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A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MENTAL MODELS OF ENTREPRENEURS INVOLVED IN SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Orientation

As an entrepreneur/mentor, I am fascinated by the issue of why some start-up businesses flourish and others struggle to survive. In line with this and in order to increase understanding of entrepreneurial success, there is, as Bakker, Curşeu, and Vermeulen (2007) state, a need for empirical research to be conducted into the thought processes of entrepreneurs during strategic decision-making. In this study I endeavoured to discover why so many businesses fail and, subsequently, find a way to improve the success rate of novice entrepreneurs by exploring the mental models that support their decision-making.

Research question

The research question that guided the study investigated the differences between the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in successful businesses and those involved in unsuccessful entrepreneurial activity.

Research aim and objectives

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the concrete experiences and mental models of a small group of entrepreneurs, of which I was one. The following key objectives were identified for the study:

- To identify the critical elements of the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in successful entrepreneurial activity
- To ascertain the way in which the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in successful entrepreneurial activity differ from those involved in unsuccessful entrepreneurial activity
- To suggest interventions that would be appropriate for altering the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in unsuccessful activity so that they resemble the mental models of those involved in successful entrepreneurial activity.
Motivation for the study

Entrepreneurial behaviour is increasingly being recognised as important for economic growth in both established and emerging economies (Ireland, Web, & Coombs, 2005). However, the number of businesses that survive the first three-and-a-half years is very low (Herrington, 2010). Accordingly, a better understanding of both the mindsets and the sense-making processes of successful opportunity entrepreneurs may enable us to develop facilitation programmes to assist necessity entrepreneurs, small and medium business owners, unemployed people, teenagers and even managers in large organisations to develop the mental models of successful opportunity entrepreneurs. I hope that this study will contribute to this understanding and to improving the current situation.

Research approach

In the light of my quantum physics background, I do not believe in an objective reality. Every perspective on a social situation represents a glimpse of reality and such perspectives are, according to Esterberg (2002), equally valid. I therefore accepted that, as a researcher, I would during my interactions with the participants influence the construction of the “data” and become part of the sense-making that ensued.

In order to include my own entrepreneurial experiences and views I opted for a postmodernist-orientated qualitative research approach. More specifically, in studying my experiences and those of the seven other entrepreneurs in the study, I integrated elements of evocative (Ellis, 2000) and analytical (Anderson, 2006a) autoethnography.

To ensure a wide spectrum of experiences ranging from extremely successful to no success in line with the aim of the study, I identified extreme cases (Shank, 2006).

Data was collected by means of open-ended questions (Chaitin, 2004) and participant observation, and by studying unsolicited documents including newspaper articles and autobiographies, as well as television programmes. In
being both the researcher and the researched, I understood the complexity of the entrepreneurial process and was thus able to bridge the gap between individual experiences in the entrepreneurial context.

Qualitative data analysis demanded an iterative process. Accordingly, the preliminary data analysis occurred during the compilation of my field notes and was followed by intensive data analysis conducted mainly according to Chang’s (2008) guidelines. Subsequently, to generate new knowledge and develop the Mental Model Spectrum for Entrepreneurial Success (MMSES), I used abductive (Neergaard, 2007; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) reasoning.

**Key findings**

The research produced the following findings: Firstly, entrepreneurial success or failure is not the result of a singular contributor, but is brought about by a combination of factors. Success and failure do not entail two discrete “values”, but rather a series of positions on a continuum.

Secondly, it was found that a set of mental models contributed to the success or otherwise of the eight participating entrepreneurs. Accordingly, distinct differences were detected between the mental models of the successful entrepreneurs and those who were involved in unsuccessful businesses. The position of each entrepreneur on the mental model continuums sheds insight on the role that the mental models played in the success or otherwise of the entrepreneurs.

Thirdly, it was also found that not all entrepreneurs develop expert mental models. Participants who had not had a parent, close family member or friend who was an entrepreneur or had not enjoyed the services of a mentor – despite having had a university education – did not experience long-term success as an entrepreneur. Hence, it would seem that a mentor can play a significant role in the success of novice entrepreneurs, especially those who do not have entrepreneurial parents, close family members or friends to act as role models.
Contributions

Theoretically, the study makes a humble contribution to the understanding of the complex interrelated concepts that play an important role in the process of becoming a successful entrepreneur. Specifically, the mental models derived from both the entrepreneurs' experiences and the relevant literature were integrated to construct the MMSES model. This model can be used to profile the mental models of entrepreneurs and to facilitate the development of mindsets that support successful entrepreneurship.

On a more practical level, the MMSES model may assist mentors and entrepreneurs to identify the mental models that challenge the growth of an entrepreneurial endeavour.

The TA\(^2\)URE\(^2\)C steps for changing a mental model were constructed by focusing on the learning experience of participants, incorporating steps for problem solving (Pretz, Naples, & Sternberg, 2003, p. 3) and the seven capacities of the U movement (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2008, p. 219). The mentoring framework listed as the framework for change in Table 7.11 may be used to facilitate the transformation of limiting mental models in entrepreneurs to ones that support the growth of their business.

Suggestion for further research

It would be beneficial to explore the presence or otherwise of direct relationships between the various mental models identified in this study and success or otherwise in entrepreneurship. This could lead to increased understanding of the successes or failures of entrepreneurs and may result in more effective facilitation of entrepreneurial success.

Key words

Analytical autoethnography; entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial learning; mental models; model for profiling entrepreneurial mental models; steps for changing mental models; mentor; quantum physics; sense-making; success; failure.
PREFACE

Entrepreneurial activity plays an important role in the economy of a country. Maas and Herrington (2006) highlight the importance of creating and sustaining new small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for the economic development of South Africa. Compared to the rest of the world South Africa has one of the lowest levels of entrepreneurial activity (Bosma, Acs, Autio, Coduras & Levie, 2008). The number of businesses that managed to survive for three-and-a-half years dropped to a mere 1.4% in 2009 (Herrington, 2010).

This study explored the business lives of eight entrepreneurs as they struggled to survive in territories fraught with challenges. Through the narratives of the seven participating entrepreneurs and my own, I searched for reasons why some had survived, others had flourished and two had succumbed.

Although the literature on entrepreneurship is interdisciplinary and vast (Campbell & Mitchell, 2012), there has been little written on either the reasons for the low survival rate of start-up businesses or the mental models which support successful entrepreneurial activity. The mental maps of entrepreneurs determine how they perceive situations and also how they make critical choices. Entrepreneurs and entrepreneur mentors seldom have access to a diverse collection of articles on entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial success and the mental models that support such success. The devastating impact of business failure on the people involved demands a better understanding of the mental models that support successful entrepreneurship. This is an issue, which according to Bakker, Curseu, and Vermeulen (2007), research is lacking. Hence, the motivation behind this study was to create a comprehensive framework of these mental models not only to assist entrepreneurs and their mentors, but also to enhance the understanding of and contribute to the theory of entrepreneurship.

The study is based, firstly, on the assumption that entrepreneurial behaviour is the result of a combination of nature and nurture. Hence, entrepreneurship can be developed in people who have an aptitude for it. Secondly I assumed that I would be able to access the mental models of the entrepreneurs by listening to their life stories, asking them open-ended questions and observing them in their
businesses. Accordingly, I decided to use a qualitative approach using analytical autoethnography (my own) which was supported by the ethnographies of the seven other entrepreneurs who participated in this study. My vision is for novice and nascent entrepreneurs and entrepreneur mentors to identify with the stories of the participants, learn from them and use the findings of this study to enhance their own entrepreneurial experiences.

Initially I used the field of quantum theory as the metaphor in the study. This was primarily because quantum theory has been an integral part of my life for over thirty years and it forms the basis of sense-making in my life. Unfortunately, however, providing the necessary background to enable non-physicists to understand this metaphor became too cumbersome. Hence, I changed the metaphor to the survival of lions on the plains of Africa. However, I retained some aspects of quantum physics as it is embedded in the mentoring processes I use.

I used a combination of writing styles, including autoethnography, confessional tales and scientific tales (Sparkes, 2002). The postmodern paradigm allows the researcher to include quotations, photographs and symbols in a thesis. These serve to make the data more visual and deepen the engagement of the reader with the writing. In some instances, these quotations, photographs and symbols enhances triangulation. Ultimately, it must evoke entrepreneurial readers to question or assess their situations and proactively address the challenges they face in the start up and growth of their businesses.

When writing the narratives of the entrepreneurs who participated in the study, I allocated a particular colour to each entrepreneur. These colours were used in the headings and some of the script in their narratives and also in other situations throughout the thesis where the particular participants were involved. I believe this helps the reader to keep track of each participant; especially when the reader wants to go back to previous sections. The colours allocated were as follow: **Albert, Allon, Dianne, Lily, Natasha, Neill, Tessa** and **Suzette**.

Quality assurance involves keeping a detailed reflective journal, triangulation of the data by means of verification using alternative sources, providing detailed descriptions of information-rich data, writing an internal audit and conducting peer
debriefing sessions. By being transparent in my writing I hoped to convey credibility and trustworthiness – two important aspects in quality assurance.

I identified over seventy concepts relevant to the mental models of the participants from the data. For each of these concepts the participants were placed on a continuum to reflect in which way the mental model was present for the participant relative to the other participants. Keeping the success or lack thereof of a participant in mind when considering the position of the participant on the continuum of a particular mental model, provided an insight into the role of the particular mental model in the success of the entrepreneur. In line with the quantum physics principle that nothing exists in isolation, I found that the concepts that formed the basis of the mental models of the entrepreneurs are complex and interconnected. Nevertheless, despite the challenge presented by the interrelatedness of the mental models I developed the Mental Model Spectrum for Entrepreneurial Success (MMSES). Not only does this model increase our understanding of the mental models of entrepreneurs, but it also provides entrepreneurs and their mentors with the opportunity to compare their mental models against a profile that supported the successful entrepreneurship of six of the entrepreneurs in this study.
TERRITORIES IN MY STUDY

PART 1: THE TERRITORY

Chapter 1: Sussing out the territory

Luring me into the bush
Reflections on physics, cats and qualitative research
Sharpening my claws
Leaving scratch marks on a tree in the territory
Finalising the delineation of my territory
I have my own territory

This chapter provides the background to how I embarked on this study and introduces the people who played important roles in the initiation on this study. I contextualise the various aspects that will play an important role throughout the study.

I sharpen my claws in preparation for the presentation of my research proposal. I refine, define and discuss important concepts in the study. Finally, the chapter culminates in the acceptance of my research proposal – my own personal territory.

Chapter 2: Marking the territory

Exploring the territory with friends at Seattle Coffee Bar
Venturing deeper into the territory with Neill
Marking my territory in the field of qualitative research
Inviting the participants onto the African plains

I explain qualitative research and my research approach to friends and my ontology and epistemology to my husband, Neill.

I develop a field note protocol, the structure of my first meeting with potential participants and my interview approach. Finally, Mary Anne listens to the story of the sampling strategy I propose to use.
PART 2: ON THE AFRICA PLAINS

Chapter 3: My pride on the African plains

The pride into which I was born
Killing to attain a goal
My first real territory: the ballet school
Switching territory: extra lessons
After the migration to Gauteng
Expanding into purrfect territory
Storm clouds gathering
Staring into the bush

Chapter 4: Other prides on the African plains

Neill, the restless lion
Lily, the insecure lion
Tessa, the trendy lioness
Dianne, the battle-scarred lioness
Natasha, the alpha female
Allon, the experienced lion
Albert, the overconfident lion

Starting with relevant personal background I relate my history as a serial entrepreneur. In view of the fact that my life has been completely intertwined with Neill’s since 1978 I incorporate the way some of his endeavours influenced my story.

The narratives of the participants are used to reveal their various attitudes and mindsets and how these, in turn, influenced their learning and the success (or lack thereof) of their businesses. Interwoven throughout these stories are glimpses into the quality assurances of the study and certain ethical dilemmas I faced.
PART 3: OUT TO KILL

Chapter 5: The hunting ground

In this chapter I discuss mental models and schemata and how they become increasingly complex through sense-making and learning. I explore decision-making, participants’ preferences for a specific style of decision-making and how both heuristics and biases influenced their decision-making.

5.1 Reflective sense-making
5.2 Decision-making
5.3 Learning
5.4 Heuristics and biases

Chapter 6: The prey

All the mental models which emerged from the narratives of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in this study are discussed in detail in this chapter. I introduce academic concepts and key research findings from the entrepreneurial world. I describe some practical experiences of the participants under the sub-heading, Digging, and then tabulate a summary of the participants’ mental models for every concept on a continuum. Under Got it! I draw a conclusion as regards the appropriateness of the relevant concept to the success of the entrepreneurs. I also look at the people who influenced the mental models of the entrepreneurs.

Mental models and schemata
Reflective sense-making
Decision-making
Learning
Heuristics and biases

Mental models
Interpersonal relationships
Chapter 7: The Kill

Analytical tools
Conceptualising the mental models of entrepreneurs
The kill model for successful entrepreneurship
Use of the MMSES model
Mentorship for entrepreneurship

A summary of the conceptual frameworks – typologies, models and theories – precedes the conceptualisation and categorisation into seven groups of the concepts identified in Chapters 5 and Thereafter I explain the development and use of the MMSES model related to the mental models for successful entrepreneurship. Finally, the TA^2URE^2C steps for changing a mental model and a framework for the mentoring thereof are presented.

Chapter 8: In the shade of an old acacia tree

The hunt as viewed from my study
An overview of the hunt
Honouring the lions in the territory
Ethics between lions
Quality assurance of the hunt
Details of the African plains
Constructing hunting stories
Metaphor change
Data analysis discussed
Findings to typology; typology to model
My hunting journal
Contributions of the study
Shortcomings and weaknesses of the study
Recommendations for further research
Did the cub develop into a lioness?

This chapter comprises the internal audit of the study. I reveal my thoughts and behind the scenes actions during every stage of the research process. Important ethical considerations and quality assurance of the study are discussed in detail. I share some of the important challenges I faced such as the changing of the metaphor as well as the construction of the MMSES model and TA^2URE^2C steps for changing habitual mental models. The discussion on the contributions and shortcomings of the study as well as the recommendations for further research are followed by a discussion of my growth as a result of this research journey. Finally, there is a short mention of the most challenging personal moments that affected the duration of this journey.
Where I inserted ❃❖❖ at the end of a paragraph or section this indicated a big jump in time or setting that may not be immediately obvious to the reader.

I used Arial Unicode MS when citing an email and Arial Narrow in the case of a sms.
Every morning as the sun rises over the African plain, an impala awakens and so does a lion. If the impala does not outrun the lion, it will die, and if the lion does not overtake the impala, it will starve. So, whether you are hunting or the hunted—when the sun rises you better be running, because in Africa, the moment you lose your edge, you lose your life.

David Molapo
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PART I

THE TERRITORY

Photograph part 1: Lions in their territory.¹

¹ Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane.
CHAPTER 1

Sussing out the territory

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Africa is not for sissies\(^3\).

When a young male lion has to leave the pride to establish a new pride the young lion has to stake out its own territory. This is often accomplished by fighting an old, weaker lion for the latter’s territory. Research, on the other hand, does not involve having a physical fight with someone in order to able to conduct the research.

\(^2\) Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane
\(^3\) Slang word for cowards that dates back to 1887
It was while I was studying quantum physics during a postgraduate year in the early nineties that I met Albert. I was a young mother who was studying part-time in an effort to preserve my sanity in a world of nappies and night feeding. Albert had been assigned the postgraduate quantum mechanics course to lecture when the professor who had originally taught it had died unexpectedly. We were sitting in Albert’s office with *Quantum mechanics* by Eugene Merzbacher on the desk between us – an intimidating book to read for the first time, no matter your qualifications. I confessed to Albert that I really did not understand much of what I was reading and I asked his advice on making the content of the book more accessible.

His advice to me was to read and reread the book, to think and read the book again and just to keep on reading it because, according to him, at some point, the understanding would come. I followed his advice and worked through every problem in the book. At times he and I struggled through the difficult problems together but my hard work finally paid off. Little did I know then that we would meet again years later – I would still be a student but the field would have shifted.

I encountered Albert again in June 2010. He was leaning against the wall in front of the physics building when I told him that I was studying for a MPhil. He raised his eyebrows. “How did that happen?”

For a moment I felt as if I had been caught out cheating and hastened to explain “I have mainly worked with people – either as a teacher, lecturer, trainer or mentor – with only shorts stints in a laboratory, carrying out academic research. You know that I would be lucky if more than five people in the world read my master’s study on the magnetic properties of those specific chromium alloys. I find that depressing. All those hours and my study simply gathers dust on shelves. I read in Hawkins (1994, p. vi) that people do not read books full of equations.”

Albert nodded in agreement, “But you eat equations for breakfast.”

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4 I chose blue ink for Albert as he is the conservative academic.
“And even I don’t want to read it! For me it just didn’t make sense to continue along the pure physics route. Any further studies will have to support what I do in real life and need to be accessible to more people than a few experts in a specific field. The other day I read that ‘we have worried much more about how we are judged as ‘scientists’ by other scientists than about whether our work is useful, insightful, or meaningful – and to whom’ (Bochner, 2000, p. 267). This really resonated with me. Adding value to people’s lives is exactly what supplies the quantum of energy that fuels my activities.”

Albert frowned, “Have you written off physics completely?”

“Absolutely not. Physics is an integral part of how I think – there is no getting away from that. However, I have started to explore courses that support my work with people and, more specifically, their thought processes. During 2005 and 2006 I learned about the power of the sub-conscious mind and the use of visualisations and storytelling while I was studying coaching and hypnotherapy. The door to the world of qualitative methods started to open for me. As a result of my studies in quantum physics I am comfortable with the issue of co-creation and the fact that objectivity is a figment of our imaginations. It was Prof Willem Schurink who pushed that door wide open and lured me into his world of qualitative research. Since 2005, I have had many invitations and opportunities to speak on and discuss quantum physics with people. A particularly successful talk was one that I gave to a group of professional people ranging from industrial psychologists to academics schooled in the Old Testament and even artists. It would appear that, without the complex mathematical equations, people find the philosophy in quantum physics both fascinating and also useful in the process of sensemaking.”

Albert smiled, “Now I feel better. I can still hear and see the passion for our subject.”

“Quantum physics has actually helped me understand people better.”

Albert was now standing up straight. He exclaimed “This I have to hear.”

I looked at my watch. “There isn’t really enough time now. I’m hoping to use quantum physics to do research on the mental maps of entrepreneurs. Schwartz,
Stapp and Beauregard (2005) use the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory to show that, when we make choices, the process does not depend on the current state of the brain only – classical, first principle mathematics. Previous experiential leaning plays an important role and they suggest that quantum theory holds the key to understanding the brain-mind interaction. I agree with this.”

“Are you going to try and prove that?”

My hands shot up to stop him. “No! No...but I do believe in treating the physical world quantum mechanically – especially the thought processes of the students and entrepreneurs with whom I work.”

“Well, I found out I’m far too kind and caring to be an entrepreneur.”

Now it was my turn to frown. “What do you mean?”

“It’s another long story. I had a centre where we looked after school children after school hours – teaching extra lessons...that kind of thing. But it didn’t work out.”

“I’d love to hear your story. Will you share it with me...and maybe let me use it if I’m accepted into the doctoral programme?”

“Of course, but I can’t see that it will be of value to you. I’m just too much of a softy. You need to be tough and ruthless to be successful in business.”

I did not agree with him but I just nodded my head. “I’m sure you’ve learned a lot in the process.” He looked into the distance and shook his head.

I broke the silence, “Well, it was good seeing you again and I’ll be in contact. Have a good day.”

“Thanks, it was. Let’s not wait this long again.”

Deep in thought I climbed the seemingly endless staircase to the fifth floor and my class. Albert’s remark on why the business had failed reminded me of Dianne.
It was at a mutual friend’s fiftieth birthday party that I met Dianne in 2007. We had studied coaching at the same place, albeit at different times, but it gave us something in common to talk about. She had recently left her job in the newspaper industry because of what she called *company politics*. Now she wanted to start her own business. In the course of our conversation she admitted, “I really have no idea what I want to do.” From our experience when my husband, Neill, had lost his job I knew how quickly time and resources run out. When we said goodbye I offered her a free workshop to assist her with her decision-making process. Four days later she took me up on my offer and we spent three hours working through her skills, strengths and weaknesses, as well as her likes and dislikes. Midway through the long session we took a coffee break and walked through the garden to my cat hotel.

Dianne left with a short list of important things to do but said, “I am now going to sleep until tomorrow.” I begged her to first reflect on the day’s session before going to sleep. She did that but I did not hear from Dianne again until years later.

I arrived at my class for master’s students in Personal and Professional Leadership in the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management (IPPM) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). Halfway through the three-hour session we had a tea break during which I struck up a conversation with one of the other students. After I had heard his story Heyns asked me the reason why I was studying for my master’s degree and this is the story that I related to him:

### 1.2 LURING ME INTO THE AFRICAN BUSH OF RESEARCH

#### 1.2.1 Liza’s contribution

It all started with Liza who was a client of Purrfect Place. When clients collect their cats we usually spend quite some time talking at their cars. Neill calls this my marketing time. Liza had become a regular client and we eventually became

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5 I chose earth brown for Dianne, the colour of earth – as she did not get off the ground.
friends. One day at her car she said, “I'm so stressed out. I have to present a proposal for a training programme for government and I’m no good with that.”

I suggested a few tips to help her work through the process more calmly and she immediately asked, “Can I please see you tomorrow so that you can help me with this?”

In short I mentored her through the process and she was awarded the tender and her rates accepted. We celebrated a few days later with tea and it was then that she said, “You need to do a doctorate with the stuff you’re doing.” A few weeks later she introduced me to Prof Willem Schurink\(^6\) who is a part time professor in IPPM and the department specialist on qualitative research methodology.

\(^6\) Henceforth “Prof” without a surname stands for Prof Willem Schurink
1.2.2 Meeting Prof for the first time

I met the Prof for the first time in June 2007 at Campus Square – one of his unofficial offices. He lives in Pretoria and, at any one time, he is the study leader of approximately twenty students throughout Gauteng. As a part-time professor at the university, UJ does not expect him to keep office hours. In order to accommodate his students he meets them at restaurants between his house in Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg. Sometimes these round trips also include visiting students at their homes. Prof is a true ethnographer and I think he is more relaxed at these restaurant meetings than he would have been in an office.

At Campus Square we ordered our drinks and started to discuss my experiences as both an entrepreneur and a mentor of entrepreneurs, my cat hotel (Purrfect Place) and the Prof’s field of qualitative research over coffee. Prof asked me, “What would you like to understand better after this study, Suzette?”

“Prof, I work with many business start-ups. I like to think of them as white water rafters. There are those who come with state of the art equipment, global positioning system (GPS) and a professional backup team following them along the river bank. Despite all of this, the team has an endless battle to keep the raft out of whirlpools and off the rocks. And then there is the rafter who arrives with a well used dugout,7 sans GPS or other assistance. This person intuitively knows exactly what to do at the right time – how to avoid the dangerous eddies and make the most of the rapids. I would like to understand why. Why do many entrepreneurs fail despite having lots of resources and others manage to fly solo?”

More than an hour had flown by. I had to rush back to the cat hotel to attend to my guests and Prof had to drive to Pretoria. I thanked him for his time and he promised that he would be in contact once he had spoken to the chairperson of the department.

There was a complex situation within the department and neither Prof nor I had the power to do anything about it. It was with sadness that I closed that door of the possibility of this study behind me. I decided to concentrate on my business as

7 A canoe made from a hollowed out tree trunk
Neill and I were going through an extremely tough financial time. Quantum Gain\textsuperscript{8} was slowly starting to gain momentum and I was spending time building a network.

In the meantime, Liza had also introduced me to her study buddies – Mary Anne, Jane, Cindy, Cathy, Willie and Stan. I became part of their group and in 2008 I attended a birthday breakfast for one of the study buddies. Mary Anne, Jane, Cindy and Willie have now completed the doctoral studies and all of them, with the exception of Willie, are now involved at tertiary education institutions, Liza and her family have immigrated to Britain and I have lost contact with Cathy and Stan.

At one of these birthday breakfasts, we were all catching up when Prof opened the subject of my studies. He suggested we consider the possibility of another university. I was tempted but, in view of our poor financial situation, it was not feasible for me to undertake further study and I simply brushed the suggestion aside. I was using any spare time I had to teach extra lessons in physics to students ranging from engineering students to medical students from all the universities in Gauteng.

1.2.3 Mary Anne’s contribution

Thursday, 22 October 2009

I had committed to writing a bridging programme for the Physics Department at the UJ. I had just parked my car in front of the Physics Department when my cell phone rang. It was Mary Anne, “Where are you? Can you talk?”

“Hi. I’m at UJ. I’ve got a few minutes before my meeting. Are you ok?”

“I’m fine. I’m fine. Listen; are you available to be on the selection panel for potential MPhil students again?”

“I’d like to. When is it?”

\textsuperscript{8} My mentoring business
“Thanks. It’s this coming Monday…and while I have you on the line, you know that our nemesis has retired. Don’t you want to reconsider doing your D? Think about it and tell me on Monday. And thank you for your willingness to assist us.”

We said goodbye as I walked into the physics department for my meeting with the head of department. I had committed to writing a bridging programme and I had three months to produce the work for the first semester.

While working on the bridging programme I attended meetings with members of the Faculty of Management on 7 January 2010 during which it was decided that I would have to spend 2010 attending MPhil (Leadership) classes to ensure I was on a par with all the other students before I would be allowed to present a proposal for my doctoral study. I also confirmed that Prof Willem Schurink and Dr Mary Anne Harrop-Allin would be willing to be my study supervisors. The first study school started on 25 January. Luckily I was extremely familiar with the work covered in the master classes although my academic knowledge of entrepreneurship was minimal. I had mountains of academic reading ahead of me.

On the third of January 2010 I delivered the first semester’s work for the bridging programme and, on 30 April 2010, I signed the programme of over a thousand pages off without relinquishing copyright. In order to celebrate I drove to the Seattle Coffee Bar in the Cresta shopping centre close to where I live and ordered “the usual” – a single, tall, skinny café latté. I was now free to focus on my studies.

I drew a timeline on the back of my shopping list and made notes between sips of heavenly latté. The shopping list was almost covered in dates and to-do lists by the time I had finished my latté.

1.3 REFLECTIONS ON PHYSICS, CATS AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

God made cats so that humans can stroke lions (Anonymous).

At twenty past four on a Tuesday afternoon in May 2010. I entered the Faraday cage housing Purrfect Place. Until sunset I would be grooming cats and serving

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9 Our nemesis was a professor and the reason for many students to either leave or move on to study with Prof Schurink.
10 A Faraday cage refers to any metal structure that prevents lightning from entering it. A good example is the metal body of a motor car.
them their dinners. It is among the cats and doing manual labour that I often contemplate possible momentous decisions and reflect on life issues. I do not feel guilty if my mind wanders because the cats have a way of attracting my attention when they need it.

Bobbels rubbed a wet nose against my leg to scent mark me as her property – or maybe she was just leaving graffiti on my leg for the other cats to read. Who knows? My communication with cats is not sophisticated enough for me to know what they're thinking. It is difficult enough trying to understand my own thinking and that of the people I study. I throw a fluffy mouse for her to retrieve. It is clear that she likes to retrieve fake mice and I am fairly certain she has no hidden agenda in doing that other than the fun of our game. People are not quite the same. Exploring their thinking reminds me of quantum physics.

Not only do we all live in the world of quantum physics but it operates within us – even if we are not always aware of it. I became aware of a furry tail sweeping against my face. It was Roxy's turn to thank me for grooming her by brushing against me and purring. If my awareness as a researcher is crucial to the success of this study – and I am convinced it is – then surely the level of awareness of an entrepreneur would play an important role in his/her success.

I moved on to brush Zilla and McClaren and saw Purrbear, who was playing on his lawn, launch himself into the air to catch a dragonfly with perfect precision. His movements – like all macroscopic motion – are effectively described in terms of classical mechanics which gives us the ability to use physical laws to predict exact outcomes provided the initial conditions are known. This reminds me of qualitative research where the observer may be said to stand behind the cat hotel fence while the observed always acts within an isolated system with no external influences allowed to operate within that system. Postmodern qualitative research, on the other hand, is more like quantum mechanics as compared to classical mechanics. Classical mechanics focuses on the parts while quantum theory sees the interrelatedness of everything, acknowledging that nothing and nobody operate in isolation and quantum theory is able to provide the probability of a specific outcome materialising only. Nothing is absolute. Thus, we are all co-creating reality – or our perception thereof – influencing one another and also the
world in which we live. According to Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle it is not possible for the observer to observe either the system or the object without influencing the outcome (Cassell, 2005, p. 169). Werner Heisenberg also showed that, even under the most propitious circumstances, the uncertainty principle makes it impossible to obtain accurate knowledge about the phenomena we study (Jordaan & Jordaan, 2003, p. 63). This is also true when we observe the human mind.

Before I groomed Missy I allowed her to have a quick run in the cat hotel run – her favourite treat at the end of the day. I stood near her gate watching her and my mind ran along like the girl\textsuperscript{11} in the run.

Quantum physics studies the mysterious world of sub-atomic particles – not by observing the particles themselves but by observing their influence on the physical, observable world they inhabit. In a similar way, animals read signs in the wind, scent markings on plants and the movements of plants as well as the behaviour of insects, birds and other animals. In this study I would investigate the stories of entrepreneurs and use their narratives to explore the mental maps of the people living the stories. I had no illusions about discovering the absolute, objective reality as I believe reality differs according to one’s perspective of it. It would be incumbent on me to reflect often and with awareness, not only to become aware of my influence on my participants but also their influences on me. Over the years I have irritated Neill endlessly by my habit of reflecting on everything. Accordingly, in order to spare him this irritation, I have kept journals for most of my life. I have found that quantum physics and my reflective journals have been a valuable way of making sense of the world and my experiences in the world.

I bring my awareness back to where I stand in the cat hotel and clapped my hands. Missy charged back to me – knowing her dinner and grooming session awaited her in her house. It was also time to go indoors to prepare food for the humans in the house. And it was there, in front of the stove, that Neill found me. “Why are you shaking your head like that?” he asked with a bemused expression.

\textsuperscript{11} As a result of my business I often talk of cats as if they are humans, thus, “girl”.
“People...They don’t always know what their passion is and go for the flavour-of-the-month projects, wasting time and resources when they can least afford it.”

Neill looked confused. “What do you mean? I haven’t been scheming for at least two weeks. What are you talking about?”

I laughed, “No, it’s not you. It’s someone I saw earlier today.”

“Great. Then I’m going to celebrate the fact that I’m not in for a speech with coffee. What would you like to drink?”

“Tea, please.” With the food prepared we had time to put our feet up for our usual end-of-day chat in our chairs in front of the window.

I took a deep breath and enjoyed the moment. “Doesn’t sound as if you had time to get to your D today,” Neill remarked.

I shook my head. “No, with six cats leaving and five coming in and all the regular cat hotel responsibilities plus an hour with a mentee it wasn’t possible and that stresses me out. However, I did use the time in the cat hotel to think a few things through and the cats always relax me.”

1.4 SHARPENING MY CLAWS

Lions and the other members of the cat family sharpen their claws regularly so that their claws are ready for the next “fight”; be it competitive or for food. They do this by scratching against a tree trunk pulling the sheath of old nails off and revealing sharp new nails underneath. Here I am sharpening my thinking in preparation of presenting my research proposal.

1.4.1 July 2010

Six o’clock on a Wednesday morning I met Prof at the Catz Pyjamas, a 24-hour restaurant in Melville and approximately seven kilometres from where we live. I had arranged to collect and pay for a text book that Prof had bought on my behalf. While we were exchanging pleasantries the student who had been due to meet with him at half past six cancelled and we decided to put the hour ahead to good use.
With steaming cups of coffee in front of us Prof asked me, “Tell me, why do you want to do this study, Suzette?”

I knew that he knew the answer but wanted to ascertain whether I had worked on my proposal – which I had – but I was not ready to talk without notes. I quickly opened my laptop which I had brought with me so that I could work if I had had to wait to see Prof. I opened my proposal file and read:

“Prof, Herrington (2010) wrote that the business environment is continually growing in complexity, diversity and ambiguity and new ventures find it difficult to survive the first three-and-a-half years in this environment. Despite this, I see entrepreneurs who successfully start-up and grow businesses – thriving under these ever-changing complex conditions. The ability of the entrepreneur to adapt and the level to which they are willing to adapt play an important role in the creation of their success. As an entrepreneur mentor I have explored this anomaly. Now I want to take my thought processes to the highest level possible. An official study will structure my empirical research and my entrepreneur mentoring programme should benefit from it. I want to feel that the entrepreneurs I mentor are able to grow to their maximum potential.”

Prof smiled, “I can hear you’ve been working on your proposal. First, tell me who or what is an entrepreneur?”

For a moment I was quiet and then I scrolled to the relevant place in my proposal. I continued with increasing confidence as my eyes sought for and found clues. “Gartner (1989) wrote an article on that question. I have read in Low and MacMillan (1988) that there are so many different definitions of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship – some dating back as early as 1921 – each capturing aspects, but none providing us with a complete picture of the entrepreneur. I have found that most of these definitions encompass the notion of the creation of value by means of new products and services through a venture in common (Venkataraman, 1997; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Rwigema & Venter, 2004; Chell, 2008).” I had turned my laptop so that Prof could read the citations. I read the following out loud. “Acs and Audretsch (2010, p. 2) define entrepreneurship as ‘all businesses that are new and dynamic, regardless of size or line of business’
while they exclude ‘businesses that are neither new nor dynamic’. On the other hand, Hindle (2010, p. 100) defines entrepreneurship as ‘the process of evaluating, coming to and achieving, under contextual constraints, the creation of new value from new knowledge for the benefit of defined stakeholders’.” For a brief moment I look pleased with myself.

Prof then asked, “But how do you define an entrepreneur?” I had known that this was coming so I had had thought about it but, under pressure, my mind went blank until my eyes alighted on the following. “For the purposes of this study an entrepreneur is a person who recognises opportunities of wealth creation, seizes the opportunity to start a business with the aim of growing the business, creating jobs and accumulating capital. I have based my definition on the work of Cope and Watts” (2000, p. 115).

“And how are you going to obtain the data? You will have to think very carefully about the methodology you want to use,” Prof warned.

“I’m thinking of longitudinal case studies.” He suggested a few books on qualitative research that I may find helpful. As I scribbled the names down I realised that it was almost eight o’clock. “Prof, thank you so much for this unscheduled meeting and for this book on qualitative research in business. I cannot wait to read it.” I paid for the book, said goodbye and hurried down the staircase in a rush to get home and through my cat hotel duties so that I could work on my proposal.

**Meeting with my supervisors - 18 August 2010**

That morning I started on my cat hotel duties before sunrise so that I could have tea ready by nine for the meeting with my study supervisors to discuss my proposal. I was convinced that a deeper insight into the reasons why entrepreneurs either succeeded or failed would not only benefit my clients and myself, but also entrepreneurs in general. However, I knew Prof and Mary Anne would focus on theoretical contribution of the study.

Once I had fed all the cats I stacked the dirty cat food bowls in the kitchen for Bonisiwe, the cleaner who works for me, to sterilise and I rushed to my desk to jot
down the points I had thought of while working in the cat hotel. Then I set up my laptop and audio recorder on the dining room table and prepared everything for tea.

Soon the three of us were sitting around my dining room table – each with a cup of tea and a copy of my proposal in front of us. I talked them through my research proposal, highlighting the need for research into the way in which entrepreneurs learn and the influence of cognitive biases on perception (Krueger, 2003). I told them, “The mental maps of entrepreneurs determine how they perceive situations and make critical choices. According to Bakker, Curseu and Vermeulen (2007), there is a gap in the research data on this. I shall explore the mental models of entrepreneurs and trust that some theoretical contribution will emerge from this study.”

Toward the end of our meeting Mary Anne drew my attention to the time limit to which I would have to adhere to during the proposal meeting. As soon as Prof and Mary Anne had left I listened to the audio recording of our meeting and made notes of all their recommendations in order to improve my proposal and condensed it, where possible, to ensure that I stayed within the time limit. I did not have the confidence to use a power point presentation and I telephoned Michael, a co-student, to take him up on his offer to go through our proposals together.
Passion is the energy that carries you through the dark nights (Suzette le Roux. August, 2010).

The day before the selection panel, Michael and I had a dry run of our presentations at my house. When he saw the quotation above on my first slide he remarked that he thought I was being overly dramatic and negative. However, having coached people through major projects I was under no illusion that conducting research and, more specifically, writing a thesis justified my little mantra above.

1.4.2 Ke nako\textsuperscript{12} – 13 October 2010

It was a bright spring day. The time to present my research proposal to the selection panel had arrived. Michael, Heyns and I sat in the office of one of the lecturers, giving each other moral support. Earlier Prof had sent me the following sms:

“Môre, Suzette, en so breek die groot dag aan! Jy het hard gewerk en is goed voorberei. Ek is oortuig daarvan dat alles goed sal gaan. Dink aan jou! Prof Willem.” (Good morning Suzette, the big day has arrived. You have worked hard and you are well prepared. I am convinced all will go well. Thinking of you! Prof Willem.)

