, Salix purpurea or 'Dicky Meadow' alongside birch, hazel and larch trees with sheep dotted on the hills.



Figure 13: The view from Carina's workshop, October 2022



Figure 14: The view coming towards Carina's workshop, December 2022

In December, the heathers and the furze are all different shades of brown, the tall reeds, the sheep grazing on the last green hills of the autumn with the sun coming out

from behind the cloud, the shadows on the hills, the water changing colour all adds to the beauty.

She explains that over many generations, wool making was a part of the tradition in the local area. Most of the farmers in the area reared sheep, and as a result traditionally, the women spun and dyed their own wool to make hats, socks, slippers jumpers and blankets to keep themselves warm. She learned how to knit from her mother, using shop bought wool, but it was not until she married Marcus that she learned how to spin and naturally dye wool. On their farm they have about 120 black-faced-ewes, and she was aware that when the sheep were sheared, the wool was going to waste as it had such low monetary value. It was only when she decided to knit a blanket for herself, from shop-bought wool, that Carina realised the true value of their own sheep's wool:

The blanket I made with shop bought wool turned out to be useless. There was no heat from it, and it was poor quality for the time and effort I had put into making it. I then bought expensive wool which cost me a few hundred euros and made another blanket, and the quality was incomparable. I decided that from then on I was going to keep some of our own wool and spin it.

She has been building the business for a number of years. The first time I met her, she was starting out, experimenting with different things and trying to identify how she would make a career for herself from the wool. While the tradition of wool spinning and dyeing was in the local area, people's habits had changed, and sustainability had been replaced by convenience. However, Carina has a respect for the local traditions and did not want to see them die, so she continued with her idea generation and experimenting and trying to learn as much as she could. She spoke with some of the older people who grew up in a time when wool spinning and knitting was a way of life in the area and she is of the view that *'those people know more than any class could ever teach. The older generation are invaluable, and they're often not given the credit they deserve for the skill and knowledge they have'*. She sourced a second-hand Stanley range and made a workshop to dye the wool in a converted shed at the back of the family home. She went online to source other methods and techniques and started making products from her own wool, for her own use and for her family. She was able to avail of some start-up advice from the LEADER scheme and slowly she started making items for people. The best thing that happened for her business, however, was when she was able to invite people to come and stay and make and dye their own

wool in the locality. Carina's involvement and enthusiasm for keeping the tradition alive in the area is encouraging and while progress in developing what she is doing may be slow, when she reviews what she has achieved since she started out, she has made great progress.

4.10.3 The Knitter

Anne, the knitter, started her learning in the family home with her mother and her aunts and had no formal training or apprenticeship in learning the craft of knitting. Anne described what it felt like when her aunt trusted her when she first put the needles into her hands,

'There is a thrill to it, being trusted with her work... And I am proud that she was willing to put it in my hands... It is like we are in this together, a shared moment.'

She is keenly aware of the influence of the community that surrounded her on learning her craft, from her family including her mother and her aunt, 'as a child I was watching them knitting at home, and I was just looking at them knitting'.

She continued:

Knitting at that time was a big part of all of our lives and nearly all families that I knew were knitting. For me, I was fortunate to have people around me who were good at knitting and who took pride in what they were doing. They taught me a lot about different techniques and that making a mistake was not the end of the world, you just go back and start again. Most of the time we were learning from each other, new techniques, new yarns, new patterns and we passed them on to each other... even today, I enjoy working with others.

Anne really enjoys the fact that she can create something with her hands. Mostly she knits at home, and she said that she loves the fact that if she is going somewhere, she can take her knitting with her. As well as knitting for her friends and family, Anne has knitted for some international knitting designers. She is content that she does not have to leave her home to work with her hands, unless she chooses to do so and in her later years, she developed arthritis in her hands which meant that knitting was more difficult to do. Instead, she took up crochet, and she said this is just as satisfying, *'It is the feel of the wool going through my hands that gives me satisfaction'*, she says, *'that and knowing I am making something.'*

4.10.4 Glove maker

Rob acknowledges his family legacy that contributed to his business. The business is in the third generation with his son now involved in the business. His Dad, George,

who was an orphan, started the business in 1944 after completing an apprenticeship with Dents, a UK company that is still crafting luxury leather gloves, handbags, and small leather goods. Rob joined his dad's business when he was fifteen years old, *'when I was growing up the textile industry was a completely different market to what it is today. Ireland had a large textile industry. My dad's company had 100 people working for us'*.

Gloves were an important part of attire for everyone, when the company first commenced, and handmade gloves were something that people wanted, *'but we can see that markets change, and people's needs change also'*, he said. He said that a person learns a lot about the highly technical skills, when they are involved in glove making and indeed when working with leather. The person needs to gain experience to make just one pair of gloves, a person cannot without putting in the time and effort.

Rob spent over a year in the UK, spending time in the Singer sewing machine company, in the accounts department and he also spent time doing the glove making apprenticeship, which involved cutting and making:

It was all part of my learning, I was involved in it all, but it wasn't something the ordinary apprentice would be doing, but the apprentices we had were indentured for four years because that's how long it took them to learn to cut the different types of leathers that we used, And, in those days, people actually learned a glove making craft.

Leather is a world-wide product, and it comes from different sources. The leather used by Rob tends to come from animals from Africa, including Ethiopia and other countries and the reason they do it is because the pelt is very strong and the substance can be taken down to a very fine soft material. This involves removing the flesh and fat, then altering the collagen protein structure to preserve it from decay and make it stable, flexible, and durable. The final steps of stretching and working the fibres are crucial for breaking them apart and keeping the leather supple:

The strength of the leather is strong enough to withhold that and the part that leads to this is the feeding of the animal is very sparse and the animal is very sturdy, whereas the sheep skins that we produce are used in garment leather the sheep are too well fed to stand up to the abuse that the other animals get.

We also use in the business bovine leather which is used for motorcycle gauntlets. The other leather that is very strong is kangaroo leather; it is the strongest leather in the world. It fights a lot and will have a lot of scars on it. It just depends on whether you know the source of the leather and if you willing to put up with the scars on the leather. Usually, it is used in a military context.

And then we have goatskin, which is also very strong, but not as strong as the kangaroo leather. This really covers the gloving leathers.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology used for this study. The blended research methodology was effective in collecting and informing what we understand about the craftsperson's journey of mastering a craft giving a multi-lens view of aspects and specific moments that contribute to the craftsperson recalling their experience to answer the research questions:

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of the craftsperson's lived experience and in so doing;

1. Identify how they came to choose their craft,
2. Describe the influences on their 'coming-to-know' experience, and;
3. Gain further understanding of the embodied journey of knowing their craft.

The narrative approach enables us to view the background story of the craftsperson's 'coming-to-know' experience and provides an historical, social and cultural context of the craftsperson's experience. The theories of micro-phenomenology are presented, and this gives a historical context of how researchers come to examine what people live through. The objective of the micro-phenomenological interview is to obtain detailed descriptions of single experiences from an embodied perspective, where experience up to that point may not have been identified. The micro-phenomenological interviews give additional depth to the stories and support the research methodology and design.

Three of the participants requested anonymity and this was respected and I used pseudonyms for them. I did not take photographs of them working, or of their work. Despite this, they were willing to give me their time and engaged in both narrative inquiry and in the micro-phenomenology interviews.

The other challenge that presented itself was the time required to engage in micro-phenomenology interviews and analysis. The specificity of the micro-phenomenological interview method is that it focuses on a singular experience. Participants firstly had to tell their stories to put their singular moments of evocation in context. The focus of micro-phenomenological interviews on singular experiences does not mean that the method is exclusively restricted to singularity and limited to only describing individual tokens of experience. Sometimes, the participant went off topic, and it took time to bring them back to the specific singular moment they were describing.

The transcription process is long and tedious. The transcription consists of noting not only word for word what was said, but also noting information such as changes in the pace of speech, silences, and the duration of the silence, hesitations, repetitions, staring, and any other body movements that could influence the state of the evocation and the effectiveness of the process of becoming aware of the experience and putting it into words. The assessment of analysis results relies on the reliability of the process that generated them and therefore analysis had to be precise and include any of the variables that were nonverbal. I was fortunate to attend comprehensive certified micro-phenomenology training, led by Claire Petitmengin. This was practice based and greatly assisted my skill development with each micro-phenomenological interview and analysis that was completed.

In conclusion, the participants were willing to tell me their stories and gave a thorough account of what they consider important aspects of their ‘coming-to-know’ experience. However, there is a difference between specific moments the craftspeople elicit in their evocations and their narrative stories, for instance, emotions and feelings evoked and described by the uilleann pipe maker, the wool maker and the knitter give a unique perspective to influences on their ‘coming-to-know’ experience, that I could not access with the glove maker. That is not to say the glove maker’s stories were not informative, they were. However, the depth of description of the lived experience as evoked by the other three craftspeople shed a light on their specific experiences that give value to understanding their ‘coming-to-know’ experience. The literature informs us that most of the work being done using micro-phenomenology interviews is in the areas of neuroscience, neurophenomenology, meditation, cognitive science, clinical

studies, religious studies art and aesthetics, and very little has been completed in the area I am researching.

Chapter 5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this research is to identify and describe the craftsperson's lived experience in mastering a craft. My research identifies aspects of the craftsperson's experiences of learning their craft that are easily remembered; it also captures specific key moments with precision that had an impact on their experience, some of which were forgotten until they were asked about them in this research. In capturing their stories, a blended research methodology was used. This was explained to each of the participants in order to offer them clarity about the different styles of questions that were asked. The micro-phenomenological interview differs substantially from everyday conversation and narrative interviewing. Therefore, the objectives and principles of the micro-phenomenology interview were explained to the participant before the interviews commenced, to enable and support the participant to describe their experience in detail. The combined methodology of narrative and micro-phenomenology facilitated the craftspeople to describe in detail their experiences and convictions of embodied learning to:

- Identify how they came to choose their craft
- Describe the influences on their 'coming-to-know' experience
- Gain further understanding of the embodied journey of knowing their craft.

A group of different craftspeople were selected to identify aspects of what contributed to their 'coming-to-know'. An introduction to each of the participants is included in section 4.10 of my thesis.

This chapter gives descriptions of their experience and influences about how they came to learn, know, and understand their craft. It will look at influences such as the communities that support them, working with tools and materials, crafting as it becomes internalised in the body, the excitement and anticipation of what might emerge from their craft work, the sense of embodiment, confidence and power of knowledge and the embodiment of crafting on them as crafting becomes internalised.

The interviews are also supported with a selection of photographs that illustrate aspects of the findings, such as the location of where one of the craftspeople are located, and the intimacy of working tools and materials with their hand. To capture the experiences and stories of mastering a craft and to enable the reader to have an additional lens of the craftspeople's embodied journey of learning, a blended methodology was selected. At the start, I assumed that each participant would engage in each aspect of the methodology and I was looking forward to taking and including images of the craftspeople working with their materials and tools as they crafted. However, that was not the case. Some of the participants requested anonymity. This request was respected, but their request meant I was unable to include photographs of them practising their craft or of their craft pieces. For one of the craftspeople, who requested anonymity, I was able to acquire stock images from Na Piobairí Uilleann, to illustrate the intricacies of making reeds.

All participants engaged in narrative storytelling to share their experiences. One of the participants chose not to engage in micro-phenomenological interviews and, as a result, their stories do not reflect evocations of specific moments of their embodied learning. The following Figure 15 identifies which craftspeople engaged in each of the methodologies.

Participant	Narrative research	Micro-phenomenological interviews
Uilleann Pipe Maker	Yes	Yes
Knitter	Yes	Yes
Wool Maker	Yes	Yes
Glove Maker	Yes	Attempted but difficulty with evocation

Figure 15: Identification of participation in each aspect of the blended methodology

The outcome from craftspeople taking part in different aspects of the blended methodology is interesting. It means that while each participant was able to share their story using the narrative methodology, and tell what they recall of their experience and what they identify as important to their learning, the people who were able to take part fully in the micro-phenomenology interviews were able to describe their experiences more precisely and brought their past experiences into the present, verbalising, without judgement, sensory impressions, images, sounds, and aspects that they recall as being important to their 'coming-to-know' experience. The photographs further enhance the stories providing additional depth to the understanding of how

craftspeople use materials and tools in their craft. They add a further dimension by enabling us to appreciate the isolation in which some craftspeople work.

On account of the fact that not all of the participants engaged in each aspect of the blended methodology, it was not possible to systematically compare each element of the experiences. However, using the blended methodology gives an additional dimension to the research by providing detailed descriptions of the craftspeople's experience of mastering a craft and an understanding of their embodied journey of learning.

5.2 Belonging and community – A view through the lens of the craftspeople

The sense of belonging to a community is an integral part of some of the key moments experienced by the craftspeople. In this section, the craftspeople describe what it means to them to belong to a community. They mention many different communities in their descriptions, and the sense of belonging is not confined to the craft community. It is evident that the sense of belonging plays a role in the development of the self-efficacy of the craft master. Different craftspeople had different learning experiences including apprenticeships and learning as they immersed themselves in the craft. All the craftspeople refer and acknowledge the influence and support on their learning that came from family and peers. It has emerged that some of the learning that they experienced also includes being supported by their community who wished to keep the craft tradition alive. Their descriptions encapsulate different aspects of the confluence of place, tradition, family and different people on their journey. Reference is made to community support and encouragement, learning in and from the community and the geographic location of the community. The image that emerges gives an insight that enables us to put a tangible reality about how the community contributed to each of the craft masters 'coming-to-know' their craft and how they became familiar with the craft process, both formally and informally. What also emerges is that craftspeople are always a part of a community, and although some of their work is done in isolation, in their workshop, the craftspeople cannot be a master in isolation. They depend on different communities to support their practice, and the craftspeople tell of their experiences, for example, the uilleann pipe maker, Tom, describes aspects of belonging to different

communities and how the feeling of belonging impacted on his experience; for instance, he speaks fondly of the first community that influenced him - his family. He also acknowledges, that the pipe playing community are important for his craft as well as his social groups.

Carina grew up in a home where knitting was part of their lives. She started to knit with her mother and became an accomplished knitter. She completed an apprenticeship as a tool maker when she left secondary school and worked as a tool maker in a company located in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, a career she said she really enjoyed. A toolmaker is a skilled worker who produces and maintains precision tools used in the production of metal, plastic and other materials of all shapes and sizes. She learned how to knit from her mother, but it was not until she married Marcus that she learned how to spin and dye wool naturally. She credits her mother-in-law, amongst others, for introducing her to this craft and she says, *'I am very lucky with the support from neighbours and from family who have been able to help out, giving me the wool and pointing me in the right direction'*. She continued:

My mother-in-law has been the centre of it all, thank God she is still alive, and she is still telling me how to do things: 'we'd have done it this way or that way long ago'. She's very good and I am still doing it the same ways they would have done it long ago. So, I am not trying to change it all.

Her brother bought her a spinning wheel for her birthday:

He was working in England... and he managed to locate a wheel for me there as they are nearly impossible to find in Ireland. It's an Ashford wheel, one of the most reliable you'll get...



Figure 16: Image of Carina working with her Ashford spinning wheel, December 2021

Interestingly, Anne, the knitter, started her learning in the family home with her mother and her aunts, and had no formal training or apprenticeship in learning the craft of knitting. Anne described what it felt like when her aunt trusted her when she first put the needles into her hands *'There is a thrill to it, being trusted with her work... And I am proud that she was willing to put it in my hands... It is like we are in this together, a shared moment.'* She is keenly aware of the influence of the community that surrounded her in learning her craft, from her family including her mother and her aunt. *'As a child I was watching them knitting at home, and I was just looking at them knitting'.*

She continued:

Knitting at that time was a big part of all of our lives and nearly all families that I knew were knitting. For me, I was fortunate to have people around me who were good at knitting and who took pride in what they were doing. They taught me a lot about different techniques and that making a mistake was not the end of the world, you just go back and start again. Most of the time we were learning from each other, new techniques, new yarns, new patterns, and we passed them on to each other... even today, I enjoy working with others.

Here we can see the importance of the family and its contribution to the learning of their craft and an understanding that while much of the craft work might be done in isolation, there is an identification of the value and enjoyment of working with others. There is a description of the intimacy of learning together and the sharing of learning. A further interesting aspect is the reference to making a mistake, which is not identified as a negative thing but another part of the learning process.

The glove maker, Rob, speaks about the role and influence of different generations of his family had for him about learning his craft. He also speaks about the influence of the craft community and experiences he had while doing his apprenticeship with Singer Sewing Machines, learning about leather, working with financial accounts and the number of skilled craft glove makers that were employed in the company. He explained that an apprentice working with the company would be required to train for four years, *'because that's how long it took them to learn to cut properly the different types of leathers that we used, and in those days, people learned a craft'.*

There are similarities between the craftspeople, regarding the impact of community and they all reference the role that family played in their craft development. In many

instances, this is the first sense of community experienced by people, and it is identified here as a supportive, inclusive aspect where there is a sense of belonging. Further, these memories from when they were younger people still resonate with them, and are identified as important to the learning of their craft. These findings echo Luckman and Andrew (2020), who identified that parents, grandparents or significant adults can play a catalytic role in the lives of many craftspeople, enabling and inspiring the development of their creative passion.

When the craftsperson is exposed to tools, materials and the act of doing at an early age, this research would indicate that there is an increased likelihood of them pursuing a craft, either professionally or as a hobby. Anne, the knitter, describes her experience of first learning to knit:

I remember the wool was heavy on my lap when my aunt put it there, nearly comfortable.

When I am using wool or cotton, it feels like a glow around me, a contentment glow, something like safety.

Safety means no danger and no fear...

My aunt is here, and I am safe,

To establish what this description meant I probed further and asked Anne what she meant by the term 'safe', and she replied:

There is a peacefulness and contentment

I am happy to have my aunt and the wool and that is all that is important right now

I am secure,

I am safe.

With this description, the reference to using wool brings up feelings of safety, peacefulness, contentment and security offers a different view of what it means to the craftsperson to be in a safe space. From this description we can understand that the sense of belonging to a community can add value to these feelings that may not exist in other situations. It also confirms that the learning and sharing is taking place in a safe space.

Tom's workshop is in a quiet, remote part of the west coast of Ireland beside the sea. He lives alone in a small cottage close to his workshop. Although the piping community is supportive, Tom works alone in his workshop. He receives feedback from people who buy his pipes:

When I am designing there is a great sense of satisfaction when I come up with an idea that works. I don't need anybody else to tell me, I just know when it will work. Pride, it's a very rewarding feeling, knowing I've done a good job, and other people can see that as well.

It's not just me, but other people can also see it and recognise it as a good job. When they play the pipes, they know they are good.

This statement is an acknowledgement that the piper understands that he has to do the making and designing on his own. It is a self-satisfying feeling when he creates something new, but pride comes when someone else who is part of the piping community can see what he has achieved or when they play the pipes and recognise that the pipes he made are good pipes.

Tom knows, however, that crafting is not always without problems and difficulties, and he describes an incident when he was having trouble with one aspect of his craft and the influence another piper had on him. At that time Tom had difficulty making proper reeds, and it was causing him angst and despair, because, he said, *'if I cannot make reeds, I cannot make pipes'*.

An English man (a retired college professor), who had dabbled in a pipe-making years ago and had made reeds in the past, called into Tom in his workshop for a visit. He had one of Tom's chanters and was coming over to "play a few tunes". The chanter is the part of the uilleann pipes that is used to play the melody and the sound is produced by the reed.

I invited the pipe maker to go to that specific moment and evoke the experience. He appeared to relax: lent his head back, rested it on the wall, and looking at the ceiling he considered what he called *'a moment of utter despair'*. Then, with a series of prompts, he slowly started to describe the specific moment of this "utter despair" in detail:

*I looked terrible...
I feel the despair all over my body.*

*When he saw the state, I was in, he asked me what was up,
I told him I can't make reeds,
He offered to make a few reeds with me.
We didn't talk.*

The two of us sat down together and went through his method until we got a reed that worked.

It was a Thank God moment.

I slowly crawled out of that pit of hell.

The fact that he was there...

I wasn't just there on my own...

The two of us just worked together, almost forming a rhythm.

I could feel the tightness in my chest easing,

I was breathing easier,

The sun even came out and I felt the heat on my hands.

The feelings Tom describes in this evocation indicate a dimension to his craft experience that, in another, or different type, of interview, may have gone unnoticed. What he described was a feeling of ‘utter despair’ and ‘crawling out of that pit of hell’. The fact that there was someone there to support him, that he was not alone, indicates that there are many dimensions to the craft experience and although a person may be working in isolation, there is, nevertheless, a reliance on having someone that the craftsperson can trust to support them. It may be an individual or a group of people, but the uilleann pipe maker is telling us that he needs support to continue with his craft. He also refers to working together, forming a rhythm, an aspect that Ingold (2013) and Sennett (2008) refer to as an important aspect of engaging in craft.

The uilleann pipe maker’s evocation, and the support he felt when his friend called and helped him to crawl ‘out of that pit of hell’ is not dissimilar to that of Anne, the knitter. An environment was created that offers both Anne the knitter and Tom the uilleann pipe maker support and a safe place to learn and share their craft; a space where they did not feel threatened. These evocations highlight the importance, and relevance, of a safe, supporting community and space, to the craftsperson and to the development of their skill set. As well as this, the environment can influence the craftsperson, for instance, where a young person grows up, and what they see happening around them is recognised as an influence on the person learning a craft, and is documented in literature (see Luckman and Andrew, 2020; Hunt, 2011). What my research has identified is that most of them work in isolation, that is, they work alone. The evocations in this study indicate that there may be a need for craftspeople to access support, as needed, as they continue in their craft journey. This would be an interesting aspect to research further, in an attempt to identify what kind of support is

needed and how they could assist the craftsperson. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

My research also indicates that the craftspeople are very happy doing the work they do. Carina, the wool maker, is proud of the wool she uses in her work and the traditions from the locality that she plays a part in keeping alive for future generations. She stopped for a moment, and, taking some wool in her hand said, *'This is the happiest I have ever been'*.