Michael went in first. He proposed an autoethnography and, when he came out, he hugged me and whispered in my ear, “They were tough, but good luck for yours.” It was with much trepidation that I walked into the boardroom.

1.4.3 Crossing a dangerous river

Every year, at the end of the rainy season, hundreds of thousands of wildebeest, zebra and gazelle migrate from the Serengeti. Trekking after grazing and drinking water they have to cross the mighty Grumeti river, but it is not the water they fear. Almost completely submerged in the water are Nile crocodiles eagerly awaiting their next meal. When the wildebeest reach the river’s edge they are instinctively very alert – noses twitching, ears swivelling and tails swishing as they are about to enter the water. Then the others follow in their droves – pushed forward by the sheer numbers behind them – even though they sense the danger lurking in the

\textsuperscript{12} Sesotho for “It is time.”
swirling waters. There is a sense of urgency in the atmosphere. None of these creatures allow fear to prevent them reaching their goal – food and water on the other side of the crocodile invested waters.

I was about to enter the river.

In 2007 I had had a long conversation with Scar and had been provisionally accepted into the doctoral programme by a selection panel. However, I was not willing to study under Scar. Seven people whom I knew well started under him and had had to change study leaders early in their research to rescue their studies. Scar was a powerful man in the department and, when he had heard I preferred another study supervisor, he had vetoed my acceptance. Months had passed before I had found out what had happened. I had been extremely upset and, one afternoon, I could bear it no longer and I had phoned him. Wow, did that conversation confirm that I had been correct not to go with him as a study leader? For about forty minutes he went at me – denigrating both my character and my lack of an IQ. My body had been shaking and my palms sweating – reminding me of the experiences about which some of his previous students had told me. However, despite all the adrenaline flowing I decided to treat him as professionally and as calmly as possible and not give in to the urge to put down the receiver.

1.5 LEAVING SCRATCH MARKS ON A TREE IN THE TERRITORY

All these memories came flooding back as I walked into the boardroom to deliver my proposal.

I acknowledged the people sitting round the table: Dr Rica Viljoen, Dr. Mary Anne Harrop-Allin, Mr Albert Wort, Prof. Gert Roodt, Prof. Willem Schurink and Prof. Theo Veldsman (Chair). Professor Veldsman welcomed me and stipulated that I had ten to fifteen minutes in which to present my proposal.

As usual, when I am stressed but well prepared, autopilot kicks in.

“The aim of this study is to explore the mental maps of entrepreneurs involved in successful entrepreneurial activity. I am hoping to improve my understanding of

13 Scar is the professor who I called “our nemesis” earlier in this chapter.
the mental maps of entrepreneurs as they navigate through the complex processes of starting up and living through the challenges along the way.”

I went through my prepared Powerpoint presentation – sometimes rushing when I remembered the tight time limit. However, I was obviously being too longwinded as Prof. Roodt interrupted, “Why is this study relevant?”

I took a deep breath. I felt calmer. “Entrepreneurial behaviour is increasingly being recognised as being extremely important for economic growth in both established and emerging economies (Ireland, et al., 2005). According to the Global Entrepreneur Monitor (GEM) (Bosma, et al., 2008, p. 29), entrepreneurship may possibly be a mechanism with which to turn around a recession with new start-ups replacing ineffective companies and it is, by definition, a source of job opportunities. In addition to its financial impact, entrepreneurial activity also drives innovation and accelerates structural changes in the economy. This, in turn, exerts pressure on the more established companies to shape up (Bosma, Acs, Autio, Coduras, & Levie, 2008).

A greater understanding of the mental maps of entrepreneurs is also important for organisations such as the Transformation and Entrepreneurship Scheme (TES) of the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) which supports entrepreneurial activity. In addition, many start-ups are short-lived and those organisations that invest money would be able to select and mentor entrepreneurial endeavours better to ensure that their money is used more effectively than would otherwise have been the case.”

After catching my breath for a split second I continued, “Maas and Herrington (2006) highlighted the importance of creating and sustaining new small and medium enterprises (SME) in the economic development of South Africa. Compared to the rest of the world South Africa has one of the lowest levels of entrepreneurial activity (Bosma et al., 2008). In 2009 the number of necessity entrepreneurs in South Africa, which, in all likelihood, had no other means of financial income, increased from 21% to 33%. However, the number of businesses that survived the first three-and-a-half years of existence dropped to a mere 1,4% in 2009 (Herrington, 2010). Even when an opportunity was seized the business
seldom survived long enough to have a long term positive effect on the country. When we look at what entrepreneurial activity has done for China we realise that there is an urgent need in South Africa for successful opportunity entrepreneurs for the purposes of job creation, greater financial wellness and improved production and service levels and also to fill existing gaps in the market.

“When we look at the GEM reports over the past few years we see that, despite the programmes of government and financial institutions aimed at supporting and mentoring entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial activity in South Africa has not improved. If we are able to change the mindsets of the entrepreneurs we may be able to change their behaviour in a way that would foster greater success in business. Although changing one’s mindset is not easy, Baron (2006) suggests examples of how such changes may be effected.

“On a theoretical level we need new empirical insights into entrepreneurship (Wigren, 2007). Krueger (2003) maintains that we will be able to understand what an entrepreneur truly is only when we understand the mindsets and thought processes of successful (opportunity) entrepreneurs. In addition, Bakker et al. (2007) express the need for empirical research into the thought processes of entrepreneurs during strategic decision making. A better understanding of both the mindsets and the sensemaking process of successful opportunity entrepreneurs may enable us to develop facilitation programmes to assist necessity entrepreneurs, small and medium business owners, unemployed people, teenagers and even managers in big organisations to adopt the thinking of successful opportunity entrepreneurs. I hope that this study will contribute to this understanding and, hopefully, to improving the current situation.”

For a brief moment the room was quiet. I proposed to use a qualitative approach and to collect data on the mindsets of entrepreneurs using in-depth, longitudinal, multiple case studies (Yin, 2003; Bygrave, 2007; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The panel suggested that I also look at entrepreneurs who had not succeeded in their endeavours. Why had I not think of this? To my surprise the chairperson of the panel proposed that I use myself as one of the cases.
When I mentioned that I wanted to use the results of the study to enrich my mentoring programme for entrepreneurs, Mr Albert Wort suggested that I incorporate into my thesis the way in which I intended to transform unsuccessfu
entrepreners into successful entrepreneurs. I agreed although I felt I wanted to focus on both successful and unsuccessfu
entrepreneurial activity as the entrepreneur experiences times of success and failure. Success is not a permanent destination.

In principle my proposal was accepted but Professor Veldsman wanted me to incorporate the suggestions made during the meeting into my proposal and send it through to him as soon as possible. On his way out of the boardroom he congratulated me, saying, “This is an important study.” This single sentence has often provided me with a quantum of energy when I needed encouragement.

By the time I walked out I was exhausted but elated. I could not remember walking to my car. My mind was racing. I was excited as a long term dream had become a real possibility. Then fear gripped my heart. What if I were not clever enough, or if my participants walked out on me toward the end of the study, or I realised at the end of it all that my findings meant nothing? I took a deep breath and pushed all the negative thoughts out of my mind. I visualised myself – the nerd – looking extremely professional and conducting successful interviews with interesting participants. When I got into my car I realised I was light headed...I had not eaten all day. On my way home I ate my favourite chicken wrap at Olivia’s – where I would spend many hours reflecting in the next few years.

At home I created the poster presented below to focus and guide me during my study.

That evening sitting in our chairs I shared my experience of the day with Neill. He asked whether I wanted to go out to dinner and I answered using one of our regular quotes, “No thanks. It’s not in the bag until it is in the bag. Let’s wait for Veldman’s signature before we celebrate.”

14 A quantum physics concept meaning a packet of energy. It is often used to refer to the amount of energy absorbed or released by an electron to move to higher or lower energy levels in an atom.
As I stared out into the evening sky I realised that I was about to take a quantum leap but with no idea of how big the gap was that I would have to clear and how much energy it would require.

1.6 FINALISING THE TERRITORY

1.6.1 Meeting with Prof

On 2 November 2010 Prof and I met at my house to discuss my study. Unfortunately Mary Anne was overseas, but, on her return she would receive an audio recording of the meeting. While I poured tea Prof said, “Isn’t it amazing that the chairman suggested that you use yourself as a participant?”
I connected my audio recorder to my laptop while I answered. “I still can’t believe it, Prof. Now I’ll be able to write ethnographically and use my experiences as an internal reference frame where, previously, I had felt I had to keep my experiences out of the study. I have read in Wigren (2007) that ethnography has only been used marginally in entrepreneurship research while Boyle and Parry (2007) suggest that it is time for autoethnography to make more substantial contributions to organisational studies.”

Prof watched me activate the audio recorder, “I have noticed that you are always using that recorder.”

I opened the folder containing all the topics on which I had made notes in alphabetical files and clicked on the recordings so I could give him quotations where possible. “Prof, this is the best digital recorder I could afford and it is my companion in this study. I have audio copies of all our meetings and I shall record all the interviews with my participants (McKenzie, 2007). Without an audio recorder I would miss so much of the conversation ... the body language ... the emotions. Trying to take notes will use up most of my prefrontal cortex ... and energy. When the recorder is on I am free to engage fully in the conversation and I
have to make notes only of the visual things I want to remember (Hammersley, 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2003; Boyatzis, 1998). Plus, I can go back to the recorded conversations and scrutinise them as often as I need to.”

“Have you considered using a video recorder?”

“Initially I did, Prof, but just for a few minutes. A video recorder is too visible. If a participant is not used to being in front of the cameras it may inhibit the person. A video camera also needs more attention than an audio recorder to ensure that the participant stays in the picture and I do not want to be distracted from my engagement with the participant while fiddling with a camera ... and I definitely don’t want a third party hanging all over us to do the recording. It also becomes too fiddly. But, most importantly, a video camera makes it impossible for a participant to be anonymous.”

Prof seemed satisfied with my answer and started to clarify specifics. “You know that I am not the expert on entrepreneurship. In your proposal you talked about entrepreneurial activity. Can you tell me more about it so that we are on the same page?”

I was more relaxed now that I had my files with articles next to me. “I prefer to talk about entrepreneurial activity rather than entrepreneurship because unsuccessful entrepreneurship sounds as if the person is unsuccessful as an entrepreneur while unsuccessful entrepreneurial activity sounds as if a specific endeavour of the entrepreneur was unsuccessful. Most entrepreneurs – even the very successful – have had unsuccessful ventures along the way.”

Prof nodded, “Ok. When is entrepreneurial activity unsuccessful...or successful?”

“There are as many answers to that question as there are people in the conversation. For the purposes of this study I have decided that unsuccessful entrepreneurial activity means that the business has either closed down or it is about to close down in the near future because it is not sufficiently profitable to sustain the owner and the owner is unable – for whatever reasons – to turn the business into what I term successful entrepreneurial activity. Successful entrepreneurial activity will refer to situations where the entrepreneur has been
able to complete the new venture creation process of creating value, making profit and growing the business (Le Roux, 2005; Venkataraman, 1997; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Rwigema & Venter, 2004; Chell, 2008). During successful entrepreneurial activity the business is sufficiently profitable to sustain the lifestyle of the entrepreneur and pay market related remuneration to those who work in the business.”

“During your proposal you talked about opportunity and necessity entrepreneurs. Can I just double check what the difference is?”

“Prof, in the case of necessity entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial activity originate from a need as often happens when people have lost their jobs or are unable to find employment (Bosma, et al., 2008). Improvement driven opportunity entrepreneurs enter entrepreneurship seeking independence and to improve their income (Kelly, Bosma & Amorós, 2010; Bosma, Wennekers & Amorós, 2011). They start their own businesses because they want to feel in control of their own destinies and they see opportunities where non-entrepreneurs may see challenges. In the case of necessity entrepreneurs, passion often loses out to the need for survival but, for opportunity entrepreneurs freedom, the control of their own destinies and specific personal achievements are more important (Carsrud, Brännback, Elfving, & Brandt, 2009). According to Acs (2007), results from the 2004 GEM show that opportunity entrepreneurs have a valuable impact on economic growth while the results suggest a positive relationship between the number of improvement driven opportunity entrepreneurs and the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country. In South Africa, as a developing country, there are a significant number of necessity entrepreneurs and informal business owners as a result of the high level of unemployment but a low percentage of opportunity entrepreneurs. If we are able to get these people to think like opportunity entrepreneurs this may have a substantial impact on the economy of the country.”

“We may also distinguish between lifestyle and growth entrepreneurs,” I continued. Prof put his right hand up, “Thank you, Suzette, I think I’m getting the picture.” My eyes caught the clock on my laptop. It was eleven o’clock.
“Prof, would you mind if I make a quick phone call?” He did not. He also had calls to return.

1.6.2 Behind the bushes

At six o’clock that morning I had dropped Neill off at Flora Clinic for an angiogram. The staff suggested I phone at eleven to find out whether I could pick Neill up. While Prof stood on the patio, I telephoned the hospital from my landline. A female voice said, “Mrs le Roux, your husband is in ICU. Doctor had to put stents in five arteries.” She rattled the visiting hours off and I wrote them down on the message pad next to the telephone.

I had not expected this. Neill was lean and fit but you can never judge someone or something on appearances. Was the story of my father going to repeat itself?

I called Bonisiwe for more hot water for tea.

1.6.3 Marking territory again

Prof heard part of my conversation with the hospital. He looked concerned. “Do you want to go and see him now?”

I poured tea into two clean cups. “No Prof, he is just out of theatre and still sleeping. He’s in good hands and there is nothing I can do. Let’s finish and I’ll visit him after lunch.” For a moment there was silence as we drank our tea. “You know, Prof, having visited my father in intensive care so often between 1967 and 1974...somehow I am on familiar territory. I have a fairly detailed map of the situations around heart problems... and this brings us back to the mental maps of entrepreneurs.”

Prof put his cup down, “Shall we continue?”

“I indicated during my proposal that there is a need for a greater understanding of the mental models of successful entrepreneurs and I would like to find out how they construct meaning in the emerging complexity of the business world. Our mental models filter how we see the world and, from our personal perspectives we

15 A back story
make sense of our worlds – trying to understand and interpret situations (Tan & Hunter, 2002).”

“And you want to look at these mind sets or mental models,” Prof reiterated.

“Yes Prof, but look at all the different terms I have come across...all referring to deeper cognitive phenomena.” I turned my laptop so that he could read with me. “Pervin and John (2001, p. 496) and Amanjee, Crous, and Crawford (2006) use schemas or schemata where a “schema is a cognitive structure that organises information and, thereby, influences how we perceive and respond to further information (Pervin & John, 2001, p. 496).” Bakker et al. (2007) talk about cognitive or mental maps while Graham (1976), Hill and Levenhagen (1995), Senge (1990) and Weick (2001) refer to mental models as “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalisations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action (Senge, 1990, p. 8).”

“Can you tell me more about mental models, Suzette?”

“Mental models – like all models – are simplifications we create to assist us in making sense within complexity. I like the way Peter Senge (1990, p. 175) says that mental models are the ‘images, assumptions, and stories’ we carry in our heads and that explain our thought processes and also help to shape our behaviour and our approach to solving problems. We use these mental models to ‘understand the world’, but it is important that we remember ‘all we ever have are assumptions, never truths’ (Senge, 1990, p. 185). This reminds me of the first time I heard about models.”

Prof has a way of slightly inclining his head and lifting his eyebrows when he is especially interested in what someone is about to say. “When was that?”

“I think I was about fifteen years old when my physical science teacher taught us about the Bohr model of the atom. The teacher told us that, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the atom was seen as a solid sphere and, hence, the Greek name ‘atomos’ that means indivisible. By 1897 Thomson had refined the model of the atom. It was still a solid sphere but one which consisted of identical numbers of positive (protons) and negative (electrons) charges evenly distributed
throughout the solid sphere – like the raisins in a raisin bun. Rutherford then demonstrated that the mass of an atom is made up primarily of protons and newly discovered neutral particles known as neutrons and that these particles form the nucleus of the atom. The electrons move in orbits around the nucleus. However, he was not able to explain the motion of the electrons. Niels Bohr refined the model in 1913. The theory of the comparatively small nucleus made up of protons and neutrons – as Rutherford had suggested – still held, but Bohr’s atomic model addressed the issue of the electrons.

"Bohr assumed that there exists within the atom certain orbits which he called energy levels and in which electrons are able to move without emitting energy. If an electron wants either to drop to a lower energy level or jump to a higher energy level the electron would have to release or absorb a quantum of energy of exactly the correct amount. If an electron receives a quantum of energy that is less than the energy required for the jump it will simply fall back to its original energy level."

“Does this have anything to do with the name of your one business?” Prof wanted to know.

I smiled broadly. “Yes, Quantum Gain is about providing the quantum of energy – thus, just the right amount of mentoring – to the entrepreneur to enable him/her to jump to the next level in his/her business.

“But, the point of my story is, my teacher took us through the explanation and all the relevant calculations and then he said, ‘Remember, this is just a model – a simplified explanation and it only works for the simplest atom...hydrogen. In reality we have no idea what the atom looks like.’ That got my teenage mind going in circles.”

Prof asked politely, “Has the atomic model been refined?”

“Ja, Prof. Now atomic nuclei are perceived to be surrounded by a probability density distribution while subatomic particles are seen as filaments of energy called strings!”
Prof looked me straight in the eye. “You didn’t tell me this story just to show me you have an idea of what models are and that they are never perfect.”

“No Prof, the development of the atomic model, and which I know so well, reminded me that all models are always in a state of refinement – never complete – and this include mental models. My mental model of how to run a business has been evolving since I was a little girl gathering eggs for my mother. I expect the mental models of my participants also to be evolving although their evolution will not all be at the same point as far as running their businesses is concerned.”

“What makes mental maps so powerful is that they determine what we see when we look at the world. Our mental models focus our minds and our senses to become more aware of that which is congruent with them. If a beggar and a well-dressed lady both see a five-rand coin on the pavement this coin would mean different things to each of them. The beggar would probably bend down and pick it up without thinking twice about it as the coin would represents half a loaf of bread to him. On the other hand, the lady may think it is too much trouble and also degrading for her to bend down in her elegant outfit and high heels to pick up a fraction of her parking money. In fact, she may not even notice the coin. Thus, that which one person perceives as a viable opportunity another person may not notice at all or, if the person does notice it, he/she may regard it as worthless.”

“How are you going to access the mental maps of your participants?” Prof wanted to know.

“I’ve been thinking about that a lot. Bakker et al. (2007) discuss two views on cognitive mapping in entrepreneurial decision-making. In terms of the one view, cognitive maps are seen as something happening in the mind and, thus, unobservable so ‘researchers can only study a representation of the cognitive map that exists in the mind of the participant.’ According to the other view, cognitive maps emerge as the participant articulates them and, thus, they are observable. These cognitive maps are made up of concepts and it is possible to study the relationships between these concepts.

“To answer Prof’s question, I am going to use unstructured interviews and participant observation in order to gather the requisite data. I’ll have to recognise
the mental jumps the participants make from the specific to the general – “leaps of abstraction” (Senge, 1990) – and encourage them to reveal their assumptions about both their worlds and their businesses to me. I sincerely hope they will reveal their true selves to me and that I’ll be able to sense the distinctions between what they say, what they do and, hopefully, how they think. I’ll need to use inquiry and reflection skilfully. However, at this point I am extremely afraid that I may end up with nothing useful at the conclusion of the study – It’s very scary.”

“Remember to make good field notes.” Prof advised. “Have you looked at research on mental models?”

“I have.” Once again I turned my laptop to enable him to see the list of citations. “As Prof can see, the mental processes related to opportunity recognition by entrepreneurs have received a significant amount of attention from researchers (Busenitz, 1996; Le Roux, Pretorius & Millard, 2006; Carter, Gartner & Reynolds, 1996; Krueger, 2000; Allinson, Chell, & Hayes, 2000). However, seeing, enacting or even grabbing an opportunity does not guarantee success in a business and I am concerned about the survival of businesses. The mental processes involved in growing a business have not received the same amount of attention as that of opportunity recognition or opportunity enactment.

“Our subconscious minds play a major role in decision-making. According to Kets de Vries (2006, p. 5), ‘Far too many well-intentioned and well-constructed plans derail daily in workplaces around the world because of out-of-awareness forces that influence behaviour.’” I pulled my writing pad closer and started to draw the diagram of the iceberg used in cognitive behavioural therapy. “I’ve found this illustration in one of the books I use for coaching.”16 The thought processes that drive the behaviour comprise the bulk of the iceberg. They are embedded below the surface of conscious thought and have a major impact on the decisions and judgements that one makes (Pfeffer, 2005). What people do is the result of processes that are not so easy either to see or to measure but it is important to gain a greater understanding of these processes.

16 Rock, 2007, p. xxii
“If I look at the entrepreneurs with whom I have worked, it appears that some of them had mental maps that provided them with the quantum of energy necessary to overcome barriers to success. I call this quantum of energy the secret quantum and it is this that I will endeavour to explore. I am going to dive down and take a peek at the mental maps of my participants – hoping to find out more about this secret quantum.”

“Do you already have participants?”

“No, Prof, it is still early days. Let’s first see whether my proposal is accepted once I have made the changes.”

He continued, “Let’s assume you do get the go-ahead. Where are you going to find participants?”

“I’ll use my networks in order to identify suitable candidates. There are interesting and extremely successful entrepreneurs at Endeavor and the Gordon Institute of Business. I often work with people who are struggling to start up a business and, thus, I have access to the full spectrum of entrepreneurs.”

It was almost lunch time and, as we started to pack up, Prof probed a little further, “I know that you and Neill went through a very bad financial patch a few years ago. Has his business taken off?”

“He actually closed AFC Creations and has had two other unsuccessful ventures, but his situation has improved this year.”

“Have you thought of using him as one of your participants – or

Photograph 1.6: The iceberg model
do you think that would be too sensitive?” Prof asks.

“Prof, our lives are so intertwined it is impossible to keep his situation out of the study. How we survived those five and a half dark years I don’t know? I’ll talk to him about it as soon as I have the go-ahead for this study. However, my first concern is for him to recover after today’s scare.”

At the car I thanked Prof and he wished me well.

I quickly organised lunch for Bonisiwe and left for the hospital to see Neill. I collected our daughters and we drove to the hospital in absolute silence – unheard of for us. Feeling a little shaky in the lunch time traffic I focused on the road.

It was a shock to see Neill – who has always been so lean and fit – looking pale and still in a state of disbelief over what had happened to him. However, on the positive side, what had happened to him was less traumatic than having to deal with a heart attack. By the next day Neill was out of hospital and more driven than even before to stay fit.

Before the end of November I emailed my revised research proposal to all the relevant people for approval. The wait began. Every afternoon while I was working in the cat hotel I had time to think. As the days dragged by I became more and more anxious and had flashbacks to a specific meeting I had had with a student in 2007.

1.6.4 Shenzi

Shortly after I had heard that I had been admitted to the extended programme for an opportunity to present a proposal for doctoral studies, I received a telephone call from Shenzi. She invited me to her house for a cup of tea and I – ever the optimist – expected a welcome to the group meeting. However, the moment I walked into her house I sensed that she was extremely tense.

I had hardly sat down when she launched her attack. Without acknowledging that she had no knowledge of either my background or experience, she told me how

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17 The hyena in The Lion King.
extremely upset she was that I had been allowed to study in the department. “The university will not allow me to do a PhD in physics. How can they allow someone off the street, like you, to do it in Leadership? Do all my years of study mean nothing?” She went on and on – the words flying at me. I felt like a small child who had been caught in the act of stealing cookies in the kitchen. I had to bite the inside of my lip to prevent myself from crying. It was only when I was safely in my car – driving home – that I pulled off the road and allowed the tears to flow freely.

Deep inside I knew that she had no authority to have this conversation with me. She was just another student, not someone on a selection panel or board. She hardly knew me and knew nothing of all the years I had spent teaching, training, mentoring and motivating people who had either dropped out of school or lost their jobs. She had not asked me what courses I had done or what books I had studied and she knew nothing about business. However, after a few minutes of clear thinking I realised that her behaviour had nothing to do with me personally. Months later I learned that she had an unresolved academic issue.

At the time I had no idea how often that conversation would come back to haunt me. Sitting late at night with what felt like tons of literature surrounding me, the conversation would repeat in my head and, for a brief moment, I would feel nauseous – doubting my ability to cope. However, I would then take a few deep breaths and sanity would prevail. In a strange way, her words motivated me to work even harder to prove to myself that she had been wrong about me.

1.7 I HAVE MY OWN TERRITORY

Friday, 10 December 2010

As before, these thoughts of possible rejection and the stress of not hearing from the university eventually drove me to my computer. I was shaking ever so slightly when I typed the following email to Prof.
Morning Prof, hope all is well. Have we not heard from Prof Veldsman or is there a big problem? S.¹⁸

Morning Suzette, it is good hearing from you. I have not heard from Prof Theo. However, he will not be at the office for 10 days. I have to see him about a few matters and shall ask him when we can expect to hear about your studies. However, I do not think there is anything to worry about. Enjoy your weekend. Prof. Willem.¹⁹

Prof Theo has approved your proposal.

Sunday, 12 December 2010

We – the cats and I – were celebrating the ninth birthday of Purrfect Place when I received a sms from Prof Willem:

“Prof Theo het jou voorstel goedgekeur!”²⁰

I flew down the four steps leading from the cat hotel into the orchard where Neill was having his afternoon coffee. Barely able to see through my tears I landed safely at the bottom of the stairs – not on a dog or one of my own cats – calling to Neill to share the news with him. At last I could relax. My research proposal had been accepted in its entirety!

After our evening tea in our chairs at the window I went to my study to reflect on the road on which I was so eager to embark. I had to think through the methodology I would use to ensure that I chose the process most suitable to the purposes of my study. There was also the question of how many participants I would use and who to choose. Where would I, as a researcher who was also a

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¹⁸ Morning Prof, hope all is well. Have we not heard from Prof Veldsman or is there a big problem? S.
¹⁹ Morning Suzette, it is good hearing from you. I have not heard from Prof Theo. However, he will not be at the office for 10 days. I have to see him about a few matters and shall ask him when we can expect to hear about your studies. However, I do not think there is anything to worry about. Enjoy your weekend. Prof. Willem.
²⁰ Prof Theo has approved your proposal.
participant, stand in all of this? The process was humbling and it reminded me of a quotation I had read on page nine of *The Holographic Universe* (Talbot, 1991).

Sit down before fact like a little child, and be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abyss Nature leads, or you shall learn nothing (T. H. Huxley).
CHAPTER 2

Marking my territory

Photograph 2.1: A male lion marking his territory

2.1 INTRODUCTION

January 2011 at Leeupoort\textsuperscript{21}

The sound of kudus at the dam ten metres from where I sat on my recliner woke me. It was a balmy late afternoon on the game farm, Leeupoort, and, as I opened my eyes slowly, I saw the one kudu bull drinking while other was rubbing his face on a branch of the haak-en-steek\textsuperscript{22} tree in order to scent mark the branch. Moments later he defecated on the road a few metres further on, where the road

\textsuperscript{21} Leeupoort is a game farm approximately two-and-a-half hour’s drive from Johannesburg. We have had a house on the farm since January, 1994. The big five – lion, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo and leopard – are not found on the farm with the exception of a lone leopard who sometimes travels through the farm.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Acacia tortilis}
in front of our house makes a T-junction with one of the main dirt roads on the farm. The kudus then walked off into the bush.

Watching the kudus marking their territory reminded me that I was about to embark on an exploration study for which I would have to mark the territory and then describe this territory in enough detail so that the reader of the study would be sufficiently informed to make sense of what he/she was reading.

Soon the weekend was over and Neill and I had to return to our house in Northcliff, Johannesburg.

2.2 EXPLORING THE TERRITORY WITH FRIENDS AT SEATTLE COFFEE BAR

Seattle Coffee Bar had become the spontaneous meeting place for a diverse group of individuals who had become my friends over coffee. A few afternoons after Neill and I had returned from Leeupoort and approximately a month after my research proposal had been signed off by Prof Veldsman, I went to Seattle Coffee Bar, knowing that some of the Seattle group of friends would be there to share a coffee with me. While walking from the parking garage to the coffee bar I reflected on each one of these dear friends in turn.

Harm is a youthful looking, sixty-something gentleman in the true sense of the word. He has been divorced for more than twenty years but is always surrounded with friends – many of them female. He has a wicked sense of humour that sometimes gets him into trouble, for example, on the day he pretended to shoot birds with a *kettie*\(^{23}\) when we were all staying at Leeupoort a few months ago. Harm is semi-retired but still consults for two days a week for the firm for which he previously worked. He is my practical; “let’s fix it” buddy.

Harm and Johann have known each other since their high school days. Johann is an eccentric, retired journalist who spends his time either in coffee shops reading the newspapers and talking to people or on his BMW 650 motorbike, travelling

\(^{23}\) Handheld catapult
hundreds of miles a day and sleeping in a tiny tent somewhere in the world. He is my philosopher buddy.

Elma is a complete extrovert, always has stories to tell and is responsible for much laughter as she always sees the funny side of things. She has never been married and travels whenever she has the opportunity. Elma holds a senior position in the Department of Health and, prior to holding this position, was an occupational therapist. She was writing her master’s dissertation on the factors influencing the survival of patients with spinal injuries.

I had met all of them through Ilze, a patent lawyer and mother of two adult children. Ilze and I had met in 2005 at one of the courses I had attended. She, too, travels a lot and has a business on the side. At the time she was building environmentally friendly houses in her spare time. Ilze is not able to sit still for longer than half-an-hour. Even when we were drinking coffee she would empty a sachet of artificial sweetener onto the table and draws endless patterns in the white powder on the black marble top of the table.

As I walked into the coffee shop Johann and Harm lifted their mugs of strong black coffee in unison, crying “Congrats!” “Well done!” The scene became a blur as my eyes filled with tears. I am easily overcome by positive experiences although hardly ever by bad ones. Ilze, who had already poured the sweetener onto the table and was drawing an intricate pattern on the marble surface, followed with “Mooi man”. She was the only one in the group who had seen my proposal slideshow and asked, “So, are you getting away with a handful of participants?”

“Yes, I’ll probably have six to eight participants,” I answered, putting my bag next to my chair and placing my laptop on the table in front of me. I never leave it in my car as I am afraid that it will be stolen.

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24 Literally “Good man” – an expression she often uses.
“How is that possible? How can you draw any conclusions from such a small sample?” Elma was clearly taken by surprise. Her voice carried easily and I felt as if everybody in Seattle had heard her question and was waiting for an answer. Elma was doing a quantitative study and she was not familiar with qualitative research. I sat down and opened my laptop. While wondering how best to explain qualitative research to her I opened the “DPhilonderwerpe” folder where I kept extensive summaries of the important topics I had read up on for my study. I scrolled down to the “Qualitative research” file and glanced at it. I could relax, knowing that when I needed help it would be in front of me.

When I looked up I saw that everybody round the table was looking at me. Clearly, they were as interested as Elma was in what I was going to say. There was no escape. With my notes open on the computer screen I read out the following: “Neergaard (2007) confirms that qualitative research does not require a representative sample. It is not about generalisations based on hundreds or even thousands of ticks on a questionnaire, but about finding in-depth understanding...about exploring how people experience something...how they

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25 Brink is a friend of Johann who sometimes joins in our conversations.
26 This photograph was taken in July during one of our many coffee sessions at Seattle.
27 D Phil/Topics
think about it. All of this requires an in-depth approach and I have also read in Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Goodson and Sikes (2001) that it is only possible if I have a handful of participants. Am I making sense?"

I kept quiet and seized the opportunity to wave my hand to catch the eye of the barista. He saw me and asked, “The usual?” I nodded and we gave each other the thumbs up.

Harm put his empty mug down. “What exactly is qualitative research?”

“That’s a tricky question, Harm. There is no single, generally acceptable definition of qualitative research because it is evolving all the time and it also encompasses a diverse range of research philosophies and strategies. I have looked through many books and found a number of varied and conflicting definitions and approaches. However, in essence ‘it involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; 2000; 2005). In short, it is about studying people or things in their natural environment and interpreting or making sense of them by looking at the meaning people ascribe to them using methods we could talk about later should you want to know more. People also refer to the contextual understanding which may be acquired from detailed data collection in a naturalistic setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). According to Mason (2005, p.3), qualitative research is concerned with the way in which the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced and constituted.”

“I know all of this may mean nothing to you. However, for me, for the purposes of my study, it is about obtaining detailed – or rich – data or information from a few, carefully selected participants by asking open-ended questions during interviews and by visiting them in their businesses to ascertain how they go about their daily work. It is about making sense of this data in order to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences and, hopefully, a better understanding of the field of entrepreneurship and, more specifically, the mental maps of entrepreneurs. It is actually not possible to do justice to the vast field of qualitative research in a casual conversation but maybe you will all gain a better understanding of it during this conversation and conversations to come.”
Ilze looked up from the sweetener maze. She knew more about my journey up until this point than the others. “Tell them why you have decided on qualitative research.”

Telling my story would be easier than explaining research methodology. I seized the opportunity. “During 2005 and 2006 I attended a series of courses to support the coaching and mentoring in which I had become involved. The brain profiling course used a questionnaire system. After the course I had felt frustrated as it had left me wondering whether the answers given by a person would result in a true reflection of what the person had really experienced and thought. Often with questionnaires I find that the options offered as answers to questions leave me feeling uncomfortable. There is often not one answer that stands out as the correct one for me while, sometimes, I would want to choose none of the possible answers, other times I would want to choose several of the options while at other times there would be many to which I would like to say ‘Yes, but...’”

If I compare questionnaires with the conversations conducted in the business building, coaching and mentoring courses or the open-ended questions used in coaching and mentoring and which enable people to explain their answers I experience a completely different feeling. I feel enriched. People’s answers often surprise me and I find such value in these conversations. People are often not aware how much they know and how valuable such information may be to themselves and to others. In other words, since 2006 I have become more comfortable with qualitative work.”

I paused while I sipped my coffee and, looking at my computer screen, I continued. “I am not saying there is no necessity or use for quantitative research but, as Schram (2003) points out, qualitative research is the appropriate choice for obtaining in-depth, detailed and rich knowledge on a specific phenomenon...and that is what I want to do. I would like to use qualitative research to uncover places which rigorous quantitative methods are not able to reach and to increase my understanding of the mental models of entrepreneurs. Why are some entrepreneurs successful while others fail....even in similar ventures? I want to know why they think they are either successful or not successful. I want to explore
with them what happened while they were involved in the process and why things happened the way in which they did.

Elma put her mug down and double-checked with me, “So, no questionnaires?”

I understood the point Elma was making. Prior to 2006 I, too, had known nothing about qualitative research.

I scrolled up to the “Interviews” file on my laptop while I answered, “No questionnaires, Elma.” Looking at the text on the screen I continued, “People, I do not have the confidence to explain all of this without referring to my references. So, please bear with me if I sometimes have to use my notes.”

“Elma. I will collect data using qualitative (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), informal, conversation-type (Goodson & Sikes, 2007) interviews.\(^{28}\) I shall ask open-ended, unstructured questions and listen carefully to the stories my participants share with me. As you may gather, I shall see one participant only at a time. If necessary, I’ll ask semi-structured questions in order to explore specific points – especially during the second or third interviews. Please note that this is not a haphazard process as my specific intention is to explore the mental models of the participants and to find out how these models influence their decisions and actions. I expect each conversation to be unique (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).”

Johann now joined the conversation. “You look very excited. Tell me, is that the only way you are going to collect your data?”

“Yes, Johann, I am very excited, but also a little scared. To answer your question, no, I will also write field notes on the interview experience, take photographs and observe the participants while they are in their businesses (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There may even be newspaper or magazine articles on one or more of them that I’ll be able to use. All of this will assist me in making sense of the worlds of the entrepreneurs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In the final analysis it is about creating meaning out of people’s reality during interaction with them (Esterberg, 2002; Achtenhagen & Welter, 2007). It is similar to what we are doing right now.”

\(^{28}\) The data collection will be discussed in more detail chapter 4.
Ever the gentleman Harm suggested I drink my latté before it is iced coffee. I smiled at him and took a sip. “Thank you, Harm.” He is involved with the mineral rights on farms and is an extremely practical person. “How are you going to remember everything everybody says?”

I could not resist chuckling. “Harm, as you know, I am cat woman not super woman. I record every meeting I have with a digital audio recorder – including my conversations with my study leaders, and meetings with my mentoring clients.” I saw the look of horror on his face, “NO, I’m NOT recording this conversation. I always ask permission to record BEFORE I record.” I added, laughing.

While I took another sip of my latté, Johann asked, “How are you going to observe your participants?”