I invited her to describe what that meant. What does happiness mean for her in the context of her crafting? She selected a specific moment and thinking about it she said:

*I am sitting in my workshop,
It is a spring day with blue skies.
I pick up some wool,
I am feeling the wool through my fingers, and I know every thread of it.
I feel it in my fingertips... in my thumb...
I am feeling what is happening outside my front door...
I know the colours,
I can see the yellows and purples,
The sheep are on the hills and close by the house.
There is nothing to disturb them, and this is the way it has always been.
It's perfect.
No noise except the sheep.
It has not changed and that makes me happy.
Our ancestors were doing this, and now I am doing it.
The tradition has not been lost,
Everyone is here to support me,
That makes me happy.*

Carina's evocation appeared to be effortless. She seemed to understand what was important to her and she was able to describe the feeling of happiness when she took the wool in her hand.

The stories and experiences of the craftspeople demonstrate that the sense of place is important to all of them. Carina identified that keeping the local traditions of wool making alive was important to her. Pointing to a blanket that was hanging at the back of a chair, she said. *'Do you see that blanket hanging there? it has been there for more than two hundred years'*; she explained, *'Marcus's ancestors made that from wool here on their own farm and it is still here. That is very special to me... because we can see that it was made well, and it can last that length of time'*. She continued

and explained that over many generations, wool making was a part of the tradition in the local area. Most of the farmers in the area reared sheep, and, as a result, traditionally, the women spun and dyed their own wool to make hats, socks, slippers, jumpers and blankets to keep themselves warm.

Tom describes other communities that influenced him, for instance as a teenager, his social circle was important. They engaged in different sports and listened to lots of music as well as playing instruments. He described how he went to class to learn how to play the uilleann pipes with his pal, and how important that community was to him in becoming familiar with, and learning to play, tunes. When he started working as an engineer, he explained that he learned a lot from the community he worked with and how, in later years, he was able to reconnect with some of his former colleagues to support him in career changes. He acknowledges the traditional Irish music playing community as being an important part of his learning, and as a member of this community he was and is able to travel around the country and internationally and was welcome at music festivals and music sessions.

He recognises Na Píobairí Uilleann for their contribution in promoting classes on reed making, and videos to support people making and learning to play the pipes. He acknowledges the advantage of the pipe making community and the benefit of keeping in touch with the makers located in Ireland and around the world. While each of them makes different pipes, he said, *'There are a few pipe makers I would be very close to...I could ring any of them and they would happily share information with me.* This community spirit among the pipe makers is a positive thing. It has changed over the years because of the efforts put in by Na Píobairí Uilleann to promote and encourage uilleann pipe playing and making because demand still exceeds supply.

In the past, back in the 1800s, pre famine, I heard stories, that if a person called to a maker and said 'I need a new reed', the pipe maker would come out of his workshop, lock the door behind him, take the chanter from you, wave you goodbye, tell you to come back tomorrow, go back into the workshop and lock the door again, protecting the pipe making and reed making secrets. That is not the current situation, with piper makers happy to support each other.

Ryan (1993) highlights the protectionist aspect of the guilds, where the number of handicraft workers in a particular trade had to be kept within limits and the secrets of each craft had to be protected. This practice assisted the craft worker, as they depended on their craft for their livelihood, and they had to protect themselves from competition. This has now changed with a move to openness, more sharing of information and learning from each other.

Carina identified others in the community who supported her craft journey, as well as her mother-in-law. She remembers that although she was trying to spin the wool, it was not giving her the wool she needed to knit with. She then met a lady from Florida, who was living in the area, and:

'within a few minutes, she had me up and running. She was telling me to relax because I was forcing it, and I wasn't natural. She said "no, no, just relax and take it easy, make sure you have it well carded because once it's carded enough it will make better wool, and then better thread."'

Carina praised the knitters that learn to spin and dye wool with her in her workshop. She acknowledges that they are particularly good knitters, with knitting expertise that she does not yet have:

The knitters who come are so good, they are really good, but they wouldn't know how to do the weaving or the spinning parts – everyone shares their own information.

I wouldn't class myself as a good knitter, but I can follow a pattern and I knit jumpers, but the other knitters do very delicate lace type of knits, and they have different techniques.

One person gave me this pair of socks that were knitted – it took her two weeks to knit them, but I can see she is a good knitter from the detail. I might be able to do that, but it might take me six months and I don't think I would have the patience for it.

She expands when she was describing the other people who came to learn to spin wool:

It is a mindfulness thing, and it is very good for your mental health, to just stop everything and come here and be a part of nature.

It's beautiful and I think people who are living in big busy cities find that this is what they are looking for.

They can come and chill out and they have something that they made themselves and be proud of it.

They are following the method that people in this area have been following for generations.

*They pick the fleece, wash it, dye it cared it, and they spin it.
We have to just slow down and do it this way.
When they make something, from the very beginning to the end, they want to keep it forever.*

Carina described that when classes are finished, everyone sits down in the evening and knits together, *'all we hear is the clickity click of the needles, there is something nice about being in the group and not having to talk'*.

This is another example of the comfort of belonging to the community and highlights how important it is to be a member of this community and also how craft can create a community. It is stated repeatedly by Corina, and it is clearly a valuable aspect of what she considers an important aspect of her craft, belonging to the community that is made up of neighbours, knitters, family and friends.

From a business perspective, Carina praises other local craftspeople who live in the community for their supports:

*I am blessed with fantastic neighbours.
When they heard what I was doing, I got offered spinning wheels from people that they had never used and local farmers offered me their wool, free and for nothing...*

I was lucky that two craftspeople, Joe Hogan and Joe Joyce, were around me and they were able to put me in contact with the tour operators.

This meant that visitors who were coming to their workshops now had the option of visiting me.

I got great support from people.

I am very lucky that the support is from neighbours, and from family who have been able to help out, giving me the wool and pointing me in the right direction.

Carina is embedded in her community, and her description of the importance of place to herself and her craft is evident. The community not only contributes to her craft but are strong and active supporters of it. She identifies the importance of the local tradition; recognising that it was in decline, she embraced it with the support of her community to keep it alive.

5.2.1 Conclusion

Carina is surrounded by people who value knitting and the tradition of wool making, and Tom is surrounded by musicians who value the musical instruments he makes. The idea of being rooted in a place within a community is part of their experience. Each of them is immersed in the community tradition of what they do. There is an inherent pride attached to the fact that they are practicing crafts that have been intergenerational and within the local community for centuries.

The uilleann pipe maker is playing pipes that were made in 1924, and he speaks of a pride in knowing that they were made for a man called Seán O'Laoghaire, who lived in Inis Córthaidh. The tradition of keeping the pipe making alive is supported by the community attached to Na Píobairí Uilleann that was established in 1968 when there were less than 100 uilleann pipers in Ireland. The tradition of uilleann pipe playing is still popular with classes available for people who wish to learn how to play the uilleann pipes and supported by festivals where uilleann pipe players can come together and play music.

Carina is delighted that the community in which she is now making wool has been using the local sheep's wool for centuries. Although many people in the area no longer spin and dye wool, there is great support for her in the community because she is keeping a local tradition alive.

The community for the craftspeople is not limited to the craft community but includes, for example, people who can sustain them from a business perspective, as well as neighbours, their families, and friends. The importance of community has been identified by authors including Hunt (2011), Luckman and Andrew (2020), Glassie (1982, 1993, 2000, and 2020), and Hackney, Figueiredo and Loveday (2024). There is a deep understanding that, although they may work alone, there is a need for support from others. Each of the craftspeople identified moments when people were there to support them when they needed it, none more so than the pipe maker in his evocation, recalled when someone called to visit him, and supported him out of a "pit of despair".

There needs to be a sense of learning and adaptation within the community and localism plays a major part in community crafting, especially if it can be identified as leading to a form of community support and stabilisation. In the next section, the craftspeople describe the relationship that they have with the tools and materials they use in their craft work.

5.3 Materials and tools – An extension of the touching and feeling hand

In acknowledging the various impacts that distinct aspects of the community play in the craftsperson's 'coming-to-know', the relationship the craftsperson has with the materials and tools that they use has also been identified as instrumental in answering the research questions:

- How they came to choose their craft?
- What were the influences on their 'coming-to-know' experience?
- Gain further understanding of the embodied journey of knowing their craft.

There is something remarkably interesting about how the different craftspeople describe the relationship and familiarity that they have with tools and materials they use. Many of the tools that they use and refer to are simple, basic, tools such as knitting needles or a chisel. However, while a large part of our experiences usually remains unnoticed, the stories and experiences relayed indicate that the craftspeople are very conscious of their hands in the lived experience. They speak about the feel of the tools and the materials that they use demonstrating incredible awareness and sensitivity to their use of them in the craft process. In this next section we will explore the significance to the craftsperson of the touching feeling hand when using materials and tools in the craft process.

Anne, the knitter, recalls that, as a child, when she started to knit, she remembers that the wool she was using must have been pure wool because she remembers it as itchy to the touch and heavy. She describes the weight of the wool:

I am not sure why I say it was heavy, because I don't really know what I would have been comparing it to then, as a child.

But in hindsight after years knitting, I know now that it must have been heavy because of the kind of wool that they used.

I really only use cotton now, so I am probably making comparisons to what I am familiar with now.

At a later stage of the interview, Anne describes what she can recall about working with a designer, and the yarns that the designer selected for the garment:

In one instance, the quality of the yarn was such poor quality I hated working with it. It was awful to run through your hand.

You'd know by the feel of it that it was weak.

It was always breaking, and it was not a nice feeling running through my fingers.

You'd just know by the feel of it in your hands... it was bitty and I would have to keep stopping and starting because the yarn kept breaking.

You'd never know that to see the finished garment, but it would break my heart to make the garment...

Anne's descriptions highlight how aware she is of the material she is using in her knitting. She can describe not only the feel of the wool, but also its weight and quality. The method she uses to identify the quality of wool is by the feel of the wool through her hands. Using her hands, she can feel qualities such as the heaviness or if it is bitty. Bitty, she explained, is a term she uses to describe wool that keeps breaking. It is an overall encompassing description of the feel of the different materials.

In a similar way, Carina Coyne explains her deep understanding of the materials she uses. As well as fleece from her own sheep, she also uses her neighbours' sheep fleeces. She has a strong conviction that the fleece she uses should be from the locality, Joyce Country. She uses all kinds of wool. For example, she mentions Black Faced Mountain sheep, and the dark brown and white of the Jacob sheep. Many people contend that the mountain wool is very hard or very itchy. However, it still has a use and she uses this wool to make rugs or mats or to put on the base of a slipper. This type of wool is hard wearing and although it does not dye very well, she believes that every fleece of wool should be used. She continues and describes what the fleece feels like when she first puts her hands on it:

When I am starting off, when I have the raw fleece,

I can feel all of the oil that is in it, and I can only do that by touching it.

That gives me an indication of what I will be able to do with that wool.

I can only judge that by touch.

My hands are the only things that can tell me.

This is something I learned over time.

Carina recognises the value and contribution of her hands to ‘the feel’ of the crafting process. Each time she points to the stages that the wool goes through, she softly touches it with the tips of her fingers. She explains that the hand is one of the especially important factors in the process:

*I fell in love with the process and I became addicted to it,
There is such a feeling of sheer joy when the wool passes through my hands onto the
spinning wheel and then becomes thread,
My hands are a part of the process...
The way the wool moves between my fingers, my thumb and index finger,
and goes into the spinning wheel.*

Carina explained the difference between the fleeces when she initially felt them, and when she was deciding what she would do with them. ‘*Look at this one*’, she said, ‘*it has a mountainy feel to it...*’. She continued and explained what she meant about the term “mountainy”. ‘*It is coarse and no matter what I do with that fleece it will never be soft, but it is ideal for slippers or something hard wearing*’. She then pointed to another fleece:

*look at these, soft, curly ones,
feel these
they are so soft...
from a Blue Leicester,
the curls are so happy to be together,
and I know that will make a really nice jumper when it is done.*

The glove maker, too, was very conscious of the feel of the different types of leathers. The leather he uses in his craft tends to mainly come from animals from different parts of Africa. The reason he selects leather from Africa is because the pelt is very strong and the substance can be taken down to a very fine thickness, depending on what he is making. I invited him to describe the leather he uses to make gloves:

We use leather from different animals.

The strength depends on the feeding of the animal.

When the feeding is sparse, the animal tends to be sturdy, sheep that are too well fed cannot stand up to the abuse the other animals get.

We also use bovine leather, which is used for motorcycle gauntlets.

The other leather that is very strong is kangaroo leather. It is the strongest leather in the world.

Kangaroos fights a lot, and the skin will have a lot of scars on it. It just depends on whether you know the source of the leather and if you are willing to put up with the scars on the leather.

Usually, this leather is used in a military context.

...and then we have goat skin, which is also very strong, but not as strong as the kangaroo leather.

This really covers the gloving leather.

He refers to the hand many times. He explains that a person learns a lot about highly technical skills when they are involved in glove making and, indeed, when working with leather, *'The person needs to gain experience to make just one pair of gloves, but a person cannot do that after just one day. It takes a lot of time and experience'*.

He describes how he came to understand the difference between leathers. He was taking over the family business, and his father send him to the United Kingdom (UK) to learn about different aspects of the business from different craft masters. He said, *'it was not a normal apprenticeship, but it was more [of] a 'how to take over the family leather business' training programme'*. He spent time working in Singer Sewing Machines learning how to sew and becoming familiar with the different sewing machinery. He spent time in the accounts department learning about how to maintain business accounts, and he also spent time learning how to cut leather and how to make things with it. He describes his training:

It wasn't something the ordinary apprentice would be doing.

The apprentices we had were indentured for four years because that's how long it took them to learn to cut the different types of leathers that we used.

And, in those days, people actually learned a craft.

Glove making and working with leather is a skill and I know how hard it is to acquire the skills.



Figure 17: Image of George Horn Design No 21122 Ladies Classic Hand Sewn Glove 2024

Stitching is important: for example, pique sewing, is the hardest stitch to master in glove production; the points, vee shaped vertical stitching on the glove; the quirks, diamond shaped pieces of leather in the vee of the finger; French seams; in seams; out seams, and flat seams. *‘All of these must be learned’*, he said, and *‘a person needs meticulous precision skills to produce the fine seams on the sides of the fingers’*. He said that many of the parts of the production are done by hand and thus the hand, he said, *‘becomes sensitive to the feel of the leather, and this has been learned over many years... Even doing the stitching is about feeling your way about the leather’*.

The descriptions of the materials used by the craftspeople resonates with findings presented by some researchers. Vannini and Vannini, for instance, suggest that “when you work with your hands you become much more respectful of your materials” (2020, p. 871). Martin (2021) also refers to this when he suggests that the craftsperson getting ‘the feel’ for something is an important aspect of crafting but is only apparent to craftspeople with extensive experience.

Ingold describes the experience of tactility and touching material as “the feeling of contact between malleable substance and sensitive skin” (2013, p. 18). Hunt (2011) suggests that the crafter has a deep understanding of raw materials. For the

craftspeople, the deep understanding is not only the tactility and touch of the material that they are using but also relates to what Anne identifies as the weight of the wool and the way her understanding of the materials she is using has changed. Working with different materials, she can now draw comparisons between them. Carina describes the feeling of the oil in the fleece, the softness, and the curls on the fleece and she expresses her identification of the way the wool feels on her fingertips and the joy that brings her as the wool passes through her hands to become thread. Rob claims that it is time that assists in ‘coming-to-know’ the feel of the different leathers. Although no specific moments were evoked about his learning experiences of working with materials, Rob’s stories still contribute to understanding how he came to know how to work with materials, and they contribute to making meaning of his experiences of the world (Huber et al, 2013; Glassie, 1982, 1993, 2000).

Meeting and interviewing Rob was both interesting and challenging. His story describes in detail the difference between the several types of leather and how and when they are used. He explained the history of his company, his entry and takeover of the family business and the fact that the business is now going into its third generation. In narrative style he described how he came to be a glove maker, but it was not possible to evoke any specific learning moments with him and the conversation tended to veer off in different directions rather than focus on the lived experience of learning the craft. For instance, he laments that the skills that have taken so long to acquire “are being lost”, as market demands change, and he put forward the view that in order to maintain the skill set, it might be an idea to replicate what other countries are doing and invest in displaying the nearly lost skills, such as glove making and shoe making, in a museum. The description of his experiences are broad, and the stories offer an insight into Rob’s experience of his glove making world and, what Le Guin (1980) describes as stories that remind us of lives that were lived, the lives that were lived by both Rob himself and the skilled people employed in his factory.

The intimacy between Carina and the materials she uses reflects her profound understanding of the process that the wool is going through as it becomes thread, and that her hands, the spinning wheel, and the wool are all part of the process (see Figure 18, below).

She describes the spinning experience as one of immense joy and she said that when she started spinning. *‘Once I made my first ball of wool, I fell in love with it, and I have never bought any shop-bought or any other wool since I started. I’ve never used any other ball of wool other than what I have spun myself’.*

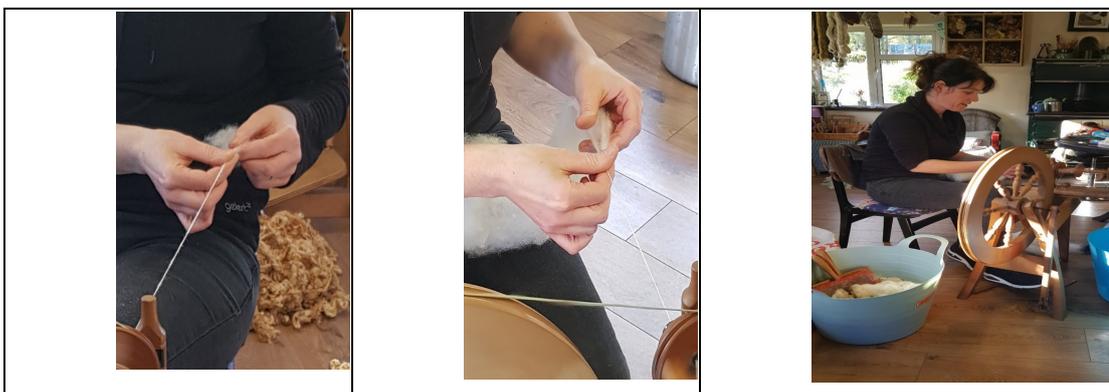


Figure 18: Images of Carina Coyne hand feeding yarn into the spinning wheel, in her workshop, paddles, fleece for spinning, solid fuel range in the background, October 2022.

Carina explained the steps she follows, once the fleece arrives at her workshop. Firstly, she feels the wool and looks at the quality of the fleece. Then she washes it, removing heavily soiled pieces, and leaves it to dry, sometimes outside in the sunshine. She then cards it with two paddles, where more impurities are removed, and the wool fibres are aligned. She recalled that when she started making wool, she would wash the fleece and then try to card it:

When I am carding, all I am doing is holding the paddles in different directions and separating all the fibres to have them all going in the same direction so as that when I am spinning it, they will all be lying down in the same way.

At the start when I washed the fleece the first time and I thought I had it cleaned, it wasn't cleaned, and I couldn't card it no matter what I tried to do with it, and it was hard to work with it.

The paddles were just not doing what I wanted them to do.



Figure 19: Image of Carina Coyne hand carding the washed wool, in her workshop October 2022

Over time, however, she learned how to work with the paddles and the wool:

...now I can tell from the feel of the oil in the wool that some fleeces might only need one wash, whereas others might need five or six washes. I can tell straight away by the feel of the fleece when I put my hand on it, and this makes the carding a lot easier.

Since she started working with fleece, she says she fell in love with the process and in her view, she became:

...addicted to it... and it became a part of who I am. I pick the fleece, wash it, dye it, card it and then spin it. I just slow down and do it. When I make something from the very beginning to the end, it becomes a part of me.

These descriptions give us an image of how Carina 'came-to-know' what it is to know. What she describes is an unconscious familiarity, becoming so familiar with the wool, the paddles, and the spinning, that she does not need to think about it. She explains that by touching the wool, feeling it, she understands what she can do with it. This

resonates with views expressed by Cook (2024) and Vannini and Vannini (2020), who suggest that by using the hand the craft form can provoke strong practitioner feelings of touch and sensory engagements linking the senses to the craft.

Anne references her ability and skill several times. She mentions tools that she uses in her knitting; for instance, knitting needles and patterns. She normally buys them but sometimes, when she is knitting or crocheting for a designer, the patterns are sent to her. She describes one occasion, explaining that she was following a pattern to make a garment. Halfway through the pattern, it started to go wrong. When she looked at her work, she knew it just was not correct. She ripped it back to where it started to go wrong and proceeded. However, she said, *‘no matter what I did, and how closely I followed the pattern, it just wasn’t right. No matter how closely I followed the pattern it was always wrong’*.

Having repeated the process a number of times, she sat down at the table with the pattern and recognised that the error was in the pattern:

So, I looked at the pattern, and I rewrote that part of the pattern myself. I was delighted with myself when I worked out that the problem was in the pattern. I am so long looking at patterns I was able to work out where the problem was.

She sent the corrected pattern back to the pattern company and was delighted when they sent her a thank you letter and a ball of wool. She explained that she did not expect anything from the company, but the acknowledgment made her feel great.

Martin reflects that “skilful manipulation of materials and tools entails seeing, feeling, or otherwise recognising features of the work that are only apparent to craftspeople with extensive expertise in a particular field” (2018, p. 2). These points are reflected in the views expressed by Sennett (2018) who discusses the ingrained hand motions that become a part of seeing ahead, and Gallagher (2013) argues that the hand can become an ingrained part of the physical being. All of this is evident in the descriptions articulated by the craftspeople. In their description they explain that their skills are skills learned over time, so much so that they just know how to do it. In other words, their skill has become embodied, a point made by Bourdieu who writes that “a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools’ is ‘transmitted in practice’ without the learner being conscious of them” (1993, p. 87).