“She’s going to stalk them,” quipped Elma, causing more laughter.

When the repartee stopped I continued. “I’ll try to conduct the interviews with the participants at their businesses. A person’s workplace tells a story about the person and, while I am there, I may also be able to observe them interacting with other people – staff or clients. I’ll ask them to take me through their businesses and show me what their typical day is like. All these observations will be overt. They will be part of a formal process during scheduled interviews or participant observation sessions but, at other times, they may be informal ... for example, during social events (Bollingtoft, 2007). What I observe and what the interviewees share with me during the interviews will form the basis for the narratives I shall write.”

All this talking had made me thirsty and I quickly drank some latté before I continued.

“I know there is the possibility that the participants may want to remain anonymous and I may not be able to visit them at their businesses. It is difficult to predict how it will all play out.”

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29 The recording process will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.
While Johann’s head was still bobbing up and down, indicating that he understood what I was saying, Elma was ready with her next question. “Now you have all these stories. So what?”

“Let me first explain that to produce the narratives is a rather complex and time-consuming process. It involves transcribing the interviews and putting together all the information gathered in a stimulating, but responsible way (Bochner 2000). This is not easy! At the same time, I will need to do lots of critical reflection and look for themes and concepts emerging from the data. This, of course, implies that I’ll be conducting a preliminary data analysis from the moment I start collecting data. This will also help me decide whether I need to spend more time collecting additional data from any particular participant. Remember, I need to ensure that I gain a deep understanding of how the entrepreneurs make decisions and operate in their businesses.”

“Data analysis and data interpretation is an iterative process of searching for themes and checking in the existing literature if or what anything has been written on a particular theme – whether the literature supports or refutes one’s findings. I hope to end up with a set of constructs that will deepen my understanding of the mental maps of entrepreneurs...or better still, to be able to add to the existing theory.”

Johann was the sensitive one at the table and he must have noticed my eyes glazing over or picked up a hint of anxiety in my voice. “What’s the matter, Suzi?”

I took a deep breath. “Every now and then I get this sick feeling in my stomach. What if I end up with a list of constructs that mean absolutely nothing? It is so scary.”

Ilze’s, “Nee, man,” was immediately followed by Johann’s. “Don’t stress, Suzi. You’ll do just fine.”

I smiled, “Dankie julle. Luckily this feeling motivates me to work even harder.”

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30 Literally, “No man.”
31 Thank you.
Elma shook her head. “Why don’t you rather do quantitative research? It sounds more straightforward to me.”

“As I have mentioned, the strength of qualitative research lies in capturing in-depth information about the feelings, thought processes and emotions of people (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It gives one the ability to detect novel information and react to it – collecting, analysing and interpreting data simultaneously.”

In the meantime, Johann and Harm had bought a second round of Americanos. Ilze tapped the sweetener off her forefinger. “Are you going to do ethnography then?”

I nodded and replied, “Entrepreneurship is a complex and dynamic world and ethnography is very suitable for entrepreneurship studies (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007). When a system is in a stable state...at equilibrium...there is no change and, thus, no growth in the system. Entrepreneurship is essentially about a change of state – it’s based on creating disequilibrium in a holistic process (Bygrave, 2007). Thus, qualitative research and, especially ethnography, are best suited to accommodate the complexity of entrepreneurship studies...for watching what happens when something changes in the system...in the business. It makes it possible for the researcher to detect nuances – little indicators – and dig up explanations during the study (Johnstone, 2007).”

Harm lifted his right hand as if he wanted to stop something. “What is this ethno-thing?”

By this time I had already scrolled to the “Ethnography” file. “The word ethnography refers to the written study of people in their cultural or natural setting” (Ellis, 2004). As I explained earlier, I will interview and observe entrepreneurs in their businesses in order to explore how situations, lives and meanings are lived rather than merely observing from a distance and reporting on my observations (Johnstone, 2007).

“I’ll also write about myself and how I make sense of my own businesses and also of the research process. I keep a journal and I reflect on my role in the research on a daily basis. So I’m also doing an autoethnography.”

Now Harm threw his hands up in the air, “Now, what is that?”
I could not help smiling. “Thank you for asking these questions, Harm. You are really helping me to explain my thesis to myself and reflect on how I should go about it. An autoethnography is a way of conducting and writing reflexive, autobiographical research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). This means that I also write about myself and my experiences in the context of entrepreneurship in my search for a better understanding of the mental models of entrepreneurs.”

“Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) sum up autoethnography as written research about a group of people which includes the researcher. I could go into more detail but I think it is getting a bit hectic for this conversation. If anyone is really interested I will email you my notes on it.”

Elma immediately reacted, “Please send me a copy.” No one else was interested. She continued, “I can appreciate that there are people who see autoethnography as an easy way out, but it sounds very complicated to me.”

It was comforting to know that she appreciated the challenges one faces when embarking upon autoethnography. I nodded. “It is, indeed, not an easy strategy to choose. I’ve did a quantitative master’s degree in physics and it was a linear process ... very black and white ... if this then that type of thing. I had many years of exact theory and mathematical skills on which to base my conclusions. If quantitative research is a clinical, bright white spotlight, qualitative research is a stage light with several coloured filters through which one may view the scene. I am able to choose which of the colours I wish to use as my filters. However, I have to explain it all to the readers so that they are able to follow what I am doing.”

I made eye contact with each friend around the table. I then looked at my notes and continued, “This study asks for so much more thinking about the process, reflexivity and self-awareness from me. Sergi and Hallin (2011) warn that a confessional tale with thick descriptions is not enough and they call for greater self-awareness on the part of the researcher. I have to make decisions on so many levels. It isn’t really possible to capture someone’s experiences fully in a narrative. What is it that I am not seeing, hearing, sensing? When is the data meaningful? I am writing everything from my perspective and the readers will read it from their perspectives which may be completely opposite to mine. They will
watch the scene through their own coloured glasses. Something I portray as yellow may appear green to someone looking through green lenses.”

“The participants are also extremely vulnerable. When someone challenges or critiques quantitative research, it is the material that is the issue. However, in an autoethnography the author is part of the material and he or she experiences a direct attack. My participants and I expose our soft underbellies to the world and anybody could rip our stomachs open because they have a totally different perspective from ours and they do not agree with us. No, Elma, it is definitely not the easy way out (Ellis, 1999).”

I saw that Ilze’s focus had shifted to the very intricate sweetener pattern she was creating. I realised that I had gone on for far too long and into too much detail and so I concluded, “But I love the way Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 4) call the qualitative researcher a bricoleur or quilt maker because, indeed, the qualitative researcher assembles tools and techniques in order to superimpose images of a person” – often using narratives.”

Elma stood up to buy herself another cappuccino. For a moment nobody said a word. Then Ilze looked up from her mini white labyrinth of powder on the table, “Are your participants not just going to tell you what they think you want to hear?”

“That is something I have to keep in mind, Ilze. Shaver (2010) warns that the patterns of speech, body language and even the amount of eye contact with the interviewer may influence the participant. I think the atmosphere that I create in which the storytelling sessions will take place will be extremely important. If the participants relax and don’t feel intimidated by either the situation or by me the chances are greater that they will feel comfortable enough to share their true stories...those experiences and views that are very important to them. I hope to create good rapport with them and to keep interruptions to a minimum. Of course, it is impossible to tell in advance how these conversations will go. I hope to spend sufficient time with them so that I am able to at least ascertain whether some of the things they have shared with me and believe to be important are reflected in what they do. Follow-up interviews will be extremely important and I want to space

32 Weick (2001, p. 62) “Bricoleur ... means to use whatever resources and repertoire one has to perform whatever task one faces ...”.

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them months apart to give me the opportunity to explore any discrepancies I may find in the participants’ accounts. I’ll also use other sources of information such as the internet, newspapers and magazines – I may even talk to someone close to the participants in order to gain more insight.”

Ilze nodded, “And how are you going to stay objective?”

“It’s impossible to stay objective, Ilze. The positivists who only believe in that which is visible to the eye (Grbich, 2007) believe in objectivity, generalisability, reliability and validity. My study will be post-modernistic.” I looked at my computer screen. “Grbich (2007, p. 9) wrote that postmodernists see ‘the world as complex and chaotic and reality as multiply constructed and transitional’. I am, therefore, looking for meaning rather than just information. There is no absolute knowledge and, thus, a subjective approach enables us to explore the complexities of the social world (Johnstone, 2007). I believe that there are different realities, depending on your vantage point. There are also different ways of knowing – all equally valid (Esterberg, 2002). For my part it is essential that I am aware of my emotions and the influence I will exert on my participants. To do this I need to reflect on everything I do, how I feel about it, how I’m influenced by it and how I think I’ve influenced the situation or person. I accept that my mental models will influence what I see and how I interpret what I have seen and that the ‘truth’ I discover will not be the full picture. However, over time and with more research the picture should become clearer (Johnstone, 2007)”. I paused as I remembered the diaries I had kept as a teenager and how close they were to what is today seen as reflective journals. I continued: “I’ll journal the research process and will have to be absolutely honest with myself. Not only do I need this to assist me to write my thesis, but being transparent throughout the writing process is extremely important in order to build up some level of trust with the reader.”

Johann, who had been sitting patiently, wanted to know, “What if you choose the wrong participants? If halfway through the interviews you find out someone has been lying to you?”

My heart skipped a beat. “As I’ve said previously, it is something that worries me a lot, Johann. Firstly, I will have to take great care in the choice of participants. It will
then be my responsibility to tell the stories of these participants and to co-
construct meaning from these stories through conversations with the participants.
At the same time it is important to remember that we all make mistakes. No one is
perfect and it is in acknowledging our mistakes in humility that we learn from them.
I, too, will make mistakes during the research process. I may very well choose
participants who are not able to communicate their experiences and views to me
... worse still, I may choose participants who want out of the process and I may
then sit without any participants.” I could feel my shoulder muscles tightening. “As
always I will try to treat each individual the same way in which I would like to be
treated. They are as vulnerable in this process as I am but I hope to get something
tangible in return. There will be times that I will have to reflect deeply in order to be
fair to the participants without sugar coating situations. I have no doubt that this
will be very tricky.”

Elma shook her head in disbelief. “When did this become research?”

“You’re not the only one who is sceptical about qualitative research. There is
definite controversy and tension even amongst researchers (Bochner, 2000;
Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012). There are people who are uncomfortable with the
small samples and the important role which interpretation plays (Blundel, 2007).
There is even intense disagreement among autoethnographers about the
fundamental assumptions underlying autoethnography (Anderson, 2006b; Ellis &
writes that it is incumbent on the qualitative researcher ‘to be careful, systematic
and explicit about procedures’ to enable other researchers to judge the quality of
the work. That is what I aim to do, but I think this conversation is becoming
somewhat hectic. Elma, I see you still have many questions. Professor Schurink
(2004a) has made a useful summary of the eight moments of qualitative research
in which these differences in opinion and thought-provoking debates are evident.
Shall I email it to you?”

“Please do.”
I made a mental note to send her the summary when I did the cat hotel administration that evening. “While we’re on the subject of my studies, don’t you guys want to help me with a metaphor?”

Harm frowned, “Metaphor?”

“I need to use a metaphor to help to generate a deeper understanding of one frame of reference, my study, by using another frame of reference that I understand really well (Anfara & Mertz 2006; Jensen, 2006). By combining one concept, the topic, with another concept, the vehicle, I hope to generate a wider perspective on the topic (Jensen, 2006). I have read in ENTER (de Koning & Drakopoulou Dodd, 2010, p. 35) that the metaphor is an important tool for sense-making in narratives. And they should know. In ENTER they take sense-making to a level I have to admire.”

Elma was sitting on the edge of her chair. She was in a hurry. She either goes spinning or walks Ilze’s dogs after coffee and she did not have time to listen to my whole story. She immediately suggested, “You know and understand cats so well. Use cats.”

I smiled and added, “The agility, flexibility, resilience and individuality of cats fit in with the mind of the entrepreneur. Thanks, I’ll think about that.”

“Or the cat hotel,” added Johann, “You always say every job has its litter trays when we complain about the things we don’t enjoy doing.”

Ilze looked up from her intricate sweetener pattern, “You’re looking for the secret quantum...the difference between success and failure. You have to use quantum theory.”

I took a moment for the idea to sink in, but I had to admit, “That makes a lot of sense.”

We lifted our empty mugs in unison, “To the secret quantum!”

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33 On 1 August 2014 I changed the metaphor to the African bush.
“Please remember to send me the info you promised,” Elma reminded me as she got up from her chair. “I’d like to know more about it. We must go now. Ilze and I need to walk her dogs before dark.”

We all dispersed. Walking back to the car park my head was spinning with our discussion of my study. It was as if I was doing an oral examination but I had really appreciated it as it had clarified my thinking.

Later that evening, after I had written the cat diaries for the day, I sent Elma the promised email.

Hi Elma,

Here is the stuff I promised you. I hope it makes sense.

I’ll start with a quote from Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3). “Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals’ lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way. Hence, there is frequently a commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study.”

Qualitative research, as a field of scientific inquiry, has grown from the early 1900s to include a large set of methodologies with complex, interconnected terminology. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 2003, and 2005) also identified eight historical moments of qualitative research. I’ve made the following summary based on their work and on the work of my one study leader, Prof Willem Schurink (2004a).

**Traditional period (1900–1950)**

The researchers between 1900 and 1950 studied human phenomena using strategies such as ethnography, phenomenology or ethnomethodology. They
observed small groups of participants at a time and wrote what they termed “objective” accounts of the actions of the participants and the meaning the participants attached to their actions. The researchers in this period conducted data analyses that were interpreted primarily from an objective perspective.

**Modernist period or second moment (1950–1970)**

During this second moment, more formalised qualitative research methods were explored than had previously been the case. Data was collected using methods that included open-ended and quasi-structured interviews as well as participant observation with causal narratives playing an important role. Data analysis became rigorous and included methods such as analytical induction and grounded theory. Qualitative researchers embracing positivism believed “that reality exists and can be more or less objectively known by an unbiased observer” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 18).


Social sciences started to borrow models, theories and methods of analysis from the humanities during the third moment while the politics and ethics of qualitative research became extremely topical. The methods of data collection varied and included open-ended, qualitative interviewing, participant observation, personal experience, and documents. Computers had emerged and were used in the analysis of qualitative data, as were narrative, content and semiotic methods of reading interviews and texts. “The naturalistic, post positivist and constructionist paradigms gained power in this period (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 18).” The alternative ethnography in which “the work in question can be contrasted and compared” falls in this category (Bochner, 2000, p. 267). Knowledge and truth are constructed, and not discovered.

**Crisis of representation (1986–1990)**

The basic assumption of this moment is that it is impossible for the researcher to be objective and value-free while conducting research. The rigour of studies of social processes was questioned. How to locate themselves and their participants
in the reflexive texts was a challenge for researchers during this time. This, in turn, led to a serious rethinking of concepts such as validity, reliability and generalisability. The researcher and the participant became partners in the research process. The issues of gender, class and race that were raised re-emphasised the role of reflexivity in qualitative research (Schurink, 2009). I’m certain you can identify with this moment.

The fifth moment or postmodern (1990–1995)

Qualitative researchers in the postmodern period struggled to make sense of the triple crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis. This is the more provocative moment of new and experimental ethnographies coming to the fore (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; p. 3). The assumption that it is not possible for qualitative researchers to capture lived experiences directly defined and shaped this moment. The researcher was required to present the data in such a way that the participants spoke for themselves (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theories were written in narrative terms as tales of the field, thus leaving the qualitative researcher facing representation challenges. These issues of representation and validation which confronted the qualitative researcher of the day were not resolved (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Both the postmodern and post-experimental moments were concerned with new ways of ethnographic story telling.


This was an exciting period with the qualitative researcher utilising novel forms of expression such as creative, non-fictional, autobiographical ethnography, ethnographic poetry and multimedia presentations.

The “methodologically contested present” or seventh moment (2000–2004)

This moment – a period of conflict – was framed by the publication of two new qualitative journals: Qualitative Inquiry and Qualitative Research.

The fractured future or eighth moment (2005 - )

This moment is confronting the methodological backlash associated with the evidence-based social movement.
Each of the eight moments is, however, still relevant today. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 20), qualitative researchers are currently experiencing:

i. multiple criteria of evaluation competing for attention

ii. numerous paradigms, strategies of inquiry, and methods of analysis from which to choose

iii. new ways of looking, interpreting, and debating

iv. a complete break with a neutral or objective positive perspective, and

v. the cutting edge is in the now.

The other aspect I promised to discuss with you is autoethnography. Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 739), who are masters of autoethnography, maintain that it is “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural”. Thus, this means that I will have to connect my personal experience and the experiences of my participants to the entrepreneurship context.

There is wide range of practices that fall within the autoethnographic field. I am going to focus on two. Firstly, there is the artistic, evocative autoethnography that is heartfelt and laden with emotions and in which aesthetic crafting plays an important role. Sparkes (2000) refers to this field of autoethnography as highly personalised tales based on the experiences of the researcher to enhance the understanding of processes. Once I had read the evocative autoethnography, Final Negotiations of love, loss, and chronic illness by Ellis (1995), I developed a sincere appreciation for the value of this genre. This work is a challenging personal experience of someone willing to share it with the world. Other people going through a similar experience may read it and, although their experiences may not be identical to that of Ellis, they should, at least, find some comfort in knowing that someone else had lived with someone who died of emphysema and they may be able to relate to some of her experiences. I have recommended the
book to every person I know who has or has had a partner or close family member suffering from emphysema.

The second field I wish to mention is the analytical autoethnography. Anderson (2006a, p. 378) proposes the following five key features of analytical autoethnography: The researcher needs to

i. have member status in the research setting
ii. be visible as such a member
iii. be in dialogue with participants beyond the self
iv. practise analytical reflexivity
v. commit to theoretical analysis.

Inspired by the autoethnographies I have read I am inspired to write evocatively. If one non-academic person derives some benefit from reading my study it would be a bonus for me. However, the Department of Psychology and People Management (IPPM) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) demands a theoretical contribution from doctoral research. Accordingly, I am also committed to qualitative data analysis and to some level of theoretical contribution to the field of entrepreneurship. I will, therefore, have to conduct an analytical autoethnography. Learmonth and Humphreys (2012) term this a double ethnography.

If you are interested to know more about any of these concepts have books I could lend you on all of the above.

Sleep tight, dear friend,

Suzette

I sent the email, but my mind was still processing some of the information I had just sent. I realised that I needed to refine my mental map of qualitative research. Even the laws of classical mechanics apply in isolated systems only where there is no influence from outside of the system. The moment we operate in an open system – and human beings are open systems – it is essential that we account for
the influence from outside. In physics, this is done through complexity, mathematics and physics laws which have been developed over many decades. However, in qualitative research, there is a need to find methods to address this issue. I aimed to do this by demonstrating reflexivity in my journal(s) and by leaving a transparent record of the complete process. This would, in turn, entail a confessional tale (Sparkes, 2002) in which I shall relate what Prof Schurink terms *The story behind the story* – the internal audit – of my research. This would, in turn, enable me to give readers a glimpse behind the scenes of my research study so that they could gain some insight into my thoughts and actions while I was conducting the research. It was only when Gandalf, my Maine Coon cat, jumped onto my lap that I realised I was still sitting in front of my computer – frozen in time.

2.3 **VENTURING DEEPER INTO THE TERRITORY WITH NEILL**

As far as the laws of Mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality (Albert Einstein).

![Photograph 2.3](image)

**Photograph 2.3:** My desk in my study

A few days later, I was sitting in my study when Neill walked in after a day spent with clients. “Not still at your desk?” he chirped, knowing that the cat hotel was extremely busy.
“More like again rather than still. It was a hectic day in the cat hotel, but I have to get to my studies too.”

“What are you up to, Erasmus?” I chuckled when I thought of how – after more than thirty years together – we still often called each other by our surnames.

“A while ago Prof told me to reflect on my ontology, epistemology and methodology if I were to embark on a research study. He said that researchers would not be able to conduct a meaningful study without a deep awareness of how and from what perspective they were focusing on the topic of their inquiry.”

Neill dropped all his stuff on the table behind me. “Please enlighten me.”

“Before I even start, I have to admit that, at the time of my conversation with Prof, I knew absolutely nothing about all of this. But he has suggested text books and I have done so much reading on it. However, I may still be more ignorant than I think so explaining it to you may be a very good idea.”

With open files spread all over my desk I read the following paragraph, which I had written out, to him. “Ontology refers to the ‘nature and essence’ of what is being studied (Mason, 2005, p. 14; Scharm, 2003, p. 41). It also gives the perspective or position from which I’ll be observing my participants. According to Grbich (2007, p 4), ’ontology’ is about the ‘nature of being and reality’ while Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108) term ontology ‘the form and nature of reality’. Thus, ontology asks: What can be known, what do we know and how do we know it?”

Neill had pulled the other chair up so that he could sit next to me in front of my desk. His eyes followed the text on the screen. “Dis ‘n bekvol,34 but what’s your answer?”

“From my background in physics I believe that everything is part of a multi-dimensional, interrelated energy field. No construct, object or creature is isolated from the rest. Every situation may be observed from different reference points. As in the case of a hologram, each perspective is a glimpse of reality. Krauss (2005, p. 760) supports my belief that ‘there is no objective reality’ but different

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34 Directly translated from Afrikaans it read, “That’s a mouthful!”
perspectives which, according to Esterberg (2002), are all equally valid. So, I really feel comfortable with that. I am also comfortable knowing that, by entering into the field, I am distorting the field. My presence in the lives of my participants will influence their actions and thinking in one way or the other. Qualitative research is not about discovering the ultimate reality but rather about co-creating reality through reflective questioning. It is not just about meaning per se, but whose meaning (Jensen, 2006). My participants and I will all make sense of our experiences and the meaning given by each participant and also by me is relevant. The classical scientific paradigm of the objective scientist observing from behind the proverbial one-way mirror has been replaced by phenomena such as Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle and Bohr’s complementarity principle (Eisberg & Resnick, 1985).


“Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle in mechanics states that the more we know about the position of a particle the less we know about its momentum. We can never observe subatomic particles without influencing them and changing their future behaviour.”

“From my experience in storytelling, I know that we all – the teller of and the listener to stories – have backstories that influence us. We are often not aware of the impact which these backstories or biases have on our perceptions and behaviours until we confront them head-on (Guber, 2011; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). I will, therefore, have to reflect critically on my own conceptual reference frames and also on the way in which they influence my perceptions throughout my research journey (Flinders & Mills, 1993).” I picked up Fritjof Capra’s *The web of life* and opened it at page 40. “Read the sentence highlighted in blue.”

Neill read: “What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.” For a moment there was silence as he pondered on the sentence. Then he looked up and concluded, “So you will have to think carefully what questions to ask you participants.”
He still looked a little confused, “And the other one you mentioned?”

“Bohr’s complementarity principle?”

He nodded.

I continued, “If two concepts are complementary any experiment that clearly illustrates one concept will obscure the other one. Let me give you an example. When I study the wave nature of light I am unable to observe the particle nature of light. As I focus on the one the other goes out of focus. The same is true when we observe humans. If we look at that which makes a person a part of the human race, it becomes difficult to see that which makes the same person an individual. By asking my participants to tell me their stories rather than asking them specific questions I hope to sidestep this challenge and gain a more holistic picture of their mental maps.”

Neill looked at me and, getting up from his chair, said, “OK. All this talking is making me thirsty. Let’s make something to drink.”

As we walked to the kitchen I continued, “I’ll have to remember throughout the research process that my participants may have different ontologies. Not only that, their ontologies may change with their environment or over the duration of this study.”

Neill looked puzzled. “Please explain.”

While heating the milk I explained: “People may have one set of beliefs which apply to their working environments and another set when they are with their families. I will, therefore, try to meet them at their businesses to tap into the former set of beliefs. In addition, I will have to meet with them over a period of more than a year to enable me to get to know them. However, their views and beliefs may change during this time – as might mine.”

35 Yes.
With a mug of coffee in one hand and the notes I was working on in the other I followed Neill to our chairs at the window. “Closely linked to ontology and methodology is epistemology or the philosophy of knowledge (Krauss, 2005).”

Neill shook his head. “What does that really mean?”

“I read in Grbich (2007, p. 3) that the word ‘epistemology’ is derived from the Greek words *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (theory). Thus, epistemology deals with what we accept as knowledge or truth and how the truth has been constructed.”

“Okay, so, how are you going to arrive at this truth or knowledge?” he wanted to know.

“By listening to their stories I hope to gain a better understanding of the way in which the entrepreneurs in my study make sense of their worlds (Mouton, 2006). I don’t believe that there is an objective reality out there waiting to reveal itself to me at the right moment. Therefore, I will have to co-construct their experiences and how they see their worlds with their help. According to Schwandt (2000), we use our interpretations based on the understandings, practices and language that we share to invent concepts, models, and schemes in order to make sense of our experiences. This makes perfect sense to me but I believe that quantum theory (QT), which I know well, helps me since it suggests that reality is created when the observer observes the observed – the subatomic particles in the case of quantum mechanics. At the moment of observation, some dialogue between the situation or quantum wave function\(^ {36} \), in the case of QT, and the observer *evokes* and, thus, gives concrete form to, one of the many possible realities inherent within that situation or wave function. However, we need to remind ourselves that the potential for some sort of reality would exist prior to the interaction.”

Neill shook his head, “Now, you’ve lost me completely.”

I smiled as I looked at him and I was reminded of how long it had taken me to work this out. I responded, “The wave function of, for example, a table cannot collapse into a cat. It can only become a table although the position or purpose of

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\(^{36}\) The wave function is the equation that describes the situation.
the table may become clearer over time; or as we say in QT, as the wave function collapses. Bokkie, what I’m trying to say is that, although my participants and I will be co-creating knowledge about entrepreneurship we can only create that which is already a possibility … that which is already being lived, either consciously or unconsciously. The stories my participants and I will tell can reveal only that which is our individual realities. If any of the participants passes off an illusion as a reality – lying to me or even to themselves – it will shine through somewhere along the line. We all make sense of our experiences, whether we are successful or not, in order to give meaning to our experiences and our lives. That is how we learn. I also believe that everyone – successful at the time or not – has some specific meaningful contribution to make to the study. This makes me think of another quantum physics phenomenon."

“Ja?” Neill urged me on.

“Each chemical element has a line emission spectrum in terms of which it may be identified – its fingerprint, so to speak. For example, the line emission spectrum of sodium consists of two yellow lines of specific frequencies. The line emission spectra of all the chemical elements form part of the full spectrum – what we term the rainbow. Similarly each participant’s contribution – typical to the individual – will add to the understanding of the mental models of the entrepreneurs. The participants in this study will contribute a few lines to the total spectrum of what we see as the mental models for entrepreneurship.”

Neill nodded his head, “I think it will be interesting, but it sounds rather complicated. You guys are not all going to have the same perspective.”

I continued, “I expect that we’ll look at things through our own specific lenses and we may not even come to the same conclusions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) – what one perceive as successful another may see as less successful or even failure as it does not address his or her needs. Over the years, as both an entrepreneur and an entrepreneur mentor, I have acquired some understanding of the experiences of entrepreneurs. You may say that I have an insider’s perspective of the world of entrepreneurship. By actively engaging with my participants over time I hope to be

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37 An endearing term that literally means little antelope
38 Afrikaans for “Yes”
able to unravel their meaning-making processes (Ellis & Berger, 2000). The insight and understanding that I gain of the way in which these entrepreneurs construct and interpret their realities will help me to map the mind sets underpinning these processes."

“Ja, having been an entrepreneur for so many years give you a great advantage but, then again, won’t your lenses colour the data?” Neill asked, grinning like a cat that had discovered a mouse.

I’m impressed with my husband. He’s starting to understand the postmodern way of thinking and I laughed when I answered, “You are right and I will have to be open about it. First, however, I have to ensure that I am sufficiently aware to be able to pick up when and how I am influenced by my own beliefs (Grbich, 1999). This is one of the reasons why I keep a reflective journal. You know, it fascinated me when I realised how much actually physical writing sharpens my self-awareness. For me writing is very different from typing on the computer. The process of writing becomes almost hypnotic in its ability to trigger my self-awareness.”

Neill put his mug down on the window sill. “Are the cats going without food tonight?”

With a shock I realised that I have not served the cat dinners yet. I grabbed the mugs and left them in the kitchen on my way to feed my furry clients.

2.4 MARKING MY TERRITORY IN THE FIELD OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The days flew past and I spend many hours reading up on different aspects of qualitative research. During our meeting in January 2011, Prof asked me to write a field note protocol to use for my contact sessions with my participants. Soon a wonderful opportunity to write in a beautiful setting presented itself.

Neill and I were invited to spend the weekend of 28 to 30 January 2011 on a game farm with an associate of his. The men wanted to do some planning for the year. I took with me my laptop and the sources I had collected on field note writing. While the other people in the group held their meetings or took afternoon naps I
prepared my field notes protocol\(^{39}\) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) using the guidelines proposed by Wolfinger (2002, p. 91) and incorporating observational, theoretical, methodological and analytical notes (Shank, 2006).

Photograph 2.4: Writing my field note protocol on the deck overlooking the game reserve

Back from our weekend with my field note protocol completed I had important choices to make and ideas raced through my mind. On the second morning after our return I felt impelled to leave the confines of my study and I went to Olivia’s – a bakery not far from our house. From the first floor of the bakery I looked out over the leafy suburb across the road and my thoughts and writing flowed more smoothly – like the café lattes the bakery served.

My reading of Shank (2006, p. 117) had confronted me with the very controversial question of the role of literature in qualitative inquiry. He highlights two schools of thought. Firstly, there is the ‘ignorance is bliss’ school of thought in terms of which a researcher conducts the literature review only once all the data has been collected. The argument is that the existing literature does not contaminate the researcher’s mind with preconceived ideas while the researcher is collecting the data. Thus, in my case, this would mean that my lenses would be coloured only by my own personal experience and not the experiences of previous researchers.

\(^{39}\) Please see Appendix F
This, in turn, would enable me to “hear” the emerging data more clearly (Grbich, 1999).

Shank’s (2006, p. 118) second school of thought proposes that the literature review should be undertaken prior to collecting the data since it is believed that this will enable the researcher to gain a better understanding of his/her topic.

It is interesting that Bogdan and Biklen (2007) support the notion of a substantive literature review between the data collection and the data analysis, believing that this would enhance the data analysis. However, they are quick to warn against reading too much prior to the data collection as this may “blind you to other ways of looking at your data” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 169). In short, the literature review should serve to stimulate the researcher’s thinking but should not replace it.

Scholars also differ as regards the place of the literature review in respect of different research strategies. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), during phenomenological study, the main literature review is conducted after the data collection to enable the researcher to suspend any preconceptions. On the other hand, with grounded theory an initial literature review is conducted in order to place the study in context and to help identify gaps in the field. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008, pp. 47–48) “The main literature review is conducted during concept development.” While Strauss and Corbin (1990) consider the literature as a source of data and maintain that, for the purposes of ethnography, the literature must be reviewed before the data collection to guide the researcher in what and how to study. For narrative inquiry and case studies an initial literature review is conducted once the research question has been developed so as to shape the direction of the study. However, the literature is also reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the study as this serves to compare and contrast the emerging data with the existing literature.

I pondered on the fact that scholars, including seasoned qualitative researchers, writing about qualitative inquiry hold varied views as to when the literature review on the research topic should be conducted. Finally, I decided that, in order to ascertain possible gaps in the existing literature and to focus the study in such a
way that it addressed these gaps, I would make use only of the preliminary literature review I had conducted in preparation of my proposal (Mouton, 2006). The insights that I had gained from this would have to suffice. However, I would have to engage in a deeper study of the literature on both my research findings and the key concepts found in the entrepreneurship literature after I had been doing the fieldwork for a while.

Once I had observed the participants and listened to their experiences and views, especially once I had conducted the first in-depth round of interviews with them, I should be able to derive concepts and themes from the interview data. These emerging themes and concepts would guide my search for scholarly findings and views that I could relate to the world of my participants. The literature on qualitative research suggests that relating concrete experiences and concepts with abstract theoretical ones should be an iterative process. This made a lot of sense to me. Whenever I found a novel concept or theme in the interview data, participant observations or from alternative data sources relevant to the participants, this would enable me to look for such a concept or theme in the existing literature. What I found in the literature, combined with what I would already have collected, would serve as an important preparation for the next round of interactions with the participants in my study.

I hoped to weave the literature into the analysis and interpretation of the data in the thesis, providing not only a solid understanding of the mental models of successful entrepreneurs but also enabling me to advance the current theory on the mental models of entrepreneurs by constructing a conceptual framework.

As I walked back to my car, my laptop and the books in my arms felt lighter than they had earlier as did my heart. I had learnt about zooming in and zooming out while painting with my Sunday morning art group. Switching between a close up, focused view and looking at the bigger picture in order to gain a wider perspective is an invaluable technique in making decisions. In my actual study I am in the focused, close-up position while being in the cat hotel or having coffee at Olivia’s Bakery or Seattle Coffee Bar helps me to see the bigger picture and gives me greater perspective and insights that do not arise when I am completely immersed in the situation.
2.5 INVITING THE PARTICIPANTS ONTO THE AFRICAN PLAINS

Many important conversations take place in coffee shops. In April 2011, at the end of a long workshop at the UJ, Mary Anne and I were sitting with our hands cupped around steaming café lattés. We exchanged news of our families, friends and current projects irrelevant to my study. Long before Mary Anne had become my co-study leader, she had been my friend. Although I have great respect for her knowledge of qualitative research this was primarily a meeting between friends. Inevitably, however, the subject of my study crept into the conversation. Mary Anne, who always shows great interest in the lives of her friends, was the one to initiate the topic. “So, tell me, Suzette, have you decided on participants yet?”

“...or I may have to let them go ... like Pierre. He is such a dynamic entrepreneur with three businesses doing well but he tells me only what he wants me to know when he wants me to help him with a specific situation. There is no way that I could use him as a participant. It is so important to choose appropriate participants ... people who will be open and able to communicate well (Esterberg, 2002; Warren, 2002).”

Photograph 2.5: Mary Anne and I enjoying our café lattés
Mary Anne nodded. “Yes, it is. So, that one is out.”

“Absolutely. I’ve also decided to be very careful when it comes to entrepreneurs who are well-known – especially if they are overly concerned with their public image. There is a definite possibility that they may unintentionally represent themselves in the way in which they would like to be seen … and I may never hear about those experiences that were embarrassing to them.”

“How did you go about choosing participants then, Suzette?”

“First of all, I considered only people who have their business headquarters in Johannesburg.”

Mary Anne nods, “That makes sense. You don’t need to spend money travelling when you live in the major business hub of South Africa.”

Realising that this conversation was going to include my sampling process I took my file with the notes on which I had been working out of my bag and opened it on the table next to me.

“Exactly. Well, I’ve read in Rwigema and Venter (2004) that age, ethnicity, education levels and sex have been found to exert some degree of influence on the success of an entrepreneur. In my study I am not interested in the way in which the entrepreneurial mindset is present in any of these categories\(^{40}\). It is impossible in an ethnographic study to have enough participants to cover them all. I am going to focus on ‘information rich cases’ (Grbich, 1999, p. 69) and I have identified ‘extreme cases’ (Shank, 2006, p. 30). The short answer is, I selected participants on the basis of their willingness and ability to communicate their specific journeys to me honestly and openly (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 24) and also on the basis of the ease or difficulty they experienced in attaining success in order to obtain some idea of how their mental models vary between the more and less successful entrepreneurs… if at all.”

I smiled when I saw that Mary Anne was folding her serviette into a neat, smaller square shape and her nail colour – as always – perfectly matching her outfit. After

\(^{40}\) Categories here refer to “age, ethnicity, education levels and sex”.
a sip of coffee, I continued, “My sampling is purposive in an effort to obtain a better understanding of the mental models of entrepreneurs. I am trying to collect a group whose combined perspective will help me in my search for an emerging theory (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 64). Although I’ll focus on the differences between the mental models of the entrepreneurs involved in unsuccessful versus successful entrepreneurial activities, I’ll also look at the commonalities in the mental maps of the entrepreneurs involved in successful entrepreneurial activities as well as the commonalities in the mental maps of the entrepreneurs involved in unsuccessful entrepreneurial activities.”

“So how many participants do you have?” Mary Anne asked.

“Ten … I think … but there are two with whom I am not really comfortable. So, I should rather say, eight. Lily started a cat hotel close to mine under my mentorship. I was involved from the conception phase of the business and I know both her and her business well but she is still too dependent on my input. I may have to choose between withdrawing from mentoring her and dropping her as a participant. She often makes choices that could undermine her business – so, it is a difficult decision. She has signed the informed consent form and I am thinking of using conversations we have had and that reflect the importance of an experienced mentor when starting a new business. What are your thoughts on Lily, Mary Anne?”

“I think it is good to keep her for now and see what transpires. Who is the other potential participant that you may not be using?” she asked while I enjoyed a long sip of my latté.