The uilleann pipe maker describes the importance of the tools and the materials he uses in his craft. Some of the tools he uses he made himself:

I had to make a series of tools before I made the first chanter.

The first chanter was just validating that the tools I had made were accurate, which it turns out they were...

I didn't put any effort at all into that first chanter to make it look nice,

I knew it was going to be a hollow stick and if I put a reed in it would it play.

And it did.

It validated that the tools I had made, the reamers, were accurate, which was a great feeling.

That was a fantastic moment, that joy to have made it and it sounds like a chanter.

Fantastic.

That was a real sense of achievement.

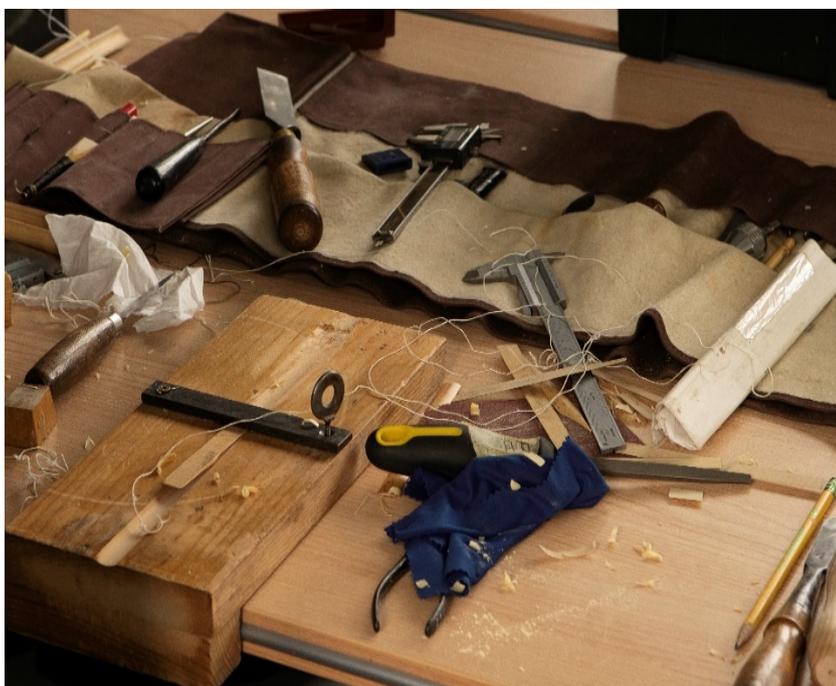


Figure 20: Stock image of Tools and materials set out at the start of making a reed, from Na Píobairí Uilleann 2024



Figure 21: Stock image of Filing the reed, from Na Piobairi Uilleann 2024

5.3.1 Conclusion

The different craftspeople give voice to their awareness of the tools they are familiar with and use as a part of their being, an extension of their hand; the ‘feel’ of the tools is clearly important and it is important to have a good fit. The tools described are simple tools, knitting needles, a hammer, paddles, a spinning wheel, needles, leather, and a timber file, with some of the tools made by the craftsperson. Time and experience have led the craftspeople to become familiar with their tools and how the tools interact with the materials, so much so that when they become familiar with using them, they do not have to think about the process of using the tools, and there is no divide between the hand and the tools in the crafting process. Tools are not just tools, however, with increased use and familiarity, they become an extension of the body. The hand and the tool have become one and the same thing in the context of their craft.

Similarly, with experience, and much repetition, the craftspeople become familiar with the materials that they use. They recognise differences between the materials and describe how they become in tune with ‘the feel’ of the materials. They also become familiar with the routine and process of their craft work.

The knitter, when she describes the identification and solving of the knitting-pattern problem, the control she has with the needles and the wool in her hands, gives her strength. It is as if she has an anchor, a practice that can ground her. Even with all of

life happening around her, she can pick up the needles and wool and there is agency in this practice. This is significant existentially because the knitter is saying something about her life; but she is also saying that irrespective of circumstances, she can turn her back on it and take out her knitting or her crochet to ground and anchor her.

However, the craftsperson also identifies aspects of vulnerability and doubt when working with tools, materials or a situation that is not familiar. Being vulnerable or doubting one's skill set and expertise can be overcome in some instances, such as the knitter who described her specific experience of the problematic pattern. She first questioned herself and then identified an error in the pattern she was following and had the confidence and ability to recognise that the error was in the pattern and not in her expertise. As a result, she had the ability and know-how to rewrite and correct the lines in the pattern and then had the confidence to send the rewritten pattern with the corrections to the pattern company.

In other instances, being vulnerable and experiencing self-doubt can have a negative impact and can contribute to feelings of despair, and isolation, as described by the uilleann pipe maker. The methods craftspeople can develop to cope with, and conquer, difficult phases or struggles in their learning experience is not something that is immediately apparent in the literature. The identification of this moment described by the uilleann pipe maker when he experienced difficulties making reeds, gives another perspective and understanding of the 'coming-to-know' experience. This is an area that could be explored further.

Making the tools that are needed in the craft is something that Sennett (2008) sees as important, because in making and maintaining the tools, the craftsperson can see how they work. Sennett (2008) puts forward the view that the person who makes and repairs possesses knowledge that allows them to see beyond the elements of a technique to its overall purpose and coherence. This knowledge can add value because the craftsperson understands the importance of using efficient tools in the craft process. Similarly, Martin (2021) presents the view that the skilled craftsperson sees a wealth of detail in the equipment they use, because they understand what the tools they are using need to do.

For the craftsperson, there are a series of influences on how they came to learn, know and understand their craft. None of these take place in isolation, and in the next section the craftsperson will describe how crafting becomes internalised in their body.

5.4 Crafting becomes internalised

The stories told by the craftspeople reveal that their expertise has assisted them to identify and find personal value and significance in their work, leading to a deep sense of connection with the tools and materials they use. They use terms that are meaningful about their experiences, and they share some descriptions that are driven by a genuine enjoyment of the actual craft work itself rather than the pursuit of external rewards. An example of this would be when Anne the knitter had the confidence to identify the mistake in the knitting pattern, and her happiness when the pattern company unexpectedly acknowledged her solution to the problem. Engaging in their crafts gives them meaning in their lives and a sense of identity, and pride.

In the next section, some descriptions are identified that illustrate how the craftsperson takes ownership of their craft and internalises the craft to become meaningful for them and will contribute to what may become a part of their legacy.

Tom gives much consideration to what he believes is the involvement of the maker in the making process and the role of his hands to this process. He explains that, for him, it does not just “happen”; he continues and explains that for him, using the hands:

...is the way we connect with the world around us, physically connect with the world, touch of the senses.

Touching with the hand can be sensitive.

We use our hands for so much, for example, if we plant a seed in the ground, we touch the seed, we place our hands into the soil, we put our hands on the shovel to dig the soil.

But before that, I have to have the thought, I want to plant a seed.

But where is that thought coming from?

It is coming from the ether into my mind, but my mind has to then put it through my body, to bring it into the world...

When he was starting out, he was thrilled when he finished his first chanter, ‘*when I made my first drones, and so thrilled when I made my first regulators*’. Now, however, when he looks back on them, ‘*all I can see is flaws*’. He continued:

I have got quicker at making, because I have to think about what I am doing less.

It's more internalised in the body, and even the thought process, when I was starting out, I'd have to keep having to stop, what's the order I have to approach this thing, I don't really have to do that now.

Experience has meant I have lessened the amount of hours I must put into it, but I have gotten faster, with the experience and the skill...

I am always striving for perfection and to have people admire my work while doing something that is tricky, reaffirms that I can achieve perfection, maybe I have not gotten there yet, but I can achieve it if I keep trying.

In the context of using his hands in uilleann pipe making, he is very aware of his hands and the importance of feeling in the making of pipes and he states 'It's lovely working with my hands'. He describes the feelings he experiences when he is making:

*That's the thing with the uilleann pipes.
I get to imagine it, design it, and then make it with my hands.
So, there is more of me going into it,
Making uilleann pipes is different and it exposes the use of my hand in the process.*

He described what this feeling means to him:

*No-one else can make the set of pipes I am making.
No-one else can visualise what I see as the end design, what is in my mind coming to reality.*

*I work the machines with my hands, scalloping, putting the rounded indentations where the holes are, so as that your fingers sit on a little bed for your fingers when you are holding the chanter – that's all done by feel.
So, I have to use a round back file and select a target depth, but you want it round so as that it doesn't feel like there are any corners under your fingers.*

*I know what sound I want from the pipes,
I am making the hole that will make the sound.
I would be stopping it and holding it.
Always feeling.
And now I just know.
I don't have to think about it.
Oh! Yeah, I can feel a little corner under my index finger and then I ask the question, does that feel comfortable now?
And now I know the sound that is going to come when the pipes will be played.*

This intimacy creates an inalienable link between the music and process - imagining the design, making the pipes and then the music that comes from playing the pipes.

Sennett calls this truthfulness of the touch of the fingertips, stating that a musician who hears a piece of music played correctly will aspire to repeat the sound: “the musician has an objective standard to meet: playing in tune ...and the sound itself ‘is the moment of truth’” (2008, p. 159). In describing the specific moment, the uilleann pipe maker has achieved expertise where he just “knows”. He is a part of the making, he is part of the craft, and his hands are a part of the craft process. Without the craftsman, the craft cannot happen and for the craftsman to acknowledge that there is a part of them in the craft, is magical.

Tom was keen to explain further what he meant about the connection between the making process and reality, and he described a specific imagined scenario of how he understands the link between the two:

If I'm going to design a cup, I don't just go into the workshop without having thought of the cup first – well maybe some people do – but I wouldn't go in with no idea in my head.

So, the first thing that has to happen is an idea.

Whether we have the idea, or does the idea touch into us, we can claim it as our idea.

I am not sure if we generate the idea, or the idea comes into our awareness, and it is coming from somewhere else.

The idea of the cup comes into the head.

First of all, you may have a think about the cup.

You have to make a few decisions; you might take out a piece of paper and sketch the cup.

You are putting it down on paper, you might do a few sketches, the handle might be better with a slightly different shape or a slightly different colour.

Then you go to the potter's wheel, and you make the cup based on your sketch and based on your idea and then tweak it a bit more.

Finally, you have a cup that you are happy with, that you are proud of, you know it's the right cup.

What you have done is you have used your hands, as the last part to bring it from the ether, the imagination, into the world, through the hands – that's the connection.

The uilleann pipe maker describes that, because of his engineering background, he was able to document and record every aspect of making the pipes, in order to enable a joiner, or someone who can read the drawings, to replicate and make pipes from the drawings to include the right number of holes in exactly the right positions with exactly the right diameters in relation to each other for each pipe. However, a person who is not familiar with the pipes will not be familiar with the feel of the chanter and the feel of where their fingertips should be on the chanter when they try to play a note.

This is all about experience and learning “the feel” cannot be written and included in the drawings.

Making uilleann pipes is different and it exposes the use of his hand in the process. Sometimes he makes pipes that are a little less ordinary for him and he described the process of making a set of pipes for a left-handed person as “weird”. He describes what “weird” means to him:

I have to have everything mirror imaged.

When I normally hold the chanter, my right hand is underneath.

For a left hander, their left hand will be underneath.

If I am shaping the chanter for them, it feels wrong, because it's the wrong hand but I still have to be able to feel it.

It's harder that way, because it's not natural for me, and I wonder does it feel wrong because I haven't smoothed it enough, or does it feel wrong because my hand doesn't want to be there in the first place?

This description offers a different perspective and records the shift in the uilleann pipe maker's confidence from what Sennett (2008) calls the truthfulness of the touch of the fingertips, evinced in Tom's comment ‘*and now I just know. I don't have to think about it*’, to ‘*I wonder*’ and the subsequent doubt that he describes as ‘*does it feel wrong because I haven't smoothed it enough, or does it feel wrong because my hand doesn't want to be there in the first place?*’ Ingold (2011, 2012, and 2013) sees tools and materials as part of a complex assemblage of relations. He suggests that making is a revealing broad process through which people acquire knowledge. Craft makers “think through making” by engaging in a form of enquiry that “continually answers to the fluxes and flows of the materials” with which they work (Ingold, 2013, p. 6).

The uilleann pipe maker's descriptions show us that even though he has acquired expertise in making pipes for someone like himself who plays uilleann pipes with their right hand, he is still developing and learning that expertise of how it should feel for a left-handed player. He can trust the feel of his hand when he knows, as a right-handed player, the right hand should be on the holes on the chanter. It is a further challenge for him to trust that he can identify where the hand should be for a left-handed player. This is the challenge for all craftspeople, learning to work with new situations, new materials and new machinery. They must think about what they are

doing until they become so familiar with the experience that they can state ‘I just know’.

Uilleann pipe making, as outlined by Tom, is a very precise thing. There are small intricate parts to making a set of pipes such as, metal work, wood turning, leather work, all the different angles to it, and then there is the reed making. He remembered making three reeds over a day or two with his mentor and, with a huge smile on his face, said that:

they were the three best reeds I ever made. Whether it was the cane we were using, or the fact that my mentor had so many years of expertise behind him – I had no fear - because I was just doing what he was doing, what he was telling me what to do, so the fear part wasn't playing into it... I was getting positive confirmation on everything I was doing.

There is a similarity here between the specific experiences described by Tom and Anne. Tom describes a state where he ‘...had no fear’ and the phrase used by Anne who recognises that, when knitting, she feels ‘*secure, safe*’. This illustrates the importance of both the learning environment and the teacher to the craftsman; they can feel safe in an environment where they are learning their skill, and they do not identify as being afraid if a mistake is made or they do the wrong thing.

Tom continues and explains that even though he can make reeds, reed making can sometimes be difficult:

My method has changed, and it is still evolving... sometimes reeds break my heart. I am not sure if it is the reed cane I use. But I am never sure when I am tying the string, am I putting the right amount of tension in the thread... there are so many variables... I heard reed making described as it's like trying to build a house and there is no foundation, but not only is there no foundation, where the foundation should be is quicksand! Everything is just moving, you're never sure. You change one thing and has it affected something down the road? You're never sure.

Even for the maker with lots of experience, reeds are still the thing that can break your heart. If I have a set of engineering drawings of a set of pipes, and you give them to someone who is competent in a machine shop, if they follow those drawings, they should be able to make you a set of pipes.

It's just a case of taking time and care but all the dimensions are there, that's all you need.

The reed is a different thing.

This is what you are supposed to do.

But now I have to do a bit of sanding and as I am sanding it, I'm getting closer to the sweet spot.

Have I sanded enough?

Touch it, the slightest sand,

Feel it,

Snip of a sand

Feel it again with my fingertip.

Is it smooth?

Am I there?

What does my hand tell me?

Now maybe this reed will never have a sweet spot, maybe it's a dud and I don't know, or maybe I have done something wrong.

The sweet spot is when it is perfect, it sounds brilliant.

But again, it is at the mercy of the weather because the dampness affects it.

It might sound brilliant today, but it might not sound brilliant tomorrow.

To find out more about the experience of making reeds, Tom was invited to expand.

He explained:

Because of the hit and miss nature of reed making, where it is not just following a set of drawings, and following a set of instructions, it's a feeling that can only be built up over a huge amount of experience, and still with that experience it's still not enough, you are still at the mercy of something else, such as climatic conditions.

In a state of evocation, he describes one specific reed making experiences as follows:

I am in my workshop.

It is wintertime.

All I hear is the howling wind going up the valley.

It is remote.

There is nobody around for miles.

I am starting to make a reed.

A local piper called in to my workshop.

I am making a reed for him.

We are both sitting.

I am sanding.

He is watching me.

I put the reed to my mouth to test it.

I suck it from the back of the reed,

There is a crow, a 'squeak, squeak' noise.

I have hit the sweet spot.

I put it into the chanter and it is singing.

I look at him.

*I know,
We know,
This is a fantastic reed.*

*I don't know what I am after doing.
Am I just lucky with the piece of cane?
Did I give it the exact number of swipes on the sanding block?*

*But there is that moment.
It feels great.
This is great.
I totally appreciate the reed.
This is great.
I am astonished.*

*I look at the other guy and see the same look coming back from him where we both
know.
This is a good reed.
I am positive,
Elated.*

*I feel a sudden lift in myself.
I take an intake of breath.
My eyes open.
The shock of something really great happening, without much expectation.*

He continued:

*I've cracked it.
I know I have a very chequered past with the reeds.
At other times they nearly broke me.
It's a thing with life.*

*I can't get too carried away with the good times,
and I can't get too bad about the bad times because I am always going to move
through them...*

There is definitely a part of me when I make a great reed I am thankful.

After the evocation he explained that making reeds can be frustrating and he
continued to describe that:

*The other frustrating thing about a reed is ...
I make a reed, I test it, it sounds fantastic, but I know it is going to change.
By working the reed, I am relieving internal stress.
Over twenty-four hours the reed will settle slightly differently,
So, an amazing sounding reed,
may be a dud the next day.
Or it may be a great reed the next day,
I am never sure.*

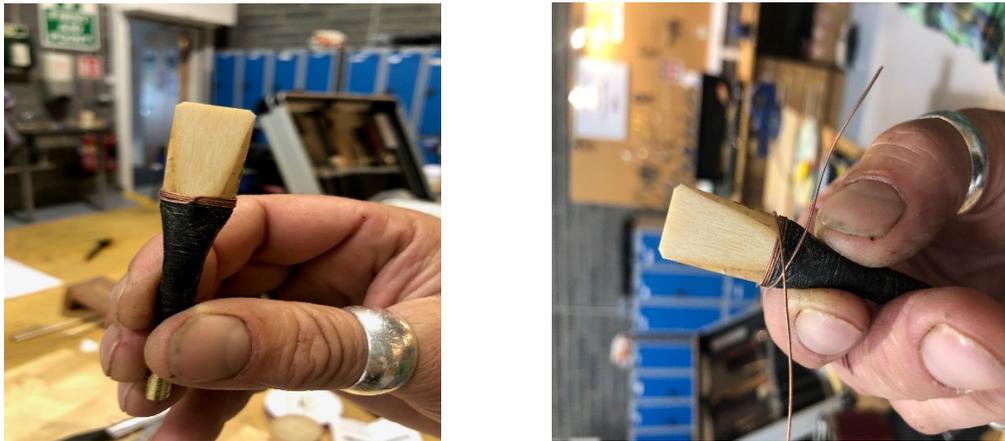


Figure 22: Stock images of Close-up of a reed, from Na Píobairí Uilleann 2024

Despite the elation of the experience of ‘*hitting the sweet spot*’ and getting the ‘*reed to sing*’ he acknowledges that there are other times when this was not his experience. At one time he was having difficulty making them and he decided to block off a few days to master the craft of reed making and ‘*get this reed-making under control*’. He said:

*the more I fretted about it the worse I got,
I lost all ability to make them.
I couldn't even make them the old way, was I trying to adapt new ways?
I didn't know what was going on, but it was hell...
So, I went into this spiral where I'd go to work to make ten reeds and none of them
would work and I spiralled down into the pits of depression.
I did not make reeds for three months...
I was very low.*

In a state of evocation, he described what this experience was like:

*I am afraid.
I am tense.
I want to relax.
I cannot relax into the flow of making the reeds because I am setting myself up to fail
again.
I have to relax. I cannot relax.
I have to but I cannot.
It is hell...
I cannot make reeds...*

*I am in hell
I am a failure
This is the end.*

These are two very thorough descriptions of the uilleann pipe maker's experience, illustrating two dimensions of two events that occurred. There is joy in the first evocation, recalling hitting "the sweet spot" that is witnessed by a piper, and the self-satisfied elation of making a good reed. This is immediately followed by the evocation of the second description of a very low feeling of self-doubt and pain. In the second evocation he states that '*...I am setting myself up to fail again..., I cannot make reeds, I am in hell*'. This evocation portrays the desperate feeling of misery and sadness that he experienced and is completely at odds to his earlier evocation when he could make the reeds '*sing*'.

Following this last evocation, Tom explained that while he experienced some difficulties making reeds over the years, he said, '*I am happier with reeds now. When I say happy, I enjoy the process of making reeds*'.

The two evocations illuminate both the positive and negative impact of Tom's experience: the great high that comes from reaching a difficult goal, and the low experienced when confronted with some difficulties.

It is rare to see such compelling detailed internalised personal accounts of two sides of the craftsman's experience of engaging in crafting. Much of the literature describes facts about how to do the craft, rather than the internalised personal emotions experienced by the craftsman in their experience of making. The literature has some cases and factual examples of the positive aspects of coming to learn a craft and becoming familiar with using the materials and tools in the craft process. However, the sense of struggle, isolation, and desperation is something that is not widely written about. This experience of internalising the process of reed making indicates how important reed making is to Tom's identity and his being.

Crevels (2023) discusses how the craftsman can know the properties of the material, to access the qualities of it, without knowing the scientific constituents of the material. In this example, we can expand on Crevels' view and suggest that the craftsman, while being familiar with the properties of the materials, cannot guarantee the outcome of working with the materials. Further, through practice, and repetition, they can become more in tune with the materials and internalise the process

of working with the tools and materials in an expression that can offer the craftsperson agency. By internalising and giving agency, the craftsperson becomes more adept in their ability to embed know-how as an instance of know-that (Gascoigne and Thornton, 2013).

Tom printed all the drawings he had created that illustrated how to make the different components of the pipes, and he now has several books with all the drawings saved for the future. He said that creating the drawings was valuable in:

*...developing an understanding of how pieces have to fit together...
I want to be regarded as a master craftsman...
That all takes time and practice, going over and over things again and again to ensure [that] they are right,
But I would rather have my work well regarded by others than for people to dismiss it.*

This is a further example of how reviewing the craft process illustrates that Tom is taking ownership for recording pipe-making drawings and can observe and measure progress. This ownership and agency add an increased dimension “to know how” as an instance of “know that” (Gascoigne and Thornton, 2013). It illustrates that if one considers the experience, one can be specific and explain it and can verbalise the explanation (Polanyi, 1958).