“He is a guy in his mid-twenties who started a college for music in 2009. The business is growing exponentially and I thought it would be interesting to look at the mindset of such a young person who appears to be extremely successful. However, he is very unreliable. He forgot the first two appointments we had. Despite the fact that they were to take place at his music academy, he was not available to see me. I decided not to pursue it any further. Instead I phoned Dimi.”

Mary Anne agreed. “Goodness, you do not need unreliable participants in your study. Tell me, now, why Dimi? Who is he?”
“Seeing that I was losing a young person I wanted to replace him with another young entrepreneur. Being young means they have had limited professional experience with which to build expert mental maps. I have known Dimi since 2002 and I enjoy his “gutsiness”. Whenever we bump into one another in a shopping mall he always tells me with great enthusiasm about his businesses.”

“Now, tell me, Suzette, you were very keen to get the owner of the tashas restaurant chain on board. Did you manage to do that?”

Photograph 2.6: The cover of the tashas cookbook showing the registered trademark, tashas

“Jip,” I felt my face light up. “I need a few truly successful entrepreneurs in this study and she, Allon and Tessa are definitely in that bracket. Natasha has opened a chain of eight very special tashas restaurants since 2005. I have spent time with her at the tashas in Atholl. She notices the smallest detail and is so passionate about her business … she is very dynamic and driven. Natasha is an extremely hard worker and definitely highly successful as a restaurateur and, apparently, as

\footnote{tashas, the brand, is written with a lower case t.}
a franchisor. She also has the ability to communicate her journey and this is extremely important for a qualitative study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) would term Allon and Natasha my open sampling. Tessa offered to come on board without my asking.”

“Tell me about Tessa and Allon.” Mary Anne urged me.

“In 2004 I met Tessa at the Ruth Reed Art Academy where I painted on Sundays. She is a highly successful fabric éditeur and interior decoration wholesaler. I welcomed her as a participant as she would give me a glimpse into the mental models of someone from an entrepreneurial family.”

“Wow! That would be an important construct to incorporate. And, tell me how you found Allon?”

“The evening I went in pursuit of Natasha, Allon was also one of the panel members.” I whipped the programme of that evening out of the folder where I kept my notepad and placed it in front of Mary Anne. “Read that and tell me how I could not ask him to be a participant in my study.”

“Impressive, Suzette, but how did you get him on board?”

“The GIBS open-days always end with a social and I just walked up to Allon where he was standing with a glass in his hand and introduced myself. I told him about my studies and I asked him whether I could speak to him about it. He immediately invited me to call his personal assistant for an appointment, ‘So I can tell you about the mistakes I’ve made.’ So, on that one evening, I gained access to two of my participants.”

42 Gordon Institute of Business Science
“Allon is the founder and CEO (Chief Excitement Officer) of Raizcorp, the only privately held, unfunded, profitable business incubator on the African continent, supporting in excess of 200 businesses. He is an author, a radio host, and has written and hosted a primetime reality TV show, all in the field of entrepreneurship. Allon is co-founder of Entrepreneurs’ Organisation South Africa and Rural Roots and sits on the advisory and judging boards of numerous local and international NGO’s and Entrepreneurial Awards. Allon has also been appointed by the South African Cabinet to the board of the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), South Africa. Allon’s passion and focus on the development of entrepreneurs attracted the attention of the World Economic Forum which, on 11 March 2008, awarded Allon as Young Global Leader. In addition to completing a Doctorate in Entrepreneurial Studies and Innovation, Allon is an accomplished speaker who, in 2011, was invited to speak at the World Economic Forum Annual meeting, held in Davos, Switzerland. Allon is the author of Lose the business plan: What they don’t teach you about being an entrepreneur, published by Bookstorm and Pan MacMillan.” (Endeavor, 05.04.2011).

For a moment we drank our lattés companionably, both busy with our own thoughts. Then Mary Anne continued, “I still cannot believe Prof Veldsman recommended that you use yourself as a participant.”

I smiled when I thought back to the day on which I had presented my proposal. Initially the thought of writing about myself had been daunting, but I had thought deeply about the notion since that day. “That makes it possible for me to identify how the constructs I find in my participants’ data support, elucidate or challenge the constructs emerging from my own personal experience (Neergaard, 2007). Being both a participant and the researcher I have a responsibility to remain aware when I am listening to and working with the stories of my participants and realising when and how my mindset is influencing my interaction with them. Now, my business is also on stage … being a participant is more difficult than I anticipated. But, you know how it feels … You did this a few years ago.”

“I know, I know and you’ll love it, you’ll see,” she said, her eyes laughing as she smiled.

“There is another participant about whom I need to tell you, Mary Anne.”
I could sense that I definitely had Mary Anne’s attention when she leant forward in her chair and replied. “That sounds almost sinister.”

I finished my latté. “I actually find the writing therapeutic – if sometimes upsetting. During one of my soul searching sessions I realised that I also wanted to use Neill as a participant. You know that we have been through difficult times. As his wife, I have experienced his attempts at starting his own businesses first hand. I have shared his light bulb moments and worked with him through the dark times. We have been married for more than thirty years so I have a fair understanding of his thought processes. Furthermore, it is impossible to tell my story without writing about the influence his experiences had on my journey. In a way our narratives will triangulate each other’s journeys. We are on opposite side of the spectrum in many aspects and we frustrate one another but we do have a lot of respect for each other. I think it could be valuable to my research and Neill is willing to “expose his belly” to us – something a cat does only to those he truly trusts. This trust has been built over time and I will have to take great care to treat it with the respect it deserves.”

Mary Anne looked concerned. “That is very brave of him, Suzette. Are you not concerned that it may damage your relationship? The intensity of this type of research may take its toll on your relationship – even if Neill is not one of the participants. So, this is going to be tough. Do you think your relationship with Neill is able to handle this?”

“I know he is brave and it is scary. At the moment it feels to me that we have been through a lot worse. He said he will do it for me because I stood by him during the tough times. You know, there were times between 2004 and 2010 when I was so angry with him and now I’ll have to work through all of that again while he will also have to work through his hurt. However, the way I know the two of us, this will provide us with the opportunity to work through some of the emotions we experienced during that time, but yes, you are right, I also run the risk of ruining our relationship...as is true in the case of all the other participants. I know Prof will be extremely concerned. You are two very caring people and I think you will perceive this choice of mine as more risky than I do. I guess the entrepreneurial spirit in Neill and I shines through in this decision.”
Mary Anne nodded and I continued. “There were times when we almost lost everything – but I suppose there are no guarantees. It is a risk we are willing to take. I will just have to be very aware and take it one day at a time.”

“And the other participants – who are they?” Mary Anne anchored me as I was about to wander off into the past.

“The successful entrepreneurs are inspirational but I also need people who have not been as successful in their own businesses...yet. There is much I could learn from their mindsets. So I have two people on board who have tried to start their own businesses but, thus far, they have not been very successful. I am keeping them anonymous. Let’s call them Albert and Dianne and because I know them well and have trust relationships with them I believe they will be honest with me about their struggles. Using someone unfamiliar to me for the unsuccessful end of the spectrum may present challenges in this regard. Allon, Natasha and Tessa are on the other side of the experience and success continuums.”

“Although there are no more than ten participants in this study most participants will bring multiple cases of failure and success to the study. By looking at the series of entrepreneurial activities I am beginning to obtain a sense of the progress that leads to success. So, my sample size is helping my understanding of the mental maps of entrepreneurs rather than representing a population (Stake, 2000; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). I expect it will be a dynamic, ongoing process (Mason, 2005, p. 135).”

“It was difficult for me to stop looking for more participants. I became so excited about the process that I wanted to take on more and more entrepreneurs to learn from their stories. Luckily, however, I know I do not have either the time or the money to handle more participants, but every time I meet interesting entrepreneurs it takes willpower not to pull them into the study. Knowing when to stop sampling comes with experience (Boyatzis, 1998) and this is my first experience in qualitative research on this level. Only once I have collected a large percentage of the data will I have the insight required to improve on my sampling. Obviously I will adjust my data collection as I gain more insight. Even a very experienced researcher such as Neergaard (2007, p. 259) maintains that it is
‘difficult to determine whether the point of redundancy or saturation has been reached’.

“These entrepreneurs will keep you busy,” Mary Anne thoughtfully reminded me.

“I know, but there is always an underlying fear that my data will not be good enough or that my participants may withdraw from the study. Sampling is actually very important as the quality of my sampling will influence the quality of my findings (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 42). I do worry about this a lot...especially about my less successful participants. However, this is my first official experience of conducting ethnography. I shall only know how good or bad my sampling has been when it is too late.”

Mary Anne sensed my concern and tried to reassure me. “These things are difficult to foretell and you will just have to deal with it. Just be transparent in everything...and know that, in qualitative research, you may not always like what you find, but you do not end up without data” Then she changed the subject slightly. “It doesn’t sound as if you struggled to find participants.”

“Yes and no. I am in contact with several entrepreneurs and I did a lot of thinking before I recruited anybody – especially as regards Dianne and Neill...and even Albert. It is difficult for them to talk about the failure of their businesses and they are often not honest with themselves or else they are just unable to see why their businesses went downhill. The time that has elapsed between the failure of their businesses and the interviews may ease the pain but the conversations may also re-open wounds. It may also be difficult for the participants to remember the process well because of the time delay. I have read of the possible challenges in dealing with emotional reactions in qualitative research (Welter, 2005) and so I chose people I already knew fairly well for the more difficult cases – hoping that the trust relationship we already have would carry us through.

“The problem does not lie in finding participants but in finding the right ones and then keeping them in the process. The successful ones fly all over the world and have branches in other cities. I am not as important to them as they are to me. However, I take care to respect their time and make the most of what is available to me because I do not want to become an irritation in their busy lives. I have also
spent a significant amount of time with people who were not suitable – the unreliable, those who simply wanted to use me for mentoring or people who wanted to impress me and would not be honest about the not so glamorous times.”

I talked so much that Mary Anne was lucky to get a word in. “Just one last thing, what do you hope to gain from the sampling you have done?”

“I’ve thought about that. By using a wide range of participants – from very successful entrepreneurs to people who have tried but have not had much success – I am hoping a pattern will emerge. I hope to gain some insight into the differences and commonalities in the mental maps of these few people (Neergaard, 2007).”

On the way to our cars I thanked Mary Anne for her time.

“It is only a pleasure,” she re-assured me. “I can see you are very excited – which is great.”

Driving home to serve cat dinners after my conversation with Mary Anne the reality hit home. I was about to embark on the data collection phase of my research study – to step into the research field for real. The realisation sent a surge of adrenaline through my body.
PART II

ON THE AFRICAN PLAINS

The African plains are home to a wide variety of game and it is the hunting ground of the African lions. In Part 2, consisting of two chapters, I relate the hunting stories of the participants in this study. I now offer you a brief preview of what to expect in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Chapter 3: My Pride on the African Plains

This is my autoethnography which tells the story of my life and my journey as an entrepreneur from my first business teaching music while still at school to my current businesses, Purrfect Place and Quantum Gain. I introduce the reader to the people close to me and the experiences that influenced my life as an

Photograph part 2: Blue wildebeest at the water hole

Photograph from the private collection of Ken and Nettie Kyle.
entrepreneur. I have included reflections on the challenges I experienced during the running of my own businesses. However, the businesses my husband, Neill, started over the years have also had an emotional and physical impact on my life. Therefore I have included some of my experiences related to his businesses in my narrative.

Chapter 4: Other prides on the African plains

The narratives of the seven other participating entrepreneurs are found in Chapter 4, Other prides on the African plains. These participants shared their stories with me in their own way and I have endeavoured to reflect each “narrative” to be true to the style of each participant.

At the end of each narrative I offer reflections on some of my interactions and insights obtained during my contact with the respective participant.

I compiled Neill’s narrative using notes I made during the many mentoring conversations we had over the years as well as journal entries he kept while running his businesses. I also had follow-up conversations with him during the writing process to validate my interpretations of events and emotions.

Lily was a client at Purrfect Place, but in 2010 she – under my mentorship – opened a cat hotel in competition with Purrfect Place. Although I had one official interview with her at her cat hotel, her narrative is also based on the many telephone conversations we have had. These telephone calls were usually intended to discuss specific challenges that she experienced, but Lily’s concern over slow business and her complains about the heavy workload always entered into the conversation. The narrative includes only those phone calls that, in my view, brought something unique to our conversations.

Early 2005 I met Tessa at the Ruth Reed Art Academy and we became friends. She habitually interrupted her own sentences and I retained this in her narrative to reflect her personality.

Having battled to start her own business for a few years Dianne eventually realised that she was not an entrepreneur. In this narrative I tried to reflect this
struggle. I collected the data through formal interviews, participant observation and working with her in preparation for a tender.

I based Natasha’s narrative on formal interviews, participant observation and unplanned social interactions we had at functions not related to this study. I did my best to reflect the proactive and dynamic way in which Natasha operated.

Allon narrated his story almost verbatim as it appears here, but I used newspaper articles, his books and his television show to triangulate his narrative.
CHAPTER 3

My pride on the African plains

Photograph 3.1: Kevin Richardson and Nad in thought – An oil painting by Suzette le Roux

3.1 THE PRIDE INTO WHICH I WAS BORN

My mother raised chickens and supplied eggs to the corner cafe in the small Karoo town of Middelburg in the Cape Province. She earned additional income as a dressmaker and I always had unique dresses which she had made from the off-cut material of the dresses she made. She was a free spirit with an iron will and there was not a lazy bone in her body. What she lacked in social skills she made up for in loyalty and work ethic. It was not that she did not love her family. She was just awkward with emotional displays and it was only in her last few years that my mother started to hug her family when we greeted her. One of her proudest moments was in 1955 when she was on the front page of Rooi Rose as Bride of the Year in South Africa.

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44 An Afrikaans magazine catering predominantly for women
My father worked in the Post Office. In 1966 he was transferred to Elliot where our family spent two wonderful years. Before our move to Elliot my mother sold off her chickens in the Karoo and started working at the Elliot telephone exchange.

Ever since I can remember my father and I had a special bond. In the afternoons after work I would help him in his vegetable garden or we would work in his garage where he did woodwork. This was quiet bonding time together. However, in 1968, when I was ten years old, my father had a massive heart attack. There was no actual hospital in Elliot so a family friend undertook a seven-hour trip with my semi-comatose father in his Mercedes Benz to Port Elizabeth. My brother and I stayed at home with neighbours watching over us. Later that year we moved to Queenstown in the Eastern Cape to be closer to a hospital that could deal with heart attack patients.
Moving schools twice in a just over two years meant I had to learn to adjust to new circumstances. Friends are extremely important to me and so I joined in whatever sport and cultural activities were available to ensure that I got to know the other children. I was very mediocre on the sport fields but mediocrity did not suit me. I soon learnt that I could earn acceptance in the circles of which I really wanted to be part by being friendly and trustworthy and by excelling academically — all of which were easier than any sport I had tried.

When I was fourteen my father again lay in a coma in Port Elizabeth. His heart stopped during an operation in which about two-thirds of his stomach was removed. During this time my younger brother and I lived on our own in Queenstown while my mother stayed with family in Port Elizabeth in order to be close to my dad. My father was in and out of hospitals until his twelfth and final heart attack in the early morning of 4 December 1974.

By seven that morning my father’s body was at the mortuary and the house was filling up with family friends. Although my father had been in and out of hospitals all my life it was, nevertheless, a sad day and we were all in a state of shock. With family whom I have not seen for years also arriving I preferred to be at school writing my examinations rather than be at home where life was chaotic with all the people crying and fussing. The fact that I had to study gave me time alone during which I worked through my emotions. In any case, my academic results had been extremely important to my father, who was a perfectionist. I wrote the mathematics, accountancy and Afrikaans examinations on the three days prior to his funeral.

There are people who may think I do not have emotions. That is certainly not true but it reflects the way in which I was brought up by a mother who does not show her emotions. My emotions are extremely deep. However, I believe that we all deal with emotions in our own specific ways. To this day I still go within to work through whatever is upsetting me. I close my eyes and become one with the universe with all the energy in the universe there to support me. I sit there until I understand the situation.
I have always had an insatiable hunger for understanding how things work – how an aeroplane stays in the air and how they get the stripes in toothpaste. At the beginning of 1976 I enrolled for a BSc in physics, chemistry, mathematics and theoretical physics at the University of Port Elizabeth. With a handful of merit bursaries I felt I was rich – a new feeling and one that I enjoyed as much as being at university. Independence brought a freedom that I relished. At the end of my first year at university I had sufficient money left over to buy a sewing machine and to pay for ballet lessons. During my third and fourth years I also worked as a laboratory assistant at the university earning enough money to enable me to be financially independent.

In July 1978 I met Neill who was also a student at the University of Port Elizabeth. We are polar opposites. In the words of our daughters, “Dad is the jock and you are captain of the calculator club.” Nevertheless, I, with my limited social skills at the time, was attracted to the way Neill in which, with all his social skills, treated people. On the other hand, he, coming from an authoritarian home, was attracted to my free spirit. I came from a home in which we were allowed to express our thoughts freely and to challenge the political or religious thinking of the day provided we had a good argument. Neill and his three brothers were not allowed to question the status quo.

Six months after he had started working at the Ford Motor Company, on 4 July 1981, we were married. His parents were not overly ecstatic about me as a wife for their son but, eventually, they accepted me.

In 1983 Neill moved to Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC). I taught physical science at Hoërskool Framesby from January 1980 until our daughter, Marizanne, was born on 8 July 1985.

3.2 KILLING TO REACH A TARGET

“These people are printing money,” said Neill one afternoon after work as he hurried me to a meeting at the house of one of the people who worked with him. It was 1982. I had no idea what a direct marketing company was and his friends

45 Now the Nelson Mandela Metropole University (NMMU)
46 High school
spent a long evening convincing me to buy into the company. Having paid for a substantial amount of stock from the company I could hardly sleep that night. It was as if a room full of cleaning products was chasing me to sell ... sell ... sell.

My need for achievement pushed me to attend all the meetings and training sessions which the company conducted. I committed myself to reach every target that had been set. Neill lost interest in the business after the second week but I worked relentlessly until all the boxes were empty except for the few bottles I had kept for my personal use. I assumed responsibility for selling the products because I could not afford to lose the money I had invested in the company. I was, however, slightly disappointed that Neill – who had got me into the business – was not helping with the active selling. My selling frenzy was not motivated by making money or any of the other material incentives that were on offer. I merely wanted to sell the stock I had and make my money so that I could get out of the business. I quickly learned that I was not suited to direct selling and that I would never let anybody talk me into signing up for anything about which I was not excited.

Despite the ‘training’ I had received it was extremely difficult for me to tell people about the products. Cleaning products did not excite me and I learnt that I did not want to convince people to buy things. To this day, I hate it when people try to convince me to buy something. I would like to think that people know what they want or need and that they will go out and buy what they want when they want it. This probably is a result of the fact that I had seen my mother supplying clients with eggs, chickens and clothes without ever doing any hard selling. She had had a good reputation and the people knew where she was. Her clients had either come to her or telephoned her to bring eggs to their shop.

When I started my first business I was still at school. However, I had not needed to do any marketing or hard selling. I had won a few music competitions and the parents of school friends asked me to teach my friends to play the organ. I obliged at ten rand an hour which was very good money in mid-seventies. However, I started my first real business in 1982.
3.3 MY FIRST REAL TERRITORY: THE BALLET SCHOOL

Like most young girls, I had always wanted to do ballet. However, when I was in primary school there had never been enough money to pay the ballet fees and, by the time I had reached high school, everybody said that I was too old.

One day shortly after my twenty-first birthday my roommate at university mentioned that she wanted to go back to ballet classes and I said I would join her if the teacher would allow me to do so. We went to our first class. I honestly think that Ms Fernie, the ballet teacher, allowed me to join the class because she had not expected me to last more than a few months at the most. It did not bother me that I was the oldest person in the class and, until my Intermediate year, also the biggest and that, in ballet, nobody wants to be the biggest!

By the time I was twenty-five I had passed my Advanced Examination in Cecchetti and registered as an Associate of the Imperial Society for Teachers of Dancing (AISTD). I was a qualified ballet teacher.

I graduated with a BSc in 1978 and completed a postgraduate diploma in higher education (HED) in 1979. In 1980 I was appointed as senior science teacher at

Photograph 3.3: Invitation to the Dance at the Grahamstown Festival (1981). I am second from the right in the back row.
I enjoyed teaching young people but I hated the fact that I had no control over my income and no distinction was made between a teacher who did the extra work involved in providing the learners with the best possible opportunities and the teacher who did as little as possible. This frustrated me and I felt trapped by the system. I wanted my own business so I could earn the income I felt I deserved. I yearned for the thrill of increasing the business turnover and profit margins. I also needed the adrenaline this would provide. It was time to start a business on the side.

My father-in-law was the principal of a primary school in the same city in which I worked – Port Elizabeth. Although he was an extremely strict man he offered the hall at his school to me for one day a week in order to teach ballet classes. I was surprised and grateful.

I had the music, the venue, the qualification and a few willing students. There was no agonising over a smart business name and no need for business cards which, to my mind, were carried only by really important executives. I did not even calculate in advance whether or not the venture made financial sense. I just started to teach. I was young, very excited and had lots of fun dancing with the little ones. I even had one senior pupil who enjoyed the privilege of private tuition at normal class rates as she was the only student ready to go en pointe.

My father-in-law did not want scratches on the floor of his spotless hall. However, doing tendus and dégagés does cause a certain amount of dulling of the varnish on the floor even if it is tiny feet that are dancing. At the end of the day, I swept the floor and tried to remove all the small marks made by the tiny ballet shoes on the varnished floor. Every time I saw my father-in-law I was scared he was going to reprimand me for the scratches on the floor but he merely changed my venue to one of the classrooms instead. This was kinder to my stress levels.
At the end of the first year, four of my students enrolled for their Cecchetti ballet examinations and they all passed well.

At about that time I had a watershed experience at the school where I was teaching physical science. The head of department post became available and I discussed the possibility of applying for the post with the headmaster. He told me not to bother as he would only employ a man in the position. The morning after the executive meeting to decide who to employ in the post everybody on the governing body, except the principal, asked me why I had not applied for the post. Apparently they had all accepted that I would be appointed. I was furious with the principal for his “advice” and that the man who had been appointed was someone I knew from the Science Teachers Association in the Eastern Province. He attended meetings only when we discussed the past examination papers because he was not able to solve the more challenging problems and needed assistance from the more experienced teachers. He was not respected in the group. I could, under no circumstances, work under him so I decided it was time to start a family and build my own business where the course of my career would not be decided by a man. Towards the end of that same year I became pregnant with our first daughter, Marizanne, who was born on 8 July 1985.

At the beginning of the next school term I was a new mother and no longer teaching mathematics and physical science at the high school. I could focus on my
ballet school. I could not afford a babysitter but I was used to my previous ballet teacher teaching with a baby on her hip. So that was what I did. Marizanne was only two weeks old and slept for most of the time. However, at the end of the first day, my father-in-law was waiting for me outside the ballet class. He told me, “This will not work. You must stop this immediately.” Being told what to do and knowing that I could not move my ballet school to another venue as this would mean defying the authority of my parent-in-laws made me feel trapped and controlled. However, I knew I was not willing to cause a major upset in the family by defying the authority of my father-in-law, but that neither he nor anybody else would control me.

Driving home after that encounter with my father-in-law I felt furious and frustrated. Nevertheless, whenever I felt as if someone was trying to control me I reminded myself that it is not possible to hold water in your fist. By the time I had reached home I had escaped from my father-in-law’s grip. My next business was planned and my father-in-law would not know about it. I understood why Neill was so secretive. Whereas I was able to share anything with my mom, he had learnt to hide anything that would upset his conservative parents.

The next week I explained to the mothers of my ballet students that I could no longer continue with the ballet school and I introduced them to a ballet teacher in the area who had her own studio and lots of experience. Although I was disappointed that it was the end of my little business I was excited about starting the next one.

3.4 SWITCHING TERRITORY: EXTRA LESONS

From 1984 to 1985 I was the chairperson of the Science Teachers Association in the Eastern Province. Accordingly, I called on my network of teachers and parents of my former students to spread the word that I would be teaching remedial mathematics and physical science (physics and chemistry) lessons from home. If they knew of students who could benefit from these lessons they were welcome to refer such students to me. Neill warned me that teachers might feel threatened by this but I suggested to them that I would be supporting them in their pupils obtaining good marks. Ultimately I would help them to look good. Two weeks later
I was in business. I coordinated Marizanne’s afternoon naps with my lesson times and my in-laws were none the wiser.

### 3.5 AFTER THE MIGRATION TO GAUTENG

In October 1986 we moved to Johannesburg – a big city that I did not know at all. Neill had been promoted to an exciting position at the Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC) head office and I was pregnant with our second daughter. We rented a house in the south of Johannesburg. While Neill was at work and meeting interesting people, I explored parts of the city to see where we would want to live in this massive metropolis. Using the *Saturday Star* newspaper and a map book of Gauteng fifteen-month-old Marizanne and I started looking at houses. This was years before Global Positioning Systems. Without that map book I would never have found my way anywhere, let alone back to our rented house. On 26 December 1986 we moved into our new home in the north of Johannesburg. However, once we had settled the loneliness hit me. In Port Elizabeth I had known so many people and I had had good friends but, in Johannesburg, I knew only one person other than my immediate family.

Teneill was born on 8 June 1987. While nursing her I often read my quantum physics textbooks for stimulation. It was ridiculous! I simply had to find something stimulating to do to preserve my sanity. I love my daughters but having toddlers as my only companions all day long did not suit me, especially not when Neill was away on business for almost half of every month.

I went to the local high schools and advertised extra lessons in mathematics and physical science. This paid off and soon I had a string of pupils coming for class after school. Initially I planned my extra classes around Teneill’s nap time and Marizanne’s hour of watching the kiddie’s television programme. However, before our third daughter, Jeanne, was born on 18 May 1990 I had employed a full-time nanny for the children. This gave me more time to teach and greater flexibility.

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48 Gauteng is the Sotho word meaning “Place of gold”.
3.5.1 The territory expands

From January 1991 I was also a freelance lecturer in Physics at the Rand Afrikaans University. In addition, I was able to take on interesting and stimulating contracts such as the Afrikaans textbook for first-year physics that I edited in 1992. The extra lessons at home continued. My daughters – having known nothing else – were used to being quiet near my home office so as not to disrupt my classes. The teaching provided me with mental stimulation but, more importantly, it gave me financial independence.

In 1993 I signed a contract with Eskom and Transnet through RAU to mentor their engineering bursary holders from previously disadvantaged backgrounds who were studying at RAU. I found this experience enriching. Twice a week I met with the young men who all came from very disadvantaged communities. We discussed the academic work that they found challenging, I assisted them with the solving of physics problems and taught them study methods. I also had to guide them socially. Initially every day was packed with new experiences such as swiping a card for a meal. Most of these young men had never even used anything as simple as a stapler before. In order to ensure that they did not spend their year’s bursary money on shoes and clothes for their families in the rural areas in their first month at university, we loaded their bursary money onto their bank cards once a month for that month. Nevertheless, some of them almost went without food for the first month because they had already sent presents home before we had been able to stop them. I also learnt from them. One evening as I was locking up one of the students gave me twenty cents that he had picked up from the floor. I told him to keep it. Who was going to come back for twenty cents? I was so embarrassed when he said, “But would it not be nice if the person did come back and found the money still here?” Most of them were incredibly honest and sensitive and they would often come up with amazingly creative, original questions about physics laws.

Towards the end of that year, I spoke to the Physics Department at RAU about a partnership. I wanted to offer a service similar to the one I was offering to the previously disadvantaged students to school leavers who did not have the benefit

RAU, later it became the University of Johannesburg (UJ).
of a bursary and a mentor. These students would pay RAU directly – either on their own or by obtaining a sponsor – and I would claim my share of the money at the end of each month. The university did not give me a commitment to the project immediately and, so, the following year, 1994, I committed myself to helping out as a senior science teacher at a local high school.

Returning to teach at a school after eight years of working freelance required a major adjustment on my part. I had forgotten how frustrating some of the meetings, fund-raising events and examination invigilation could be. Most of the learners hated science but they had to take the subject to obtain a university entrance or because their parents wanted them to. I used story-telling in an effort to arouse their interest but, nevertheless, I had to put up with rude teenagers whom I was trying to educate and ensure that they understood physics and chemistry. It would have been an extremely long year with much boring administrative work and red tape if it had not been for the opportunity to choreograph the school musical, Grease.

In September that year I was particularly frustrated in my teaching post. One day while travelling down an escalator in my favourite shopping mall, Cresta, I saw a painting by Julian Fisher hanging in a gallery. I admire his work and I knew his paintings cost almost as much as I earned in a month as a teacher. Nevertheless, that day I walked straight into that gallery and bought the cityscape of a wet Johannesburg. To this day it is hanging in the entrance hall of our home. It serves as a reminder that I never want to earn a living doing something I really do not enjoy.

During that year the chairperson of the Physics Department at RAU telephoned to discuss the possibility of a bridging school to assist students to acquire the relevant credits for university entrance to courses such as engineering, medicine or veterinary science. The department had decided on an expanded version of the proposal I had made the previous year! I was excited and ready to start the following year. Accordingly, in November, when the principal of the school wanted to renew my contract for 1995 I refused as I had already committed to run the bridging school at RAU.
I had to draw up a programme covering the senior school physics and chemistry syllabi to prepare students for their first year at university. However, I had also enrolled for a BSc Honours degree in physics (part-time) at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Before I could write the programme, I had to pass my examinations in January 1995. My three daughters also needed their share of my time and attention. However, for the month of December, my husband and the girls went to his parents for a long summer holiday at the coast while I stayed at home to study and write examinations. I was fortunate to have a husband like Neill, who was willing to help with the children.

After the final paper of my examination I cleaned my study thoroughly – this it is still my de-stressing ritual. The next day it was back to reality. I had to condense the academic material to fit into the programme that ran from February to October. I thrive on this type of challenge – thinking of ways in which to engage the students to ensure they understood my explanations as there would be no time in the programme for them to catch up if they fall behind with the work.

I remember many years earlier one of my postgraduate higher education diploma (HED) lecturers saying, “You can teach anything new to a person by hooking it
onto the existing knowledge of the learner and taking small enough steps from what they know to where you want them to be.” Using this advice and the experience of using a map while house hunting when we had moved to Johannesburg. I designed a map for each chapter and started the lesson with “Let me first tell you a story ...” I used everyday experiences with which they had an emotional connection to engage their amygdala\textsuperscript{50} and to give them an overview of the journey on which we were to embark. It was essential that the story provided them with a feel for the scientific laws I was about to teach them and, so, I had to put markers in the story so that, as we reached these in the theory, I would be able to refer back to the markers and utilise the emotional anchors to bring about “aha moments”. Before I taught the new theory we would look at the map that constituted the basis of the theory I was about to teach and only then did I teach the actual chapter. Although it sounds like a long process it is not and it saves time. The students soon became used to this system, felt “safe” using the map and fully engaged in the process.

As soon as the academic year had started in 1995 I took life literally one day at a time. On a Wednesday morning I would write the English chapter of the work that I taught later that afternoon. By lunch time it would be printed and, at approximately four o’clock, I would photocopy the work for the students. On a Thursday morning I would translate Wednesday’s English version into Afrikaans and, later that afternoon, the Afrikaans students would receive their freshly printed notes. The students were given the weekend to solve a comprehensive set of homework problems based on the work done during these lessons. On a Monday (English) and a Tuesday (Afrikaans) we would mark the homework and address all the problems that had proved to be challenging. This was an extremely important step in their learning. In this way the chapter was completed within eight days.

Before the record examination I would hold a Saturday workshop to go through the entire syllabus. I had endless energy and pushed the students hard. At the end of the year many students commented that they could not believe what they had achieved during that year. By the second year things were much easier. On the basis of my experience the previous year, I merely had to edit the notes.

\textsuperscript{50} An almond shaped mass in the brain that forms part of the limbic system and plays a primary role in emotional reactions and decision-making.
I also embarked on my MSc (Physics) that year. I confessed to people who thought I was brave to do it all, “Studying is my excuse to retreat to the quiet of my study after eight at night.” I desperately craved the stimulation of my studies. For me a day without personal growth is a day wasted.

I ran the bridging course at the university as a profit centre – assuming responsibility for everything from managing the payment of fees to the supply of coffee for the coffee breaks. The system ran smoothly until the end of 2000 when the university decided they no longer wanted a school on campus. They offered me the opportunity to run it as my own business off campus. To this day they still refer potential students to me and, from time to time, they still ask me either to write educational programmes or to read physics theses for them.

I am convinced that RAU uses me because I am reliable and undemanding. I have no problems with being given last minute contracts and I have never demanded fulltime employment with all the concomitant benefits. I enjoy the freedom to fill up my hours with lectures, remedial work and interesting projects such as editing a text book without being tied up with all the administrative red tape of a fulltime post.

3.5.2 Gaining territory: bridging school moves to our house

It was with considerable excitement that I moved the bridging school to our house in February 2001. I now had complete autonomy and would be able to expand to include any subject the clients needed. I bought 24 desks and chairs and Neill installed two whiteboards in the 52 m² room on the ground floor of the old house we had bought in 1998. Although I did not have a photocopy machine I printed the notes in my home office on my basic HP laser printer.
I discussed the changed situation with members of the Gauteng Education Department who knew me well by then. They were comfortable with the school moving to my house. They conducted regular inspections during examination times and everything was always in order. During the matriculation examination I would collect the question papers for the day from the department the moment they opened in the morning. Then I would rush back through the early morning traffic to be in time to welcome the learners and ensure that they were seated and organised. After the examination I would collect the papers, check everything that needed checking, seal the answer sheets in an envelope and return the parcel immediately to the department. The fact that I am extremely organised minimised any possible stress I may have experienced.

I saw a broad spectrum of young people between the ages of seventeen and twenty-six years. It was clear from the start that these young people needed more than just academic content. The mentorship programme in which I was involved in 1993 was extremely useful. The students required certain skills, including how to prepare for an interview, apply for bursaries and learn study methods. I also
attended a workshop with an educational psychologist, to enable me to use the relevant assessment material for career guidance. These students often did not realise at the outset how hard they would have to work in order to achieve distinctions, while they had to adjust to the realities of academic life. Having a mentor often prevented them from giving up on their dreams.

Together with my contract with the RAU I had also been involved with the International Baccalaureate since 1998. It was an excellent system and I had enjoyed being part of it but, in July 2001, Dr Robert Storms, who had spearheaded the project in Johannesburg, died. I realised that the project would probably not continue in 2002 and so I saved as much money as possible to resurrect a half-forgotten dream of ten years before.

3.6 EXPANDING INTO PURRFECT TERRITORY

In January 1991, while collecting my cats from the cattery where they had stayed while we were on holiday, I watched the owner with envy as we walked along the winding pathway. I love animals – especially cats – and I could visualise myself thoroughly enjoying running a cattery every day. However, I did not have the financial resources required to buy a suitable property and build the necessary accommodation. Consequently, I pushed the thought to the back of my mind and decided to enjoy my academic contracts.

Almost ten years later I was at the veterinarian paying my darling Donsie’s last veterinary bill when the receptionist, in an effort to cheer me up, asked about my other cats. The conversation turned to December holidays and I told her that, with seven cats, I was no longer able to afford to take them to a cattery. I mentioned that I was going to build a cattery for them in my garden and pay someone to take care of them while we went on holiday. She immediately said, “Why don’t you build a cat hotel? You have been a client for so many years. We know and trust you and will keep you full.” I left the surgery mourning my beloved Donsie and he became the inspiration for Purrfect Place.
3.6.1 July 2001 – Luxury territory

Early one Saturday morning in July 2001, I sat at my desk sketching plans for Purrfect Place on an A4 writing pad. I calculated that we could fit twelve cat hotel units in on the highest terrace at the back of our property and estimated that it would cost approximately twenty thousand rand to build. By mid-morning I was on my way to Lyn, the chairperson of the Pets Boarding Association (PBA), to discuss the requirements for membership of the organisation. She took me on a guided tour of Katmandu, her cat hotel. However, I already had a clear picture in my head of what I wanted my cat hotel to look like.

It was essential that the cat hotel ensure that the cats would stay dry in the wildest storm, had shade when the summer sun baked down and that they would be warm on the coldest night. In addition, the cats needed enough space in which to move about and, even though they could see other cats, it was essential that the cats be kept apart to prevent their fighting or passing on any diseases. The stand we had available for building the cat hotel dictated the north-facing orientation of the cat hotel. I will be forever grateful for the fact that the sun was able to heat the concrete floors during the winter months but not shine into the houses in summer. We designed a slanted roof with a small overhang to ensure shade inside the rooms in summer and to shield the door and window from most of the rain which usually comes from the south.
In September 2001 the building commenced. It was a stressful time. Neill has an extremely good eye for straight lines and dimensions. In an attempt to help me, he often interfered with the building. He gave the builder, a dear octogenarian, a very difficult time about the gap between the doors and the frames and other details that were too small for me to care about. However, this upset me. Although I say what I believe, what one says must come from a positive place and I do not like to hurt the feelings of people whose intentions are positive. Neill and I had quite a few arguments but our marriage survived the building process as it would other challenges in the future.

Once the brickwork had been completed, Rick Rossouw and his men moved in to do the steel mesh work. Although this job was much more complex than I had anticipated, the atmosphere was calm. Rick is a softly spoken introvert. Despite constant blood streaked arms from the steel scratching him he always appeared serene.

Photograph 3.8: Purrfect Place emerging from the hands of Rick (blue trousers) and his workers

Neill and the girls helped me paint the cat hotel – roof, window frames and walls. Neill and Aaron, the gardener, collected patches of lawn from the nearby riverbanks and one of my student’s parents, who were changing their garden,
donated LM grass for the last three cat gardens. I installed a birdbath under the apricot tree in the fruit orchard in front of the cat hotel for the cats’ entertainment.

While the building was in progress, I bought cat beds, litter trays, food and water bowls, blankets and towels. This was the first time in my life that I had had to negotiate bulk prices and I was surprised at how easy I found it. I enjoyed transforming The Purrfect Place from a concrete building into a boutique hotel for cats. I see myself as the provider of a luxury service and it is essential that my clients have peace of mind when their cats are in my care. I am aware that, if my clients have a positive experience at Purrfect Place, word will get around and success and the money will follow.

My timing with the cat hotel was perfect. Purrfect Place opened at a time when every cattery and kennel in Gauteng was overbooked. Lyn from Katmandu recommended me to some of the people she could not accommodate – a fact for which I am eternally grateful. Purrfect Place was fully booked from 12 December 2001 to 5 January 2002 and I did my absolute best – hoping to retain some of the clients.

During December I realised that I had made two huge mistakes with the building of my cat hotel. I should have built the passage as part of the buildings and not as part of the garden as this would have meant that I would have remained dry when it rained. However, my biggest mistake was my cost estimate of twenty thousand rand. I spent eighty thousand rand to get Purrfect Place up and running and this meant that I had to borrow forty thousand against the bond on our house.

After the December honeymoon period I received a reality check. During February and March 2002 Purrfect Place ran at a loss. Although Neill’s family regarded the cat hotel as my new hobby, I was convinced that it would become a successful business in the long run. December had taught me that there was a need for my service and this gave me the confidence to hang in during the tough times until the next busy period arrived. By the Easter weekend, Purrfect Place was fully booked once again. I knew that the business would grow if I provided an excellent service. Fortunately, I had the bridging school to carry me financially through the tougher
months. It also kept my mind busy and thus, there was no time in which to sit and worry.

3.6.2 I am a caged lion again

In July 2002 I received a telephone call from the principal at Hoërskool Florida. The school desperately needed a senior science teacher and I seized the opportunity to earn some money to sustain me while I grew the cat hotel. However, I was definitely somewhat over-committed. At five o’clock in the morning I had to feed the cats and clean the cat hotel. My family had to prepare their own breakfasts and pack their dishes and mugs into the dishwasher. By seven o’clock Marizanne and I – showered and composed after the early morning rush – would be on our way to school. Neill dropped Teneill and Jeanne off as they attended another school in the opposite direction to Hoërskool Florida. Until two o’clock I taught physical sciences and then I went back to the cat hotel until four o’clock.

Clients either dropped off or collected their cats before 07:00 or after 14:30. Although these times were awkward, the clients were, amazingly, willing to accommodate them. During breaks at school and in the afternoons at home I returned telephone calls and confirmed bookings. Whenever I had a gap I would collect my daughters from their extramural activities, drop them off at home and teach two hours in the bridging school between five and seven in the afternoon. Fortunately cats are diurnal. In the early evening I would feed, brush and play with the cats – a relaxing activity for both the cats and myself.

One Thursday evening in October, after the last bridging school class of the week, I had to carry four tables and chairs from the school to the cat hotel to accommodate the cats arriving the next day. During one of my trips up two flights of stairs I stopped to catch my breath. It felt as if I was forever carrying tables and chairs up the side of the mountain – we were 1760 metres (1 mile) above sea level. Despite the fact that I was constantly eating I had grown extremely thin and my legs were shaking when I stood next to the table. It was time to cut back a bit. I was not only running out of hours in the day but I was also running out of energy.
Photograph 3.9: I had to carry the tables and chairs from the far right hand side of the photograph to the cat hotel – situated beyond the far left hand side of the photograph and up another flight of steps.

3.6.3 Relinquishing some territory
At the end of the 2002 school year I asked the Mathematics teacher (Susann) at the bridging school, whom I had known since 1976, whether she wanted to take over the bridging school. Susann was extremely excited by my offer and from January 2003 I forwarded all referrals to her. We agreed that she could use my building – the lower floor of my house – as an examination centre for the final examination in 2003.

In view of the fact that I was no longer running the bridging school, I was looking forward to an easier 2003. However, I was soon involved in more activities at Hoërskool Florida than had previously been the case – returning to the school in the evening for meetings or extramural activities. Three evenings a week Marizanne and I rushed back to Florida where we were involved in *The Tempest – the musical* by Blake Toerien.

Thirteen-year-old Jeanne took over the cat hotel duties between four and whenever I returned home at night. My human family received dinner only after I
had fed and taken care of the cats. Although my cat clients were extremely understanding and Jeanne attended to the clients in an increasingly professional way – especially for her age – this was a very challenging time. I was down to four hours sleep a night – often sterilising cat units at midnight to shower and return to the house to prepare lessons for the following day. I spent the weekends spring-cleaning our house, doing the laundry and cutting, when there was no other option, the cat hotel lawn with hand shearer as I did not allow power tools near the cat hotel. Halfway through 2003 I had repaid my loan.

One particularly crazy day – and definitely the most expensive one – we had friends staying for the night en route to Europe. Late that afternoon on my way home from school I bought take-away pizzas. Loaded with pizzas, handbag, briefcase and bunches of keys I rushed up the nineteen steps to the front door and into the kitchen where I popped the pizzas into the oven – not noticing that I had put my car keys and the alarm remote in the oven with the pizzas. A while later while reheating the pizzas, I heard a minor explosion in the oven. I was very upset thinking that the new oven was giving problems. The next morning, searching for my car keys and alarm remote, I eventually found the pieces in the oven. I had spare keys but not a spare alarm remote. The alarm system of my car had to be replaced. To this day I am teased by everybody who hears the story of how I baked the alarm remote.

My conviction that it is essential that students correct the mistakes they have made in assignments, tests or examinations while the experience was still fresh in their minds often meant that I had to mark almost through the night to ensure the students were given their marks and saw their mistakes at the very next lesson. I often fell asleep in the middle of marking a test sheet – waking up after a short power nap to continue marking. Slowly it dawned upon me that this state of affairs could not continue indefinitely. In March 2003 I resigned but, knowing how difficult it would be to find a qualified senior science teacher in South Africa, I promised the principal I would not leave before December. At this point the Purrfect Place turnover had started to exceed my teacher’s salary, while the Purrfect Place business expenses equalled my petrol costs for the multiple daily trips to and from the school.
Late 2003 was an extremely busy time. With the cat hotel filling up I had to carry almost all the tables and chairs up the hill to the cat hotel and then down the hill to the bridging centre before and after every examination paper. It was crazy! I needed the tables and chairs in the cat hotel more than I needed the money from the school. Thus, after the examinations had finished I helped Susann to set up her own centre so that she could run it completely independent of me. I had moved on to something new and exciting with the cat hotel now doing extremely well.

3.6.4 Learning tricks in this territory

One afternoon toward the end of 2003 while I was grooming cats I looked back over the last two years at the cat hotel. My learning curve had been as steep as the increase in turnover. Although I have had my own cats since 1981, there was still much that I did not know about cats and cat care and probably more even that I had yet to learn. Owning a cat hotel not only involves feeding the cats and cleaning their litter trays twice a day. I have developed systems to ensure the safest and most cost-effective way to sterilise dishes, houses, bedding and litter trays. I have learnt how to spot an abscess and detect the presence of fleas and other parasites. In addition, I have also learnt about the myriad possible cat diseases – from skin cancer through renal failure to feline aids and the dreaded FIP.  

Cats manifest a range of temperaments. For example, there was Beasley who ate his tablet as if it were a tasty titbit and Smee who turned into a ball of spikes if you needed to medicate her. However, fortunately she would eat food spiked with medication without noticing it. Some cats devour food while others refuse to eat for days and have to be hand fed twenty kibbles at a time every few hours. In addition, there were the special cats who needed extra special care and are forever etched on my mind – Harry and Vinnie and Simon and Sage. Harry was the first diabetic cat that I had had to inject. I remember setting my alarm clock for his twelve-hourly insulin injections to ensure I always gave him his 0.03 ml on time. The first few times I would start to worry as soon I withdrew the needle. Had I actually injected all the insulin? Had the needle not poked right through his skin?

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51 Feline Infectious Peritonitis
with the insulin squirting into the air? Had I measured the quantity accurately? What if, what if, what if? If poor Harry dared to nod off I would wake him up – fearing he was going into a hypoglycaemic coma. He was such a star – he never flinched and nothing ever went wrong. I could not have wished for a better teacher to instruct me on how to deal with diabetic cats. After Harry there were Vinnie and Mike, who were also on insulin, and then there was Simon who had to receive approximately 200 ml subcutaneous fluid every morning. How daunting was that! However, they were so patient with me. I have planted lavender bushes in each cat garden in memory of these brave souls.

I started 2004 as an extremely happy cat hotel owner. For the first time in twenty years I had one responsibility only other than that as a mother, namely, Purrfect Place. The fact that I was able to answer the telephone at any time resulted in a higher occupation rate – averaging ten cats per night. However, without any staff either in the house or the cat hotel I was still doing a lot of the manual labour. Nevertheless, my loyal client base was growing and financially I was better off than I would have been as a teacher. Despite the fact that cleaning litter trays was part of the job, I loved every moment of running my little business. I do not enjoy being confined to one building all day and every day and, as a teacher, I had often felt trapped. At the cat hotel I have a sense of freedom. I am able to take on extra work if it suits me but I am able to enjoy a cup of coffee with a friend or client when the opportunity presents itself. This flexibility is extremely precious to me. I am a workaholic and am able to squeeze activities into small pockets of time, but I do treasure interaction with dear friends and close family as much as I like solitude.

3.6.5 Lily came into my territory
In 2006 my mentor, Lyn, introduced me to Sandy and David who were planning to open a cattery close to mine. Over coffee, Lyn and I shared our knowledge with David and, later that day, David visited Purrfect Place to look over my setup and take measurements. When Sandy and David were about to open their cattery they invited me over to show off their new business and they asked my advice on
small, but important, details such as sterilisation procedures and food suppliers. The peak holiday season was upon us and soon they were marking their territory. However, there is always a steep learning curve when one starts a new business. Late one afternoon shortly after they had opened Sandy phoned me sounding stressed. They had a boarder who was refusing to eat. This is fairly serious. A cat that does not eat for more than thirty-six hours will start to digest its own liver. I rushed over to their place and, once we had established that there was no medical reason for the cat not to be eating, I showed Sandy how to hand feed.

Sandy used to work at a veterinary clinic and she had a good referral and support system. They were soon were running a successful business. We still have a good relationship and Sandy is on my referral list when Purrfect Place is unable to accommodate requests for cat accommodation.

Early in 2010 Lily, a client of mine, decided that she, too, wanted to start a cat hotel. The game was about to change.

Although both Sandy and Lily had used Purrfect Place as a model for their catteries, their catteries do not look the same and neither do they look exactly like mine. Each cat hotel has its own character as we all confronted the differences in the lie of the land and available resources. I was fortunate that there was a large, north-facing terrace at the back of our property that was ideal for a cattery. Both the other catteries offer good accommodation and I am happy to refer clients to them, but they have smaller units in which to accommodate the cats and one faces south and the other east – not ideal.

In the summer the sun passes over high up and does not shine into my units while, in the winter, when the sun is lower, it shines right to the back of each unit. The concrete absorbs the heat and the units retain heat until late into the night. By nine o’clock on winter evenings I have put hot bags into the cat beds and I close their doors. By morning the units are still cosy. Our rain usually comes from the south and, thus, the patios of my units stay dry for most of the time. Lily’s units do not get any sun in winter and, thus, she has heaters on throughout winter, resulting in extremely high electricity accounts. Sandy’s units get early morning sun but, by early evening, she has to turn on the heaters too. Lily has the added
frustration of the rain beating down on the doors and windows of her units. The utilisation of the location of a cattery is ninety per cent luck and ten per cent innovation – making the best of what you have.

Between 2005 and January 2011 there was seldom a unit vacant. However, the last week in March 2011 was one of the worst weeks in Purrfect Place. During the second half of 2010 three catteries, including Lily’s cattery, each able to accommodate between fifty and hundred cats, had opened in our area. Obviously some clients explored these new options – especially when Purrfect Place was fully booked when they needed to board their cat(s).

I always hope that clients will return to me and, indeed, most of them do. In order to encourage them to return I introduced a new practice: once a year every client receives a personalised, branded calendar with a photograph of their cat(s) and magnetic strips attached to the back. This follows on the original Purrfect Place habit of every cat going home with a diary of the time spent at Purrfect Place. From the obvious delight on human clients’ faces it is clear that those two practices are successful. In 2011 I bought a colour printer and I started printing the calendars at a fraction of the original printing costs.

### 3.7 STORM CLOUDS GATHERING

During the first months of 2004 I realised that Neill had become extremely negative and secretive. He appeared to be unhappy at work and I felt as if he were jealous of the pleasure I found in my business. During the day when he was at work I had fun in my business but, in the evenings, I tried to be very casual about my day. However, I was feeling guilty for having so much fun while he was obviously not. A month later Neill sat me down and we had a life changing conversation.

#### 3.7.1 Continued darkness: September 2004 – January 2010

While in the depths of emotional darkness in 2007 I would sit at my desk staring at the rose garden through my study window without seeing anything at all ...

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54 See Lily’s narrative in Chapter 4.

55 Please see Neill’s narrative in Chapter 4
mind wandering through the past almost six years. How had we reached this point?

When Neill had told me in July 2004 that he had been demoted, but without a concomitant decrease in salary, and that he was seeing an executive coach, I had encouraged him to accept the arrangement. I know Neill and I was aware that he enjoyed the privileges of an executive position. Finding employment had become increasingly difficult while starting your own business was far more difficult than people anticipated. However, at the end of September 2004, Neill accepted the retrenchment offer – believing that it would not be too difficult to make a considerable amount of money in an own business. Every time I think about the events of this time it upsets me again as it resulted in more than five years of incredible financial stress at a time when our daughters were at high school and university.

I have always maintained that the greatest chance of achieving success is in the field in which you have expertise, special skills and your main networks. I have seen so many retrenched people use their golden handshake to start a business in a field in which they have no knowledge or skills – only to have to close down the business within the first year after opening. However, Neill was adamant. He did not want to “work with people”. He insisted that he was going to become an extremely successful cabinetmaker. I had seen him work with his hands and I had even assisted in a small way when we had renovated our little farmhouse on Leeupoort. Nevertheless, he had very little experience and, in addition, he usually underestimates the scale of projects. However, he was extremely excited. The weeks that followed were nerve wracking for me but very exciting for him.

At the end of September 2004 the executive coaching that the company had provided had disappeared together with his steady, monthly income. Now Neill was at home all the time and we spent hours talking – actually he was talking and I was his sounding board! This was very time consuming but it was part of my education. I had had some experience in coaching and mentoring the bursary holders in the engineering department at UJ and later the students at the bridging
school. However, it was clear that I had to improve my coaching skills and, as there was no training programme in South Africa that I knew of at the time, I bought *The coaching manual* (Starr, 2003) and I worked through it as if preparing for an examination. I experienced a problem in downloading resources from her website so I emailed her. She was kind enough to send me everything I needed accompanied by an encouraging email.

The years between late 2004 and early 2010 were the most difficult period of my life with Purrfect Place as the only light at the end of the monthly tunnel. With AFC Creations, Neill made the typical mistake of trying to be everything for everybody – taking on such a wide range of projects that every task required a new skill set. He had to focus, but the need to earn an income made it impossible for him to say no to anything that crossed his path. It was extremely difficult for me to witness his struggles. I had to support him in his dream and grant him the right to make his own mistakes despite the fact that it was clear to me that what he was doing was not sustainable in its current form.

I own framing equipment that I had bought second hand from a friend in order to frame my own oil paintings. Framing oil paintings is easy to do and also considerably cheaper than professional framing. Accordingly, to help Neill I did the little framing jobs that were offered while he built cupboards in people’s houses. I wanted him to focus on bigger projects such as kitchen cupboards and wall units. Sadly, I did not possess the skills necessary to do all the intricate projects Neill brought home. For example, one day I had to cut an oval out of glass to frame an antique wedding photograph. It was a total waste of time and glass.

If the frame I had to do was extremely large and heavy Neill had to assist me with the project. This often ended in an argument as he was extremely impatient. Although I understood his frustration and I did have some empathy for his bruised ego and the long hours he spent in stressful manual labour, I was not a qualified framer and neither was my equipment sophisticated enough for many of the projects he brought home. In addition, I had no desire to do any framing courses or to buy more equipment as framing was not my passion. Soon I told him that he was welcome to use my equipment but that I was not going to help him any longer as it was damaging our relationship.
At the same time I was worried about the fact that Neill was working extremely long hours and making hardly any profit. He is a dreamer and very good with detailed work. Nevertheless, I am usually the one who is able to see where things are heading long before he does. I could see his sense of pride and accomplishment every time he completed a project and he was enjoying himself, but he was getting deeper and deeper into debt. However, this was a very sensitive subject and often I could not speak my mind because his ego was still extremely fragile after his retrenchment and his inability to earn sufficient money to meet his financial commitments.

While Neill was busy with AFC Creations there were issues that were bothering me. I was extremely concerned about the noise of the electrical machinery constantly running in our front yard. It was not conducive to a tranquil cat hotel and there was always the possibility that it would cause problems with our neighbours. Every time a client rang the bell at the front gate I had to ask Neill to stop working so that there was no noise while the client was present. This made me feel guilty. However, although I felt I was cheating there was just no way that I could expose them to the noise even though it was clear to them that Neill was working in the driveway and garage. As for the neighbours, I merely hoped for the best.

Our worst experience happened shortly after Neill’s retrenchment when he became involved in a scam. Despite the fact that the children and I pleaded with him not to become involved, he lost twenty thousand rand of his retrenchment money although he could have lost his bakkie and even his life. He had thought he was going to multiply the last of his money a hundred fold but, as is so often the case, if it sounds too good to be true it probably is. For at least two days I was too angry with him to speak to him – something that had never happened either before or after that incident. We still have a glass ball covered with tar that he had bought believing it to be tanzanite to remind us never to be gullible.

I knew I had to think of ways in which to make enough money so that we were not dependent on Neill’s income at all. Although it was a pity that I no longer had the bridging school there was a possibility that I could start teaching science, although

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56 Pick-up truck
on a part-time basis only as the cat hotel was now too demanding to allow me to take a full-time post. I would require a salary that would cover the wages of a cat hotel manager, my petrol costs and enough extra to make it worth my while. Nevertheless, although no school or university would pay me that much I would make a plan.

I immediately phoned someone in my network who had started a tutor centre. A week later I started teaching freelance at a small private school close to home. I only went in for the periods I taught and the principal was extremely accommodating. All my classes were scheduled to fit between the hours of twelve and two to enable me to see cat clients for most of the day. Hence I had no need for a manager at Purrfect Place. I also telephoned the physics department at UJ and both UJ and the University of the Witwatersrand started to refer engineering and medical students who required tutoring to me. This kept my mind busy and I felt slightly more relaxed knowing that, for much of the year, I would be able to cover most of our basic running costs.

However, the stress overwhelmed me late at night. I would curl up in bed, tired to the bone, but, as soon as all was quiet, I would become aware of my muscles bunched up with stress and my shallow breathing. I used all my knowledge and skill of yoga to relax my body in an effort to fall asleep. When this proved too difficult to do I would go into my office and, lying on the couch, I would listen to professional recordings to guide me through the relaxation process. This always works for me.

It was a time of extreme financial discipline but also some luck. Liza, who was one of my cat clients and who had become a friend, was about to emigrate. One day, while I was having coffee with her at her house, we talked about their imminent move to Britain. She excitedly told me about the school they had found for their daughter, Abigail. However, they were slightly concerned as Abigail would go from Grade 6 in South Africa to the middle year programme of the International Baccalaureate (IB). I told them that the IB is a magnificent system. In view of the fact that I had had extensive experience in both the IB, British, and South African programmes I offered to coach Abigail in the science and mathematics curricula in

57 The same Liza who introduced me to Prof.
the six weeks that they would still be in South Africa. This would ensure that Abigail would be ready to enter the middle year programme when she went to her new school. Her parents insisted on compensating me generously for my efforts.

2009 was a particularly barren year financial for Neill. One day in February we were standing in the kitchen while Neill heated water for coffee on his camping stove. Our electricity had been cut off due to late payment and Liza was returning to South Africa in three days’ time to stay with us for a month. The thought of her being with us without electricity upset me. I suggested that we sold our holiday cottage on Leeupoort as we could use the money from the holiday cottage to pay off the bond on our house. This would, in turn, make it easier for us to survive through each month, while the knowledge that I was not about to lose my cat hotel would alleviate my stress.

We had bought the Leeupoort house in 1993 and as a family we had accumulated wonderful memories during weekends and holidays there. As a result of the fact that none of the big five\textsuperscript{58} were to be found on the game farm – with the exception of a lone leopard passing through from time to time – our daughters had enjoyed total freedom on Leeupoort. The house was very dear to us but our financial situation was desperate.

Neill was not keen. “I’d rather sell this property and retire to Leeupoort.”

“What about the cat hotel?” I wanted to know. Neill shrugged his shoulders.

The possibility of losing Purrfect Place made me feel very insecure. “If you sell this property I shall go back to teaching and grow Quantum Gain. I am not prepared to retire now.” Fortunately, the property on which the cat hotel was situated was in both our names and it was, thus, not possible for Neill to sell it without my permission. On the other hand, Leeupoort was in his name and so I could not sell it. For the rest of the day while working in the cat hotel my mind was searching for alternatives. If we had no outstanding bond on this property and we did not have two daughters at university I should be able to cope financially. However, as this

\textsuperscript{58} Lion, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo and leopard
was not the case, I needed to earn even more each month than I was doing to meet our financial obligations.

Purrfect Place was running at maximum capacity. Although I needed more money I was not prepared to consider lowering the standards by housing cats from different households together in order to accommodate more cats at the cat hotel. In the past, when clients had begged me to allow their cats share accommodation just so that I would be able to accommodate them, I had refused to do so as it would not have been fair to the cats. Some cats would dominate and others would hide and not eat enough. There was also the added danger of the cats contracting diseases such as snuffles and feline AIDS from infected cats. I could never allow that. Purrfect Place is a luxury hotel and the cats would not live in overcrowded units, compete for food and/or be exposed to disease. The more difficult our situation, the more important my good name became to me.

During peak times there was sufficient market interest to justify the opening of another branch of Purrfect Place. Unfortunately I did not have the financial resources required to buy another property and build another cat hotel at the current building cost of thirty thousand rand per unit. As I had explained to Neill on more than one occasion, expanding the current facility would be even more expensive than building another cat hotel. In addition, during the building expansion, the existing operation would have had to close temporarily and we could not afford three to four months without an income. Thus, all I could do was to increase the number of hours I spent teaching and mentoring and charge the maximum rate.

3.7.2 Spending time with Neill’s pride in the stormy weather
Between 2004 and 2010 I often had to remove myself emotionally from our sometimes traumatic situation to act as Neill’s coach. Although I was not supposed to coach my own husband, we were not able to afford to pay either his previous or any other professional coach, and, in addition, there was no one else to whom Neill was willing to go. It was essential that I remain extremely aware of my own agendas so that I would know when I was coaching Neill and when I was manipulating him. I wanted to be there for him in the best possible way when he needed it and, during the coaching sessions, I did my best to remain professional.
I meditated daily and I also kept a reflective journal in order to de-clutter my mind, maintain my sanity and make sense of the difficult times. I had to be as honest with myself and with him as was humanly possible in order to support the process he was involved in making the best decisions for us under the circumstances. However, there were certainly times when I did manipulate him. I shall put this into perspective a little later.

Looking back at Neill’s time as a cabinetmaker I am forced to admire him for his work ethic. Not only did he spend long hours engaged in manual labour but he also made beautiful cupboards using amateur tools and with hardly any initial expertise. If he had been able either to employ skilled workers or to skill workers up to the level at which they would have been capable of doing the work with him as the manager, this business would have had the potential to be more successful than it was. Unfortunately, however, this was not part of his strategy. Neill does not enjoy long processes. As far as he was concerned there was no time to waste. The men had to learn as they went along but, sadly, because of the variety of projects and the time pressure their learning was random and not standardised.

In hindsight, AFC Creations was Neill’s therapy rather than a long-term business.

When Neill moved on to become an estate agent I joined him. Apart from gaining a qualification during my short time as an estate agent, I gained an understanding of the industry. This, in turn, enabled me to be a better sounding board for Neill than would otherwise have been the case. However, I also learned valuable lessons of the trade.

The cat hotel became extremely busy and, with my other responsibilities increasing, I employed a cleaner at the cat hotel to ease my load. In 2006 this provided me the freedom to attend a series of courses in the evenings. One of these courses was a six-month course on business building as part of an intensive hypnotherapy course. In addition to the hundred and six hours of practical hypnotherapy work the course offered superb practical business skills and I learnt much from it. Although the hypnotherapy included numerous techniques, I focused on those techniques that supported the coaching process including visualisation techniques for goal achievement.
I returned to the estate agency where Neill was working once to give a motivational talk. Some of the agents who were going through difficult times asked to meet with me. I started building on the coaching process that I had developed by reading about coaching and practising on my former students, Neill and our daughters. People started referring friends and clients to me. Initially I saw people for a free introductory session in order to establish rapport with them but I soon learnt to charge from the beginning because some people tried to exploit this complementary session. The business building course helped me to set boundaries and structure these sessions.

Photograph 3.10: A large collection of my coaching books

In the meantime, Neill had moved on to his next business – starting a recruitment business with his friend Peter in 2007. However, things were about to become extremely complicated. Joining a small family business run from people’s home is bound to result in complicated situations, but not one as serious as the lack of an income. Once again I was Neill’s sounding board. The very thought of that time drives me to the kitchen for a cup of tea.

As his wife I have always tried to support Neill. However, I am human and I have had to find ways of coping with some of the situations that Neill brought into our
lives. It is difficult to predict exactly what you will do in order to survive until you are confronted with the necessity of surviving. Neill, probably as a result of his own insecurities, was often not honest and open with me about his situation. However, this had taught me to look for non-verbal indications from him in order to address situations and avoid uncomfortable surprises.

I noticed that the moment money came into our lives Neill started to relax. His focus would then disappear and he would revert to dream mode until he ran out of money again. Experience had taught me that when he became extremely quiet he was probably hiding something negative from me. The tension in the house would become unbearable until he would sit me down and tell me that he had not paid the electricity bill, the levies at The Yard were in arrears or his credit card was unpaid. During the early part of our troubled times, Neill would withdraw money from the access bond on our house until the bond reached its limit. As our debt increased, I experienced additional stress. My cat hotel was on the same property as our home. Thus, losing our house would mean also losing our main source of income.

Neill's complicated working conditions in his friend's family business and the ongoing dramas about money fuelled the suppressed anger in me. I realised that, because I had taken so much of the financial responsibility onto myself, he had reacted as if there were no financial pressure. Accordingly, I decided to be less open about my income. However, Neill knew I would save money throughout the year in order to pay our youngest daughter's university fees which were due at the end of February each year. When we were no longer able to borrow money against our bond, I was forced to use these savings when Neill was in financial difficulty.

It was difficult for me to make up for these losses in time to pay her fees. Nevertheless, I managed to do it every year by hiding money away and putting pressure on Neill to focus on earning an income. If he did not realise there was back-up money he tended to stay more focused than he would otherwise have done. When he had money coming in, I would hold back and give him the opportunity to pay for the small amounts involved in our day-to-day expenses. This

59 The Yard is a property development near UJ in which Neill owns a block of 8 bachelor flats.
helped to maintain his focus between spurts of earning an income. I felt devious and I am not proud of what I did. Nevertheless, this strategy focused his efforts on making a success of his recruitment business and also defused my anger, enabling me to demonstrate some empathy towards him.

It was essential that my self-awareness level remain high during my coaching of Neill and also during other conversations with him. However, this is not possible all the time. In addition, although I tried to remain completely impartial, I had to see the bigger picture and work with Neill – knowing that, when he was in a better place emotionally, this would also have a positive impact on my life. One evening we had a serious argument. The next morning, when he asked me for a coaching session, I was still hurt and cross with him. Thus, in order to ensure that he received a reasonably fair deal, I had to meditate for fifteen minutes in order to quieten my mind and reach the self-awareness required to be his coach.

It is with a huge smile on my face that I remembered January 2010 when Neill had signed a contract with Callie. An immense weight had lifted off me and the sun had shone more brightly than it had in years! Since then Neill has been running in luscious territory. I am eternally grateful for him and for the rest of our family. I am able to sleep at night.

3.7.3 Back in my luxury territory – a weekend in 2013

It was a Saturday morning and Gray, a young blue male kitten had just arrived for his first visit to Purrfect Place. Shortly after his “mother” had left I went to sit with him to enable me to become used to my scent and to ensure that he relaxed. This presented me with an excellent time in which to think.

With my feet propped up on the window ledge I counted my blessings. The cat hotel was running like a well-oiled machine. I had been extremely lucky. My clients, and both the veterinarian practices I used and those of my clients, had been extremely helpful in growing my business. Thus far I had relied almost completely on referrals.

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60 This section gives the reader an indications of the systems employed in Purrfect Place.
Word of mouth is a double-edged sword. Firstly, the clients who had been referred to me have been screened as the referring client or veterinarian would know and trust them. This had probably contributed to the low incidence of bad debts that I had experienced. In addition, I had not had any cats abandoned at Purrfect Place. Also, when there was a reduction in the number of referrals, I could explore the reason for this. Purrfect Place had grown steadily and, thus, either a steady or a sudden, but apparently permanent, decrease in occupation would set off alarm bells in my mind. At the end of every week I would conduct an analysis of the occupation for that week and, at the end of the month, I would repeat the process for the month. I would compare the results with previous weeks and months and also with corresponding months of other years. One can never be too alert.

Gray’s wet nose sniffing my arm brought me back to the present. At that same moment I became aware of a flaw in my strategy. I was not keeping proper records of the number of clients I was not able to accommodate when Purrfect Place was fully booked. There could have been a decrease in those numbers and I would not realise it. Being fully booked would not necessarily have meant that all my clients were satisfied. I needed to put a system in place to address this loophole. I also knew that, if clients were often turned away because of a lack of accommodation at Purrfect Place, I lost these clients.

I offered Gray my hand to sniff and scent mark and I ran that same hand over his back. He looked relaxed and I felt able to move on to do some real work. I went to the laundry and placed the next load of cat washing into the machine. Then, with a freshly made cup of tea, I went to my office to consider the differentiating factors of my business and the systems I had put in place over the years to smooth the operation of every aspect of Purrfect Place.

I remembered that I had taken some time to decide what hours to open. As a boutique hotel for cats Purrfect Place was open by appointment every day of the week between 07:00 and 19:00. These hours are more flexible than the fixed hours of the larger catteries. The appointment system also meant that I knew exactly when to expect each cat and I was, thus, able to use the rest of the time to my best advantage – seeing business clients, running errands or doing whatever I
deemed necessary at the time. The Purrfect Place hours are printed on the cat calendar and diaries and on my website so every client has access to them.

Sunday afternoons I was in my office planning the week ahead. As always I typed a logistics table of all the cat movements in and out of the hotel and I planned the cat food orders for the week ahead. I even planned the meals for my family. I believed that, in this way I set my pre-frontal cortex free for more important decisions than what to serve for dinner.

At approximately half past four – on my way to serve the cat dinners – I stuck the printed copies of the logistics table up in the kitchen, the cat hotel storeroom and next to my computer so that Bonisiwe and I would have the necessary information available when we packed the food basket for the cat hotel, fetched the linen required for a cat hotel unit and when I wrote the cat diaries at night. Hence, Bonisiwe can see at a glance which house in the cat hotel needs to be ready and for how many cats on what day. She knows the regular cats and, for example, when she reads the name “Roxy”, she will use a special set of bedding as Roxy chews holes in material. On the other hand, “Simba” tells her she needs to remove the chairs and put a special bed in the house as he is very old and he cannot jump. For the less regular clients I always write a little note to indicate special needs. However, when I employ relief staff in December I have to write more detailed notes in order to convey the necessary information.

While I was filling up the cat food containers in the cat storeroom my thoughts turned to Bonisiwe. She is a young Zulu woman who loves animals. She left school before matriculating. However, what she lacks in formal education she makes up for with her warm personality. She quickly learnt the cat hotel systems and she is my proverbial right hand in Purrfect Place. Initially, she did not fully understand my concern about hygiene principles. Although all cats entering the cat hotel must be inoculated and treated against parasites such as worms, fleas and ticks, there is no guarantee that a cat does not carry the herpes virus or even the feline immune deficiency (FIV) virus. It is, thus, essential that we ensure that no cat comes into contact with these and other viruses during their stay with us. Once I had explained to her why we kept the dirty laundry and the used food bowls from the cat hotel away from all the cats until we have sterilised them, she
has adhered to the rules. With more than six years’ experience, she now understands and follows the systems. Although I have to double check the important things once a day, she takes the mundane work off my shoulders so I that have the time to do the things that I enjoy and find stimulating, such as conducting this research study and mentoring people.

![Bonisiwe Msomi](photograph3_11)

Photograph 3.11: Bonisiwe Msomi

I glanced over the interior of the cat hotel storeroom, noticing the printed lists of the cat hotel processes and stock stuck on the cupboards. There are three people who know these processes. When one of them takes over in my absence, that person has to have written guidelines for each process. On my return to the business I am able to ascertain immediately what is going on in the business by checking a few things.

With all the schedules in place, I focused on preparing the cat dinners. Before I left the storeroom I checked that I had packed everything for the cat dinners in the basket. It is extremely frustrating to have to run back to the storeroom when I have forgotten something. Winding my way through the fruit trees in the orchard to the cat hotel I thought how lucky I had been to have had Lyn, who had more than thirty year’s experience in this business, as a mentor when I started Purrfect Place. Not only had she taught me not to feel threatened by competition but I had received referrals from her when I had needed them most. Now, however, it was
my turn to refer my overflow to her as she has a much bigger cat hotel and has moved far out of town. In the last seven years I had also mentored three other cat hotel owners – two of whom had opened cat hotels within a four-kilometre radius of Purrfect Place.

Walking up the steps to the cat hotel I stopped to chat to Neill who was having coffee on the wooden bench next to the cat hotel – the highest point in our garden from where we have a view from Northcliff to the Hartebeespoort Dam. I told him about a client who, despite the fact that she was not going away, wanted to bring her cat in for a week so that she could be given a calendar for the new year. Neill knows me well and he always teases me about how competitive I am. I am always looking for ways in which to make Purrfect Place stand out. Competition makes me sharp and creative and forces me to stay aware of the needs of my clients. I am determined that my facility and service must always live up to the Purrfect Place standard of excellence. Being aware of the competition makes me think of small but important ways in which to ensure that my clients return.

3.7.4 Lessons learnt on the African plains

A few years later – a lovely late afternoon in March 2012 and the fruit trees in front of Purrfect Place were still green although there was no longer any fruit on them. I was grooming the cats. Starting at number twelve (PP12) I worked my way down to PP1. As far as possible I teach the cats to jump onto one of their tables so that I am able to stand while grooming them so as not to place too much strain on my back. Over the years I have found I am able to teach the cats to jump onto the tables within a few days using clicker training.

While grooming the cats I think of my own mentor in the cat hotel business, Lyn, who also rescues cats, especially from the squatter camps. At any one time she has between twenty and thirty cats living free on her smallholding. When I started Purrfect Place I made a conscious decision not to own more than the seven cats I already had. My cats are like my children and seven is about as many as I am able to afford to keep. I prefer educating people to become responsible pet owners instead of becoming a dumping place for unwanted cats. Does that make

61 Using the clicking sound made with my thumb and middle finger to guide them step-by-step.
me selfish – hard-hearted – or just responsible? It is difficult to decide that about oneself.

By the time I had reached PP6 I was completely relaxed. Grooming cats always has this effect. I also realised afresh that we live according to the choices we make and I choose not to have more cats than seven.