Carina tells of her internalised personal emotions in her experience of making. She pointed to the piles of washed fleece on the floor, first to the pile in their original state and then next to the dyed pile beside it and she said:

*I question myself every day.
And people who come in think I am a nut...

This wool is a part of who I am, where I live and where I come from.
The people before me felt it and I am feeling it now and I cannot understand how anybody would do it any different [sic]
I don't want to lose the trace of that living sheep,
I know every single fleece that comes in.
I nearly know every blade of grass the sheep ate...*

*Mother Nature has provided everything we need.
She produced the wool and the natural dyes
Isn't this perfect?*

Her description that the wool is “a part of who I am” provides an indication of how internalised the process of making the wool has become a part of Carina’s identity. It has become a part of her core identity and her values. Her stories augment the views put forward by Polanyi (1958), Gascoigne and Thornton (2013) and Ingold (2018) who propose that skill is the ground from which all knowledge grows, and skill is intrinsically sonorous.



Figure 23: Image of Washed fleece



Figure 24: Image of Naturally dyed fleece

Later, she spoke about a neighbour who gave some black lamb’s wool to her. In her area, she describes the local lore: ‘*Ara! We have a piseóg here that tells us you can’t buy a black lamb, you can’t sell one, and you can be without one.*’ After saying this, she took the wool in her hands and said:

*Look at this lovely black wool,
I can feel how soft it is, and I know I will make something really special from that [sic] wool because it is so soft and special.
Isn’t it beautiful?*

Carina’s description of the wool she uses ‘*this wool is a part of who I am, where I live and where I come from*’ highlights an ownership and immersion to her sense of belonging to the community where she lives. There is a sense of absolute pride from her descriptions of the wool produced in the local area; for instance, ‘*Isn’t this perfect?... Isn’t it beautiful?*’ and, despite the change in retail habits and what Gu (2018) refers to as the globalisation of local crafts, making remains a local phenomenon for her. She describes a picture of joy and ownership in being able to state that ‘*I know where every fleece comes from, I almost know every blade of grass the sheep ate*’. Carina recognises the importance of place and traditions to her craft, and, by introducing herself into the scene – ‘*I know every thread of it... I will make*

something really special from this’ - she defines and illustrates what it is to be an embodiment of the place in which she lives.

All of the craftspeople in this study mention the concept of rhythm and repetition at various stages of their development. This is integral to the continuation of the learning and the development of the craftsperson over time, as, without it, it is unlikely they will achieve mastery of their craft. The crafting has become internalised, to become a part of their being, so much so that they cannot ‘unknow’ what they have learned and practiced over the years.

Rob, the glove maker spoke of getting to know the different types of leathers and the time it takes to understand the feel of them:

Once you know, you know, and you cannot unknow it.

I am so familiar with the feel of the leathers and what to do with them, I don't have to think about it.

Once I became familiar with the 'give' in the leather... there are going to be few surprises because I am just doing what I always did with the leather to make a pair of gloves. I am repeating the same process with small variations to suit the different leathers.

Anne, the knitter, recounts that she has been knitting for many years, both in company of other knitters and on her own, but now she can see that she is always learning, whether it is about the material she is using, the style of work – knitting or crochet -, and reading and understanding instructions. She said that with knitting and crochet, unless there is a time constraint, there is no big problem in making a mistake, as all she needs to do is undo the knitting back to where the mistake happened:

But I know what I am able to do.

Mistakes, when they happen, can be frustrating, but most of the time, if I take my time and don't rush, I make fewer mistakes.

At this stage in my life, working with needles and wool is part of who I am.

There is a rhythm to it that has come from years of practice.

Crevels’ (2023) argument about “knowing” are holistic and encompassing. They are based on other thinkers informed views and robust in their contribution to understanding tacit knowing and skilfulness incorporating Polanyi (1958) and his interpretation of Polanyi’s work. It develops views put forward by Polanyi and others to enable a deeper understanding of internalising knowing and skilfulness and how the body comes to learn.

5.4.1 Conclusion

It is clear from the stories that their understanding of their craft has become a part of their core being and that they have taken ownership of their relationship with their craft. Their descriptions of the intimacy with their tools and materials, as well as their understanding of how the manipulation of the materials can result in an outcome, are profound and illustrate a deep understanding of many years of practice and observation.

Carina's stories make it clear that she is very in tune with the materials she uses, she knows the farmer who owns the farm from where the sheep's fleece came and she tells, for example, that she can almost know which blades of grass the sheep ate. She knows, by the feel of the wool, what she can make, and by making decisions and acting in a way that reflects her values and goals, she defines and illustrates internalising working with wool. Like generations before her, what she does is an embodiment of being a part of the place in which she lives.

The uilleann pipe maker completely internalises his craft that embodies each of the constituent parts that include the pipe making, reed making, as well as the music. None of these elements happen in isolation; they all are interconnected, and his stories are expressive and illustrate how he has internalised becoming an expert in each aspect of the pipe making process that has made him a master. He describes that even though he has written down how to make the pipes, that in his view any joiner can follow, it would still be difficult to follow the drawings and instructions unless the maker internalises and understands the feel of where the fingers should be placed on the instrument. The ownership of this 'feel', and some aspects of this internalising, is an area for further exploration.

The uilleann pipe maker describes extensively that, despite documenting and drawing the stages of how to make pipes, making the reeds is still dependent on a materiality that sometimes cannot be guaranteed, and may be outside of his control: for instance, humidity or the quality of cane he is using. However, despite this, the excitement he describes when he makes the "reed sing" is the goal and achieving this makes making uilleann pipes worthwhile.

In the next section, another aspect described in the craftsperson's experience will be discussed: the expectations of the finish. Despite being familiar with their tools and materials after years of practice and coming to terms with their ownership of their expertise, there is still an unknown element at the start of each project, and that is the excitement and anticipation of what might emerge from their craft work. There are no absolute guarantees, and this adds to the craftsperson's experiences and convictions.

5.5 Expectations of the finish

Each of the craftspeople described feelings of giddiness mixed with fear when they described starting a new project. Despite their mastery and expertise, they explained that sometimes when they start out on a new piece of work, working with raw materials, joining them together or splitting them apart, the outcome cannot be guaranteed, and this can add to the anticipation of what might emerge. *Ceteris paribus*, the project should end as planned, but there is always the 'what if' question. For instance, what if the materials do not do what was expected of them, what if the materials are worked too much, what if supplies run out, what if the tool breaks, what if power runs out, what if they do something wrong, what if they run out of time, or what if it turns out better than planned? All of these 'what ifs' are there for the craftsperson at different times during their craft journey. There may be an assumption of predictability, especially if they had completed a similar piece in the past, conversely, something outside of their control may occur and therefore the craftsperson needs a sense of openness and responsiveness to possible eventualities. It could be argued that not knowing the outcome fuels the magic and excitement of the craft and keeps the craft master grounded in each moment of creation. It could be argued further that every new project is a new experiment because the aesthetic potential of the work cannot be guaranteed. This section will illuminate the crafts masters' experiences and provide insight into their reality of expectations when starting a new project with new materials and not knowing the eventual outcome.

The knitter, Anne, commented that when she was making pieces that were created by a fashion designer, the pattern and the materials would be sent to her. She explained that sometimes she found it difficult to see how the picture of the garment on the pattern would turn out as designed, because the yarn the designer wanted to use was

of *'such poor quality'* that *'it was always breaking'*. However, despite these frustrations, she followed the pattern, and had to deal with the yarn breaking, reconnecting, and rejoining it as it broke. Then, with a broad beaming smile, she said: *I am very proud when I see garments I made in fashion magazines, selling for huge amounts of money, and I think to myself, I made that, and who would believe all the times that yarn broke, and broke my heart too!*

The knitter's expectation that the garment might not turn out as designed, because of Anne's frustration with the quality of the yarn, offers a new perspective on the makers' anticipation of what might emerge. Despite her description of the "poor quality" yarn that the designer selected, the garment finished up as designed and Anne experienced a sense of pride when she saw the finished piece. This pride comes from the fact that she persevered, did not give up despite the yarn continually breaking, and completed a piece that is a top-end designer garment. This example is testament to the unpredictability of the materials and the aliveness of the craft. It is also uplifting to see the determination of the knitter to complete her project and for her to experience a sense of pride in achieving the finish, despite her frustrations along the way.

Carina states her view of the anticipation of what might emerge, based on her experience of carding and spinning local wool and sharing her expertise with others, *'I just never know what I am going to get from the wool when I start working with it'*. She explained that every piece of wool is different, the pots she uses to dye the wool can influence the outcome of colour, the oil in the wool can impact on the wool that is spun, the natural fauna used to dye the wool will result in variations of colour, and all of this, in her opinion, adds to the richness and uniqueness of the wool they use.

Most of the people who come and learn how to dye and spin wool with Carina

... are not as conscious of the sustainability of the wool and the dyes until they commence the process,

*but the minute they pick out their fleece,
a dark fleece or a white fleece or a grey fleece,
and I ask them what would they like to see it as,*

*they might say for the weaving,
something and it is pure white.*

They will not understand how you can make that even more and then when you are explaining that this is already a natural product, and we add something to it which is also a natural product, which is the dye, and they can see what they can create.

She continues,

Then, they get really excited and passionate about it.

I explain to them that they can share their wool, because someone else is dying with an unusual colour and they can mix their colours.

No one will share their wool.

They only want to work with their own and they say that this is so precious to them that they are connected to it.

There is something about going out and once you walk up the mountain and go down to the lake...

They all do it and they all love it.

*You have picked the dye,
you have done it,
you went out and picked the dyes,
You dyed it, you physically did it.*

After that it is theirs, and the respect they give it – they own it then, you see.

It is difficult to explain it, but the thing is, you couldn't buy it.

It is so personal to each person and by the end of the week they would not part with it for anything.

When I ask them will they give it away, they so no, this will be mine forever.

They have huge value on it.

And then Carina describes her own perspective:

I have the same strong feeling myself.

I question myself every day.

*People that come in might think I am a nut, or that I need help!
Because, I cannot understand how anybody would do it any different.*

I know I am slightly obsessed by it but why would you go and get something from another country or why would you get a dye that is manufactured?

This is the most personable thing to this area.

I know our wool might not be as good a quality as wool in other parts of Ireland or wool from other countries,

But it is ours, it has been used by generations to keep people warm

And it is sustainable

Everything about it is unique.

I never know what I am going to get.

She displays an example of one fleece and was able to show the different colours in it and said, *‘even though the colours are different, they all blend, because it is natural, there is nothing here that cannot be traced back to where it came from, and that adds to the mystery, the magic and my obsession with it, I just never know how it will turn out’*. Figure 25 below for samples of Carina’s hand-dyed fleeces.



Figure 25: Image of a Selection of hand dyed wools, Carina Coyne. October 2022

5.5.1 Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, Ingold (2013) notes that, despite everyone in his class using the same material, willow, and each person being under the same instructor’s direction, the basket that each person made was different and unique reflecting the mood and temperament, as well as the physical stature, of its maker. Hunt (2011), in his study on stone carving, suggests that the high degree of risk inherent in stone crafting shaped the carvers’ approaches and attitudes to their work, requiring not only great manual dexterity but also patience and care.

What we can understand from the stories with the participants about experiences, is that while there may not always be a financial risk to the craft, there is a risk that the craftsperson's emotional being may become disillusioned if they do not experience the pleasure of a sense of achievement at the end of the craft project. This emotional risk has been described by the uilleann pipe maker, Tom, and, to a degree, by Anne, the knitter. They start their projects with an expectation of success, and each one describes that they anticipate that it will turn out as planned. However, they acknowledge that, in some instances, they just do not know. Positive expectations of the anticipation of a successful outcome influence their belief in the possibility of a positive finish and this results in pride.

There is a conscientious acknowledgement that the craftspeople do not recognise that they have learned everything to do with their craft. They are continually seeking to learn more and enhance their expertise. For instance, the uilleann pipe maker wants to be recognised as a master craftsperson. He tells that, in his view, his work is improving when he compares his current work to earlier work he did, but he does not believe he is yet a craft master. However, he has an expectation that he will achieve mastery. Carina, the wool maker knows that she is always learning and surprised by how things turn out. She recognises that older generations knew more than what she knows, but yet again, there is an expectation that she will eventually know everything.

In order to continue in this quest to achieve mastery, practising embodied techniques requires skill and takes considerable time to acquire. It relies on practice, the rhythm of routine repetition and a willingness to commit error. To concur with the views expressed by Bell and Vachhini (2020), embodied techniques enable craft workers to discover specific material possibilities and repeat them with a degree of reliability. Seeking support when it is needed and relishing in the positive outcomes as they occur, gives the craftsperson confidence and enhances their skill set to enable them to be confident in their expertise and ultimately increase their likelihood of achieving and creating the anticipated craft piece.

In the next section, we will examine how this will contribute to the stories that the craftspeople tell of their experiences of embodiment, confidence and the power of knowledge.

5.6 Embodiment, confidence and power of knowledge

The stories included in this thesis give voice to different views, experiences and different descriptions. These stories illustrate circumstances where, no matter what is going on around the craftsperson, their craft practice gives them grounding and gives them a capacity to ‘be’ as well as to make things. It may be a grounding that enables the craftsperson to be in the world, or it may be that they recognise the powerful self that has emerged from years of craft experience.

Their stories and descriptions suggest that their crafting practices envelop them, in most instances, in a state of calm and this gives a stability, which in turn gives them strength. What makes these findings interesting is the fact that although the crafts are different there are commonalities between the embodied experiences in the different samples, and this will be explored below.

Carina, the wool maker, describes her affinity to the fleece that is collected from her local area and she says that carding, dyeing and spinning the wool ‘...*is difficult to explain it... But it is ours, it has been used by generations to keep people warm. And it is sustainable. Everything about it is unique*’.

Her statement ‘*it is ours*’, puts a claim on the wool, an ownership that has existed for generations, and there is pride associated with this declaration of ownership. The origins of the wool have grown to become a part of her, her family and her community. She continues, ‘*[t]his wool is a part of who I am, where I live and where I come from. The people before me felt it and I am feeling it now*’.

O’Connor (2007) and Atkinson (2013) explore the embodied perception of objects in the workshop and the concept of tools blending into the sense of the user’s body and Carina’s description of her experience of how she works with the wool and the tools concur. She explains that she is so in tune with what she is doing with her body when she is working with the materials and the tools that they almost become an extension

of her body. *'When I make something from the very beginning to the end, it becomes a part of me'*.

Carina's descriptions leave us in no doubt that she embraces the embodiment of her craft experience. It has become a part of who she is, where she lives and the way she and her family live their lives. From hearing her descriptions and narrative accounts of her experiences, it would be difficult to imagine a scenario where she might stop using local fleece to make the wool. Her embodiment and confidence in her ever-increasing know-how and skills, combined with her sheer determination and confidence, indicate that her craft has grounded her so much that this is now a fundamental characteristic of the person she has become. Furthermore, her stories indicate that she is very happy with the person she has become as a wool maker. *'I fell in love with the process, and I became addicted to it. There is such a feeling of sheer joy when the wool passes through my hands onto the spinning wheel and then becomes thread....'*

Indeed, all of this affirms the positive aspects of the life that Carina now lives, immersed in the communities that support her craft. One of her evocations describes a specific moment that presents a clear image of what it means to be doing something that not only gives her joy and contentment, but also raises the embodied experience to happiness:

*This is the happiest I have ever been.
I am feeling the wool through my fingers, and I know every thread of it.
I feel it in my fingertips... in my thumb...
and I am feeling what is happening outside my front door...*

The idea of living in the moment is highlighted in the context of crafting: doing only what the person can do at that moment in time with the tools and materials they have at that moment in time. Her descriptions inform us that she is completely embodied in her craft. What adds increased value is the fact that her craft not only gives her stability and strength, but also a resounding experience of happiness. Carina was able to articulate this when she evoked feelings and emotions attached to her experience of feeling the wool through her fingers.

She is very clear that the process of wool making and dying it naturally has added great value to her life. In describing her craft, she uses phrases such as:

The most natural thing in the world...

I am addicted to it...

I know I am slightly obsessed by it but why would you go and get something from another country or why would you get a dye that is manufactured?...

This is the most personable thing to this area...



Figure 26: Image of Carina Coyne in her workshop October 2022, pot of tea on the range.

She describes how she tends to get lost in her workshop and it is not until one of her children calls her that she leaves the wool and her workshop and goes into her home. She is happy to be spinning and making new wool with the natural materials from the area. *'I don't need to think about anything else when I am in the workshop, only the happiness I feel when I make the wool as good as I can'*, and she describes the details of her crafting process with clarity and honesty.

Ingold describes the experience of tactility and touching material as “the feeling of contact between malleable substance and sensitive skin” (2013, p. 18). Hunt (2011) suggests that the crafter has a deep understanding of raw materials.

In exploring embodiment with the glove maker, he recounts that *‘I am so familiar with the feel of the leathers and what to do with them, I don’t have to think about it’*. This suggests that, after a lifetime of working with leather, his understanding of the feel of the materials has become embodied; he no longer needs to think about it, it is a part of who he is. He explained that in glove making all the skills associated with the process must be learned and that it takes time to learn the *‘meticulous precision skills to produce the fine seams on the sides of the fingers’*. He said that many of the parts of the production are done by hand, and thus the hand, he said *‘becomes sensitive to the feel of the leather, and this is learned over many years... Even doing the stitching is about feeling your way about the leather’*.

Skill acquisition is a primary objective of apprenticeship learning with the ultimate purpose of apprentices becoming competent practitioners, entrusted with work tasks and responsibilities. For a glove maker to be confident in their skills, and adept at the delicacy of stitching that is a part of the glove making process, takes time and practice and he states that the people working in the factory did a four-year apprenticeship to enable them to “learn their craft”. His use of the phrase “learn their craft” conveys connotations of skill, artistry and technique, and the implications of someone knowing their craft would indicate high levels of quality in the pair of gloves created. He spoke fondly of the craftspeople and admired their skills. He laments the fact that people do not understand the amount of time it takes to acquire the skills; skills so embedded that the glove maker does not have to think about every single aspect of the glove making process, (from the cutting of leather to the stitching and understanding the feel of the leather), but can do it instinctively. These embodied skills cannot be learned in one day. He, too, learned his craft by spending time learning the different aspects of glove making including learning about the feel of the different leathers and which leathers were more suited to different gloves as well as cutting and stitching.

Tom, the uilleann pipe maker, states that he gets great satisfaction from making the pipes and knowing that when he plays the pipes, he just knows that they will play a

good tune. He knows exactly where his fingers should be on the chanter, and he is able to craft them so that the musician will be comfortable with the pipes. This embodiment emerges over time, and he recounts that when he is making pipes for a left-handed player, this requires more effort from him, the maker, because being a left-handed player does not come naturally to him.

Anne the knitter's description and details of her experience of identifying a problem in the knitting pattern she was following is another illustration of how the practise of knitting has become an embodied experience for her. She identifies that her experience has added to her confidence that has enabled her to look for a solution when she faces a problem when knitting. She describes a scenario where she was following a knitting pattern and even though she was following it closely, the garment was not turning out the way it was supposed to. After a number of times of ripping back the lines of stitches, she looked closely at the pattern and because of her experience and confidence, recognised that there was an error in the printed pattern. This is an illustration of the personal power and confidence she has come to own because of many years of practice. She recognised that her skill, or any perceived lack of, was not the problem, and she was confident and grounded enough in her own expertise to recognise that the problem was in the pattern. This example also highlights the confidence she has in her own ability, and, rather than writing to the pattern company looking for a solution, she identified the solution herself. Once she found the solution, she explained that *'I sent a letter to the pattern people and included the new stiches to them and suggested that maybe the pattern was wrong....'*

This is a display of power and confidence in her ability. She did not need to send back the changes to the pattern company. She could have just finished the garment and said nothing to anybody, but what she demonstrates is the power that comes with ability and embodied skill to enable her to share her problem-solving experience. She explained that she understands how frustrating it can be when a knitter cannot finish a piece, and if it were to ease another knitter's frustration, then it would be worth doing. She continued:

I didn't expect to hear anything back from the company, but a few weeks later I received a letter from the company thanking me, and they also sent me wool. It was a nice acknowledgement that they sent me the letter and the wool. I didn't expect it.

She described how receiving the letter and the wool made her feel:

I felt really happy that I was able to break it down and work it out and solve the problem.

I knew I was able to read patterns, but it was a nice feeling to be able to understand that the pattern was wrong and be able to correct it.

I always knew I was a good knitter and good at crochet, but this breaking it down and working out the solution to the problem was something that I had not done before.

I guess what I realise is that I am always learning, new ways, and new things and that gives me a strong feeling of satisfaction.

I guess it was a lot of practice...

And that practice and familiarity gives me confidence.

For me looking back now though, practice was the key, because with more practice I become more comfortable with the wool or the needles or the pattern or a combination of them all.

Her story illustrates that with experience comes confidence and power. Her skillset has become so engrained and her confidence in her ability is now embodied, and this gives her strength to solve problems and let other people know that she can solve the problem.

5.7 Conclusion

The stories of how the craftsperson acquires their craft knowledge and skills to enable them to do what they do, illustrate that it takes time and practice to gain the confidence to enable them to achieve mastery. They describe that they have become so familiar with what they are doing that they do not need to think about it. There is a sense that their craft has become a part of who they are, and that they have a deep embodied understanding of the materials they are using. The unconscious understanding of the materials associated with their craft, and of doing their craft, illustrates that the craft experience has evolved into being a core characteristic of themselves. Their stories and descriptions add value to understanding how they ‘know’ and what influences their experiences.