Over the years I have had my share of cat hotel problems. In 2004 an American evangelist working in South Africa booked her Chinchilla breeding pair into the cat hotel for six weeks. While in the United States she was admitted to hospital and I did not hear a word from her for seven months. According to my contract I was legally able sell her two cats to cover my costs but I intuitively decided not to do this. By the time she returned to South Africa she was unable to pay her account of over ten thousand rand. She paid me two thousand rand and suggested that I choose a kitten from the next litter – hence Purrbear. Initially I felt cheated but I soon became smitten with the silver kitten with the huge green eyes and who had been conceived in Purrfect Place. I accepted the deal. However, I definitely learnt from that experience and I will not accept kittens as payment again.

*Photograph 3.12: Irresistible Purrbear*

The other two cases in which I almost lost money did not end as well. However, both clients eventually paid in full, although one took six months to do so.
However, I never again admitted either of their cats to Purrfect Place nor did I refer them to any other cattery on my referral list. I did not want my colleagues to have to go to the same lengths I had had to go to in order to receive payment for a job well done.

While serving out the last cat dinners I thought of the conversations I have had with Lily and in which she expressed her anger because of her feeling that owners do not always take good care of their cats. Noticing the extremely wet litter tray of Farmer Bates reminded me that Lily and I definitely have a different view on that. I knew that Farmer Bates’s owner loved him dearly and I had realised that she was probably also having to clean his litter tray out three times a day because of his huge puddles. However, when I had mentioned to her that she should talk to her veterinarian about it, she had been surprised to hear that the huge puddles may have been indicative of a kidney-related disease or diabetes. She did not have the same frame of reference I have as Farmer Bates was her only cat. The fact that she had not considered that the extremely wet litter trays could be indicative of a problem had been the result of a lack of both knowledge and experience and not negligence. It is, thus, important to me that I deal with such issues in a way that does not make the owners of the cats feel as if they have failed their cat, as it serves no purpose to make owners feel guilty about the way in which they care for their cats.

I usually record everything I notice in the cat’s diary to remind me to tell the cat’s owners about anything in particular when I see them. However, I always suggest that they discuss the matter with their veterinarian. I am not a veterinarian and I definitely do not diagnose cats. On the contrary, I only administer medication as per veterinarian prescriptions. Nevertheless, I have found that this is not true of all cat hotel owners.

I moved on to Rococo, the hairless sphinx cat. She reminded me that we are all different – we deal with situations in different ways – some people stress more than others and over different things. I try to stress only about things I am able to change and then I try to change such things proactively as quickly as possible. I would imagine that the fact that my father was a perfectionist and he died so young plays an important role in the proactive way in which I deal with stressors.
Soon all the cats had been fed and it was time to write up their diaries while the dinner for the family was in the oven.

3.7.5  A rainy day in Africa

I woke up the next morning with the rain coming down in buckets. No matter the weather, the cats needed to be fed and their houses needed to be cleaned. Cats hate the sound of waterproof clothing and I never want to stress the cats in the cat hotel. When cats are stressed they tend to refuse food and, if they carry the herpes virus, this may cause it to flare up. Luckily in Gauteng the rainy season is usually warm. Dressed in light clothes, but with a peak on to keep the rain out of my eyes, I started the morning feed. I keep the food bowls dry by covering them with a special plate until I am inside a cat house. As I walk into the cat house I leave my shoes\textsuperscript{62} on the rubber mats in front of the door to ensure that everything inside the houses stays dry.

I like the fact that this business has its own challenges. These challenges are one of the reasons why not everybody who loves cats owns a cat hotel. In the late afternoon the rain stopped for a short while and I used the opportunity to serve the cat dinners. Although it was not raining I had to open and close all the gates gently in order to stay dry. The roof of the 22 x 6 x 3\textsuperscript{63} metre steel mesh cage was covered with drops of water waiting for encouragement to take their final leap to earth. While I worked my way up the run I asked myself, “Why do I always feel I have to do the ‘purrfect’ job”? Yes, I love cats and I want them to receive the best possible treatment but I also want their owners to be able to enjoy complete peace of mind – knowing that their cats are well cared for. However, I think the main reason for my attitude is because doing my best makes me feel good about myself. I think less of myself if I know I am not doing my best. I am building maps in my subconscious of who I am as a business and as a person by the way in which I live and run my business. Although this business certainly does not define me, it does tell me something about myself.

Summer and winter, every night before I go to bed I sit at my desk and plan the following day. On Sunday afternoons I plan the week ahead and, at the end of the

\textsuperscript{62} Thank you for Crocs
\textsuperscript{63} Length x width x height
month, I plan the month ahead. As I come closer to the end of this study – which has been my focus the last three years – strategies for what will happen after this study are starting to take shape in my head.

Purrfect Place has been fully booked almost every day and the possibility of opening other branches is extremely viable. I definitely think other branches could be successful provided I choose the location and the management carefully. However, Quantum Gain, my latest start-up business, is also providing options which I am extremely eager to pursue.

3.8 STARING INTO THE BUSH

Twenty-eight years later, I still teach extra lessons, although now mainly to university students. The bridging school opened the door to my coaching and mentoring business which I find extremely rewarding. Purrfect Place has been immensely important in my life; both financially and emotionally. The lessons I have learnt over the years have stood me in good stead. I am truly grateful to every business I have had.
CHAPTER 4

Other prides on the African plains

Photograph 4.1: Lions relaxing in their territory

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks – in terms of time, equity, or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal the needed resources; the fundamental skill of building a solid business plan; and, finally the vision to recognise opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion (Kuratko, 2007, p. 3).

Stories have the unique power to move people’s hearts, minds, feet, and wallets in the story teller’s intended direction (Guber, 2011, p. 6)

Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane.
When someone tells us a story with data tucked inside, our brains cleverly lock the data onto the feelings we experience while listening to that story (Guber, 2011, p. 46).

Based on the definition of entrepreneurship quoted above and in view of the fact that I share Guber’s belief in the power of stories, I was inspired to hear the stories of the participants in my study.
Neill, the restless lion

Photograph 4.2: Ready for another adventure

Photograph 4.3: On the road again

66 Green – the colour of the bush
67 Photograph from the private collection of Nettie and Ken Kyle
4.1  THE RESTLESS LION
This is Neill’s story in his own words.

4.1.1  Caught in a trap – 2004
It was a long time before I was able to tell Zette\(^{68}\).

I was driving home from RB\(^{69}\) for the last time and my mind, inevitably, returned to the tumultuous few weeks which had just passed. I had had a wonderful position, excellent remuneration package and the spoils that went with it, but I had simply gone in too deep and I had not been coping. Losing my job had been a terrible blow on every level. Nevertheless, although the manufacturing processes in the company had intrigued me, the human resources processes were long and complex and, in addition, there were lots of company politics that I did not like. The CEO had felt my leadership was not strong enough and I know that I had not always had enough confidence. I had also thought that the CEO’s timeframes for some of the projects were unrealistic and, from time to time, I had become completely snowed under by the workload. Anyway, I had finally been retrenched.

This was not only a blow to my ego and confidence but also a severe financial setback. Six months earlier I had bought a block of eight flats, The Yard, off plan. The block is situated across the road from the University of Johannesburg. If the building were completed by the end of the year, I would have occupants by early 2005 when the academic year started. This would have meant that I would have to carry the bond for one or two months only. However, if the accommodation became available only during the course of 2005, when all the students would already have found accommodation, I would probably struggle to find tenants. Nevertheless, I was determined to try to remain positive and not to waste energy worrying about something over which I had no control. However, I needed to decide what I was going to do with the rest of my life.

I wanted to do something more visible and more within my control – something that would involve short, concrete projects in terms of which I would be able to see and quantify the results of my efforts. Zette and I had had long hours of

\(^{68}\) Neill’s nickname for me
\(^{69}\) The company where Neill was working at the time (Not the actual name of the company)
discussions during the preceding two weeks. She maintained, “You make your best money in the industry where you have the most experience – knowledge and skills.” However, I definitely did not want to work with people in a corporate environment. After a long discussion and much soul searching I decided to do woodwork and renovate kitchens for a living.

Wood has always fascinated me. I love the smell of wood when I work with it. I find the beauty of the wood hidden beneath the rough bark and the different grains of wood fascinating. Nevertheless, my wife is very sceptical about our financial future, but I was too frustrated and hurt to debate my choice of a potential business.

When I stopped at our house I had no recollection of the road I had just travelled.

In the following few days I started AFC Creations. I spent considerable time buying tools and setting up a workshop in our double garage.

4.1.2 AFC Creations

When I stood in my converted garage cum workshop for the first time I took a few deep breaths to override the adrenalin coursing through my blood. I was extremely excited, but also a little afraid. I slid my hand over the brand new red generator that would power the spray gun used to apply protective coats on the cupboards I was going to make. At the back of the workshop stood the Emcostar – a multipurpose machine that was able to do things I had only heard about. Thinking about them made my stomach turn over but it could not be too difficult. The man who had sold it to me had known how to operate it and he was not an engineer. How tricky could it be?

I looked at my watch and realised that I needed to rush off to meet Heinz, the owner of the company that had fitted our kitchen cupboards the previous year. Approximately ten years prior to that, the company had also installed the kitchen in our previous house. Heinz knew the business and I remembered how busy he had said they were. I was convinced he would be able to give me good advice and also that he may even be able to refer people or subcontract small jobs to me.
I found Heinz behind his desk busy with calculations. He moved the papers neatly to one side while we exchanged pleasantries. After he had asked the receptionist cum personal assistant to bring us coffee, he enquired how he could help me. I told him about all the power tools I had bought in order to start a business as a cabinetmaker.

For a moment Heinz was at a loss for words. Looking a little confused he asked, “Were you not some big shot in HR? This is a major shift. Why?”

“The last few months at RB were tough. There were unrealistic expectations and the human resource managers, who reported to me, were torn between doing what head office demanded versus what the operations managers of the different factories desired. I had no control over the things I was supposed to control. I did not always buy into the processes, especially when they seemed too intangible and without a real end in sight. The operations managers often won and that, in turn, made me look bad. My confidence level dropped to zero, and, on 30 September, I walked out of that building for the last time with a four-month retrenchment package in the bank. Just thinking about it now, I can feel the stress in all the muscles in my back.”

Heinz listened attentively although he still looked somewhat confused. “Wow, Neill, I can see you have been through a lot but I still don’t understand why you’ve decided on this business.”

“I need to work with tangible things where I feel in control again. You remember the house we had in Randpark Ridge – I built cupboards in the one bedroom and I fitted Suzette’s office with cupboards and bookshelves. I remember how great it felt every time I completed a job. I believe that I will be able to make anything I set my mind on.”

Heinz wanted to know, “Have you had any woodwork training?”

“I’ve did woodwork as a subject in grade eight. Also, when I was about thirteen I read a book about a boy who had a toolbox. He went from house to house fixing things. This little book left a lasting impression on me. Over time I realised I prefer

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70 Human resources
making something from scratch rather than fixing things. Inspired by the story I spent lots of time walking in the veld\textsuperscript{71} near Postmasburg and collecting dry wild olive wood. I meticulously sanded small pieces of the wood by hand – turning it into jewellery. It was also during that time that I made three small tables and all three are still in service.”

Heinz smiled.

“I really feel that I am good with my hands, Heinz, and now I need to do things where I am able to quantify the results of my efforts. I need to feel good about it.”

The coffee arrived and I asked Heinz some of the many questions in my head – learning as much as I could while in the presence of an expert. He rattled off a list of essential tools I would need and the names of suppliers I may have wanted to use. I scribbled everything down in the black note book I carry with me everywhere I go. By the time his mug was empty Heinz was telling me about one of the kitchens he was working on at the time. “Amongst other things the owner wants a custom built wine rack. It is not one of the standard items in our range – a nuisance item. If you want to make this wine rack to specifications and I am happy with my workmanship, we’ll use it and use you in future for other, non-standard items.”

It was with a happy heart that I drove away. Fortunately, my bakkie\textsuperscript{72} had a canopy and, thus, it was ideal for transporting the tools, material (often six metre long planks), workers and finished products. I stopped at one of the suppliers Heinz had mentioned to buy the tools I still needed and lined up three assistants. I would use them as and when I needed them – depending on the size of the job. Of the three, one had very limited relevant experience while the other two had no experience at all. However, they were willing to learn and eager to earn money. At home I stood in my garage cum workshop with the adrenaline pumping. Although I had been given my first assignment I also realised there was a steep learning curve ahead. Nevertheless, I had the names of suppliers and the tools I would need. The learning process was about to begin.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[71] Fields
\item[72] Pick-up truck
\end{footnotes}
I sourced material and suppliers as I needed them. The suppliers were invaluable. When I bought hinges they would inform me which hinges were the best for which doors, how to fit them, the equipment I needed for the job and where I could buy it. I asked questions, absorbed the new knowledge and learnt new skills almost non-stop.

Everywhere I went I marketed myself – seeking job opportunities. I was also responsible for client liaison, quoting, sourcing and screening suppliers (of tools, wood products, paint/varnish, hinges, door knobs, etc), daily planning, all the preparation for the jobs, doing the physical work on site, tool maintenance, invoicing, debtor control, learning about both the industry and specific jobs, as well as directing and supervising my assistants in all aspects of their jobs. In fact, I was overextended.

Two days after my first visit to Heinz, the wine rack was finished. It looked marvellous despite the fact that it took five layers of lacquer to obtain the smooth, high gloss finish it required. I only learnt that I had to seal the wood before applying the colour or protective layers months later. On my way to deliver the wine rack, I felt elated – I was pleased with the concreteness of the product as well as the fact that producing it had not involved a long drawn-out process. Heinz was very happy with the quality of the product and honoured his undertaking to refer projects in which his company was not interested to me. Soon there was a steady stream of orders coming in, ranging from making an oval picture frame to fitting an almost complete kitchen. Each of these projects brought its own challenges. I took photographs of every item I made – building up a portfolio.

One specific challenge arose from a friendly woman who lived on a smallholding in Muldersdrift. She had dreamt of owning a three-tiered tea trolley with beautiful turned legs in order to wheel food from the kitchen to the dining room. I promised to deliver what she wanted. I drew plans for the trolley and estimated the thickness of the supawood that would be suitable for the surfaces and how I would match the colour of the supawood surfaces to the meranti legs. I started turning the legs using white meranti but the first leg broke early on in the process. During my second attempt, I found the rounded parts of the leg were too brittle and pieces splintered off easily. I repeated the process using red meranti and this time I was
successful. Spraying the trolley with stained varnish using a small generator was
tnerᴠ e wracking. Drops started to form on the nozzle of the spray gun. These drops
left marks where they splashed onto the surface of the trolley. The only way to
remove these marks involved sanding the surface down and repeating the
process. Sourcing suitable wheels for the trolley was another challenge. I did not
know where to start looking and had to buy two sets before I found one that was
suitable. Almost a week later the tea trolley was ready to be delivered to
Muldersdrift. I used pantyhose to secure the trolley on the bakkie as I knew rope
would mark the wood. In addition, I had to ensure that the trolley did not bump
against the sides of the bakkie when I was driving along the dirt road to deliver it.
The new owner loved her trolley although she was a little less enthusiastic about
the price. I had had to increase the price just to cover the cost of the trolley. It did
not make financial sense as I had taken four days to manufacture it and I could
not really charge for the labour.

![Photograph 4.4: The trolley and the Mabilingwe wall unit](image)

One morning, tired after successive days of hard manual labour, I was cutting
strips of supawood for kitchen cupboards. My concentration was further impaired
by the boredom involved in cutting strip after strip and this resulted in the biggest
fright of my life. Pushing planks through the electric saw, I suddenly felt the saw
pulling my hand down onto the saw plate. My whole body went cold as I realised
that the blade had caught my right thumb and had then pulled my thumb down in
order to cut through it. I was extremely fortunate that the bone had not been
severed although the cut was deep and wide.

I quickly ran upstairs to the bathroom, cupping my thumb in my left hand in a
hopeless attempt to staunch the blood. My wife heard the commotion and almost
collided with me at the front door when I rushed past, leaving a trail of blood on my way to the bathroom. She poured “steel drops” over the thumb to stop the profuse bleeding and then wanted to rush me to the doctor. However, I had to finish the cupboard doors so I cleaned the coagulated blood and we dressed the wound with gauze and Elastoplasts strips. I then returned to the job – but with increased awareness. I had time to see a doctor only three days later. By that time, the wound was swollen and a seven-millimetre gap between the two halves prevented the doctor from stitching the wound. For the next six weeks I worked with an extremely sensitive right thumb. This did not make my job easier.

If this was the biggest fright I had ever had, the biggest challenge in my life was definitely the wall unit I built for a lodge in Mabilingwe. I met the owners of the game lodge in a restaurant near our house to discuss a wall unit to house the television in the recreational area of the lodge. They wanted the unit made from pinewood with a dark finish. The problem was the lodge was approximately two hundred kilometres north-west of Johannesburg and I did not have the time to drive there and take measurements. However, the owners suggested that when they returned to the lodge they would telephone me with the measurements and specifications for the wall unit. Surely this would be sufficient?

With the measurements written down in my black book I sourced the materials required to build the framework and ordered the doors from a reliable supplier of cupboard doors. However, once the basic framework had taken shape, I realised that it was going to be difficult to transport the unit as a whole. It would probably be wiser to do the final assembly and spray the dark finish on Saturday afternoon once the unit had been safely delivered to Mabilingwe. By Friday the pressure to complete the wall unit was intense. My assistant, Dave, and I worked until the early hours of the morning. After about two hours of sleep we were up again. We had to travel to Mabilingwe, spray and install the wall unit and return home the same evening.

We loaded the top section of the unit as well as the compressor onto the bakkie. I secured the bottom half of the unit – which was significantly bigger than the trailer – with ropes on top of the closed lid of the trailer behind the bakkie. There was no other option. I looked at the loaded bakkie and trailer thinking, “How am I going to
get this cupboard safely to Mabilingwe?” Zette watched with disbelief. I could see she was also worried.

I drove slowly, keeping one eye on the road and the other on the contraption on top of the trailer. At the slightest sign of any increased movement of the cupboard I stopped to check the ropes. After four very long hours we arrived at our destination with all the pieces intact. It was just past eight in the morning but both the lack of sleep and the stress of the trip had depleted my energy. However, there was no time to waste. I had to start installing the wall unit immediately.

A closer inspection of the room added to my concerns. The walls were not as straight and smooth as the measurements I had received had suggested. This complicated the installation process and, in addition, I had not brought with me all the power tools I required to adjust the back of the unit. On the positive side, the weather would permit us to work outside. It would have been impossible to spray the unit inside the lodge. I am always tense when I stain or varnish a piece of furniture and, once again, the droplets of stain accumulating at the tip of the nozzle of the spray gun caused intense frustration. By late afternoon all my muscles were aching. Nevertheless, we had to complete the job and stopped working only at midnight. The two hundred and forty kilometres home with the empty trailer was easier than our early morning trip but we were exhausted and fortunate to reach home safely.

The following weekend I returned to Mabilingwe to complete the task. On the road I had time to think. The fact that I had had to travel more than a thousand kilometres just for this wall unit had meant that the hourly rate for the job had dropped to the bare minimum. With month end a few days away, I desperately needed the money but, despite all my efforts, there would be a shortfall. The amount I owed on my credit card was increasing. During this trip I also realised that some of my equipment, for example the compressor for the spray gun, was not suitable for the jobs I was doing. I would have to upgrade some of my equipment.
4.1.3 The restless lion reflects

I was sitting at my desk reflecting on the past six months at AFC Creations. I had been working six to seven days a week for most of that time – sometimes spending several hours on planning, making mistakes and remaking the same item. Projects often took three times longer than expected. Nevertheless, my obsession with straight lines was a benefit as attention to detail was crucial in the business. I was also convinced of my ability to master a job even if I had never done such a job before. I found it easy to solve the problems my potential clients experienced. This, coupled with the fact that I am good at liaising with clients, was building up my confidence. I also had good mentors in Heinz and Stewart of NS Kitchens, Henk Behnken, my tennis friend and a professional carpenter, and the sales staff at my suppliers. I definitely had more confidence in this business than in HR in which I had so much more experience than my present job.

Despite the fact that the volume of work I had to do was mentally intense and physically extremely tiring, I was fully engaged and happy. I found it therapeutic to look at the finished articles I had made – concrete evidence of a job well done. I enjoy the creative nature of the business. Although the majority of my clients treated me with respect it was difficult for my already bruised ego to accept that my clients probably perceived me as a manual labourer only. I was used to being treated with respect in the corporate world but, in this business, my knowledge and skills as regards human resources and management were largely irrelevant.

My knowledge of and experience in woodwork had grown significantly and I was always busy as a result of referrals. However, time was my biggest enemy. I was not able to charge for all the time I spent on a project as I was competing with businesses that were fully automated and could finish a job in a fraction of the time it took me. On the other hand, I could handle unique projects that the bigger companies would not take on. Nevertheless, I had just completed a twenty-four thousand rand job that had taken a month to complete but my net profit for the project was eight thousand rand. This was not nearly enough to cover my living expenses for the month – let alone the costs involved in expanding the business, saving and becoming financially secure. I could not continue in this way but I did
not have the financial means or the financial backing to take my business to the next level.

In August 2005, after ten months of doing woodwork, I closed down AFC Creations.

4.1.4 Spritely Sprouts
I was sitting on the garden bench with a mug of coffee, watching Zette feed the cats their dinners. It was obvious that she was enjoying herself and it reminded me of a time when I had been content running a business – Spritely Sprouts – on the side. It had all started during one of my visits to my good friend, Gert, on his smallholding in Zwartkops in the summer of 1996. It had been my experience with Spritely Sprouts that had given me the courage to start AFC Creations.

While we were making coffee in the kitchen, I had noticed a number of twenty-litre plastic drums in his pantry. Expecting to hear that the man was making mampoer,73 I asked “Wat is die,” Gert?” “Spruite,” he answered. Although I had no idea what he was talking about I experienced a intense sensation – as if somebody had hit me in the stomach with one hand and I knew “This is it” – this was the “side business” I had been looking for all these years. I did not discuss this any further with my friend but, from that moment on, my whole being was absorbed by sprouts.

At home my wife helped me understand what sprouts were and for what they were used. The next day I bought two books on sprouts and read halfway through the one book although I looked at all the photographs in both books. I then conceptualised my new, small business. I designed and constructed a framework for my production facility using square tubing which I had salvaged when I renovated the farmhouse on Leeupoort. During my lunch break at the office I went out to buy twenty-litre plastic drums and strong plastic netting and I visited potential suppliers of raw seeds for sprouting to learn about the business from them. Next I sourced suppliers of packaging and I bought a second hand machine for cling film wrapping. I visited City Deep, the Johannesburg fresh produce

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73 A strong alcoholic beverage made from fermented fruit.
74 What is this
75 Sprouts
market, twice – once in the late afternoon and once in the early morning – in order to familiarise myself with the place and to find agents who would market my produce. I had to be able to deliver attractive, properly packaged bean sprouts of consistently excellent quality twice a week. The agent’s fee would be five per cent of the revenue from the products sold.

I went into production immediately. I rinsed the seeds with fresh water at least twice a day as a considerable amount of waste material is generated during the sprouting process. Good ventilation and the correct moisture level and temperature are critical elements of the successful production of sprouts. In order to minimise the risk of contamination and to ensure excellent quality products, I washed the drums myself and I used clean, good quality seeds only.

Photograph 4.5: My sprout farm

I started off experimenting with twelve different seeds but soon reduced this number to three – chick peas, brown lentils and mung beans. Although the business was very small I felt connected to the world. I followed the weather in the source countries of my seeds as that affected the quality and supply of the seeds, as well as the local weather, as this influenced the quality of my product.

Within two weeks my first batch of sprouts was ready for the market. That first evening, after a day at the office, I persuaded my three young daughters – Marizanne (11), Teneill (9) and Jeanne (6) – to help me to pack the sprouts for the market. At approximately half past ten in the evening Zette emerged from her study and insisted that the girls go to bed immediately. I continued packing on my
own until the early hours of the morning and, at four o’clock the next morning, I delivered my first sixty packets of sprouts to City Deep – tired, but extremely proud of my first crop.

![Photograph 4.6: Teneill and Jeanne packing with me. Marizanne took the photograph](image)

Our three daughters assisted with the packing for the first few weeks and they earned good pocket money. However, their mother became increasingly concerned that this was affecting their sleep patterns and their school work. Nevertheless, by that time the business had grown and I employed two part-time packers who reported for duty twice a week – in the morning before I left for work. In view of the fact that I was away from the house at the office while the packers were working, I had to ensure they had enough of everything they required for the day before I left for the office. Because it was not possible for me to run around during the course of the day in the event of any emergencies detailed planning was essential. The workers would set up two white plastic tables in my double garage, wash them down, and proceed with the harvesting and packing of all the sprouted seeds. The packets were stacked eight packets of sprouts per beer box in a second-hand Pepsi fridge I had acquired for this purpose.

Early evening, when I arrived home after a day at the office, I would transfer the beer boxes of sprouts to my car and trailer and deliver them to City Deep. The intense nature of the business forced me to be both disciplined and organised. I washed drums, fetched supplies or made deliveries at very difficult times – either
very early in the morning or very late at night. There were two production cycles per week with deliveries on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Sitting in the garden watching Zette in the cat hotel revived my fond memories of Sprightly Sprouts. In my mind’s eye I am still able to visualise the triangular sticker reading *Sprightly Sprouts* in the corner of the Styrofoam packet of sprouts and with the three types of sprouts arranged in a diagonal pattern on the packet.

With a short shelf life of three to four days only there was little room for error. It was essential that the product not be damaged during the harvesting, packaging and transportation process and also that the time between removing the packaged product from my fridge until it was delivered to the fridges at the market was minimised.

I bought production materials at the lowest possible prices. The empty beer boxes in which I delivered the packets of sprouts to the market were free. However, it was extremely time consuming to collect them as I collected them from a number of bottle stores at least once a week. They were light but bulky and fairly fragile to transport and store. However, with low input costs the business ran profitably as I received a relatively good price, on average, at the market. The wages of the packers were a fixed rate per completed packet. This was less than the average daily rate for a gardener if they were not very productive, but more than a gardener’s daily rate if they were productive. I had a company car and, thus, fuel and maintenance did not increase the costs. Aside from a poor quality product, the main risk was that the price was not guaranteed and I was paid by the agents only for the products that had actually been sold. Unsold or spoilt sprouts were thrown away. However, wastage was kept to a minimum. On the odd occasion, especially in the summer heat, it did happen that most of the product I had delivered had to be thrown away because it had gone off before market day.

The cash flow was not ideal as I paid cash for my production materials and the packers’ wages but was paid by the market agents, electronically, once a month only. Nevertheless, Steve’s Spar and Impala Fruiterers paid me upfront on delivery. They assumed the risk of carrying the wastage of products not sold and there was no marketing fee. Although selling to retailers meant a better profit
margin as compared to selling to the market, it was not practical as I would have to deliver to too many different retailers to match the volumes I was delivering to the market. In addition, it would be time consuming to drive from retailer to retailer and my time was very limited. I would also have to deal with pricing issues and more administration than was the case selling to the market.

My weekly production soon increased to two thousand packets per week in summer. My product was a luxury, niche product and the demand in summer was double that in winter as sprouts are used mainly in salads and stir-fry meals. Nevertheless, the summer heat and rain presented different challenges compared to the winter conditions but I learnt as I went along. I was able to ascertain with little difficulty whether the quality was right or not. It was a very good feeling when the whole operation ran smoothly and the market price was good.

Timing the harvesting correctly was very important. In the summer seeds sprout approximately forty to sixty per cent quicker than in winter and their shelf life is shorter. When the market price was good, I would generate the same revenue on half a car boot full of packaged product compared to a full boot and trailer of product when the price was down.

On 31 August 1998 – twenty months after I had started the business – we moved to Northcliff. By this time I was familiar with the climatic conditions in Rand Park Ridge and had perfected the production process to ensure quality produce. Although the production facility and process were the same in Northcliff, I was not able to ensure a product of the required standard. The slight increase in altitude and temperature against the northern slope of Northcliff influenced the production process significantly. For three months I tried to improve the quality but never quite succeeded. At the same time I must confess that my new position at work was more demanding than my previous one and the office was now fifty-five kilometres away from home. Although the sprout business was very close to my heart it became too much for me to manage and, as consistent top quality was a non-negotiable requirement, I decided to close Sprightly Sprouts.

A few years later I used the experience I had gained in Sprightly Sprouts as an example in the board-based business simulation training I conducted for a number
of corporate businesses. However, I first had to learn how a ruthless son was able to run the business he had inherited from his father into the ground.

In mid 1998 the organisation for which I was working at the time was bought out by Rcorp. Over the next twenty months everything spiralled out of control – starting with the theft of my BMW. Although I was part of the senior management of Rcorp I was the oldest man in a group of smart, wild youngsters. This increased responsibility and pressure had contributed to my closing Sprightly Sprouts as I was not able to handle all the stress. In hindsight I think Rcorp only kept me on in order to sort out the mess the son who had inherited Rcorp had left in his wake. I could not believe the level of arrogance the owner displayed and how the managing director and the financial directors pulled the wool over my eyes. However, halfway through the second year since it was taken over by the original owner’s son the company ran out of money and I had to retrench more than two thousand workers, while not being paid myself. My wife nagged me for three months to cut my losses and move on but I was convinced that the company would pay me as I was doing so much. Needless to say, I was never paid, and when the company closed its doors, I was on my own.

4.1.5 JN le Roux Consulting

In 1990 when Rcorp went insolvent I decided to become a human resources consultant as I had many connections in the field. Accordingly, I formed my own business – JN le Roux Consulting. A few years earlier, while still working at one of the big organisations, I had been introduced to Business Today, a simulation-based, business training company. When I started JN le Roux Consulting I attended a two-week training programme at Business Today as I believed that this would offer me an opportunity to supplement my income.

I found the Business Today processes interesting and rewarding but also complex as there were several variables that needed to be borne in mind during the course of the training. When I did work for Business Today I worked on a commission system and the percentage commission I earned depended on whether I had sourced the business and conducted the training myself, whether I conducted the

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76 Not the real name of the organisation
training for a business sourced by another consultant or whether I sourced the client but someone else conducted the training. The last option was applicable to cases in which the business sourced demanded training on a level higher than I had been trained to deliver. For most of the time I conducted the training which had been sourced by another consultant and much of my work was at Eskom.

In 2000 I met the owner of Performance Unlimited, a human resource consultancy in East London (South Africa) and I was extremely fortunate to be awarded an excellent contract for training at Anglo Platinum through Performance Unlimited. I had to go through a two-week “train the trainer” programme before I could commence training. I worked on disciplinary issues, primarily in Rustenburg and Potgietersrus. It was a huge project and, although there was the stress of being evaluated after every session, I was earning a good commission. The Performance Unlimited project was just coming to an end when I met a woman who had been awarded the tender for restructuring the South African Defence Force.

All the business I conducted as JN le Roux Consulting was as a subcontractor for other companies and this worked well for me. However, late in 2002, Charles Bester recommended me for his position at RB and that is how I landed that fateful job that ended in retrenchment. It is impossible not to wonder what would have happened if I had not accepted the RB job and continued with JN le Roux Consulting. However, AFC Creations may never have been and maybe I would not have started in the recruiting business.

When I decided to close AFC Creations I had to find an alternative source of income urgently. In 2002 I had bought a townhouse – my first rental property – near a high school and in March 2004 – while still working for RB – I had bought the block of eight bachelor flats in The Yard. Since 2005, The Yard, situated across the road from UJ, has been running smoothly as a business offering student accommodation. I am very interested in the property business and, as a result of my experience with The Yard and the stories of estate agents who have been successful, I decided to become an estate agent.
My wife and I underwent the estate agent training together and we joined Sotheby’s International Realty. We worked at a branch close to our home as it was essential for Zette to be able to go home quickly in order to see cat clients if and when necessary. After approximately six months Zette left Sotheby’s, having sold two houses in that time. Her heart was not in selling houses although she understood the business well enough for me to discuss all my deals and negotiations with her.

During this time we started meeting spontaneously over breakfast which often lasted for more than an hour. During these sessions I was able to vent my frustrations and clarify my mind regarding negotiations. When I became too excited about a possible deal she would remind me that a deal is a deal only when all the signatures are on the document and all the money secured.

I was regaining my confidence and I enjoyed being part of a large organisation again – especially the interaction with the other estate agents and attending the corporate functions. I sold nineteen houses in twenty months but, then, the property market went into a decline. I was working on commission only and my financial situation became precarious.

During this time, despite the fact that I could feel a yearning to return to the corporate market, I still had the desire to own my own business.
Recruitment

While I was an estate agent my friend, Peter, started a recruitment business and invited me to join him. However, I wanted to remain in the property business in the hope that it would recover. One day while I was doing some welding for him in my garage Peter extended the invitation again. In the meantime his two sons had started working in his business. However, they did not have any corporate experience and he wanted someone with more experience to run the business as they were not able to get the business off the ground. In view of the fact that Peter was working for a training institute, he did not have the time to work in his new business – at least not for the next few years. At this point I realised that I was ready to move into the corporate environment again and I was convinced that I would make more money this way than I was making in the declining property market.

Later that afternoon, having completed the welding job, Peter and I held our first meeting. He offered me a small basic salary plus commission so there was the opportunity to earn a significant amount of money. He was willing to give me shares in the business but, as the business was not yet making a profit, these shares would mean that I would be sharing in the losses of the company. Nevertheless, I was extremely excited. Although it was not my own business I would be able to become a partner within a short space of time ... or so I thought.

The business operated from the newly renovated top floor of Peter’s house. However, the surrounding terrain still looked like a building site and the garden was non-existent. Clients had to park outside the premises and walk though fairly rough terrain to the office. It did not look as professional as I had hoped but the office equipment was new and looked efficient. The premises were the least of my concerns.

From the start it was evident that his sons – who had been there before me – did not want me in the business. They knew the computer software program the company used well and, initially, they had to assist me to learn it. They treated me as if I were stupid because I was not as quick as they were on the computer. There was no system in the business and the boys did what they wanted to do when they felt like doing it. They did not appreciate my effort to put systems for
running the business in place while I, on the other hand, was not impressed with their way of doing business. They did not keep office hours and often arrived at work late and hung-over from a late night party. The fact that I had many years corporate experience and worked in an organised systematic way did not impress the boys. On the contrary I was considered old school and a nuisance. Although Peter wanted me to manage the business I had no real power as he made the rules, ignored it when the rules were broken and paid the salaries.

After a few months Peter’s wife also started working in the business. She was extremely inefficient as regards administrative work and, although she relied heavily on me for assistance, she treated me like an inferior when it suited her. I felt like an intruder in their house rather than an equal in the business. I did not enjoy the feeling although Peter and I worked well together. One day Peter’s wife announced that she would manage the business from that point on. However, I realised it would be impossible for me to work under her leadership. I was the person who carried out all the managerial tasks – making sure all the legal processes were in place, employing additional staff as the business grew and ensuring that all the contracts were drawn up. This would often take up half of my day but I did not receive any additional remuneration for it. Although new people were employed there were challenges as very few of the employees had the skills and/or corporate background necessary to make good placements.

After the freedom of movement that I had enjoyed at AFC Creations and as an estate agent, I found it extremely restrictive to have to be at the office for at least eight hours a day with very little freedom of movement. I detested having to ask Peter’s wife for permission if I wanted to be out of the office. I felt like a naughty schoolboy despite the fact that I was working by far the longest hours of everybody in the business.

In addition, the atmosphere at the office was sometimes a little hostile, in particular, when I uncovered certain irregularities in the business. During the investigation I came across emails between the sons which were extremely derogatory about me. The sons of the original owner had no sense of ethics but never faced any consequences. I learnt that working in a small start-up family business is difficult because blood is thicker than water.
Another big challenge was that there was no supporting personnel. The account managers had to do all the sifting and editing that the administrative staff would have done in a larger company. I also found out that recruitment is very labour intensive – sourcing the best potential candidates for a position, reading through numerous curriculum vitae (CV) in order to select potential candidates and preparing each CV to be forwarded to the relevant company. My success rate was significantly lower than I had anticipated and I felt completely deflated.

I was also getting steadily deeper into debt as my income was not covering my basic financial commitments. The business was not taking off and Peter – who had never done recruiting – did not know about or understand the challenges of the business first hand. He was using up his investments to fund the business. When things became tense at the office I contemplated opening up my own recruitment agency at home. I wanted to work on my own with one administrative person only to assist with the searches and administrative work.

One evening I discussed this and other possibilities with Zette. "You already have a home office. We can put dry walls in and subdivide the space and share a person to do all our admin. I could subscribe to the recruitment search engine and run my recruitment business from there."

Zette was not keen. "Your voice carries. If you are on the telephone I cannot hear myself while I am in the same room. It is impossible for me to have an office next to you – let alone mentor someone – with only a thin wall separating us. If you want an office you could turn one of the other rooms into an office. I want to expand Quantum Gain into a training centre sometime in the near future. So I need my space. Sorry, but I have to be practical."