Each of their stories identify what it means to achieve a sense of embodiment and the power and confidence that results from this. Understanding the feel of the material, the process of creating and making and problem solving are part of this experience of ‘coming to know’. A standout moment in this, however, is the in-depth personal immersion, ownership, happiness and pride in the entire wool making process

expressed by Carina, the wool maker, and the complete involvement and emotional connection for Tom, in making the uilleann pipes. Anne, the knitter, describes the feeling of confidence she experiences when she knits and, earlier, she explains the feeling of safety she experiences when she is knitting.

What emerged from their stories, and the detail and depth of their experiences was further enhanced by using micro-phenomenological interviews. For example, the detail that they were able to describe, including details of materials and tools they use, as well as their emotional involvement, adds richness to understanding how they 'come-to-know'. Their willingness to share this level of detail of the embodiment, power and confidence that they experience when engaging in their craft illustrates that using this combined methodology to probe and clarify how they 'come-to-know' proved effective. Exploring what influenced their experiences adds a further dimension to understanding the lived experiences of the craftsperson.

In this chapter, a blended research methodology of narrative inquiry and micro-phenomenology enabled the craftspeople describe in detail their experiences and convictions of embodied learning in order to answer the research questions. It gives descriptions of their experiences and influences about how they came to learn, know and understand their craft. The idea of being rooted in a place within a community is important to each of the craftspeople. The support that the different communities offer the craftspeople vary from introducing them to the craft concept from a young age, supporting them when times are difficult to the general camaraderie that exists between the craftspeople when they come together to attend an event or to work together.

The community for the craftspeople is not limited to the craft community but also includes people who can sustain and support them from a business perspective, as well as neighbours, their families and friends. Although the craftsperson may work in isolation, there is a need for support from others, with each of the craftspeople identifying moments when people were there to support them when they needed it.

Knowing and learning craft relies heavily on embodied connectedness with materials, tools, and equipment. The relationship the craftsperson has with the materials and tools they use has been identified as key in answering the research questions. Their

expertise has assisted them to identify and find personal value and significance in their work, leading to a deep sense of connection with the tools and materials that they use. They describe “the feel” of the tools and the materials they use, indicating incredible awareness and sensitivity to their use of them in the craft process. The participants indicated an intimacy working with the materials, which shows a deep understanding of the craft process.

For all of them the hand and their tools have become one and the same thing in the context of their craft. The familiarity of using the tools over time means that the tools have almost become an extension of their hand and of their body. Equally, through experience, and much repetition, the craftspeople become very familiar with the materials that they are using, and they recognise differences between the materials and describe how they become in tune with ‘the feel’ of the materials. They also become familiar with the routine and process of their craft work.

The stories illustrate circumstances where, no matter what is going on around the craftspeople, their craft practice gives them grounding and a capacity to ‘be’ as well as to make things. However, what has also been identified is that when working with tools, materials or a situation that is not familiar, the craftspeople can experience vulnerability and doubt. The methods that craftspeople can deploy and develop to cope with, and conquer, difficult phases or struggles in their learning experience is not something that is apparent in the current literature and this is an area that could be explored further.

Despite being familiar with their tools and materials from years of practice and coming to terms with their ownership of their expertise, there remains an unknown element at the start of each project, and that is the excitement and anticipation of what might emerge from their craft work. Their stories indicate that each of them has an intimate relationship with their craft, and it has become a part of who they are as people, almost an extension of the self. This can be seen from each of their stories, where they suggest that they cannot unknow what they know, or describe doing their craft as the happiest that they have ever been. All of them acknowledge that their learning journey is not over, but that their bank of knowledge and their experience give them great confidence to be the best people they can be.

Social relationships are important to the craftsperson, as are the material relationships involved in the process of developing craftsmanship between the hand, body, materials and tools. What is also important is the craftsperson's resilience in coping with working in isolation, problem solving, and the solitude that can occur when facing a crisis.

In the next chapter I will discuss how this research contributes to the literature in the field.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

For most of my life I have been fascinated observing different craftspeople at work. I enjoyed watching what appeared to me as an effortless, regular, repeated rhythm that they used when they engaged in their craft, be that a stone mason, a carpenter, or a painter. Their rhythm never appeared to be rushed, but looked like it was following a set of instructions that were written in the craftspeople's head, and were thus not available to me, the observer. Sometimes, I overheard other people complimenting the person's work and they would use phrases such as 'you'd know by his hands', or 'look at the hands, sure you would know by the hands'.

My fascination was further influenced by two people who were close to me who had mastered their crafts. When I watched them doing their work, they appeared to instinctively know what to do with the different materials, tools and equipment required to create something, and both had a deep knowledge and understanding about their craft. People learn how to craft in many ways. Both of these people learned their craft by completing apprenticeships, and they instinctively knew how to do things within their chosen craft.

I explored the traditional apprenticeship model and came to understand that much research has been undertaken that examines various aspects of apprenticeships and that, although very popular and effective, it is not the only way to learn how to master a craft (Billett, 2016; Walden and Troeltsch, 2011; Deissinger and Hellwig, 2005, and Ryan, 1993).

At one moment in defining my research questions, I asked myself the question how does the craftspeople know? More specifically, I recall asking the question, as I rubbed my hand along a table, how does the craftspeople know by running their hand along the table, that it is sanded enough, or how does the dressmaker know which fabric will suit a particular design, cut or fall of a garment? The more I thought about this, I also wondered what influenced them in learning their craft. This thesis responded to these primary questions - how does the craftspeople know, and what are the influences on their learning? This research aimed to identify what has contributed to this knowing with specific emphasis on material knowing, 'coming-to-know' and

working with materials and tools including their hands and the role of the community as an influence on their ‘coming-to-know’.

In the next section, I will illustrate that including micro-phenomenological interviewing alongside narrative inquiry provides a new perspective to the reader of the lived experiences of the craftsperson.

6.2 Methodology for describing lived and embodied experience

There is an abundance of rich literature available that has researched crafting and learning how to craft, and this has been reviewed in the literature chapter. Some of it observes craftspeople at work such as Ingold (2011, 2013), Jones (1989), Sennett (2008), Baume (2020) and Cook (2024). Researchers such as Vanninni and Vanninni (2020), Martin (2021), Ingold (2013, 2010, 2007, 2000, 1999), Hunt (2011), and Sennett (2008) also examined the nature of the materials and tools used in craft practices and the ways in which people learn from the materials and tools. Ingold’s attention to the role of materials in skilled practice has implications for how those practices are learned. Such learning occurs through “guided discovery” (2000, p. 356) in which learners are led to discover the properties of materials by manipulating them in specific ways. Observing experts at work enables the learner to take note of certain routine movements, which they then attempt to copy in their own pieces and this “enables the learner to get the ‘feel’ for things himself” (p. 354).

Other writers took an ethnographic approach and lived with the craftspeople observing and documenting the people engaged in crafting, such as Glassie, (1982, 1993, 2000, 2011, 2020), Jones (1989) and Hunt (2011). Their research was insightful and informative. I gained a new awareness from their work. For instance, Jones’s (1989) work offers a remarkable understanding into the life of the craftsperson.

Some researchers engaged in the craft practice themselves in order to document their own learning experience and illustrate that learning is embodied and materialised between the learning body, materials and tools. O’Connor (2007, for example, explores her experience of how glass behaves and moves in the process of glass blowing. Ingold (2013) observes what little control he, and the other members of the group, have when working with the willow they were using to make the baskets. Martin (2021) writes about his experience as an apprentice and refers to how the craftsperson can ‘tell by hand’ and gets ‘the feel’ for something in a similar way to

Carina, the wool maker, who describes how she knew the differences between sheep's wool by the feel of it. Indeed, journaling my own experience of learning the craft of bee keeping and the documenting of how I came to know various aspects over a number of years was instrumental in informing my methodological decisions.

As I described in the methodology chapter, I decided that narrative research would be an important method for the collection of stories about the participants' crafting journeys. In an attempt to also capture the experience as lived, I concluded that adopting a blended methodology with micro-phenomenological interviewing would provide the best opportunity to capture both. This blended methodology included narrative research methods, because the story informs the 'coming-to-know' experience. The writing of Robinson and Hawpe (1986), Cresswell (2009) and Clandinin (2019) were reviewed because their use of this methodology provides an historical, social and cultural context for the journey of becoming a craftsperson. However, it remains difficult to access and describe an experience that has happened in the past so using micro-phenomenology interviewing techniques with willing participants seemed like the best way to draw awareness to pre-reflective or unnoticed dimensions of their 'coming-to-know' experience.

Research by Petitmengin (2018), Valenzuela-Moguillansky (2013), Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vasquez-Rosati (2019) was reviewed to inform and enhance my micro-phenomenology interviewing skills and knowledge of this field. A further element included was photographs in order to add another dimension to this landscape of experience, both of the people, places and artefacts of the craft process. Finally, the short vignettes interspersed through this thesis serve to place the lived experiences and memories of the researcher in conversation with the stories being analysed.

Much of the literature gives step-by-step accounts of the crafting process, and observations of the crafting process. What is rare, however, is a recognition and understanding of the craftsperson's *lived experience* of learning their craft; for instance, when and how did they arrive at a state that their crafting became instinctive and intuitive thus embodied? This is what I recognised as missing from the literature, a tangible reality of the experience of 'coming-to-know'. This thesis contributes to this wider field through this blended methodology that draws substantially on the

micro-phenomenological interview method. This blended approach, coupled with the philosophical position of interpretivism, facilitated a focus with the participants about answering the research questions and it is, I suggest, a useful model for approaching research in this field.

In this section, I will show how adding micro-phenomenology as an interview method in a blended methodology contributes to the wider interpretation of understanding the lived experience of ‘coming-to-know’ in craft making. This blended approach enabled a comprehensive and detailed story to be portrayed that gives an in-depth account of the craftsperson’s ‘coming-to-know’ experience, with the narrative framing, prompting and contextualising the experience of coming to learn a craft for the person. It enabled the willing craftsperson to access key moments so that they were able to describe them with clarity, which then gives a unique perspective on their lived experience.

While using the blended approach facilitated the collection of robust descriptions and stories of the craftspeople’s experiences, there were significant challenges as outlined in the Methodology chapter. However, using it yielded a richer understanding of the experience of crafting and learning a craft, because it enabled the participant to evoke precise moments that they were able to describe with detail and clarity that add further depth and value to the tapestry of the craftsperson’s lived experience. This intersection of craft and micro-phenomenology interviewing was key to drawing a complete picture of their lived reality, capturing the richness of subjective experiences that sometimes included sensory, cognitive and emotional aspects of a moment.

To identify a number of these specific moments, it is important to give context to the craftsperson’s life. In this regard, the narrative methodology was selected, and it assisted in locating them in a space and place where they engaged with their craft. This methodology gave them an opportunity to tell their story of how they became involved in their chosen craft and the various influences on their journey to craft mastery. Including micro-phenomenology interviewing gives their stories a new layer of detailed descriptions of rich experiential reports of brief moments that they identified as contributing to their ‘coming-to-know’.

This research augments Depraz et al (2003) who explores the understanding of how we examine what people live through. A substantial amount of research is currently taking place in this field that identifies the intersection of cognitive science and contemplative practice. For instance, Valenzuela-Moguillansky et al. (2021) affirms the relevance of the study of lived experience to cognitive science and examines the relationship between first-person research and enaction to make it possible to clarify the basis from which to address the specific challenges that arise in studying lived experience. Other research undertaken by Valenzuela-Moguillansky and Vasquez-Rosati (2019) explore their experience of abstracting and developing the example of an analysis carried out in the context of a specific investigation using micro-phenomenological interviewing. Their work illustrates the tracing of the different steps of the analysis, and the criteria used to solve the numerous issues that arose throughout it. This research builds on this by including the story behind the ‘coming-to-know’ in that precise moment.

Valenzuela-Moguillansky (2013) identifies that the elicitation interview approach makes it possible to gather and analyse descriptions of a lived experience. Their work illustrates that the experience of a given subject at a particular moment in time can cover all the lived experience at that moment and can also be new and different each time. This research takes this further by adding the centrality of the story behind the ‘coming-to-know’ in that precise moment where ‘coming-to-know’ and experience is pre-reflective, tacit and multi-modal, as illustrated in the ethnographic film *Epoché* (2020) by Petitmengin and Suhr. The film documents how new understandings emerge in interactions between phenomenologists and experienced meditators. Through micro-phenomenological interviews and meditation, they come to see the contours of the specific micro-acts and micro-events that appear to be key to our ability of suspending judgment. In a similar way, using micro-phenomenology interviewing for this thesis gave the craftsperson a gateway to describe in concise detail, specific moments that they identify as significant in their coming-to-know’ experience.

To illustrate the benefit of using narrative research with micro-phenomenology interviewing the uilleann pipe maker was able to provide an overview of his life and

set the context for how he came to make uilleann pipes. Further, he was also able to evoke specific moments in detail to help us understand the experiences as he lived through them. For instance, he was able to tell me that music played an important role throughout most of his eventful and adventurous life. He was encouraged to play music and learned how to play different instruments, and he listened to a lot of music. He was able to revisit a moment and add context with detail such as listening to a particular programme on the radio, *Mark After Dark*, presented by the disc jockey (DJ) Mark Cagney. He was able to recall the DJ announcing that he was going to play a piece of music by Moving Hearts, which featured an uilleann pipe solo, a slow air by Davey Spillane. This seminal moment is later revisited when he traces his journey from what he referred to himself as a ‘city guy’, who was into rock music and bands such as Dire Straits, Led Zeppelin and Madness, he would skip Irish music when looking for more rock and popular music, “*because it was Irish, and we didn't bother with any of that kinda [sic.] stuff... I was into rock bands...*” to a celebrated uilleann pipe maker and craftsperson.

This story illustrates the lived transformation that took place for the piper when he was available to new experiences. He was able to access and describe with clarity the specific lived experience of the moment of when his recognition of music changed, and how it ultimately changed the course and direction of his life. As another example, in a separate interview, he described other aspects that he considered important to becoming a skilled craftsperson. Throughout this description, he repeatedly referred to one aspect of his craft, reed making, and it became clear that this was an important part of the craft process for him. On account of the fact that he referenced it so many times, I was then able to invite the uilleann pipe maker into an elicitation interview, and this enabled him to recall the process of reed making in specific detail. For one of these elicitations, he recalled the weather outside of his workshop, a detailed description of the tools he had made himself, the feel of tools in his hand, the feel of the cane he was working with against his fingers, the feel of delicately sanding and scraping the reed, the thickness of the lips on the reed, gently blowing away the shavings from the reed, and blowing on the reed until eventually he hit what he describes as that ‘sweet spot’, and he knew it was a good reed:

*All I hear is the howling wind going up the valley.
It is remote.*

*There is nobody around for miles.
I am starting to make a reed....*

*...I put the reed to my mouth to test it.
I suck it from the back of the reed,
There is a crow, a 'squeak, squeak' noise.
I have hit the sweet spot.
I put it into the chanter and it is singing.
...I know,
This is a fantastic reed.*

This level of specific detail would be very difficult to capture using the narrative research method alone, and the detail gives us an idea of the joy that he experienced when he created that '*fantastic reed*'.

The knitter describes how she came to know her craft, and the various elements that assisted her. To illustrate a different depth of detail that identified existential and embodied anchoring, she was able to recall the feeling of the knitting needles in her hands stating that now the needles are '*like an extension of my hands*'. She was also able to express the feeling of comfort she experiences when she holds the needles, and even goes further by describing it as a feeling of safety: '*[w]hen I am using wool or cotton, it feels like a glow around me, a contentment glow, something like safety. Safety means no danger and no fear...*'. In a world where people strive to feel safe, with all of life going on around them, the knitter can pick up the needles and wool and there is agency in this practice, "*I am secure, I am safe...*"

This is very significant existentially because the knitter is saying something about her life, and she is also saying that no matter what is going on around her, she can turn her back on it and take out her knitting or her crochet and this is grounding and anchoring for her, despite everything.

This kind of elicitation gives a unique insight into the 'coming-to-know' experience at the exact moment it is taking place, and while knowing the story of the craftsperson's life can reveal a lot, it cannot give this kind of insight this research sought to uncover. That is, this thesis provides a tangible reality of the experience of 'coming-to-know' whereby this knowing becomes embodied and the person knows that what they are doing coalesces at the right time, in the right way, producing the right outcome.

Equally, these moments had to be put in context and needed to be situated within the craftsperson's story of their crafting journey in order to give depth to the feelings expressed and unearthed by the craftspeople using this interview methodology. It is insightful and offers a different perspective about the experience of crafting: it is not just about learning how to *do* crafts; it also captures sentiments that are internalised for the craftsperson. In the craftsperson's normal day-to-day routine these moments may be forgotten, because they are not a part of the general day-to-day craft process. During evocation, the associations with the moments are part of the experience and are clearly described.

Before I met with the craftspeople, I would not have identified that weather would be an element that contributed to their experience, but it is referenced in moments of evocation by the participants. For example, the uilleann pipe maker refers to the weather when he recounts: *'It is wintertime. All I hear is the howling wind going up the valley...; The sun even came out and I felt the heat on my hands...; It is a spring day with blue skies...'*

During evocation, Tom, the uilleann pipe maker, identified and described these feelings as a part of his experience. Feelings are a key part explored in an embodied way in micro-phenomenology that is not easily identified in general conversation. These dimensions give a further insight into aspects of the craftsperson's experience.

It feels great.

This is great.

I totally appreciate the reed.

This is great.

I am astonished...

I am afraid.

I am tense...

It validated that the tools I had made, the reamers, were accurate, which was a great feeling.

This methodology illustrates a difference between the stories from craftspeople who were willing and able to go into an elicitation interview, from the craftsperson who only engaged in the narrative dimension of the research, namely the glove maker. His

description of his experience of ‘coming-to-know’, while interesting and informative, did not have the precise depth of detail described by the other craftspeople who were able to recall in detail the specific moments that they experienced as part of their ‘coming-to-know’ journey. The specific moments arose from stories that the participant was recalling, and the elicitation enabled them to verbalise moments that they now recognise as important to their learning experience, very accurately and reliably, through what might be referred to as using a microscopic lens into the specific moment.

This methodology gives a dimension of rigour to understanding the craftspeople’s experience as they learned their skill. The only other way to recall this level of detail would be for the craftspeople to keep a journal or log of their learning experience. I know this from my own experience of keeping a journal when I started learning the craft of bee keeping. Things that were brand new to me at the start were continuously mentioned in the journal, but as I became more familiar with them, were mentioned less and less until it came to a point where I did not have to think about them at all, and forgot about them because the knowledge had become embodied. It is now difficult to remember a time when I did not know what I know.

Listening to the craftspeople’s stories of how they came to know was very important because it put their learning in context and identified areas that were significant to them. The evocation and elicitation process were then able to give them an opportunity to recall significant moments and to describe these moments in precise detail. This combined methodology gives an overall view of their ‘coming-to-know’ experience, and the elicitation gives a unique view into their experience learning their craft. Micro-phenomenological interviewing of craftspeople is well suited to help participants describe subtle aspects and micro-dynamics of their experience of ‘coming-to-know’ that they may not have spontaneously identified in a narrative interview.

6.2.1 Narrative vignettes of recalled stories

To put the vignettes in context, they are an important aspect of the research and directly influenced the research questions. On a personal level, my mother (Bea

McGing, née King) and my life partner (Michael Leahy) were two skilled craft masters who are both now deceased. However, when I reflect on their craft skills, I often ponder the question ‘how did they know?’ Including the vignettes gave me an opportunity to think back, reflect and write down memories I have of their craft life. I was able to acknowledge their expertise, recognise their skill set, and record it. This explains how the honesty of the research questions came about. I was doing this because I really wanted to know the answers, and unfortunately, I was no longer able to ask them directly.

Petitmengin (2007) writes about this in her work, where she explores how a person frames this dimension in their subjective experience. Barter and Reynolds (1999) propose that vignettes provide a valuable methodology for exploring people’s perceptions, beliefs and meanings about specific situations. The advantages and pitfalls of using vignettes to prompt research interview questions are explored by Hughes and Huby (2002), who conclude that vignettes, used alone or in conjunction with other research techniques, can be valuable research tools in the study of people’s lives, their attitudes, perceptions and beliefs. In their work, Spalding and Philips (2007) present the argument of the trustworthiness of using vignettes, and that, from their experience, vignettes can present more data than anticipated. Indeed, they continue, their use gave an unexpected outcome of the participant’s experience. They conclude that vignettes are a trustworthy source of data and interpretation is a central feature of the success of their use.

Fraleigh (1987) describes how she wove the intuitive voice of the dancer, from the first-person experiential voice to analytical third-person theory, through inclusion of short personal vignettes about her own learning experiences and the learning of her dance students. What emerged was a validation of embodied experiences and an appreciation of dance as a way of knowing. Vignettes, stories and memories can never mirror completely the lived experience. However, what they can do in a research study, is give another view or lens to support the research data that has been collected (Faia, 1980; Hughes and Huby, 2002).

The reason I have included narrative vignettes, stories and memories in this research is because I wanted to add a dimension to it that would give a voice to two

craftspeople I knew personally, cared for and loved. They were craft masters, and I wanted to share stories that I recall of how they learned and practiced their craft. It is because of their craft mastery that I embarked on this research journey. Both of them are now deceased, but their expertise stimulated my curiosity about how the craftsperson becomes an expert. When they were alive, we had some conversations about their learning, experiences, and influences. It was not an in-depth study, and that is something I lament to this day. However, the vignettes give descriptions of stories they told me. These vignettes, and my appreciation of the work craftspeople do, provide an insight and connection to the deeper motivation that inspired me to undertake and complete this research. The stories are questions asked out of curiosity about how they knew how to do something. Their responses were accurate descriptions of their experiences, answered in general conversation, rather than answering a specific research question. My questions and their responses are recollections collected over many years, in a broad attempt to not only keep their memories alive, but to document their expertise. I also spoke with other people who knew these two craftspeople and their recollections, while not directly recorded and included in the stories, concur with my memories.