I supposed she had a point so I suggested, "While on the topic of Quantum Gain, why don't we turn it into a company in which we have equal shares? I can be responsible for all the human resources related issues in which I am highly skilled."

Zette was comfortable with the suggestion. "We can do that but I will be able to focus on that only once I have completed my studies."
As I could not afford to wait for years that plan had to be placed on hold. I played my next card. “Why don’t we expand Purrfect Place to double its current capacity? I’ll be your partner in the cat hotel.”

“Neill, you know I have been against expanding the cat hotel on the current premises. Firstly, I cannot afford to close the current operation for the building period, which will be at least three months, but, if I don’t close, the cats in the hotel will be so stressed they will not touch their food. It just will not work. Secondly, if we expand I will need more staff and I don’t want more staff on the premises as it is also our home. More than that, I have seen that the jump from twelve to twenty-four cat houses is not viable. A cat hotel must either be boutique and small (ten to twelve houses) or really big (fifty plus houses) in order to make financial sense.”

Suzette scribbled figures down in her notepad to prove her argument and passed the notepad to me. Then she continued, “Lastly, during the December holidays, everybody goes away and I have to do all the manual labour. I cannot cope with more houses.”

“I’ll help,” I promised.

“As soon as your financial situation improves you are going to want to go off on exciting trips during the December holidays again, what then?”

It irritated me that she knew me so well.

I had always considered buying a food franchise. It was, however, very difficult to talk to Suzette about such a franchise but I persevered. “Maybe I must just buy a food franchise.”

She shook her head and there was irritation in her voice when she said, “With that one you are on your own. I will not pay someone to be my boss. If I want to sell fish or hot dogs or chickens, I’ll open up a place under my own name and adhere to my standards. I am not the one to talk to if that is what you want to do and you know that.”

“Zette, why are you so against franchises?”
“With a franchise you are just working for another boss – one you don’t know at all and who controls everything. If you have a food franchise, you cannot be creative about what you are selling – it is just rules and more rules. I feel like a wild animal in a cage just talking about a franchise. In any case, buying a franchise does not bring passive income – and that is what you want – passive income. Ver van jou goed; na-aan jou skade. 77"

When schemes pop up in my head I usually chat to our youngest daughter, Jeanne, about them first and, only if she thinks the scheme makes sense, do I approach Zette about it. My dear wife usually cuts through my plan in seconds. I always know in advance that I run the risk of having my dreams shattered and yet I return every time.

However, a new opportunity presented itself one Saturday morning in December 2009 after a breakfast with friends. They had a friend who owned a successful human resources business in Mpumalanga and who was looking for an associate to take over the responsibilities in Johannesburg. Kallie set up a meeting with me in January 2010 and we have worked well together ever since.

While I was still doing recruitment Andrew, an old friend who also has a human resources consultancy, had asked me to chair disciplinary hearings from time to time. I decided to meet with him in an effort to expand our collaboration. This resulted in contracts and I am currently still working for Andrew on a retainer basis.

4.1.7 Rental properties – November 2013

Sitting on the stoep, 78 reading the auction insert of the newspaper, I still dreamt of owning my own business. This dream was realised by my owning rental property. In 2006 although I had had to sell my townhouse to order to help us through a difficult period financially, my student accommodation was doing well. In less than ten years The Yard has doubled in value. I have had good tenants over the years and I enjoy the responsibilities of being a landlord. I am currently on the lookout for a commercial property – perhaps shop with flats on top. On 23 November 2013

77 Far from your belongings – close to losing it
78 Front patio
I saw three shops below a block of flats in Pretoria for sale and I made an offer on them which was accepted.

For many years I had thought that if I had bought more stands at Leeupoort in the nineties, this would have made it possible for me to pay The Yard off by reselling the Leeupoort stands in 2005. However, I had never bought more stands. Nevertheless, when I had the opportunity to buy the shops in Pretoria I used my previous experience to maximise the new deal. I am extremely happy with this addition to my property portfolio and I am now significantly closer to realising my dream of owning a business which will provide me with a passive income.
4.2 AN INSECURE LIONESS

This is the story of how Lily started her own business.

4.2.1 A tradition of support

One Saturday afternoon in early 2010 I received an unexpected request from Lily, a cat client of Purrfect Place, for an urgent appointment. She arrived at our house accompanied by her husband. With bright eyes she informed me that she was going to open her own cat hotel. Although I shared my information freely I warned Lily, who had just retired from her corporate job that running a cat hotel is a physically demanding business. She assured me that she was extremely fit for her age. After a satisfactory mentoring meeting her husband measured the units in Purrfect Place. They spent the next year building and setting up her cat hotel.

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79 Red – the colour for anxiety
80 Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane.
Late November 2010 Lily called me in a panic. “Did you hear, another cattery has opened in the area? How are we going to make a living if catteries pop up like this?”

For a moment I was at a loss for words. For almost a year I had supported Lily while she started her business but, now that someone else was starting another cattery, Lily was upset. Obviously I was not overjoyed to hear of a third cattery opening in the area in the same year. I could also understand that Lily, who had just spent a large portion of her pension fund to build her cat hotel, was in a panic. However, that is the nature of business and all I could say was, “There will always be competition, Lily. You’ll have to learn to live with it.”

However, Lily – unlike Sandy and David whom I mentored a few years earlier – needed constant reassurance.

4.2.2 A stressed out lioness
One Thursday morning two weeks before the long weekend in March 2011, Lily telephoned me. The anxiety was audible in her voice as she said, “I spoke to Sandy this morning and her cat hotel is fully booked for the long weekend at the end of this month? Are you fully booked?”

“No, I’m not,” I admitted, “with three new cat hotels in the area I am definitely finding business slower than usual, but don’t panic. There are always last minute bookings. Over long weekends the demand for boarding space far exceeds the supply. I have no doubt that Purrfect Place will be fully booked before the long weekend and I’ll send my overflow to you.”

Lily’s mind was consumed by the need to recoup her investment. Although I could understand her concern, she could not allow it to compromise her service to her clients. A stressed caregiver will have stressed cats.

“What do you think so?” she asked.

“I know so,” I reassured her.

81 Please see Chapter 3 for more about Sandy and David.
All the catteries were fully booked for that long weekend.

The week after the long weekend I arranged to meet with Lily to discuss her participation in this study. I appreciated the fact that she was eager to contribute. Accompanied by a few of her own cats she welcomed me in her driveway. Like true cat lovers we walked through her cattery – admiring and chatting to all the felines. There were not many boarders but Lily was rightfully very proud to show me through her cattery.

Her cattery had opened late in 2010 so everything was still new and shining. Her husband had also built a little kitchen at the end of her cat hotel and, it was while standing there, that Lily admitted to me, “Many times when we were still building I would stop and think that maybe I’m building a great white elephant.”

“That must have been scary, Lily.”

“It was – and still is from time to time.”

This concerned me and I asked, “How do you cope with that thought?”

“I don’t. When the fear hits me, it will probably stay for a day ... or two and then something changes and it shifts.” The fear was visible in her eyes as she talked about it.

However, there was a further internal battle that she was waging. “Do you also get so many emails about animals in desperate need of a good home?”

“I do.”

Lily continued, “There is a woman feeding a group of about fourteen feral cats. I became involved with her when I took care of her one cat until the end.” I must have been frowning because Lily added, “She’s a Buddhist and would not euthanase the old girl who had complete renal failure. So I took care of the cat – doing sub cuts and nursing it till the end.” Before I could say anything she continued, “But now the girl is going back to Japan and she wants me to help her home all these cats ... I call them the ‘Japanese cats’.”

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82 Subcutaneous infusions
I had been in this business for quite a few years and a warning bell sounded in my mind, “Look, you are doing wonderful work, but are you running a charity or a business, Lily?”

“A business, but what about the poor cats?” she wanted to know.

“Refer her to one of the cat charities. I have a list of animal charities ... I support some of them financially and do not hesitate to refer people to them. If you want to run a charity that is great. It is a very worthy thing to do but do not confuse being a charity with running a business.”

“But I feel so sorry for these cats. I love cats,” she defended herself.

“I love cats too but, if you run a successful business, you will be able to do even more by financially supporting the people who take care of these less fortunate cats.”

Lily nodded. “I see what you mean,” she said. However, I was not convinced that she did.

We walked to the house with Tigger following us. While we drank our tea he was stretched out on the table between our mugs of tea. When Lily had been working in human resources she had been one of my cat clients. I wanted to know, “What made you decide to start a cat hotel?”

“Despite being a perfectionist and organised I actually dislike imposed structure. I prefer to create my own structure. I found working with the Y generation too much of a conflict of values and playing the political game necessary for survival in the corporate environment went against my grain. So I walked out.”

For a moment we were both quiet. Lily stared through the window in the direction of her cat hotel and then she continued. “This was followed by a time of intense fear because I’m an insecure person. I worry about money. However, I set up the HR consulting business, but without too much passion for it ... It was never my first love. I was very good at it but it was never my first love. One morning – and this must have been two years ago now – I woke up and I just knew I was going to

83 Human resources
go on with HR consulting but that I was going to build my dream cat hotel. I have always said I’ll build a cattery when I retire.”

I realised that I was shaking my head as I stopped myself from commenting. Why do people think a cat hotel is a business for a retired person? Luckily Lily carried on talking. “I had to retire earlier than I had intended ... and the cattery had always been a dream, but I thought I’d never get to do it ... and suddenly the clarity was there. I would be able to generate income doing something for which I had a complete and utter passion ... it was like an explosion in my mind. When I looked at your place I realised it is possible ... it really is ... and being close to retirement age maybe I could take early retirement ... take my one-third tax-free capital out and invest that in building my cattery ... and that was how I got started.”

“Was that when you came to me and took measurements at Purrfect Place?”

“Yes, and I remember that you told me it is a wonderful business but a lot of hard, manual labour and that I had to think twice about it as it isn’t an ideal job for a retired person.”

When she touched on this topic I felt the muscles in my face relax. “I remember. I am always very concerned when someone says they are going to retire and want to start a cat hotel ... especially when they intend using their pension money to fund it. Many catteries open but few stay open for more than two to three years and one of the reasons is that people underestimate the amount of work that is required. You are going to work long hours every day of the year.”

Lily smiled, “I remember thinking, I know it will be hard work, but I can do this. Maybe Suzette is just trying to discourage me. But, boy, did I underestimate it!”

I encouraged her to keep talking, “But you had your mind set on a cat hotel.”

She responded. “I knew in my mind what I wanted and I had done my market research. I looked at feasibility ... I spoke to you ... But the stumbling blocks I had not expected were the legal ones ... the argument over whether cats are animals. Cats are legally defined as pets – not animals. The council wanted to cash in on my increasing the pet population of the area and the use of the parks and roads.
The process repeated itself from department to department and, in the end, I could not cope with the stress anymore and my husband handled the council for me.”

Lily ran her hand over Tigger’s side. Then she looked me straight in the eye and said, “Last night I had a wobble. My daughter told me that, in order to succeed in business, you have to rip people off. I thought, G_d, am I going to fail at this now, because I can’t rip people off? It’s against my values. I’m not going to charge a person if they’ve cancelled and they’ve given me adequate warning. If it is in the middle of high season I may keep their deposit but, so far, I haven’t done that. My daughter said people do not succeed by being honest.”

This was the second time a participant had suggested this: “I have no idea why your daughter said this, but I know that honesty and integrity do not exclude success. On the contrary, I think they contribute to long-term success. To ease your mind you may have to find out from your daughter what had triggered that statement.”

I realised that Lily had not been in this business long enough to know how she would handle clients who defaulted or who dumped cats on her. I decided to return to the previous topic which was based on actual experiences: “So you sorted all the legalities out.”

“Yes. There was such a feeling of elation when all the legal stuff was done ... The next obstacle was the cost. We soon realised that everything was going to cost more than twice what we had expected.

I laughed, “I was much further off than that – Purrfect Place cost four times more than my estimate.”

She continued, “I could have gone the cheap route of building little cages and putting ... like a dog kennel in, but I would not want my cats to stay in that ... We had to cut back a little on the size of the units to fit the building into the space we had available but I wanted a solid building like yours. Unfortunately, the building faces south – so it is not getting any sun and we’ve had to install heaters to keep

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84 Please see Albert’s story for a similar view on successful business owners.
the cats warm at night. Also, every time it rains I have to rush out to close all the windows and doors as the rain usually comes from the south."

To cheer her up I said, “Lily, things are seldom perfect. The important thing is that you are operational.”

Lily smiled and fondled Tigger’s ear.

“Tell me more,” I urged her.

“When they started building I started sewing all the soft furnishings for the cattery – spending many hours from July to October in preparation for the opening of my cat hotel. I was very tired towards the end and, so, I became creative – using plastic basins instead of sewing igloos. The sewing process was also a learning curve – finding out what works and what does not.”

“But you enjoyed it?” I checked with her.

“When I wasn’t full of fear, I did.” There was a short silence. “Come, let me show you what I’ve made.” I followed her and she showed me the placemats, blankets, curtains and igloos she had made. It had probably been therapeutic for her to sew while waiting for the building to be completed but it would be interesting to see whether she would have time for sewing now that she was running the business.

4.2.3 Caught in a trap

A few weeks later, I received a telephone call from Lily that threw me completely. Her voice was a little flat as she said, “I’ve taken the twelve Japanese cats in. If you know of anyone who will take one – or more – will you let me know? I’ll email you photographs – please share them with your connections.”

I promised to post the photographs on my Facebook page. However, I could not believe that she had taken the cats only two weeks after she had insisted that she was a business and not a charity. Shortly after I had opened Purrfect Place I had taken it upon myself to re-home three young adult Siamese cats. Despite the fact that they were pedigrees it had taken me months to re-home them. Fourteen feral adult cats would present a much bigger challenge. Maybe it is easier to teach cats simple obedience tricks than business knowhow to human beings.
About a year and numerous telephone calls later, Lily called to say that she had found homes for all but three of the cats. She had adopted the last three. These cats took up valuable accommodation space – especially during the hectic December 2011 holiday period – but, during the course of 2012, they were all homed. One of the Japanese cats that Lily had kept had needed months of intensive medical care, including four operations costing thousands of rand, while another has a genetic kidney disorder. Nevertheless, by taking them on, Lily had definitely made a difference in the lives of these cats.

4.2.4 Meeting the lioness in her den

Lily’s cat hotel is now three years old and I still receive regular phone calls from her – like the one I received in March 2013. Her first words to me were, “I am so tired. I know you told me that this is hard work, but I had no idea how hard it would be when the cat hotel is full. At the moment I have seven cats on drips. It takes forever to get through my day. Why people don’t take proper care of the cats, I don’t know. I was crazy to spread the word that I specialise in old cats.”

I confirmed, “It’s challenging at times, but still a great business.”

A few days later an elegant young woman arrived at Purrfect Place having just viewed Lily’s cat hotel. New clients often view a few catteries before they decide which one they wish to use. Her cat needed to stay in a cat hotel for more than two – maybe even more – consecutive months while she helped her mother settle into a house in Bangkok. As we walked up to Purrfect Place I could see the client was upset. She told me that Lily had not trusted her and had grilled her with questions like, “Why are you going away for so long?” and “What are you going to do there?” She had felt insulted by these questions.

After the woman had seen Purrfect Place we went to my office to find out whether I had accommodation available for the period she required and we booked the male cat85 in. I talked her through the contract and there seemed to be no reason to doubt that she was trustworthy. Not long after the client had departed Lily

85 Her cat
telephoned me and warned me about this client saying, “I don’t trust some of these people and I have a funny feeling about her.”

I had to confess, “I have just booked her cat in.”

Lily repeated what the client had just told me, ending with, “I hope you get your money.”

“I have no reason to doubt the client. People don’t usually dump pedigree kittens. This Ragdoll has not even been neutered yet. And she signed the contract and paid for the first month. If she does not pay the second month I can sell the cat to cover the cost for that month but I really don’t think that will be necessary.”

For a moment the line was quiet. I sensed that Lily was unsettled by the conversation. In an effort to relieve the awkwardness I asked, “I did give you a copy of my contract to use, didn’t I?”

“Yes, thank you, I am using it.”

I decided it might be a good idea to terminate the conversation. So I wished Lily well – giving her the opportunity to reflect privately on her tendency to distrust potential clients. For a few moments I also sat next to the telephone in reflection. People who wanted to board their cats for longer periods of time or while moving house definitely made Lily feel anxious. She was still refining her instinct about which cat clients to trust and who not to trust. Not that there was a foolproof way of making such a decision.

Late in January 2014 Lily telephoned me in a panic. “My cat hotel is completely empty for the first week in February. This is the worst February for me ever and I have very few bookings for the remainder of February, March and until the Easter weekend in April.”

She had, however, telephoned all the other catteries and most of them had reported a lower than usual occupancy. I was amazed at the comprehensive study she had done and admitted to her, “At the moment I only have six cats in Purrfect

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86 It is difficult to give the details and protect the client in this case so I am giving a general description only.
Place.” However, I break even at four cats a night so my situation was different to hers. “My February bookings do not look bad and Purrfect Place is already fully booked for sections of March and April so I will refer my overflow to you and Lyn. But I must admit, the telephone is quieter than previous years and there are definitely fewer business trips.” We speculated that the fact that people were feeling the financial pinch was resulting in fewer holidays and weekend trips.

During February Lily telephoned me almost daily – offering possible reasons for the drop-off in occupation ranging from the e-tolls87 to the spacing of the holidays. During one such call she told me, “I have sent an email to all my clients telling then that I have lowered my rates.”

For a moment I was speechless. “Wow. That is a bold step. Let me know if it works for you.”

About a week later Lily telephoned me again. Her voice was lifeless. “It was such a huge mistake to lower my prices. I did not get a single booking from it. The only people holding me to it are the ones whose cats are, in any case, in my cat hotel. So all I did was lower my income.”

I tried to find something positive to say but could only come up with, “But you have learnt a valuable lesson.”

“One I can ill afford,” she added.

“Please ensure that your clients know this is for a limited period only. Fiddling with prices may be very confusing for clients unless you communicate it very clearly,” I warned.

She continued, “You know that there are quite a few cat hotels with smaller units who charge much more than we do. If our price is not the problem; what is?”.

“It can be so many things ... but I think everybody is cutting back on spending at the moment.” I was not lying. People were cutting back, but there may have been more to it than that. However, it was a sensitive issue. We said our goodbyes and, as I walk back to my study, I worked through my guilt for not mentoring her.

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87 A new e-toll system started operating in December 2013 and people are upset by aspects of it.
4.2.5 Staring into the bush - reflecting

Lily was after all my competition and, in addition, she did not pay for my mentoring. I asked myself: Do I need to tell her everything I suspected or even knew? I had been there for her since the planning stage of her cat hotel and she had had my complete support for the first two years of running her business. Nevertheless, I had gradually decreased my input – especially since I had started with this research study. Although I still listened to her and would continue to have regular conversations with her, she needed to stand on her own feet and make her own decisions. She had had many business lessons for free but these lessons did not include the key differentiating factors of my business. She would have to create her own and keep them a secret.

Most of the time when Lily called me she was either anxious or exhausted. She was not having fun. Fear of failure often took over her mind – preventing her from getting into the flow. I regard business as delivering on a promise in exchange for money but thinking or worrying about the money does not make the money. However, delivering on the promise made impresses the client at a price that is sustainable and this has a better chance of bringing the money in.

After our telephone calls I also felt guilty at my rushing off to make field notes on our conversations. She had signed a consent form and surely she had realised that I might use our conversations in my study. However, there was no disembodied voice warning her, “Please note that this call may be recorded for quality ... I mean, research purposes.” Nevertheless, I did not remind her about this as I was concerned that it might inhibit the conversation.
Tessa, the trendy lioness

Photograph 4.9: A trendy lioness with bloodstains on her neck and purple whiskers

Photograph 4.10: Tessa in her showroom

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88 Purple – the trendy groovy colour
89 Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane. Purple whiskers added by Suzette le Roux
4.3 THE TRENDY LIONESS

4.3.1 While painting lions

One Sunday morning in March 2011, during our tea break at the Ruth Reed Academy of Art, Tessa pulled me aside and, over a bowl of fruit salad, we chatted about a specific situation at her Cape Town branch. Fruit salad was always followed by coffee and it was with a Florentine in the other hand that she enquired, “So, tell me, how are your studies?”

It is the type of invitation that I enjoyed. “I have just started conducting in-depth interviews with my participants and for the next year or two I’ll visit them in their businesses. I can’t wait to gain a better understanding of why some are successful and others are battling to make their businesses work. It’s a long process and it will unfold as I go along but, thus far, I am thoroughly enjoying it.”

“You sound so excited.”

“I am and I feel so fortunate,” I replied.

“Do you know my story?” she asked.

“The bits and pieces I have heard in the art class but I would love to hear the full story.”

As we walked to our easels she started telling me, “You know Suzetteski,90 I almost did not have this business. It was touch and go. Early on in the business I was faced with a serious crisis. Friends turned on me and became my direct competition – cutting me off from my main suppliers. I had to decide whether to cut my losses and go the housewife way or to meet the challenge. I decided on the latter and today I have a thriving business with branches in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Plettenberg Bay. Maybe you can use me in your study?” Tessa never beat about the bush.

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90 A nickname given to me by my ex-neighbour, Norman, who had introduced me to his aunt Ruth and the art class
“Wow, I would like to hear your full story. Is it possible to come and see you at your office?” From what I had read in Schram (2003, p. 9) I expected to obtain in-depth information by visiting her in her business.

“Absolutely, just phone the office and let them schedule you in my diary,” she smiled and continued with her paintings. Instead of focusing on my painting, my mind went back to the Sunday in March 2004 when Norman had introduced me to his aunt, Ruth Reed. I had been fortunate enough to receive an invitation from her to join the Ruth Reed Art Academy where we have shared the ups-and-downs of each other’s lives and ‘solved’ all the tricky problems of the world. With the exception of one person we were all just weekend “hackers” but, through the art class, I had been exposed to people and situations that had enriched my life and informed my mental maps in a profound way.

Although Tessa was an extremely successful business person, I had not thought of asking her to participant in my study. In a class with seven entrepreneurs – ranging from me to one who ordered a Rolls Royce Silver Phantom every few years – I had not wanted to risk causing any complicated dynamics by singling one out. However, by offering to tell her story to me, I had not chosen Tessa in preference to anyone else. No one could feel that one of them had been given preferential treatment. And nobody did.
On Monday morning I telephoned Tessa Sonik Fabrics, and arranged to meet her on 14 March at the Village Walk, Sandton, where her business headquarters were located at the time. I had wanted to meet my participants in locations in which they would be in their comfort zones, knowing that it would also give me the opportunity to observe some of their interactions with their staff members and perhaps even with clients.

On the day of my first interview with Tessa it was pouring with rain. By the time I had left the cat hotel I was soaked. Knowing that the wet roads and the Johannesburg traffic might result in some delays I had departed earlier than necessary for my interview with Tessa. Accordingly, I arrived early enough to have time to gather my thoughts over a café latté at a nearby coffee shop. As I walked up the stairs to her offices I reminded myself to double check that she understood what I was saying but, more importantly, to repeat what she said to me at pivotal moments to ensure that I understood what she meant. I did not want a misinterpretation of her words to compromise our friendship.

Walking through the doors of Tessa Sonik Fabric Collection, I was met by understated elegance. The vast reception area was primarily empty space – reflecting her dislike of clutter. The two chairs and table were unquestionably top quality. Tessa’s welcome was warm and exactly the same as if we were in the art class. Her office was a workspace with her “books” taking pride of position. It was, however, less glamorous than I had expected.

Seated in her office – she behind the desk and I in the visitor’s chair – I started the conversation. “Thank you for this opportunity, Tessa. Before we start I just want to run through a few points so that you know what you are letting yourself in for.” I placed the printed list of points in front of her. “This process will require about three interviews of at least an hour each, observation plus emails and phone calls. I am interested in your story and the story of your business – not the statistics – but in your personal process of how you started and coped with the challenges, what inspired you and what kept you going when the going was tough. This may upset you from time to time. Are you ok with that?”
She nodded, “No problem.”

“I would appreciate any additional information, photographs, photocopies of relevant parts of your journal, newspaper and magazine articles – whatever you have – on you and your business.”

She was quick to respond, “I’ll send you what I have, but there is also stuff on my website – www.tessasonik.com. You know about the ads and articles in Visi but just ask if there is something you need ... and you can print pics off my Facebook page.”

I went through the informed consent form91 with her and she signed it without hesitation. I placed my tiny voice recorder on the table between us. It was hardly visible amongst all the swatches and sample books on her desk. I always tried to place the audio recorder in a position where we were not constantly aware of its presence as Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest. Bogdan and Biklen (2007), amongst others, point out that the researcher must ensure that the participant is comfortable with the presence of a recorder. Hence I always ask permission. Are you comfortable with the fact that I am recording our meetings? When we discuss something that you would rather not record, please ask me to switch it off, but know that most of what you say will be recorded (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).”

Another, “No problem.”

“You are welcome to remain anonymous and use a pseudonym, but it is not easy to guarantee that you will remain completely anonymous. Just signing a consent form exposes you and there is a small chance that someone you know may read this and recognise you.”

“Suzetteski, I am who I am.”

“What I can promise you is that I’ll handle your information responsibly.”

“I know you will.”

91 Please see blank informed consent form in Appendix E. The signed consent forms are kept locked up in my study to protect the identities of the participants who wanted to remain anonymous.
One last important thing, “If at any time you want to opt out of the process, you are free to do so.” Obviously, I dreaded this happening in the final stages of writing up my thesis but I kept quiet about that. By now Tessa was becoming impatient. It had been clear throughout my talking that she understood the process despite the fact that she had never been to university.

“Yay! The official stuff was out of the way, now you can tell me your story.” I knew Tessa well enough to realise that the best strategy would be to let her get into the flow and do the talking (Grbich, 1999). I unobtrusively double checked that the recorder was switched on and then I sat back, opened up to her story and allowed her to take me on a journey through her life (Ezzy, 2010). This was the story in her words.

4.3.3 The lioness’s trendy life

“I always wanted to do interior design but, unfortunately, I never took school seriously and I was too slack to do the entrance exam. They did not accept me for the course. So, when I left school, I had to go to design school – XX, which was a really inferior design school. Also, it was not for interiors, but for graphics. I thought if I am not going to get into interiors – which I really loved – I’ll just do a graphics course and see how that goes. I did a year of that ... got my diploma — or whatever you get for this — and I HATED it. I said to myself, ‘There is no way I am getting into this industry.’ So I went into corporate interiors. I ended up working for an office furniture company where I drew little plans of what the offices were going to look like, what fabrics they would use for the seating, which chairs I would use...which desks... It was a decorating form of design..., but we did it more technically. So it was not only about pretty pictures. It was floor plans and layouts and I was called an environmental planner.

“While working at this corporate office furniture company I also did my Diploma of Interior Design via a correspondence course offered by Inscape Design School.

“A few years later I left the office furniture company and went into corporate design —more curtains and the floors and ceilings ... more like the full service of interior design. I did this on my own for a few years. Then the original company for which I

92 Not real name
had worked incorporated my business into their business ... as an arm of their office furniture business. I became their in-house interior designer. I then took in a partner ... and it did not work out. She was a greedy girl and she had different aspirations to mine. Also, at that stage, I was not a business woman and I was not looking to become anything but a designer.

“I have always loved putting things together – it’s my passion – from a young, young age I have always loved to redesign rooms and I love space. So, if I look into a space and I feel uncomfortable, I like to see how I could make it comfortable. It’s like a puzzle and I think I have always had a passion for this puzzle ... where I have wanted to make people’s spaces much nicer than they were. So there was satisfaction but, when it came to the business side of it – where you have to deal with contractors and suppliers...it was hectic. If the curtains were not hung properly you did not get paid – that real bad stuff – I actually could not be bothered by it. It really was not my side of the business ... I did not enjoy it, but the creative side, I definitely enjoyed that.

“Then the company bought me out because I had a fight with my partner, who was much too greedy for me. She carried on with the business and I went on to work for another office furniture company which had no design department. I established a whole design centre for them and, today, they are a very big office furniture supplier ... probably the biggest in the country. They now have got a fully fledged design department that I had started for them.”

I smiled, “I can see that you are very proud of that achievement.”

“It feels as if I sowed the seed to lift them to a better level. You know, in the old days when you went to buy office furniture, you just went to a showroom and you said, ‘I want that desk; that chair ...’ or you bought from a catalogue. It was not glorified. So, I started this new age thinking – the client would call the office furniture company. Then the client would call their designer and between the designer – who would do a beautiful layout for the client – and the fabrics, the client would suddenly have this amazing office. The office became more of a luxury. As opposed to being just an office, it was a beautiful space.
“So, I got into the industry at a point at which things were really moving ... small offices were being transformed into open plan offices ... It is actually a huge, amazing thing ... There’s a lot of psychology behind it. When we did company Y\(^{93}\) with a lot of people ... engineers and the people who work under them – it was this hierarchical thing. At that stage they had started to employ black people in office jobs ... you know, that whole scenario of being politically correct. I’m talking late eighties ... early nineties when things really started happening. Mandela was hot news – he had been released ... So you can imagine politically what was happening. So, now I was to go into these open plan offices and you had Mr van der Merwe,\(^{94}\) the accountant, and Rebecca Sesepe,\(^{95}\) a clerk, sitting next to one another in an open space and you would have to see how you could separate them. Rebecca did not want to sit next to Van der Merwe because he smoked at his desk and Van der Merwe did not want to sit next to Rebecca because she talked too loudly on the telephone.

“That was what I had to deal with. So, not only was it about taking people out of the box and putting them in an open plan, but it was about educating them about space ... and about boundaries ... and about what was acceptable and what was not acceptable. It was like major psychology stuff ... very exciting and that was what I came into. I found it all a bit of a mind challenge. What did I know about those kinds of things? You learnt as you go along. I thought this was insane! First of all, I was not into racial issues. I did not know what was going on. From a corporate point of view you would have an engineer ... the staunch, hierarchy guy ... and how he had to deal with the fact that he now no longer had an office. His space was now open plan with the woman who made the tea ... so, it was interesting.”

“I stayed in that industry until I had Zara ... my daughter in 1990. Then I started freelancing for two years – working mostly from home ... I did a bit of decorating work ... and then I also did a fashion range ... but let me take you back to when I was still at college.

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\(^{93}\) Company name withheld

\(^{94}\) Pseudonym

\(^{95}\) Pseudonym
“When I was still at college I did a range of clothing ... you know these legging that we wear? Leggings had never been in the country before ... nobody even knew about leggings ... so I did a range of clothing with leggings and big, loose T-shirts that were worn over the tank top T-shirts. This was in 82/83 ... and it just sold. I could not believe it. I got a factory to make the range and my brother sold it. I went to see the shops and people were just repeating orders and I thought it was so easy to make money.”

We had a good laugh and I asked, “Where did you get the factory?”

“It was a cotton knit factory. I had grown up in fashion so my parents had connections. My father had connections. My sister had connections. So it was easy – I found a knitter, sourced the fabric and the pattern and said, ‘Do it. Here’s what I want.’ We styled it ... we did the whole thing. It was amazing. It was exciting because at that point I was so young. I was 18 or 19. I thought it was so easy to make money but, obviously, I could not make that my career. I was not a designer. I did not know anything about fashion.

“When Zara was born in 1990, I went into making kids’ clothing. It was on a very small scale and I sold it to the shops in Rosebank, but it was too small for me. It was a hobby. I did a few little ranges ... lovely ... beautiful stuff, but it fizzled out because I grew out of it. It was like, so what, I used to make these beautiful knitted jerseys. We sold them but it was not where I wanted to be.

“About two years later, Zara started going to play school and I was offered a job. I decided that I could do a morning job. So I became the sales lady – a fabric rep – for the home fabrics group, W & A Textiles. I worked for half a day ... got great contracts ... made easy money. I thought, ‘Cool, this is a great business to be in.’

“At that point my father had also bought a fabric house called Satter Brothers – a very important fabric house in the day and it had a hardware section. They were job buyers. They bought the content and moved it to where they were in Fordsburg. So I was already doing some of the fabrics with them. There were always dress fabrics around me. I grew up with it. It is in my genes. As a kid I use to work in dress shops on Saturday mornings or, during my school holidays ... in those cool, groovy shops in Hillbrow. That’s how I used to make my pocket
money. So I have always been in fashion. I have always been in textiles. It was not something that was foreign to me on any level.

“And then I had Ryan\textsuperscript{96} and I decided I was actually not going to go back to them. I’d stay at home for a while as I was not very well at the time. While I was pregnant my leg had gone lame and I was walking on crutches and it was the start of my illness. I didn’t know it at that stage. I never went back to work because I was having tests done. But, about four to five months later, Mark, my husband at the time, came to me and said, ‘You have to go back to work now. I can’t afford to support us on my own. It’s expensive. I need some income from you.’

“All my life I had brought in a great salary. So I said, ‘Cool, but I am not going back. I am going to start up on my own.’ So I went to my father whose partner worked with fabrics and I said, ‘Let me see what you’ve got. And maybe I’ll go out and sell some of your ranges’ – which I did. It was the end of ’93.

“Sayed, an Indian gentleman is my dad’s partner ... and they are still partners. I grew up with this guy. In a way my father funded him. In those days you were not allowed to own a business as an Indian. However, I grew up with him as my father’s brother in a sense because he was always around us. They never did anything without each other. My father was his guardian angel. He is a great guy. I grew up with his kids and we used to go to Swaziland for holidays because it was the only place in South Africa where you could have a multiracial holiday. Sayed is a real trader and he decided to take on the fabric side. He used to get suppliers coming in but my father was not interested in textiles. At that stage my father, who is passionate about golf, had started his golf business with my sister.

“So I went in with Sayed, and he looked after me as if I were his daughter. When something came up and he did not want to do it he would say, ‘You take it on and I’ll support you … whatever.’ That is how I went into the business with him instead of with my father. At a point these Spanish reps would come around and show Sayed a product ... faux suede ... like a poly-micro fibre suede. It was the best thing ever. It was washable ... you could write on it and it would come off with alcohol ... any stains ... any wine. It was a magic fabric. No one in this country had

\textsuperscript{96} Her son
ever seen it before. When they offered it to Sayed he called me in and I said, ‘This is amazing. Let me take the card and see the market’s response to it.’ I took it to a few of my customers and, whoever I showed it to, said, ‘We love it. We want it. Can we get it?’ And I said, ‘Ja, sure.’ The reps went to all the different fabric houses but nobody else in the industry wanted it. I was the only one who took it. So I had a vision at that point. I said, ‘You know what, let me run with it.’

“So I brought in a few pieces ... just a few colours. I did not bring in the whole range, but I made hundreds of cards. These Spanish guys helped my set up my business by sending me a card programme and I think ... I perhaps paid one US cent per card ... And I decided that would be my first range. Then I bought a few other things from one of the other suppliers...inferior ranges but, anyway, it helped me to start my business. It was the most amazing thing of this product as it was almost as if it was pre-sold. I would sell it before it had even arrived in the country. And it just kept growing ... exploding and, again, I had this idea that it was so easy to make money. I didn’t have to put in any effort. It just happened.

“Then I started to see trends. The trend I saw at that time was bright fabrics ... the brightest turquoise and the brightest pink. I said, ‘You know what? I’m going to do this bright range.’ I went to a client and showed it to her and she said, ‘I want this range.’ I was not travelling overseas at that stage nor had I looked at the international market. I was focused locally with the international guys coming here. I did not even realise that I was ahead of the world. Anyway, I did this range and I could not believe how easy it was to sell the previous range that I had brought out – the suede. And then there was this very heavy brocaded damask looking fabric and chintz curtaining – neither of which had ever done anything. It was hideous stuff. So I had this epiphany ... I realised that that was the commercial market and ...” Tessa pointed at her fabric books scattered over the table. “THIS was the fashion market. Like this ...” She snapped her fingers. “... I hooked into something.

“I realised that, every time I touched something that was just mediocre, nothing happened to it.” Her excitement was audible. “But if I touched something that was new and exciting – it was amazing. There was this excitement in the market. And it was not as if I was wanted to do massive business. I was having fun. It was
exciting. It was what I loved. I did not want to do the boring stuff. I only wanted to
do things that excited me. It was like a hobby ... not a business. I felt so important,
you know. I was this young woman ... I had little children and I was working and I
had this amazing business happening. But it was a hobby. It was fun. There was
no stress. I was not hungry and I was not hunting for a career ... and I had the
support of my husband, whose business by now had started to do very well. And I
knew that I could take a little bit of risk here and there. I mean, if I bombed out it
did not matter ... I now no longer had to be a breadwinner. I had stopped being the
breadwinner a year or two into my business.”