I acknowledge that micro-phenomenological exploration is not included in these stories. What is included in the remembered conversations, however, is a recollection of genuine curiosity from the questions asked, and honest accurate answers delivered in an environment of trust, as promoted by Spalding and Philips (2007) and Kim (2019, 2016). I gave considerable thought to which stories and vignettes to include; what I wanted to achieve by including them; what the reader would gain from their inclusion, and how the stories would and could enhance this research project. I selected several memories and stories from a large archive to illustrate Bea McGing and Michael Leahy's' working practice, and how proud I am of their legacies. It is a proud moment for me to include them in this research and have their stories recorded. The stories are good examples of best learning practice, the apprenticeship model of learning, benefit of experience, and they demonstrate how implicit skills become embodied.

I considered placing the vignettes throughout the thesis but decided that it was fitting to include them in Chapter 1 to introduce the influence they had on framing the

research question. It is rare to identify research questions that acknowledge family and loved ones in terms of shaping research questions. Petitmengin (2007) puts forward the idea that a profound layer of our subjective experience appears to play an essential role in the emergence of all thought and understanding. The craft lives of the two people who influenced the emergence of my desire to do this research have made me a more inquisitive, observing, embedded researcher who needed to understand the journey of 'coming-to-know'. It extends past a self-centred description of positionality and, indeed, made the research motivation personal and honest - I wanted to understand the 'coming-to-know' experience a craftsperson goes through in mastering their craft. I also wanted to acknowledge and respect the skills, while also identifying the hours of practice, repetition and work that went into enabling Michael Leahy and Bea McGing to be craft masters. Because of this, it was important for me to include their stories in this thesis.

While the effort and time that they invested in learning and perfecting their craft is not unusual (Sennett, 2008; Gladwell, 2008; Ingold, 2013; Lucas, 2022), it was unique to me because I witnessed their craft skill that was effortless and embedded so much in their lives that it was a part of their identity. Some references that I have included are in admiration of their confidence, for instance the advertisement for Miss Bea King, my mother, in 1951 enables the reader to see the high regard in which she held her craft master, and it also illustrates the confidence that she had in her ability and skill because of the apprenticeship she completed with Mrs. Gildea. She was aware of her craft skills and, in 1951, was happy to advertise them. I have also included photographs of my life partner Michael Leahy's work and some of the tools he used to illustrate his skill. They both appeared to me, the outsider, to work effortlessly and always seemed to know the best way to do things when using different tools and materials.

When they were alive, we spoke about how they came to master different aspects of their crafts. However, it was only when they were deceased that I began to experience a visceral need to know how they came to master their craft, and how they came to 'know'. Hughes and Huby (2002), Barter and Reynolds (1999) conclude that vignettes, used alone or in conjunction with other research techniques, can be valuable research tools.

The role of family and community to the researcher in shaping research questions is a contribution to the field, because it builds on honesty in terms of where ideas and lines of enquiry come from and extends beyond books, and other published work, to become a more 'self'-centred description of positionality.

6.2.2 Photographs

Photography was added to this research study to add a visual aspect to the journey of mastering a craft. Photographs capture a moment in time that stands still and invite the reader to interpret and to notice what is being presented. The aim of including them with the text is to add context to the tools and materials people are working with, the locations where they practice their craft and where possible, and the intimacy of their hand to the craft process. Arguments put forward by Van Dijck suggest that photography has always “served as an instrument of communication and as a means of sharing experience” (José van Dijck, 2008, cited in Pink, 2011, p. 95). In this project, I selected photographs, concurring with Riessman (2008), Stinson (1995) and Barbour (2011) who suggest photographs can deepen and thicken interpretation as they can evoke emotions and imaginative understanding that is sometimes missing in research findings. The photographs I included represent a selection of the tools, the workshops, the hand, some of the work in progress and some finished work completed by participants, and they add a visual representation of parts of their experience. It is also a method of visually recording parts of the craftsperson's journey, and I am proud to include some photographs in the vignettes. The photographs give a visual representation of the craft process in which the craftsperson engages, and an added appreciation of the natural environment where, for instance, the wool maker works and gets her raw materials for her handmade dyes. Some of the outcomes of the crafting process are also included. The photographs give an added dimension to understanding the isolation in which craftspeople tend to work, an important aspect that enables the reader to locate the craftsperson in their place and space. At the start of the thesis, I wanted to include photographs of the craftsperson's hand as they worked, to give a visual sense of how engaged and immersed the craftsperson is, in working their hands with material and tools. Taking an image of the raw materials that are used before they are transformed into the final craft assists us to understand the processes that must be followed to change the material into the finished craft. It would

also enable us to see the intricacies of the craft process, for example in reed making. While the thesis does include some images of reed making that were kindly given to me by Na Píobairí Uilleann, they are not of the uilleann pipe maker who participated in this research, whose request to remain anonymous was respected and a ‘research name’ was used.

The photographs also add a visual dimension of colour and including images of their environment enables us to comprehend that rather than a piece of literature recording the journey of mastering a craft and the experience of ‘come-to-know’, including photographs gives an identity to the craftsperson and an acknowledgement that there is a real living person behind the craft.

This blended approach is made up of threads that come together to present the complex tapestry of ‘coming-to-know’ in the craftsperson’s life as well as the genesis of research questions and design and is illustrated in Figure 27 below:

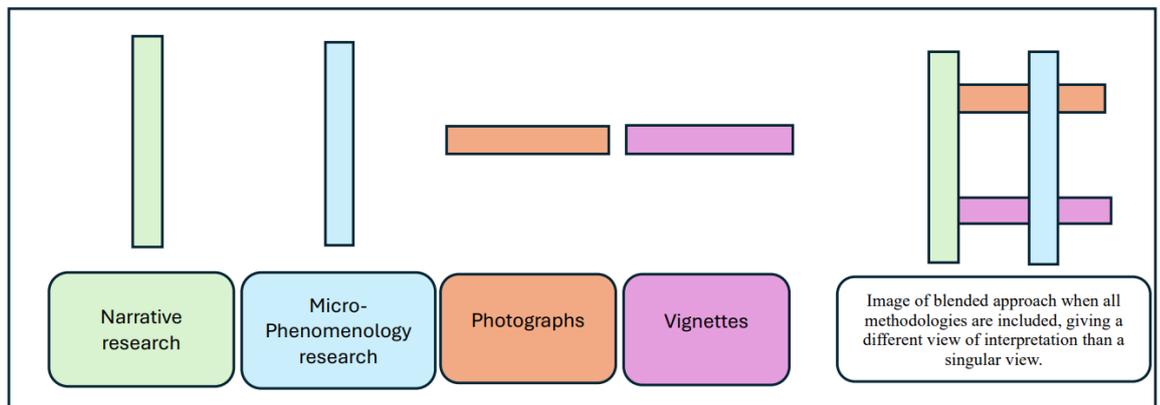


Figure 27: The blended research model in action.

This exploratory research model offers a unique insight into the participants' experiences and is one that will have many uses in research projects as illustrated in this thesis. This visual provides an understanding that by interlinking the methodologies that I selected and including vignettes and photographs to enhance the methodologies and inform the research design and questions enables us to view a multi-faceted interpretive analysis.

The benefit of this blended approach, combining narrative research with micro-phenomenological interviewing, shows how this methodology, where the participants' evoke experiences are set in the context of their overall story, contributes to further understanding of their 'coming-to-know' experience. Including micro-phenomenological interviewing gives a unique lens to the comprehension of how the craftsperson 'comes-to-know' and enables the reader to understand the influences that contributed to their experience of mastering their craft skill. While micro-phenomenology is used in research in areas such as neuroscience, meditation, clinical studies, there is a dearth of research using it in the field that I am examining. This thesis has added a new depth to the research findings that explore how the craftsperson comes to know their craft mastery, and the influences on their experiences.

In the next section, I will discuss the impact and influence of the community, family and local history on the craftsperson's experience of 'coming-to-know'.

6.3 The community is more than the craft community – Identification of key community influences on the craftsperson

Every craftsperson is unique, and each one is impacted in different ways by communities and networks. Culture and identity, the everyday habits and customs that bind people together may go unnoticed for some people, but communities can influence, empower and support craftspeople. The literature acknowledges the importance of craft communities to crafting and the value of social connection in 'coming-to-know' a craft. This section will discuss the impact and influence of family, tradition, place in which they came to know, and the craft communities on the craftsperson's experiential journey.

Hunt (2011), for example, refers to the stone carvers in her research as being immersed in their community, sharing common bonds of knowledge, skills, values and heritage, and Holtzberg (2011) examines the importance of available skills to the local town's ship building industry. Many craftspeople work in isolation but simultaneously belong to a wider craft community. *Craft Communities* (Luckman and Thomas, 2024) contains experiential reflections of researchers who explored their

experience of craft communities and their impact on the craftsperson. Luckman (2024) sees craft as a highly collective activity, drawing upon shared knowledge, resources and experiences, and Rothnayake et al., (2023) reflect on the ways in which crafts are embedded in the traditions of local communities in Sri Lanka where making is still a local phenomenon. Their findings are important to the craft community's survival, as they include reference to the role of place to the craft community, commercial aspects and changes in market practices, and the role of technology to crafting.

However, this research paper illustrates the importance of the wider communities of people who support the craftsperson; for example, the influence of family members, the local community and being a part of the shared experience of learning and teaching craft techniques within their community. The uilleann pipe maker, for example, enjoys visiting other pipe makers' workshops, and he also sees the benefit of attending schools and festivals where people are learning to play the pipes. The wool maker highlights the significance of her neighbours, and the guidance of local business support agencies, to sustaining her craft.

People can generate styles and techniques based on local values, none more so than the traditions and rituals that exist within the family. Research undertaken by Luckman and Andrew (2020) show how early childhood exposure to crafting has a formative role on the person choosing to do creative things; and parents, grandparents or significant adults play a catalytic role in many of their lives the craftsperson's life, enabling and inspiring the development of their creative passion.

The stories collected in this research concur with these findings, and show that early exposure to crafting is important to the individuals becoming aware of and 'coming-to-know' their craft. Anne, the knitter, started her learning in the family home with her mother and her aunts and had no formal training or apprenticeship in learning the craft of knitting. Anne describes what it felt like when her aunt trusted her when she first put the needles into her hands: *'there is a thrill to it, being trusted with her work... And I am proud that she was willing to put it in my hands... It is like we are in this together, a shared moment'*. She continues:

Knitting at that time was a big part of all of our lives and nearly all families that I knew were knitting. For me, I was fortunate to have people around me who were good

at knitting and who took pride in what they were doing. They taught me a lot about different techniques and that making a mistake was not the end of the world, you just go back and start again.

The wool maker also learned to knit from her mother, but it was her mother-in-law who introduced her to the local way of spinning wool from the locality, hand-dyeing the wool using plants and flowers that are grown locally, and using local wool making techniques that were passed down through generations:

My mother-in-law has been the centre of it all, thank God she is still alive, and she is still telling me how to do things, 'we'd have done it this way or that way long ago'. She's very good and I am still doing it the same ways [that] they would have done it long ago. So, I am not trying to change it all.

A further example of family support for Anne was when her brother bought her a spinning wheel for her birthday. She recalls that: *'[h]e was working in England... and he managed to locate a wheel for me there as they are nearly impossible to find in Ireland. It's an Ashford wheel, one of the most reliable you'll get...'*

Tom, the uilleann pipe maker, says that he and his sisters were always doing some kind of creative activity, such as drawing or making, when they were young. This was encouraged because as he had a creative mother who was always making clothes and soft toys and his *'hobby carpenter father'* and this background influenced him in his first career choice which was in engineering and later in his decision to make musical instruments.

The glove maker's family owned a glove factory and he was submerged in the activity of glove making from when he was a child, which ultimately saw him take over the factory and continue glove making. This tradition that is now being passed down to the next generation, as his son now works alongside him.

Each of the participants refer to early childhood exposure to crafting, in a supportive, non-threatening environment, and each of the participants speaks fondly of their 'coming-to-know' experience as young people. It is evident that there is a personal value and meaning placed on their craft, and also an acknowledgment that their craft is a tradition that they started learning within the family unit. It may also reflect family beliefs, values and expectations that they were exposed to, and the availability of support and encouragement, as there is no trace of animosity in their description of

the influence of their family, or that they were forced to engage in the craft. Instead, it is a pleasant and sometimes joyful view of their ‘coming-to-know’ within the family unit. The importance of family and significant others’ ability to influence and stimulate the craftspeople’s interest in ‘coming-to-know’ is clear, as is the importance of passing down knowledge and skills through learning by doing, and regular practice in a non-formal, supportive, environment.

The impact that the craft community has on crafting is well documented, for example, Ingold (2011, 2013), Sennett (2008) and Glassie (1982, 1993, 2000, 2011, 2020).

This impact is an important observation, because each of the craftspeople mostly practice their craft alone. The shared communities of which each of the participants is a member is described in Section 5.2: *Belonging and community – A view through the lens of the craftspeople* in Chapter Five. This belonging facilitates skill-sharing opportunities to be experienced between the cohorts of craftspeople, and the craftspeople are happy to make things together. This not only fosters personal growth but also fosters social connections. It recognises that the craftspeople want to be an active participant in their community and this sharing of space with various groups and individuals enables them to contribute to their community of craft practice in a positive way. Membership of these communities is an acknowledgment that their craft skill, earned through long years of practice and repetition, enables them to be a part of their craft community.

Concurring with much of the research referenced in the literature, this research project shows that traditions matter. Crafting is not *only* a particular way of making. It also brings together, and mirrors, the structure, values, history and identity, not only of the immediate family environment, but that of the society in which it is practiced, and, in doing so, preserves crafts as living traditions. Ingold (2013) suggests that skills are passed from generation to generation through practical hands-on experience. Sennett (2008) argues that craft is the desire to do a job well, and craftsmanship relies on a continuing involvement that can take many years of practice, referring to skill as trained practice. He further suggests that, in the traditional world of the archaic potter or doctor, standards for good work are set by the community, with skills passed down from generation to generation. Jones explores the tradition of chair making in the tradition that has been passed down from one generation to another: “learning by

being under another's supervision... reinforcing ideas about the best way to do things..." (1989: p. 240). Glassie (1982, 1993, 2000, 2011, 2020) refers to the community and the influence of tradition in the community. For example, Glassie (2011) notes that potters in Turkey do not speak of 'handing things down', but rather of artists alive and breathing amid crafting conditions, that, from birth, the craftsman breathes in the environment of absorbing influences, intentionally or not.

There is an eloquence expressed in the experiences and the stories included in this thesis when the participants describe the traditions that have influenced their work. This appreciation may not, however, have been articulated in general conversations, because the tradition of their craft is so interwoven into their daily lives. However, their descriptions, evoked by this particular research methodology, including the micro-phenomenological interviews, enable the reader to understand that, without exposure to traditions, their craft practice would not exist, and may even have been lost. For example, Carina, the wool maker, reflects at length on the tradition of wool making in her locality, by pointing to the blanket that was made over two hundred years ago. Carina describes her methods and how she makes and hand dyes the wool in the same way that people in the local area have done for centuries. Yet, for a period, this tradition was nearly lost, until she started to become interested and was able to access traditional methods and skills from her mother-in-law.

The findings of this research concur with the literature in underlining the importance of the relationships that exist between the individual, and the communities and traditions in which they work. Each craftsman is making a mark and personalising the tradition in their local community to make it their own. Luckman states that "crafting is a collective activity, drawing upon shared knowledge, resources and experiences" (2024, p. 1).

The stories recorded in this research refer to the value of tradition that each craftsman has for their craft. There are references to sustainability, legacy, and an appreciation that the craft is still being practised, with each participant aware of the tradition of their craft. For instance, the uilleann pipe maker tells of the history of uilleann pipe making and proudly speaks about the set of pipes that he currently plays that were made in 1924, more than a century ago, by Willie Rowsome who was Leo

Rowsome's father. Leo Rosome was the piper who kept pipe making going up until his death in 1970. The pipes were made for a man whose name is engraved on the pipes, '1924, Seán O' Laoghaire, Inis Córthaidh'. The tradition of uilleann pipe making has been passed down through generations with the support of Na Píobairí Uilleann, and a tradition of pipe making and playing that was almost lost is now well supported. The skills that the pipe maker uses have been passed from generation to generation through practical hands-on experience, under supervision. The pipe maker's reflections on learning and practising his craft can be interpreted as pride in the fact that he recognises he is a part of the living legacy of the history of the pipe making tradition and the pipes that he is making today will be there for future generations to play.

The respect and admiration that the craftspeople have for those who influenced their learning journey is evident from the stories collected in the thesis. Each of the craftspeople are engaged in different crafts, but they each recognise that the sharing of skills within the craft is important. Sharing is viewed as a positive thing, constantly takes place, and it is there to support their craft. It is not seen perceived as a negative or an intimidatory practice, but an acknowledgment that the craftspeople are always striving to do better work and that their craft learning journey is never complete. The uilleann pipe maker describes his experiences of sharing his skills with other pipe players and makers, and that there is a sense of camaraderie between the pipe makers.

Community spirit among the pipe makers is a positive thing... There are a few pipe makers I would be very close to... I could ring any of them and they would happily share information with me... It's not just me, but other people can also see it and recognise it as a good job...When they play the pipes, they know [that] they are good...

He explains that, in his view, his skills are still improving. He recalls that when he looks back at his first pieces of work all that he can see "is flaws". However, he also states, *'I am always striving for perfection and to have people admire my work while doing something that is tricky, reaffirms that I can achieve perfection, maybe I have not gotten there yet, but I can achieve it if I keep trying'*.

Anne, the knitter, recounts that she has been knitting for many years, both in company of other knitters and on her own, but now she can see that she is always learning,

whether it is about the material she is using, the style of work, knitting or crochet, and reading and understanding instructions. Carina, the wool maker, says that she questions herself every day. She praised the knitters that come and learn to spin and dye wool with her in her workshop and acknowledges that they are very good knitters, with knitting expertise that she does not yet have. The glove maker acknowledges that making gloves is a craft, learned over many years and that learning the different aspects of the craft takes a lot of time.

This sharing of skills is not limited only to the craft community. Another finding from the stories is the influence of other communities on the craftsperson such as neighbours, the geographic location in which the craftsperson lives, the availability of raw materials and tools, as well as local community support groups. For example, the wool maker refers to the support that she received from local community businesses, and neighbours who bring her unique wool to work with. This also supports the social connections that exist within the different communities and by interacting and engaging with them, can alleviate the threat of social isolation that could result from working alone. It provides the freedom to be one's own boss yet there is still inviting inclusion within a wider community. From a business perspective, Carina praises people who live in the community for their supports: *'I am blessed with fantastic neighbours... I am very lucky that the support is from neighbours, and from family who have been able to help...'*

What has transpired, from spending time with the craftspeople and listening to their stories, is interesting and some new findings have emerged. For instance, an aspect that has been referenced in previous work is that while craftspeople work in isolation for most of the time, what they refer to as the community is very important to them. However, the community that the craftspeople refer to is not limited to the craft community but encompasses a wider confluence of family, peers, friends, and support organisations. What is apparent from their stories is that there is a fundamental need for the craftsperson to belong and be rooted within a place in a community, and there is an inherent pride attached to the fact that each of them is practicing crafts that have been intergenerational and within the local community. The image that emerges gives an insight that enables us to put a tangible reality on how the community contributes to each of the craft masters 'coming-to-know' their craft and becoming familiar with

the craft process, both formally and informally. For the most part, the literature informs us about the support offered by the crafting communities, but the stories tell us that as well as the craft community, the craftsperson needs the support of other communities to enable them to know, practice and pursue their chosen craft. There is also no evidence in the literature of the supporting role provided by the communities when the craftsperson is struggling to achieve something or experiences moments of despair with their crafting. This is an aspect of becoming a craftsperson that needs further consideration.

Community, as described by the craftspeople, encapsulates different aspects of the confluence of family, tradition and place, including the overarching importance that belonging to a community has on them. For instance, the positive impact of different communities on their craft and on themselves personally, and the ever-presence of support: either resources, learning new techniques, facing difficulties or taking advantage of opportunities. This aspect of the importance of additional community supports is an area I would like to research further, because it is clear from their stories that while the craft community is important, other communities support them to craft.

Interestingly, none of the participants referred to support from the *Design and Crafts Council Ireland* (DCCI). This is not intended as a slight against DCCI, whose remit is to support designers and makers to develop their businesses in a sustainable way, and advocate for the societal benefits of craft and design, but it is worthy of reflection, considering the research undertaken.

The next section of this chapter will discuss how the craftsperson develops and understands their relationship with materials and tools, including their hand.

6.4 “Touching by the hand can be sensitive - I can only judge that by touch”

I have always been intrigued by the fact that many craftspeople know things by feeling and touching. How has their hand become so entwined with their craft, that they intuitively know things by touch? How, in an expression used by the knitter in

this thesis, do the tools that they use become ‘an extension of the hand’? I also wanted to understand how they get ‘the feel’ for the materials that they work with.

Listening to the stories that the participants told in this study gave me an opportunity to understand further the craftsperson’s relationship with their hand and how they include it and view it as a part of their craft process. Research completed by authors such as Vannini and Vannini (2020), Radcliffe (2013), Sennett (2008), Ingold (2011, 2012, 2013), and Pye (1968) examine this as detailed in the literature chapter, noting, for instance, that one of the hallmarks of craft is the bodily manipulation of physical objects. Repetition and practice contribute to becoming familiar with the tactile sensitivities of using the hand in the craft process and is an aspect that may, in some instances, be overlooked, but the way that the hand is used is an inherent craft skill. Martin argues that “skilful manipulation of materials and tools entails seeing, feeling, or otherwise recognising features of the work that are only apparent to craftspeople with extensive expertise in a particular field” (2018, p. 2). His research explores the claim that the skilled craftsperson sees a wealth of detail in the equipment that they use whereas the outside observer does not and, he suggests, it follows that these objects change in the eyes of the learner as he or she becomes acquainted with new workshop practices. This observation and practice lead to an expertise that contributes to the craftsperson’s skill and mastery.

Ingold suggests that “it is not through the transmission of formulae that skills are passed from generation to generation but through practical ‘hands-on’ experience” (2020, p. 291). The findings in this thesis concur with this and as an observation, the repeated use of tools, to become familiar with the practice of using them, is never mentioned as a chore or as a laborious activity. Instead, it offers an understanding of how the craftsperson comes to know bodily movements in the process of their work, with a special focus on the practice of using their hand.

The findings communicate how the craftsperson becomes so familiar with using their tools including their hand, and materials, that they have developed an intuition over time. The knitter for instance tells how she recognises the quality of wool that she was working with ‘...you’d know by the feel of it...’, and Carina states that ‘*I can only judge that by touch, my hands are the only thing that can tell me... my hands are a*

part of the process'. The glove maker describes that it took four years to learn how to cut different types of leather and he tells that '*glove making and working with leather is a skill and I know how hard it is to acquire the skills*'. The uilleann pipe maker describes the importance of touch when making reeds, '*Have I sanded enough? Touch it, the slightest sand, feel it... feel it again, is it smooth... what does my hand tell me?*' The influence of ideas of embodiment and material dialogue in the data inform us that understanding exists not only in the community in which practice takes place, but in the individual practitioner as well, through learned ways of perceiving the human body, tools, and materials. In all of the literature I read, as well as the stories collected for this thesis, I cannot find any reference to a suggestion where learning by doing became a chore or implied any negativity. It was always referenced and understood to be a key part of the learning process.

All the participants explained that much of their 'coming-to-know' experience came from various stages of observation and practice. Touch, and how the craftsman, as Martin (2021) also suggests, gets 'the feel' for something is an important aspect of crafting but it is only apparent to craftspeople with extensive experience. Sennett (2008) calls this truthfulness of the touch of the fingertips. Ingold suggests that "the hand is supreme among the organs of touch. It can tell the stories of the world in its gestures and in the written or drawn traces they yield or in the manipulation of threads as in weaving, lacemaking and embroidery" (2013, p. 112). I was delighted to gain further understanding of how the craftspeople in this study came to know and understand, and get 'the feel', what are they expecting to feel and how do they know it is the right feel? Rob, the glove maker, spoke of the time it takes to 'come-to-know' and become familiar with the feel of the different types of leathers and the four years it takes to learn how to cut and sew the leather to make a pair of gloves. He states that when the glove maker achieves this skill:

*...once you know, you know, and you cannot unknow it.
I am so familiar with the feel of the leathers and what to do with them, I don't have to think about it...
but that takes time and experience.*

He explained that he learned about the feel of the different leathers over many years through his time doing his apprenticeship, and came to know that the leathers have a different feel depending on the type of animal and what the animal was fed. He

explained that these skills are not something a person can learn in a day and that in making gloves and working with leather, *'people actually learned a craft. Glove making and working with leather is a skill and I know how hard it is to acquire the skills'*. The intimacy between Carina and the materials she uses reflects that she has a profound understanding of the process the wool is going through as it becomes thread, and her hands, the spinning wheel and the wool are all part of this process. She took some wool in her hands and commented, *'Look at this lovely black wool, I can feel how soft it is, and I know I will make something really special from that wool because it is so soft and special'*.

She explained that for years she had been knitting, but it was not until she married, and was introduced to sheep's wool by her mother-in-law, that her views changed. She says her mother-in-law, among others, was the key to her discovery of the difference between the shop bought and the natural fibres of different wools and that this really supported understanding 'the feel' of the wool. Had she never been introduced to sheep's wool, she may never have known that there were different wools, with different consistencies, oils and uses. But, to quote Rob, the glove maker, *'once you know, you know, and you cannot unknow it'*. She says that it happened over time, and now she knows, for instance, how many washes a fleece might need: *'I can tell from the feel of the oil in the wool that some fleeces might only need one wash, whereas others might need five or six washes; I can tell straight away by the feel of the fleece when I put my hand on it'*. She explains that by touching the wool, feeling it, she understands what she can do with it.

It seems that there is no mystery to acquiring *'the feel'*. All of the stories in this study tell us that the skills are acquired over time and learning from feeling, what the uilleann pipe maker refers to as the *'sensitivities of the hand'*. Understanding the differences between the different materials means that the person must engage with different materials and 'come to know' and feel the differences.

Exposure to different materials and understanding their differences assists in this and defines a set of skills that not everyone is exposed to, and this is what sets them apart. It may be difficult to learn the skills alone, and that is where observation and sharing of skills makes the coming-to-know possible. Learning the craft is seen in a positive

frame, their stories tell us that they are still ‘coming-to-know’ skills. They all state that they never stop learning, even after many years practising their craft.

Remarkably, the participants’ stories illustrate an admiration, acknowledgement and an awareness that the person they were observing was an expert and reference was never made to any negative aspects of the learning through observation. The knitter, for instance, makes reference to this in a positive way, and says that if she made a mistake, she ripped it back and started over again. When a person is ‘coming-to-know’, there is a certain point in which relying on memory transitions from explicit to tacit or implicit and the person is just there: they just know. Ingold (2018) and Sennett (2008) put forward their views that support the importance of practising skills so that they become embedded. This takes time. Rob, the glove maker, says that a person learns a lot about the highly technical skills, when they are involved in glove making and indeed when working with leather. The person needs to gain experience to make just one pair of gloves, and a person cannot do that after just one day.

The craftspeople’s stories demonstrate that practising their skills made them better at doing what they do. For example, Tom, the uilleann pipe maker, looks back at the pipes he made at the start of his pipe making career and notes that the pipes he is making today are far better. Michael Leahy recounted that the skills he learned from his master were practised over and over again so that he did not have to think about them and they became second nature to him. Bea King spoke about her nine-year apprenticeship, where each aspect of the craft had to be perfect, because without this, the clothes that they were making could not be sold.

These stories inform us that these skills are developed over time and include the coming to recognise the sensitivity of working with, touching and feeling materials and tools. Polanyi examines this and suggests that there may be personal knowledge involving an “active comprehension of things known, an action that requires skill” (1958, p. vii) and he proposes that “the art of knowing is seen to involve an intentional change of being; the pouring of ourselves into the subsidiary awareness of particulars, which in the performance of skills are instrumental to a skilful achievement” (p. 64). The craftspeople’s practice was task-focused, until they came to

recognise the skills of working with their hands and the practice of touching and feeling the materials and tools they were using. There is no negativity in sharing or acquiring new knowledge, because they are always learning new ways of doing. The uilleann pipe maker, for instance, acknowledges the support of Na Píobairí Uilleann, as well as the support of other pipe makers, and Carina recognises the skills that others have when they come and join in the wool making workshops.

The stories showed, in a similar way to the literature, that without the ability to use their acquired experience of touching and feeling the tools and materials they use, as well as the ability to understand and interpret the touch and feel experience as they are craft, it would be difficult for them to engage in and practice their craft. Crevels (2023) says that it is not always necessary for the craftsman to know the scientific aspects of the material to access the qualities of it. My research, including the stories in this thesis, suggests that it is their continuous experience of touching and feeling under guidance that has led the craftsman to become an expert in the materials they use and ultimately an integral part of the craft process. This is what differentiates it from other manufacturing processes. The craftsman is completely engaged in the process and without their experience, knowledge and touch sensitivity acquired over years, they would not have acquired the level of skill that enables them to be craft masters. However, this is difficult to put into words. The uilleann pipe maker explains in detail how he came to learn the importance of touch and feeling in pipe making. At the beginning of his experiential learning journey he states: *'I would be stopping it and holding it. Always feeling. And now, I just know, I don't have to think about it'*.

The other craft masters give similar versions of 'coming-to-know' the importance of the sensitivity of feeling and touch with different materials and tools. The wool maker, for example, tells that she has learned, over many years, the differences in wool composition; and Rob, the glove maker, explains how he came to understand and know the differences between the leathers. Radcliffe (2013, p. 148) puts forward the view that touch remains "indispensable to a sense of reality and belonging". Ingold (2013) holds the view that the hand is supreme among organs of touch. Cook (2024) and Vannini and Vannini (2020) illustrate that the craft form can provoke strong practitioner feelings of touch and sensory engagement, linking the senses to the

craft, and that the hand, by reaching out, ensures that we are not alone and the world is not alien to us. It is very clear that the craftspeople's experience of feeling and touching material and tools develops over time. At the start of their learning they are conscious of each stage of the process until arriving at an intuitive sense of the craft process where they can feel and respond to subtle material changes and they come to trust their abilities and sensitivities in working with tools and materials and repeat them with reliability to reach the point where they can say '*I just know*'. The knitter talks about a hesitancy when she first saw an error in what she was knitting. However, because of her experience, she recognised that there was an error in the pattern and then had the confidence to rewrite that part of the pattern. When she rewrote it correctly, she had the self-confidence to send it to the pattern company. This ability to trust one's own ability and skill comes from many years of practice, working with tools and materials in different environments.

Ingold (2013) refers to his own experience of learning where he proffers that to know something, a person must know it from the core of their being. This has become a more global theme in the stories with the craftspeople referring to understanding their craft as a part of who they are, an extension of the self. For this reason, they take pride in the finished product when they judge it to be good. Conversely, when it is not good, it almost wounds them or, as Tom says, sent him "into the pit of despair". As part of this, the stories inform us that after so much experience and practice of working with materials and tools, the craftspeople just 'knows'. They do not have to think much about the tools and materials that they are using, or the process that they are following. Their experience in becoming experts has given them the embedded and embodied knowledge to just know.

When Michael Leahy was asked how he knew how to measure the roof for the shed he was making, he was not able to articulate *how* he knew but he was able to explain in detail *why* he was doing what he was doing. It may be that the repetition and seemingly automatic movement associated with habit has a significant purpose in the practice of crafting and this concurs with views expressed by Sennett (2008) who suggests that as skill expands, the capacity to sustain repetition increases and as a person develops skill the content of what he or she repeats changes. This is echoed by Gladwell (2008) who describes how a group of violinists achieve mastery and

speculates that the ‘thing’ that distinguishes one performer from another is how hard he or she works. We can interpret, therefore, that guided practice with sustained repetition is what leads to the craftsperson achieving mastery. There is no secret to achieving it. In fact, it could be argued that a substantial portion of the effort and experience that leads to mastery is derived from overcoming mistakes, and the craftsperson has the interest and the will to invest time and effort in order to achieve this mastery.

The fact that the craftspeople acknowledge the familiarity of the tools in the context of their hand and their crafting indicates incredible awareness and sensitivity to their use of the tools in the craft process. While a large part of our experiences usually remains unnoticed, the micro-phenomenological interviews assisted in drawing out a previously unnoticed awareness and consciousness of their hands in the lived crafting experience. The participants acknowledge an awareness of the hand in the craft process and the role of the hand in discovering the ‘*feel*’ of the tools. Carina, the wool maker, said that without her hands, there would be no wool. When she was describing a specific moment where she recognised that her hands were important to the craft, she said she could only judge what she could do with the wool by touch, ‘*my hands are the only thing that will tell me*’. When she was in a specific evocation, she used her hands to assist her to describe what she was talking about. Interestingly, as well as moving her fingers, she moved her hands to her face and nose in these specific moments and she said, ‘*it is not just the hand, it is the touch, the smell, the colour, they all work together but my hand is the key, it is the thing I rely on*’. Each time she described the stages that the wool goes through, she softly touched it with the tips of her fingers. She continued and explained that the hand is one of the very important factors in the process:

*I fell in love with the process, and I became addicted to it,
There is such a feeling of sheer joy when the wool passes through my hands onto the
spinning wheel and then becomes thread,
My hands are a part of the process...
The way the wool moves between my fingers, my thumb and index finger.*

Anne, the knitter, explained that the feel of the wool going through her hands was how she was able to judge the quality of the yarn that she was using. ‘*You’d just know the feel of it in your hands*’, she said. Some of the craftspeople include the material that they are using when they talk about the specific tools. The stories highlight the

importance of knowing and understanding the tools and materials they are working with. For example, the uilleann pipe maker tells that he makes some of his tools and speaks of the affirmation of knowing that he was able to do this: *'The first chanter was just validating that the tools I had made were accurate, which it turns out they were'*. He also identifies the importance of the cane he uses when making reeds, and how this can impact the outcome of the reed.

Other stories explain the importance of the familiarity of the tools and materials they are using to the craftsman, in the context of their hand and body, and their crafting indicates incredible awareness and sensitivity to their use of them in the craft process. For example, Michael Leahy preferred a hammer with a wooden handle, and he said it was "the feel" of the hammer in his hand, it had a good balance, it was the right weight and it "fitted his hand well" for a proper grip. The knitter talks about the knitting needles being *'an extension of her hands'*, and the glove maker suggests that the hand *'becomes sensitive to the feel of the leather, and this is learned over many years'*. These observations and practice lead to an expertise that contributes to the craftsman's skill.

An interesting observation from the stories shared in this thesis highlight that the crafter almost takes the hand for granted when they are engaging in their work. When they were asked about the use of their hands, the micro-phenomenology interviews enabled the participants to describe specific, single moments that explained how important their touching, sensitive, receptive hand, along with the sense of touch, is to their craft. For instance, the wool maker described how she knew when the wool was washed enough, or she was able to know what she could do with the wool by the feel of the oil in the wool on her hand, or the feel of the softness of the wool. When Tom refers to the craft hand he suggests that when a person creates or crafts something:

What you have done is you have used your hands, as the last part to bring it from the ether, the imagination, into the world, through the hands – that's the connection. ... is the way we connect with the world around us, physically connect with the world, touch of the senses.

Touching with the hand can be sensitive.

The descriptions relayed by the participants during micro-phenomenology interviews, inform us that these people are so experienced to the different feels on their hand that it has become an embodied knowing and they no longer think about it. Because of

this, when they were asked to describe the role and importance of the hand to their craft, using and touching tools and materials, something that has become so embodied that it had to become broken down into parts, and the micro-phenomenology interviews, using evoked specific experiences, enabled them to describe how important their hand and the experience of touch and feel is to their craft. In their normal crafting experiences, they would not think about the role of their hand, they would just use it and trust it as a part of their process. Regular repetition using familiar tools and materials has given them a certain rhythm that enables them to fall into a pattern of work where they no longer think about feel and touch. They have become familiar with the materials that they are using, how the tools are held, and the force and pressure that is needed to achieve the desired outcome that they now just 'know'. The stories give voice to their awareness of the tools and materials they use as almost a part of their being, an extension of their hand, where the 'feel' of the tools is clearly important and it is important that the craftsperson experiences a good fit when they are using them.

Time and experience have led to the craftspeople becoming familiar with their tools and how the tools interact with the materials, to the extent that they do not have to think about the process of using the tools and there is no divide between the hand and the tools in the crafting process. This illustrates the views put forward by Ingold referring to Heidegger (1971) that, in a sense, the only way a person can really know things is through a process of self-discovery and that "to know things you have to grow into them, and let them grow in you, so that they become a part of who you are" (2013, p. 1). Making is a process of growth that is impacted by the self, the body, tools, materials and environmental factors, all of which have an impact on the finished craft piece. The tools are not just tools, they are what the knitter described as an extension of the hand, and the hand and the tool have become one and the same thing in the context of their craft. To touch is to know, which is where this entire research question emanated from, how does the craftsperson 'know'?

The hand and touch do not work in isolation. Vision, sight, and the eye are included in the touch experience, as is the act of smell. Gallagher (2013) suggests that the hand and brain are part of a larger dynamic system where they need co-operation of the dorsal visual stream to provide visual information about, for instance, the shape of

something and where it is located. We can see this from some of the stories shared in this research: *'I know the colour. I can see the yellows and purples... I can see a good knitter from the detail... look at these, soft, curly ones'*.

A distinct relationship between the craftsperson and their tools and materials has been identified from their stories. This correlates with the findings from Hunt (2011) who suggests that the craftsperson has a deep understanding of the raw materials they use, and Martin (2021) and Sennett (2008) recognise that the craftsperson becomes skilful in the manipulation of materials and tools. The stories that the craftspeople shared highlight that, for them, the tools are not just tools, but with increased use and familiarity, they become an extension of the craftsperson's body. They do not have to think closely about them, because the hand and the tool have become one and the same thing in the context of their craft from repeated practice of using them in their craft routine. In all their stories they refer to 'the feel' of the materials, and express that they understand 'the feel' or just know 'the feel', from much repetition and they can recognise differences between 'the feel' of different materials.

The process of using the hand with tools and materials has also become intuitive for the craftspeople, that is, until they are making something that is set apart from their normal process or routine. In this instance, the craftsperson questions what they are doing, because it is not a familiar rhythm or routine to them. This means they stop and question what they are doing and are more mindful and aware of the process, that, in their regular practice is instinctive. For example, the uilleann pipe maker describes the experience of making a set of pipes for a left-handed player as *'weird'*. He is a right-handed player, and he instinctively knows where a right-handed player will place their hands on the pipes. Therefore, in this instance, he must think a lot more about the craft process, because the hand placing is not instinctive or automatic.

The craftspeople say that they realise that they have learned many things about their craft, but they are continually seeking to learn more and enhance their expertise. For instance, the uilleann pipe maker stated that *'my method has changed, and it is still evolving'*. However, they try to start each craft piece with a positive expectation of the anticipation of a successful outcome. They acknowledge that, in some instances, they just do not know when they start working on a new piece how it will be at the finish.

The knitter, for example, described that she could not imagine at the start how the designer piece she was knitting would finish, as the yarn she was using, in her opinion, was of bad quality. However, she also said that in the end the piece would be wonderful, and she was proud that she had knitted it.

The participants in this study recognise and revere the work completed by previous generations of craftspeople. This is an important finding, as it illustrates an understanding of longevity and the sustainability of craft pieces; it also acts as a reminder to them that their craft pieces will, probably, outlive them, linking the craft into their legacy for future generations. There is an enveloping sense of pride in the recognition of this reality, because they want future generations to be able to recognise their skill in the same way that they admire the work completed by previous generations.

The stories illustrate that their craft practice gives them grounding and gives them a capacity to *be* as well as to make things, and they recognise the powerful self that has emerged from years of craft experience. This encompasses their descriptions of their experiences of joy, happiness, pride, frustration and despair, as well as the ordinary normal routines and activities that they practice while crafting. These descriptions give an insight into the importance of craft to the lives these people live. Their unconscious understanding of the tools and materials associated with their craft, and of doing their craft, illustrates that the craft experience has evolved into being a core characteristic of themselves. Crafting is a part of who they are. It influences the way that they live their lives, infiltrating many aspects of their wellbeing. In the next section, the experience of living through craft will be examined.

6.5 Living through craft – Trust in self

The stories that have emerged from my thesis inform us that the craftsperson is always evolving and is committed to their craft, engaging with their mind, body, including their hand, their senses, and their emotions, in craft processes where there is always more to learn. They describe their pursuit of excellence and each step of their learning to achieve it, so much so, that their craft is a key part of their lives and a way of knowing life. An outcome from the stories is the way in which they persevere, especially if a project is not going as planned, and their persistence and need to keep the craft alive that conveys their craft as a living history.

Using micro-phenomenological interviewing in this study assisted in identifying several here-to-fore unexplored findings in relation to crafting. One aspect that emerged from the stories is the emotional aspect. The stories serve to frame the experiences of delight, happiness, pride and joy experienced by the craftsperson when they achieve the desired finished piece. For instance, Tom describes the feelings he experienced when he completed a set of pipes that he was satisfied with. '*Pride*', he said, '*it's a very rewarding feeling, knowing I've done a good job, and other people can see that as well. I feel it in my gut*'. Similarly, the knitter, Anne, states, '*I am very proud when I see garments I made in fashion magazines*'.

An aspect identified by the craftspeople during specific evocations, is the experience of embodiment. This thesis is faithful to the findings collected and an interesting finding that emerged was how the craftsperson identifies themselves. It is as if they do not have a choice, they must do their craft, they must keep going with it, and this links back to the community that influences them and their embodiment of the experience. All participants reference this, and while this has emerged from the descriptions, it was not something that was intended as an area for consideration. Ingold (2013) puts forward the view that to know something, a person must grow into it so that it becomes a part of the person. O'Connor (2007) suggests that it is through embodied relations with the tacitly understood world that people accrue practical knowledge, and she explains that her tutors' instructions as she was glassblowing had consistently encouraged a shift towards this lived type of experience. O'Connor (2007) also puts forward the view that the experienced craftsperson, in her case a glassblower, has a real vision of the finished glass, this vision is only possible when the glassblower understands the circumstances in which they are working and is able to act and react immediately, which the novice glass blower is not able to do.

To elucidate, the craftsperson trusts themselves, their intuition and experience to make decisions when engaged in their craft. In so doing, the craftsperson trusts themselves to take direction and advice from others, if needed, and take calculated risks in order to give their craft every chance of becoming the best that it can be. As an example of this immersion and trust in self, is the knitter, Anne. She was following a pattern and was not achieving the expected outcome. She trusted her skill in the practice of reading patterns, and in the practice of knitting. Her ability was so embedded, that she was able to trust her own intuition and self-confidence and identified that there was an

error in the written pattern. She had the confidence to trust her own experience and her ability to rewrite the pattern. Further, she had the confidence to send the corrected pattern back to the pattern company, who acknowledged her corrections and sent her a gift. This highlights that the craftsperson is so in tune with what they are doing in their craft that it has become a part of their core being. Trust in the self may be an aspect craftspeople identify with, after much experience on their craft journey, and rather than referring to it as trust, they refer to this as ‘just knowing’.

Barbour’s research supports the view that a person’s lived experience requires creative people to deal with issues that cannot be solved rationally or through intuition, and that “embodied ways of knowing foreground knowing as creatively living in the world” (2011, p. 96). The uilleann pipe maker recognised he was having a troublesome time in his craft; he needed support and accepted the offer of support from a fellow piper. It takes courage, determination, and the will to continue when faced with challenges, and the trust in the self not to give up even when facing difficulties.

Ingold (2013) explores the concept that when many people are working with the same material, the outcome each produced was uniquely different and their experience of working with the same material was unique, because no two people are the same. Carina Coyne referred to this when she described the knitters who came to her workshop to learn to spin and naturally dye wool. They own their craft, and their craft outcome, and she describes it as ‘*being precious*’ to each person; continuing that ‘*they only want to work with their own and they say that this is so precious to them; that they are connected to it*’. In this example, we can see that the making has become internalised to the maker and each maker can understand that they have contributed themselves to the making, their physical body, their senses and their pride, making the end product more intimate and special to the maker.

In another instance, Tom tells of the internal and bodily feelings he has experienced when going through the emotional highs and lows of making reeds. In these descriptions, he reveals ‘*I am positive, elated*’ and in another instance ‘*I am afraid, I am tense*’. These descriptions illuminate the dual aspect of his experience: the internal high that comes from reaching a goal, and the low emotional state when facing a difficulty with the craft. He remarks that ‘*even for the maker with lots of experience,*

reeds are still the thing that can break your heart'. He explains that he is always feeling his way when making the reeds, *'...touching. ...feeling, what does my hand tell me?'*. His evocations describe that when he experiences satisfaction with his work, he feels it in his body: *'I feel a sudden lift in myself. I take an intake of breath... pride, it's a very rewarding feeling knowing I've done a good job, and other people can see that as well. I feel it in my gut'*. When he experiences feelings of dissatisfaction, he describes feelings of angst and *'a moment of utter despair'*, continuing, *'I looked terrible... I feel the despair all over my body'*. He explained that, for him, using the hands *'is the way we connect with the world around us, physically connect with the world of the senses'*.

The stories also reveal moments of safety and security. For instance, Anne describes an experience of learning to knit as *'I am secure, I am safe'*. Tom describes a moment in learning his craft where he *'had no fear'*. These descriptions of recognising that they can experience safety and security in their craft adds another dimension by providing them with a grounding whereby, even when troubles abound, engaging in their craft can offer them a safe place to harbour. It may be that because they are so in tune with the minute detail of perfecting their craft that they are able to isolate themselves in their safe place, where they can control the variables associated with their craft, providing a form of escapism. For instance, Carina tells that *'this is the happiest I have ever been... the wool is part of who I am, where I live and where I come from'*. She describes that she tends to get lost in her workshop and it is not until one of her children calls her that she leaves the wool and her workshop and goes into her home. *'I don't need to think about anything else when I am in the workshop, only the happiness I feel when I make the wool as good as I can'*. she states. Rob echoes this and tells that his crafting has become so internalised, that *'once you know, you know and you cannot unknow it. I am so familiar with the feel of the leathers and what to do with them, I don't have to think about it'*.

The stories also describe the frustration or despair that the person can experience when facing challenges, and how the different communities that the craftsperson is rooted in support and holds the person during such times. For instance, Tom describes one specific moment by saying, *'I am in hell, I am a failure, this is the end'*. However, he continued and pointed out that it was a fellow pipe player that came to his aid and

supported him in getting his rhythm of making back on track. The pipe maker's evocations describe both the positives and negatives of crafting: the great high that comes from reaching a difficult to achieve goal, and the low experience when confronted with some difficulties.

Much of the literature describes facts about how to do the craft, rather than the internalised personal emotions experienced by craftsperson in their experience of making. It is rare to see such detailed internalised personal accounts of two sides of the craftsperson's experience of engaging in crafting, and it is heartening to recognise that there are supports in the communities to support the craftsperson when it is needed. Sennett describes his experience of making errors and suggests that "I experience error - error that I will seek to correct... I make mistakes... I have to be willing to commit, to play wrong notes, in order to eventually get them right" (2008, p. 160). So, despite the errors, the craftsperson needs to acknowledge that making errors is a part of the craft process, and practising and repeating actions repeatedly is instrumental in achieving mastery.

Another interesting aspect that came from the findings was the conscious effort by the craftsperson to maintain a level of quality control that is associated with legacy and sustainability. The craftsperson wants their work to be recognised as master craft work and by living through their craft, they are conscious of doing the best that they can with the tools and materials that they are using. Ingold (2009) is aware of this concept, or risk, and alludes to makers who work with materials that they have to work in a world that does not stand still until the job is completed, and with materials that have their own properties. Hunt (2011) describes the high degree of risk inherent in the stone carver approaches and attitudes to their work. The knitter, Anne, refers to the quality of the yarn a designer asked her to use in making a garment, and she described it as *'bitty and I would have to keep stopping and starting because the yarn kept breaking'*. The glove maker describes in detail the quality control that is a part of working with leather and glove making, stating that *'glove making and working with leather is a skill and I know how hard it is to acquire the skills... Glove makers learn a craft'*. The quality that the craft makers strive to achieve is something that they would like to achieve each time they start a project. However, because they are dependent on the quality of the materials that they are using, the outcome cannot

always be guaranteed, a point that the uilleann pipe maker outlines when explaining reed making.

The wool maker refers to a blanket that is 200 years old that is still in use, and the piper is playing pipes made more than 100 years ago. They are conscious that, as individuals, they identify themselves as craftspeople, and that they can never say they know everything. In doing this, they are always learning and are always willing to learn from each other and from their communities. The pipe maker is conscious of the longevity of the pipes that he makes and wants to ensure that they will remain of good quality and not diminish his reputation. The knitter is avid about the quality of the garments that she makes, and while she may be the only one that knows a stitch is dropped, if she knows there is a mistake, she is unable to proceed until the error is mended.

At no stage did any of the stories suggest that the craftsperson achieved complete mastery and that they knew as much about their craft as was possible. They all identify that their learning is ongoing and that they enjoy learning. For example, the wool maker is delighted to learn new styles of knitting from one of her students. They themselves are their greatest critics and they themselves have to judge when something is ready to let go. Hunt (2011) suggests that in order to achieve the craft, the stone carvers' approaches and attitudes to their work requires not only great manual dexterity but also patience and care. They are always trying to hone their craft, make it better, develop their craft, and hand on their craft knowledge to others, as if the craft is their legacy and there is a pride in the place that the craft has in the environment.

6.6 Conclusion

One of the contributions and insights of my thesis is to show the value of the blended research model used. It puts a unique insightful perspective of the understanding of what it is to master a craft. While micro-phenomenology was not used in the strictest sense as directed by Petitmengin (2018), it has added a detailed tangible reality to the research as a method of interviewing. This methodology was able to bring the person back to the singular moments and verbalise how they achieved mastery of it, thus giving a clearer understanding of what it is to 'come-to-know'. The blended approach of using narrative and micro-phenomenological interviewing, inviting the participant

to an elicitation that enabled them to give precise data about the moment in real time, provides further insight into the lived experience of the craftspeople's journey in 'coming-to-know'.

A lot of the material about the community comes from the literature. However, multiple forms of community are identified in the data and many forms of holding and supporting the craftspeople are named. It was interesting to see from the stories and findings, the different forms of support required to enable the craftspeople to keep going with their crafting and recognise that the support did not always come from the crafting community. This is not always reflected in the literature. There are multiple communities that influence the craftspeople, and the sense of belonging is important to the craftspeople's commitment to continue with their craft through the good times and the more challenging events that they encountered. On account of the fact that they are their own worst critics, the role of the various communities that they belong to fosters continued confidence and encouragement to persevere with their craft until they come to a stage where, to quote Rob, *'they just know'*. These communities are made up of family, friendly neighbours and the local community who together support the person in their craft and give them a grounding that assists them to continue with their pursuits.

The stories included in this thesis have given a great understanding of the tangible experience of 'coming-to-know' and recognising the journey a craft master takes to become an expert. This research set out to capture the lived experience of the craftspeople to assist in answering the research questions: how does the craftspeople know, and what are the influences on their learning? Crafting, as an embodied experience, is a culmination of working with the body and the senses, learning how to use tools and techniques to manipulate materials into a form.

While traditionally a craft was learned using the apprenticeship model, observing and mimicking a craft master, the findings inform us that this is not the only way to master a craft. The findings tell us that very little of the participant's learning involved apprenticeships in the traditional sense. Instead, it was the sharing of knowledge between someone with expertise, skill and experience and someone who wanted to learn. Additionally, they were and are willing to invest the hours of practice to keep going and become familiar with the different aspects of the craft in a supportive

environment. The stories identify that there are challenges in this journey and there are moments of genuine pure joy and satisfaction. The craftspeople are aware that gaining this expertise does not happen overnight, but if they keep with it, they will achieve mastery and come to a place that they describe as ‘knowing’.

There are many variables that can influence the ‘coming-to-know’ experience and each of them is important. The stories enable us to better understand ways of learning and how and where a craft is learned. The reviewed literature discusses how the craftsperson uses the hand in ‘coming-to-know’ when working with tools and materials. What was an interesting finding is that the stories identify that the craftsperson takes their hand for granted; they see their hand as a tool and their tools as an extension of the hand. They are aware of the sensory aspect of feel and touch to their craft, and this has become more refined with years of experience working with tools and materials. This was one of the key questions at the start of the research, how does the craftsperson know?

Becoming an expert craftsperson involves the complete immersion of the craftsperson in their craft. There is a curiosity embedded in them to keep going, to learn new things, and continue to seek meaningful relationships with their tools, materials and everyday processes. The engagement that the participants have with the tools and materials that they use explains that, over time, and with repeated use and practice, they develop a self-belief and trust in themselves and their intuition to know what to do with the tools and materials they use. Over time, they recognise ‘the feel’ of what they are using, and the stories tell us that the people are so familiar with the different feels on their hand that it has become an embodied knowing and they no longer think about it. As a result of this, when they were asked to describe the role and importance of the hand to their craft, something that has become so embodied, their descriptions had to be broken down into parts, in order to enable them to explain the role of their hand. Craft knowledge is not removed from the body but emerges through the body and is embedded in practice.

The stories describe how the craftspeople had to understand the materials and tools that they use through repeated bodily actions (for instance, touching, feeling, recognising) and through this, the craft skills and knowledge were acquired. Developing craft skill and knowledge requires the participants to be in tune with the

materialities and movements of the tools and materials so that they become familiar and skilled to understand ‘the feel’ and, further, what they describe as a comfortable feeling. Through this process of materialisation, the participants and materials, tools, and equipment gradually became one in the development of their craft skill and expertise. The glove maker, Rob, describes this embodied knowing very well when he said *‘once you know, you know, and you cannot unknow it’*.

This research has given the reader another lens to understand further the tacit nature of ‘coming-to-know’ a craft, and has identified the multiple aspects that influence the ‘coming-to-know’ experience, without forgetting that it must be embodied, sensed, and materialised to be tacitly known. This aspect is always in the process of change and can be partly articulated. Understanding ‘the feel’ of tools and materials cannot be written in a textbook and the role of the emotional aspects of crafting that have been identified in the stories (pride, joy, happiness, helplessness and despair) is an aspect that is rarely referenced in the literature. It is an important aspect that should be illuminated, as it can influence the learning and the continuation of the craft legacies.

Their craft reflects the craftspeople themselves. It is a part of who they are. Their legacy is that the people who view or use their craft will recognise and acknowledge them as a craft master who has contributed to the tradition of crafting.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Using a blended methodology, this research examined the craftsperson's experience of 'coming-to-know'. The research questions emerged from my own personal interest in the area, and this has contributed to a meaningful and honest attempt to discover answers from the stories included. Although the sample size was small, the participants gave a thorough overview of their experiences of learning and practising their crafts. Their stories, and what the different voices say about the themes, give a new layer to our understanding of their 'coming-to-know' and embodied cognition. All the participants are micro-entrepreneurs, small business owners, who engage completely with their craft to make the best craft that they can, one that will be sustainable and a living legacy of their craft and skill.

7.2 What did the stories tell us?

A number of key areas were identified by meeting with the participants and listening to their stories. One aspect foregrounded, and each craftsperson makes reference to it, is that they are conscious of the legacy aspect of their craft. They acknowledge that the craftspeople that practiced the craft before them were highly skilled, with many examples of their crafts still in use today. There is an awareness that their craft work will outlive them. They are motivated by the legacy of what they themselves create, and there is a personal need for their skill and craft to be recognised by future generations. This drives their need to be conscious of what might be referred to as self-imposed quality control. They want to produce a craft that is as good as it can be. However, in identifying this, there is also an awareness that their learning is never complete, that there is always room for improvement, that they do not know everything, and that there is always something new to be learned that will improve their individual craft skill.

While each of the participants referenced the monetary aspects of their craft, it is clear from the findings that they are not motivated to practice crafting to achieve financial gain. That is not to suggest, however, that the financial aspect is not considered, as all of them make reference to it at different stages. However, their stories tell us that it is not their primary motivator, and their pride in their craft legacy far outweighs this.

They value feedback from their peers and the people who use their craft pieces more than financial gain. It is worth noting that none of the participants mentioned the *Basic Income for Artists Scheme*, an initiative to assist artists deal with precarious incomes and to prevent them from leaving the sector for economic reasons. This scheme may be of benefit to the craftspeople, provided they know about it and can access it.

The community and the sense of place play an integral role for the participants. Each person talked about the place that they practice their craft in. This sense of putting down roots in a place was evident. The community they described comes in different shapes and sizes with different influences depending on the need of the craftspeople at particular times. It is clear from their stories that they are all highly influenced by the craftmasters that surrounded them. The supporting community that was described was different for each participant. However, the relational aspect of belonging to a community was described as being important to them to enabling continue with their craft. They were able to describe times when different communities sustained them in the form of other craftspeople, associations, family, neighbours or friends. Much of their work is done in isolation and because they belong to different communities whose main interest is to support and carry them when needed, being a part of a community is vital to their craft.

Each of the participants is aware of the importance of their hand in their craft. They all refer to it and the importance of touch and ‘the feel’ of materials and tools. What is also identified is the care that they practice when using their hand with the materials and tools, and they recognise that the hand is an active part of their craft practice. The participants also made reference to the existential aspect of their craft, where their craft grounded them, and engaging in material practice gave them a sense of peacefulness, security and safety. It identified that while all the troubles of the world are happening around them, the person can escape into their craft and engage materially with the craft and give them some peace and a coping mechanism to deal with issues in their lives.

7.3 Peeling back the layers

There is much literature written about doing crafts or instructions on how to craft. I wanted to identify more than the steps of how to practice crafts. I wanted to know how the craftsperson ‘comes-to-know’ their craft and what impacts this ‘coming-to-know’ experience. While narrative research is an important aspect of the research methodology, and enabled the participants to tell their stories, using it on its own would not provide the relational and emotional experiences that I sought. Therefore, I included micro-phenomenological interviews in order to enable the craftsperson to evoke specific moments that happened in their past and describe them in detail to understand how they ‘came-to-know’. Those participants who could access the evocation state were able to describe the sheer joy that they experienced when they successfully completed a craft piece that they were proud of, and the effect of this on their well-being. Equally, they describe the despair that they experienced when they struggled with their craft. Many people are delighted to share happy experiences but would choose not to share their struggles. These evocations and descriptions were very insightful, because this emotional aspect takes a toll on a person. For this reason, there is a need to belong to a strong supportive community to ground and motivate the person to continue with their craft and offer encouragement and reassurance.

7.4 Keeping the legacy alive

There are many benefits to the apprenticeship model of learning. Traditionally crafts were learned using this model. The stories here identify that there are different ways to share learning, apart from the formal traditional model, and the participants’ stories indicate that a lot of their learning came from within their communities, with special emphasis on how the skills and traditions were passed down in their family. However, what we can also recognise is that the traditional family unit is changing. Therefore, the opportunity for passing down and sharing traditional skills through generations is diminishing and the question this raises is, what are we replacing it with?

In the interest of preserving our craft legacy for the next generations, a greater effort is needed from a wider community where craftspeople could be in a position to share their skills as part of a formal structure, such as ‘the visiting crafter’, or ‘crafter in residence’, that would be supported by government policy, either as part of an

educational structure where a new perspective on sharing skills could be incorporated into the primary or secondary curriculum. It could also be considered as an initiative to include within the wider community for adult education, where craft hubs could be created that are supported by government policy, in a similar way to the European *Big Pulse Dance Alliance*, to share stories, create powerful experiences and connect with individuals and communities. *Big Pulse Dance Alliance* is a vibrant partnership of European festivals and institutions united by a shared purpose. With a passionate belief in the potential of dance to share stories, create powerful experiences and connect with individuals and communities, Big Pulse is dedicated to strengthening and expanding the reach of contemporary dance (www.bigpulsedance.eu)

The *Arts in Education Charter* is another example of how the visiting crafter proposal could be initiated, but this applies to artists and art organisations in receipt of support from the public purse, where they have obligations to share time each year with local education initiatives. Is there an opportunity for the government to introduce the apprenticeship model, where the crafter and the apprentice can be supported by the government to keep the crafts that appear to be destined to disappear in our lifetime alive? I am reminded of what the uilleann piper, Liam O'Flynn, said at an awards ceremony, "There can't be many occasions when it couldn't be right to pass the buck, but for me I think this is one, and I would immediately like to pass it to all the people who have taught me and the great tradition that made them make me... it's not easy to thank a tradition" (Liam O'Flynn, *Píobaire Piper*, 2020, TG4).

We need to value and thank our craft tradition, not just by an economic model, but by a means to preserve our craft traditions that could be supported by a guaranteed income for crafters by the State. Financial gain does not have to be the driving force. Instead, we should recognise the benefit of engaging in material practice to our health, wellbeing and our craft heritage.

There are specific supporting agencies available in Ireland for the craft industry. Apart from Tom who praised the contribution of Na Píobairí Uilleann for their continued support in areas such as tuition, research and recordings (www.pipers.ie), none of the other participants in this study made reference to accessing them and one would

question are these agencies meeting the needs of the craftsperson, and indeed, is there a need for additional support for the micro enterprise in the craft sector?

It is recognised that young people are experiencing increased levels of anxiety, and many would argue that the use of social media and smart telephones is a major contributor to this. A report undertaken by the World Health Organisation, *Teens, screens and mental health (2024)* reveals a sharp rise in problematic social media use among adolescents. The report defines problematic social media use as a pattern of behaviour characterized by addiction-like symptoms. These include an inability to control social media usage, experiencing withdrawal when not using it, neglecting other activities in favour of social media, and facing negative consequences in daily life due to excessive use. Re-introducing a craft initiative into the curriculum may offer absorption in an activity that requires this cohort to live in the moment, and engage in material practice, rather than engaging with the screen. The benefit of this to the entire community cannot be overstated. The *Design and Crafts Council Ireland's (DCCI)* nationwide primary schools programme, *CRAFTed*, delivered in partnership with the *Association of Teachers' Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI)*, works with teachers, craftspeople and primary learners. It aims to provide skills for life through positive, collaborative and joyful engagement with craft and design processes. By emphasising the making journey rather than finished products, *CRAFTed* allows space for experimentation, active learning and personal growth. It focuses on harnessing the creativity of every child, valuing individual creative expression.

7.5 Scope for further research

Completing this research has introduced me to a new way of thinking about education, learning and material practice. Even though the sample size was small, I can see the benefit of engaging with the participants and their sharing of valuable information. Their descriptions of how they learned their craft skills illustrate that their learning process is never fully complete, and it is engaging with their craft that gives their lives meaning and purpose.

Many communities are constantly being challenged about the rise in anxiety levels that have resulted from the ever-present smart phone, and, as a means to counter this,

I would be very interested in identifying how we might engage with the supporting agencies to map out a way to reintroduce crafting into our curriculum and into our local communities in order to counterbalance the amount of screen time that we engage in. Anything that can support us to feel safe in our environment can only be seen as a good thing, and the idea of encouraging people to engage in material practice, doing something with our hands, can only be beneficial.

Crafting is an essential part of our heritage, and my research findings illustrate that it takes time and patience to become a craftsperson. It would be a worthwhile piece of research to engage with school-going people and establish how many of them are interested in engaging in material practice either as a career or as a hobby and identify the barriers that are preventing them from doing so. Including elements from the micro-phenomenological research method would enhance this greatly and provide accurate and precise information.

The stories have identified that financial gain is not the primary motivator for engaging in crafting. However, a worthwhile piece of research could identify the government supports that are available for craftspeople and if the supports that are currently available are meeting the needs of the micro craft businesses. This research could also aid in identifying methods and values that we place on craftspeople and their skills, in an attempt to preserve the craft legacy.

7.6 A final word...

This research, initially borne out of grief, was an absolute joy to complete. As well as making a contribution to the field, it enabled me to record forever the wonderful craft skills of both my late mother and my life partner. It was a very emotional piece of research as unfortunately the two people who inspired me to undertake and complete it are not here to witness it. What I now appreciate is the hours and hours of practice to make their craft look effortless. This comes from doing it, doing it again, and doing it once more, making mistakes, learning from them, seeking support and not giving up. Craftspeople live through their craft, and their craft tradition lives and is sustained through them. They cannot be separated. As the W.B. Yeats poem *Among School Children* reminds us.

...O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,

*Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?*

My beautiful mother was always looking at garments with a critical eye. The fabric, the cut, the style and the fit. She would say ‘*don’t follow fashion, follow style... know what suits you and suit what knows you.*’ As someone who lived with and watched her practice her craft and skill, it is a huge loss that people no longer value it, and that fast fashion is now a part of our wardrobes, slowly replacing her craft legacy. As a people, we have to make strong efforts to preserve our traditions, because we will not be able to thank them if they are lost forever.

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