“Let me tell you where I was. I was in Fordsburg98 ... in a warehouse ... upstairs in
a derelict building where nobody saw me. I was the rep and I had a cutter ... just
him and I. I had no overheads ... I paid no rent ... I think my father gave me five
thousand rand to start up ... I used his driver ... I used his infrastructure ... I used
his secretary ... All I had was my own little office. It cost me nothing. And that was
important ... not having overheads. Also the biggest thing was I had room to fail. I
had the confidence to fail. That was a big part of my success ... when you know
that you are not the breadwinner and I knew that. I had my father’s backing. I had
my husband’s backing. If I failed I would only be a loser to myself. I would only
have disappointed me. This gave me confidence. I was not scared to take a
chance because I knew that, if my business crashed, I was not going to lose my
livelihood. I think that is a huge, huge thing. That sense of confidence. It is
absolutely a psyche thing. If you know that, if you mess up, you are finished, you
will never take any risks in your life. That freedom was the whole thing behind the
excitement and ease of starting up a business.

“So the business ran and I was having fun and the market got wind of this new
little chick on the block – Tessa Sonik – and what she was doing. However, the
man for whom I had worked previously at HF did not like this at all. So he went to
my suppliers and said, ‘Do me a favour. I’m going to give you ten thousand metres
per month – not Tessa’s thousand or two thousand metres. Take her out of the
contract ... then I’m in.’ My suppliers dropped me instantly. My biggest fabric – this
faux suede fabric – disappeared from under me. You must understand that was

98 Fordsburg is the suburb in Johannesburg where the Indian people used to have their
businesses prior to 1994 and it is still known as a bargain hunter’s paradise.
ninety per cent of my business ... the rest was all filler ... all fun and cute. THIS was my business. What could I do? Sue them? I couldn’t. At the end of the day I could not guarantee them the same distribution as they could get with H F which had shops in every single centre. They were massive. At that point faux suede had become the in thing in the world. Everybody was doing faux suede and mine seemed to be the best one ... the best priced one ... the best coloured one, but I could no longer get it. The agent who used to sell it to me saw the chance of earning huge money and took it away from me. I really could not do anything about it. It was going to be a really costly experience. In the end I was really humbled by the experience. It threw me. I thought, ‘What do I do from this point on? Do I close my business? Or do I just carry on trading without the product?’”

Tessa sounded tired. “It was a process. You have to wait for things to happen. Doors close. Others open. My father’s always taught me that in life you always have to be patient. You can sow the seeds. You can plant the information, but you have to wait for them to grow. You know me, Suzetteski, I am a very optimistic person. I live my life with optimism. In a bad situation I always look for the lemonade; not the lemons. I asked myself, ‘What’s the positive side of this bad situation?’ I looked at the situation and said, ‘I can either close my business or carry on mediocre-ly.’ I don’t really think that that was an option for me, because I am not a mediocre person on any level. I don’t live my life with mediocrity. So I had to do something that would really change things...otherwise I had to get out of that business. At that point I decided to do collections of fabrics and I started going to the international fairs.

“In the market there are guys called ‘editeurs’. An editeur is like an international supplier. So, all these top-end, very important guys in the world create their own collections. In other words, they buy from the fabric suppliers in the market and they put their ranges together and then they sell their ranges to the fabric wholesalers throughout the world...like an Andrew David. He will buy from the same supplier as I will...Indian supplier, Italian supplier, whatever. We pay the same price but each editieur creates an own collection – his own product...of his own taste...of his own saleability...what he thinks the market wants. Without knowing about the existence of something like an editeur I decided to do that.
“Another thing I had noticed by then was that I hook into universal energy. It is a very important thing ... a trend in my life. I'll see something and I think, ‘That’s an amazing idea’ and I will base my whole collection on that idea and then, a month later I’ll see that it is all over the place. How did I know? How did I hook into it? Why did I see it as a trend? What gave me the genius to see that? And I think that has been my success. Every collection I have has a theme to it. In the beginning it was Japanese because I was into very simplistic ... Zen design ... which was very big in the early to mid nineties and I hooked into that.

“Everybody out there knows Tessa Sonik as the contemporary designer in the industry ... Whenever I have put a trend out, the market has just followed me – locally. A lot of the time I would go to the international fairs and say, ‘But I’ve already done that.’ And I’m talking international fairs – not local. I’d think, ‘That’s amazing’, because I did that last season. How are they only hitting it now? Am I too far ahead of what’s going on? And, actually, it worked against me in the sense that sometimes I would do things three years too early. Three years later the world catches up – especially the commercial market. There are different markets – the very top-end, sophisticated market, the middle market and the very low-end market which doesn’t really care. The middle market takes up to two to three years to catch up with a colour trend or fibre.”

“Every season I bring out a book and every book has a theme and I colour coordinate them. Let me show you what they look like.” Tessa went off and returned with several books of fabric collections. She talked me through a few. Tessa buzzed her personal assistant, Rosy, “Please bring me the last two years’ books.” Then she continued, “You understand. The whole thing now becomes coordinated. Now the best thing about it for me is that each fabric comes from a different supplier. This is the key. I will never buy a whole colour line from one supplier ever again in my life. That was a decision I made at the point at which that first supplier dropped me. That was the turning point in my career because, if H F now decides to take on my line and take twenty colours in the range, I couldn’t care because I only have one of it in a colour line. If they want to withdraw it, I’ll withdraw it because it is not going to affect my entire collection. It’s not going to take me out of business. If someone says, ‘I won’t sell it to you.’ I don’t mind – no
problem. It’s one fabric out of thirty...forty...fifty fabrics. No longer am I dictated to by any supplier.”

Rosy dropped the other books onto the desk in front of us and Tessa talked me through them, “These colours are very hot now ... they are from three years ago ... This was quite an important collection based on the photographs of ‘Z’. These are all his pieces. I said to him that I had hooked into what I wanted to do. This was the trend for me. So we took these photographs and we made fabrics to suit the pictures. The whole thing was based on each photograph.

Photograph 4.12: Tessa Sonik Collection Source book

“Everything I do is about fashion and design ... It is in my head. The collection is always about a theme ... It is not just putting a range of fabrics together. That is also the strength of this business ... we create market interest. I am not a fabric house and I always say, ‘Don’t see me as the fabric house, because I’m not. I am actually selling concepts ... I’m a designer ... I’m the trend. You come to me, because you want something special in your home. You are not coming to me because you want to cover your lounge suite. When you cover your lounge suite you say, ‘OK I’m coming here because I want this look ... this feel ... this idea that’s happening in the world.’ That’s why you come to me. I’m not big, I’m not

99 Real name withheld
small but I’m a medium sized business that wants to do that. That’s the place where I want to be. I don’t want to be there.” She indicated a place somewhere outside the window. “I want to be here,” pointing at her desk and the books on her desk. “So I am quite clear about those kinds of things – the market, what my philosophy of interest is. In this business I always say that I do not want to deal with the whole market. I would rather have thirty amazing customers than five hundred bad customers. I don’t want the whole market. People will come to me if they want my kind of fabric. I do not want to sell you fabrics. Go to H F if you want fabrics. They have got a whole variety of things for you to look through. I’m selling you design … energy.

“So, we follow the trend of what is happening in the world – not in fabric but as to where the world is going. My ‘2010 Nude’ collection is about being nude … about being exposed … being real and honest. So, the cover of the book was just the raw board with no fancy cover. The intention was to say that this is where the world was. We were having problems with the economy … people did not have money anymore. It was a huge thing. The global … ecology of the world was shattered … the waters polluted and there were earthquakes and global warming and we needed to recycle things. So, the whole energy of this was about what we could do – as a fabric house – what was our commitment and the most honest way we could find to market this collection. The fabrics we used were totally natural yarn. We did not use any manmade products that year. We used cottons, linens. You understand what I’m saying to you? I’m NOT selling fabric. I’m selling what I believe the world to be today. Where is it? What is happening?”

“We have an obligation to the people around us …to inform them. This whole year\textsuperscript{100} we’ve done a charity thing. Every metre of fabric we sell from our outdoor range goes to the wildlife fund for the gorillas. So the intention the whole time has been to show that we have an obligation to be responsible people running businesses in the world and giving back to the world. Not only do I give to charities, we give back to the economy, the ecology, to every aspect that we can because that is the future for me.

\textsuperscript{100} 2011
“Currently, one of my next trendy things that I’m looking at is how can I re-embellish my fabric. In other words, if I’ve got dead stock – how can I make it work for me? It is a very powerful thing if you understand where the future of the world is going. There’s a website on which you can buy salvaged goods but nobody even buys them and they’re good products. They do have a slight fault but, if you paint it up, you would not even notice it. It may be sold as a defective product in a new way. So it’s an exciting process for me. This is why I get excited about this business. It is my hobby.”

“The only time I hate this business is when I have customer hassles ... when we have problems with one of the fabrics not arriving – which I had the whole of last week – or when we have a problem with the fabric not wearing properly – which does not happen very often. Last week a customer complained about fabric arriving late. I told her, ‘I’m not selling heart-lung machines; I’m selling fabric. Nobody is going to die because the fabric is late.’ It has to be fun.

“I had never been stressed about where the market wants me to be. I’ve made the market where I want it to be ... So, if I decide to do one range a year or two ranges a year – it’s always my choice and whether I am able to afford to do that. I have no boss saying, ‘You do three ranges a year and that’s the way is will be or you don’t have a business.’ No pressure. I take it in my own time as to where, what and how I want it. Sometimes I become a little anxious if I haven’t done something for a while. However, those are my own deadlines. I have always paced myself to my heartbeat as opposed to the market’s heartbeat. My success is also about not being anxious to be something and mess it up. I can’t have regrets. If something goes wrong, I feel sad ... I think it, I feel it and then I have to move it on. Then I say, ‘That was one of the lessons I had to learn.’ I’ve always lived like that, you know. I don’t hold grudges. If I fight with someone I get it out and move on.

“Another turning point in my business was when I started doubling my turnover. I decided to bring out a new range for my contract market which is completely different form the top-end market with which I had been working until then. I started to service the corporate market. Coming from a corporate background – when I was in office furniture – I understood it probably better than most. To cope with the increase in workload, I took on a partner who was going to run it for me.
We compiled these corporate files.” Tessa showed me one of her corporate range books of fabrics. “But it did not work out. As you know, partnerships often don’t work – not a good thing.”

Tessa continued while I flipped through a book. “Corporate fabrics are very different to top-end fabrics. Suppliers bring out a colour line and that’s it. They have a card with ten fabrics in different colours – all looking the same. I said, ‘No, my business is coordinating fabrics.’ I wanted to bring out a range for the corporate market that had all this.” She pointed at the book in front of me. “It’s all coordinated. They do not have to use their brains. The people who sell chairs and desks don’t necessarily have colour sense. It’s true and they don’t want to be selling fabric but they have to offer it as a service because they have to cover the chairs. I understood this as I had been there. I used to support these guys. I know what they want. I am making it easy for them.

“It was about then that my partner left me and she took away my entire concept of customising the fabric for a company. So, when a company buys fifty metres – one role of fabric – I can have their name or logo or whatever you want printed on it in the colours of their choice. It was like money for jam. It was a no-brainer. You can have your own corporate fabric. Why would you buy anyone else’s? Design your own. So it was a very exciting concept I brought into the corporate market – which nobody had thought of before.

“It all came about when I did a Tessa Sonik Fabrics line. I don’t know what made me hook into it but the idea was very easy and all this is locally produced.” “This, on the other hand ...”, she pointed at the top-end pile of books, “... is international. I’d never touched local before. Now I was going local. So, not only was I going local, but I could offer this service to coordinate your whole office for you. Everything has got its spec on it. I even have sport ranges – bringing sporty into the office.

“I have a customer who is colour blind and he said to me, ‘You don’t understand what you’ve done for me. I can go to my customer and say this is the blue card. I know that this is blue and my customer goes mad and says, ‘I want my visitor
chairs in this fabric, my curtains in that one and the cushions in ... and everything is colour coordinated even though I am not able to see it.”

When I left I asked Tessa, “Have you ever considered anything other than fabric?”

Her answer came without hesitation, “Never.”

4.3.4 Reading Tessa’s scent markings – Tuesday, 15 March 2011

The next day, directly after my morning routine in the cat hotel, I started to transcribe my interview with Tessa. This was in accordance with the advice of Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 112), namely, to transcribe an interview while the emotion and physical gestures are still fresh in the mind. It was a time-consuming process and it took almost ten hours to complete the verbatim transcription as Poland (2001) cautioned. I had been warned that this could be a tedious and boring process but I found it fascinating. Being in my own study meant I was relaxed and, therefore, I tended to hear what was being said in more detail. Often I had to re-listen to the same sentence a few times to understand exactly what was being said but it was as if I was spending time with Tessa again. Listening to the interview transported me back to my interview with her. When I reached the point at which I had been looking through Tessa’s books I could remember the textures and the colours of the fabrics I had touched during that conversation.

Despite the fact that the transcription process was long and tiring I gained much from the process. Listening to the tone of her voice in the solitude of my study highlighted her emotions – the excitement but also the moments when she had been upset. During this time I gained a fair amount of insight into the situation; something I read often happens (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Maxwell, 2005). I picked up her confidence in her own judgement and her passion for her industry. She recognised the value of growing up in the fabric environment and the solid support structure she enjoyed – making it easier for her to take risks. Not once was there any suggestion of a fear of failure in anything she had said and it was clear that she saw connections in her industry that were apparently not obvious to her competition.
While transcribing the interview I made notes of such insights in brackets in the text as part of my preliminary analysis. I also noted the changes in body language that I had noticed during the interview as well as the tonal and volume (energy) changes in her voice that became very apparent when I listened to the recordings at home.

4.3.5 Picking up the scent
Listening to the section of the recording where she had delegated tasks to her staff without any hesitation took me back to a situation that had occurred about a year earlier in the art class. Tessa had been planning a launch which she had called *Collaboration* and where she planned to work with artists. At about the same time I had received an invitation from a group of ethnic artists who were creating fabric. The morning at the art class I had showed Tessa the invitation. She had taken one look at it and started pouring her coffee saying, “Thank you, but this is not for me. It is craft and not really truly ethnic.” No hesitation. End of story.

4.3.6 Sniffing Tessa’s scent marking again – Wednesday, 16 March 2011
I listened to the recording with the transcription in front of me – checking for mistakes in the transcription. This, too, was extremely time consuming. I typed the corrections in only at the end of the process. At long last the transcription was ready and I emailed it with my notes to Tessa for her approval as Goodson and Sikes (2001) suggest.

Later that same day I received an email from her:

Sorry. I’m hectic. Preparing to launch. Will see what I can do.

Within twenty-four hours her edited version of the transcription was in my inbox. She was shocked about her strong language and slang. She had not realised that that was how she communicated and she asked me to remove some of the words. She had also corrected a few places where she felt I had misinterpreted her intentions and returned the edited version to me – all of this despite the fact that she was preparing to launch.
4.3.7 The lioness scent marking Cowboys and Indians

In the spring of 2011 I received an invitation to the launch of Tessa’s Cowboys and Indians series. She forwarded her press release – below – to me:

The starting point for this collection was the large amount of *ikat* that was shown worldwide. At Tessa Sonik, we often seek inspiration globally, and then try to contextualise and often re-invent international trends or make sense on a very local level. With this in mind we looked at the history of *ikat* … (www.tessasonik.com).

Photograph 4.13: Cowboys & Indians launch and the exhibition at the launch – advertisement (left) and showroom (right)

I arrived at the exhibition space – an empty, rough concrete room with Tessa’s cloth hanging like flags on poles with spot lights as the only lighting. Tessa had just moved into the premises but she had utilised the raw unpretentiousness of the surroundings to echo the atmosphere of the theme. Everywhere well-dressed people with strawberry coloured drinks in hand were socialising. Dressed in denim pants, jacket and cowboy boots she welcomed me with a smile, but no voice. She was as sick as a dog and, as she was unable to make a speech, a film loop telling the story behind the collection ran on a screen – three metres by three metres in size – in the one corner. Throughout the evening waiters offered us chicken kebabs, biltong and nachos served in miniature boats made of leaves. Tessa
networked non-stop and, from three metres away, it was impossible to tell that she was so sick. It was an extremely successful launch for her.

4.3.8 Watching the lioness relax
A few weeks later on a Sunday morning at art class, we were discussing how the current economic conditions were affecting us all and how we were coping with it. Tessa, who had been late for class, had settled at her easel and started painting but soon she asked, “Will someone change the music?” Obviously the CD being played was not to her liking and someone changed the music.

By eleven o’clock the butler had brought in fruit salad, tea, coffee and Florentines and we gathered eagerly around the table. While we were enjoying our coffee break Tessa told me the following story. “I was still in high school when I started working for this jeweller. On my second day at work I was working with a customer and, while she was looking at diamond rings, I turned my back to fetch something else for her from another cupboard. The owner came down on me like a ton of bricks. I was extremely upset. He had not ever told me never to turn my back on clients while they were trying on jewellery. There was no way I was going to work for someone who talked to me like that and I resigned on the spot.” Even at a young age she had been able to stand up against unfair treatment. Fairness was very important to her.

Not long after tea time Tessa asked, “Will someone please tell me the time.” I looked up from my painting. Tessa was totally engaged with the portrait on her easel. “What time is it?” she repeated her question. I turned my head to look at the clock on the wall. Delegating tasks came so naturally to her she did not even know that she was doing it. “It’s ten past twelve,” I answered. “Thanks, I need to leave at half past. Will somebody tell me when it’s half past?” she asked without looking up. Nobody answered – all were concentrating on their paintings. At half past she packed up. No one had had to remind her, but by asking someone she freed up her conscious mind to concentrate on her painting.

As usual the rest of the group left at one o’clock. While driving home I thought of the previous Sunday when Tessa had come in but had not touched her brushes. She had not been able to paint as the room was too cluttered and she had spent
the whole morning cleaning up. This week she had been completely focused and had been irritated by everyone who was not as focused as she had been. This lioness knew what worked for her and organised her situation to suit her needs.

On another Sunday morning at the art class, while the rest of us were painting Tessa was planning her next fabric range. “The new trend in the world is collaboration,” she said. “I’m thinking of collaborating with well-known artists. Maybe they could paint a panel and I could repeat it as a fabric. Each fabric could carry the signature of the artist whose painted panel it represented and, for each metre of fabric sold, the artist would receive a royalty ... thus the artist would also benefit. What do you think about that, Doug?”

“Sounds great,” he said.

A few weeks later the invitation arrived and, on Thursday evening, 14 June 2012, Tessa launched her Ray collaboration fabric series.

Photograph 4.14: Ray poster and Tessa during the Ray launch

Instead of the concrete dungeon of the Cowboys and Indians launch the previous year we were in a sophisticated showroom in the same building. This time the film loop was being shown on a fifty-two inch flat screen television and the room was well lit with her fabric on neat rails. Ray furniture covered in Tessa Sonik fabrics was on display and there was live entertainment with Tessa working the floor in an elegant, simple, black dress. She gave an excellent speech explaining the rationale behind the new range.

101 Doug is a pseudonym for the only professional artist in the class.
4.3.9 The lioness expands her territory

Towards the end of 2012 Tessa talked about importing bed linen made of a thousand threads per square inch Egyptian cotton and, in January 2013, having returned from France, she told us about the rugs she had also sourced there. She was extremely excited and she invited me to visit her shop to see all the luxury items she was importing.

On Wednesday, 28 February 2013, at eleven I arrived at the head office of Tessa Sonik Textiles in Kramerville. Tessa met me in the reception area where I was chatting to her daughter, Zara Pimenski, who had started working with her mother. I took photographs of the rug in the reception and of some of the new and interesting items in the showroom. This showroom was a fairly new addition to the business and it had sparked a new trend in the business. As Tessa showed me the rugs, trendy furniture and interesting objects of the shelves I asked, “Are you becoming the one-stop-shop for decorators?”

Tessa beamed. “Tessa Sonic Textiles – it was our first … it's our main business and it will always be our main business, but I have expanded quite a lot. Have you noticed we are now also in this retail space? People are in and out the whole day – up and down the stairs. So, what we have found is that people want immediate gratification. They walk in here and think about what to buy. How can they take with them – something that feels worthwhile for them? Not just a piece of fabric. They do not come here only to buy fabric. They're come here to buy things that they can take away and feel satisfied with. Therefore, we have things that add value to our business as opposed to just our first business – which is selling fabrics. We started off with collaborative products like Snapp.”

She guided me to the glass shelves displaying the Snapp items. Pointing to the Snapp salad forks she said, “He’s an industrial designer and the quality of his design is almost Swedish – clean lines, beautiful, simple designs.” We looked at the different coloured salad forks and then Tessa picked up a stack of plastic pipes which were held together by magnets to form a wine rack – demonstrating how you can stack them in different combinations and ways to suit your space. She also pointed out the wobble lamps and interesting chairs, “So that's the Snapp collaboration.” I found it interesting that she had super modern items such
as Snapp – as well as silver jewellery made by a woman from Ruanda and rubber o-rings from some recycle-junky seller off the streets – combined with the finest cotton, linen and cashmere bed linen – all under the same roof."

Then she told me about a competition she was sponsoring. “One of our projects for the year\textsuperscript{102} which will be interesting to you ... We’ve put out a competition to all designers, decorators and students. We’re taking fabric that we can do absolutely nothing with – end of ranges, small pieces ... I can do nothing other than give it away to charity or somebody will come to buy bits and pieces on a sale. However, we don’t have that many to warrant a big sale but I’ve got enough to do an

\textsuperscript{102} 2013
exhibition. So we’re inviting people to give us their ideas of how they would upcycle the fabric. In other words, you can make it into something else. You can put another finish on it or another texture to make it look like something totally different, but the starting point is always the fabric. So it’s a creative project and, at the end, we are going to auction the pieces. The prize winner\textsuperscript{103} will win a trip oversees to one of the design shows with all expenses paid for a week – a twenty-five thousand rand prize. In addition, the work will receive exposure right through the year. We will interview the winner and he/she will feature in our media ... our advertising media such as Visi magazine. It’s going to be an unbelievable thing to do ... and we’re also putting back into the community.”

\textbf{Photograph 4.16}: Tessa Sonik reception, the imported rugs in her showroom

Tessa walked me to the pile of rugs on the floor of her showroom. “I went to France ... as you know ... Paris ... and I picked all these rugs\textsuperscript{104}. There were about five thousand rugs. It took me about two hours to select these – I could only buy fifty rugs. They come from Turkey and they sent them by freight so it was not an issue to bring them in. However, I want them to be exclusive so I did not want to bring too many in – just enough for them to be special enough. They’re very interesting ... they’re all washed out.” We looked through the rugs spread out in a pile on the floor. Pointing to the one in front of her reception desk she said, “I decided to keep that one for here.”

\textsuperscript{103} The winner used coordinating pieces of materials to cover a couch, producing a patchwork quilt effect.

\textsuperscript{104} In September 2013 the rugs went on a half-price sale.
We moved to one of the tables and she pulled out fabric books from a low shelf – opening them up to show me the bed linen swatches ... all very beautiful ... and also books of wallpaper for children’s rooms. We chatted about the designs as we paged through – just like typical women. “This would look great as a table cloth in my dining room,” I remarked pointing at something I found very beautiful.

Tessa immediately replied, “That’s one of the things we are going to be doing ... linen table cloths and room sprays – for nice smells. We are trying hard to get into that market.” I continued to flick through the beautiful swatches – enjoying the silky textures of a thousand threads per square inch cotton on my skin.

With a small white cup of freshly brewed organic coffee in my hand we moved from the retail space to her office. The staff was busy with stocktaking and Tessa popped her head into the one room, “How’s it going?” There was a problem. One of the fabrics had a stain on and Tessa immediately asked Zara to get a professional person to come in and clean it.

“Take a seat,” she offered while she moved to a stack of medium sized boxes piled waist height on her office floor. “I brought this in because some of my older stuff was moving too slowly. I just have a natural understanding of the fabric market. You cannot just keep going – if things aren’t working, you have to change. Even if you are not making money ... it’s not about making money. It’s about changing the way you do things. Fabrics are my first love – always – as you know and it is easy for me. It’s like I am able to do it with my eyes closed. I am able to put a collection together without doing too much investigation into it but, because it’s me, I go into the depth of it. I go through numerous fabrics to find the right piece for my collection. It’s not hard for me and I understand it clearly. Now, if your business runs like that – just naturally – it may become very boring ... mundane. So you look for things that can add value to your business and that excite you.

“The market is dead and we’re not doing as well as I would like to be doing, but the world is in a recession. It really is. We are down from last year’s figures.” She used her forearm to demonstrate how their figures were going down instead of going up. “It’s a little concerning, but it’s not me. I cannot say that it’s Tessa Sonik. It’s the industry because I hear all my competitors talking about their businesses.
We are selling luxury goods – not necessities. And what happens to luxuries? When people don't have money, they are not going to cover their couches and they are not going to redecorate their offices or their hotels. So, instead of doing it every three to five years, they are now doing it every five to seven years.

“So, if you're lucky enough to get one or two of those hotel contracts, it’s your bread and butter. It carries you through the year. It’s not huge money but it can be half a million to a million rand in a year...It’s big, but it’s small – if you know what I mean? It provides the business with a little bit of fat. It gives you some credibility and it gives you some turnover. And, if the hotel does one job with you it may do all its jobs with you if it works well with you. We’ve already done two now – last year we did Sun City ... and now the Cabanas. It’s the same designer. He likes how we work. You develop a special product ... It is not a lot of money, but that kind of business helps us to look after our business, you know.”

The man who had cleaned the soiled fabric popped his head into the room. Tessa thanked him, adding, “You know, I'll be using you all the time. I see you also clean Persian rugs. Give me your card. People need you all the time in this industry. Did you see my rugs in the front?” He had. “Thanks for coming so promptly.”

Tessa continued, “This new stuff is not big money but it is fun money. I'm not doing it for the money. I travel so much and can bring back the best in the world ... even if it's expensive. I'm aiming only for that top-end of the market.”

Tessa picked up a flat box from a pile and placed the open box in front of me. I folded back the tissue paper revealing an apricot coloured cashmere bed throw. My jaw dropped as I stared at it. “It's amazing! Isn’t it?” she said almost in a whisper. I touched it. It was gossamer and soft and definitely the ultimate in luxury bedding. We took turns enjoying it. Tessa opened a variety of bed throws of different materials and thicknesses and ranging between two thousand to seven thousand rand each. I indulged my senses in the luxury and could understand that for those who could afford this it must be worth it. However, I was amazed that there were enough people able to spend that amount of money on a gossamer bed throw to make them a viable product on her shelves.

“And this sells well?” I asked.
Tessa nodded. “I want to put these on the market when winter is approaching. Next to arrive will be my tablecloths.” Tessa opened up her computer and showed me some of the things she had on order – including room fragrances and interesting vases.

On our way back to reception Tessa saw some staff members sitting at a table chatting. In a stern tone she asked, “What is going on? Why are you not taking stock?” They explained that someone was conducting an interview in the room in which they had been working. “Why don’t you work in the room next door?” I had noticed during the clean-up sessions at the art class how Tessa was able to focus on the task at hand. She became irritated when someone was just hanging around doing nothing when there was work to be done.

As we passed through reception I thanked her for her time. “Your stuff is absolutely gorgeous, Tessa.”

“It is.” She smiled like a lion lazing in the African sun after a good meal.

4.3.10 Staring into the bush – reflecting
Driving home I am glad that she had not even asked about my study. Tessa was sharing her passion with me and she was not concerned about what exactly my mission was. Grbich (1999, p. 132) maintains that “the best data are obtained when people are not being constantly alerted to the researcher’s purpose”.

At home I started the usual process of writing field notes, verbatim transcriptions and the preliminary analysis.

Tessa is extremely creative and has an excellent instinct for future trends in decor. Her face lights up when she talks about her products. Although she is softly spoken there is an underlying confidence in her voice. She feels secure enough to open up and she does not mind admitting to mistakes. In addition, she recognises the important role played by her support structure in her success. Her high level of self-awareness had made it easy to access data from her. I caught myself smiling. Tessa likes to call her business her hobby but, with branches in three cities and with a turnover of millions of rand per annum, calling it a hobby is an understatement.
Dianne, the battle-scarred lioness

Photograph 4.17: The battle-scarred lioness

4.4 THE BATTLE-SCARRED LIONESS

Dianne story was co-constructed from my interactions with her. About a month prior to my official interview with Tessa I had attended a networking session in Linden. I often meet entrepreneurs making use of my mentoring services at these networking sessions, but I had been surprised to see Dianne sitting on the far side of the table. I had not seen her at these meetings before. As always she was well-groomed and stylish but, during our chat after the meeting, she started to cry. “I am so depressed. I have completed quite a few coaching and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) courses, but my business is dead. I’d like to come and see you again.”

I told her, “You’re welcome. Just give me call to arrange a time. Unfortunately, I have to run back to the cat hotel now.”

105 Brown – the earthy colour
106 Photograph from the private collection of Ken and Nettie Kyle.
107 A suburb of Johannesburg
4.4.1 Entering her territory

More than a month later I had still not heard from her. Since our last interview I had thought about her situation. It was five years since the workshop I had done with her in 2006 but, from our conversation at the networking session, it was clear that she was earning very little money from her coaching and training business. I felt she may be a suitable participant in my study, representing an entrepreneur involved in unsuccessful entrepreneurial activity.

I phoned Dianne. She sounded depressed, “I’m desperately looking for work.”

“What about your training and coaching business?” I wanted to know.

“I’m not doing anything there.”

“Don’t you want to be part of my study? I need people who’re going through tough times with the start-up of their business and maybe you’ll learn something of value about your process while we’re at it.”

To my surprise she immediately said, “Yes.” We set up an interview at her house – as she only has a home office – for 31 March 2011.

4.4.2 Meeting the lioness in her den

Before driving to Dianne’s house I make a mental note to keep this interview informal – a conversation rather than an interview (McNamara, 1997; Ellis & Berger, 2000). I did not want Dianne, who was already going through a difficult time, to perceive the process as intimidating. From the first coaching manual I had read (Starr, 2003, p. 51) I was aware that true communication takes place from a position of “equal to” and not “more than” or “less than” the other person. Dianne was going through a difficult time financially and I knew what that felt like. I did not want to exacerbate her insecurity by making her feel like an insect under a microscope. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 39), “If you treat people as ‘research subjects, they will act like research subjects, which is different from how they usually act.” I wanted Dianne to see me as someone who was interested in and willing to listen to her story.
I arrived at Dianne’s house and, within minutes, we had settled into a cozy corner with a mug of tea each. Step by step I guided her through the informed consent form and my introductory interview.\textsuperscript{108} I wanted the interview to be non-threatening but also I needed to be sure that she understood what she was letting her in for (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999).

“Dianne, I would like to record our conversation. I cannot concentrate on what you are saying when I am worrying about taking notes. If, at any point, you want to say anything off the record you can just tell me to switch the recorder off. Are you ok with that?”

“That’s fine. I also work with a recorder. It is so much easier than trying to take notes,” she said.

While she had signed the consent form I set up my audio recorder. She was looking more positive than she had during our previous conversation. I reminded her to think of a pseudonym to protect her identity.

She promised to think about one.

I tried to sound casual when I asked her, “What is going on with your training and coaching business?”

“It’s terrible to think but, actually, the business is a failure.”

Wanting to keep her spirits up I double checked whether it was as bad as she thought it was and I then pointed out, “Most of us have a venture that fails somewhere along the line. Do you have any idea what contributed to the business not taking off?”

Dianne threw her head back and ran her one hand through her auburn bob. “I don’t really have a product … I don’t really have programmes to sell. You cannot hope to make money as a coach in South Africa… The people won’t come to you for individual coaching … and, even if they do, you will never make decent money from it. The courses I have written are great, but it is difficult to get people to attend these courses. The marketing is very important. If you don’t do it well and

\textsuperscript{108} Please see framework for first interview in Appendix F
your planning isn’t good, you can forget it … And I broke all the rules … every
single one.”

“Why?” I wanted to know.

“You know … Maybe it was because I always felt I didn’t really have a product to
sell. I think subconsciously I self-sabotaged.”

“So are you saying that you do not consciously buy into the product and,
therefore, it is doomed?” I had learnt from both my coaching practice, as well as
from Holstein and Gubrium (2003), how important it was to ensure that I
understood her correctly.

“Yes, you can forget it. I also think I started coaching because I felt I had no other
options. The work market was dead as far as my work was concerned. The
problem with me is that I enjoy more than one thing and I am certain there are
other people who are the same. So, now I am forced in one direction. The world
tries to force you in one direction and it is very difficult to focus on one thing only,
but with coaching … It is one of the things … I really enjoy coaching people, but I
think – when you are going through emotionally difficult times when you are
questioning yourself, it is very difficult to project strength – which is what you
should do as a coach… and maybe that is why – subconsciously – I did not attract
people. I don’t have a website, which is a problem. How will people get to know
me? I did not do any decent marketing – such as free talks – so that people could
learn about me. I focused only on emails when I promoted two of my courses …
and in the process I mentioned, ‘I am also a coach’. So, I did not really go out
spreading the news far and wide. My marketing was completely wrong.”

Dianne had covered a lot of ground almost in one breath. However, I had to go
back to explore further. I asked, “Why did you not get a website and do proper
marketing?”

“I did not believe in my product.”

“What did you do about that?”

She shrugged her shoulders, “Nothing.”
To avoid going around in circles I recapped, “So your only marketing was when you sent out emails. What happened?”

Dianne sounded despondent. “I have a relatively good database but it was a hit and miss situation. People don’t know you and there is no trust relationship.”

She went quiet, staring through the window. I added, “And it is easy to ignore an email or press the delete button without thinking about it twice – especially when you are busy.”

Dianne continued, “But if you do not have a good product, it does not make sense to spend lots of time and money on marketing ... to recruit people in person ... especially for a three hundred and fifty rand per person course. It is a lot of work for little return. If you go out and sell a ten grand\textsuperscript{109} product, it is a different story. Then you can invest man hours in promoting it.”

For a moment it was quiet. I allowed myself time to reflect on her words. There was a flaw in her reasoning in this, but I did not want to challenge her here. Hence I took a gentler option, “Have you done any pro bono work?”

“This month I have a pro bono session at a company. I am going to work with management for an hour and present part of a course. That hour plus the preparation is my freebee. I’ll see what comes from it. There is the possibility that something may come from it ... but there is also a possibility that nothing will come from it. I have also done pro bono coaching – many, many, many hours over a period of a few years ... I did not gain a single client through it. Maybe I chose the wrong people to coach.”

“Who did you choose?” I enquired.

“Friends who were struggling financially, who else?” I deliberately remained quiet. “... a company or organisation?” she asked.

She knew the answer. People who are struggle financially are not a target market if you want to earn a living. I thought this may the right time for some self-disclosure (Esterberg, 2002). “I understand. I have coached many friends and

\textsuperscript{109} R10 000
even people I hardly knew who had lost their jobs, but I write that off as charity. When I do official, pro bono work I do a once-off for someone in a business who can afford to come back for follow-up sessions and who may refer other professional people to me. I think it is important to have a focus area. I do SME business owners only ... and many of them are restaurant owners.” She nodded.

Dianne was starting to look depressed so I decided to give the conversation a more positive slant. “Tell me about the things that did work for you.”

Dianne stared through the window for a moment before she answered in a more upbeat tone, “My first workshop was great – for me ... Ten people attended.”

Keeping it positive I added, “It is actually a convenient number for an interactive workshop.”

Dianne sounded more energised. “It was wonderful. I had a fresh database. Women in Mining South Africa (WOMSA) advertised on their website on my behalf and that was where most of the attendees came from ...” She lowered her voice again, “But that was that. Once I had utilised them ... those who were interested had attended ... And my first workshop was not great.”

I frowned, “Why do you say that? You have just said it was great ... what now?”

“I should have had a practice run using other people before the time in order to smooth out the glitches ... to see what works and what does not work.”

“At least you have learnt an important lesson,” I pointed out.

She nodded again. “Very important.” She stared into the distance and it was obvious that, for a moment, she was back in that situation.

“What systems did you have in place to encourage further engagement with the people on the course?”

“Nothing. I had nothing.”

“Did you have a coach or mentor during this process?”

She rolled her eyes. “Not really.”
“I don’t quite understand.”

“I used a friend of mine who is also a coach but she was not in it to help me. I don’t think she had relevant experience. She contributed, but not what I needed ... and it was very random ... Whenever we saw each other.”

“So it wasn’t structured ... contracted?” I checked.

“No, and no real support.”

“Do you think it would have made a difference if you had had a coach or mentor?”

“Yes ... Yes.”

“What support did you have?”

She took time to think before she answered, “You know, I don’t have a family who supports me. I think that is emotionally draining. I cannot really expect my son to support me. He has his own things to do. I think if you have a husband who supports you – that is valuable ... and a proper coach may also be very valuable.”

“Let’s pretend you were married. What kind of support would you have appreciated from a husband?”

“Emotional support ... encouragement ... Not financial help ... that would have made me lazy. It is easy just to plod along if you have a rich spouse to support you. You don’t have to worry about the business making a profit. Maybe a financial injection at a crucial time, yes, but if I knew there was always money I would never switch on.”

We were now indulging in wishful thinking and I needed to know how Dianne dealt with real challenges. However, she seemed more relaxed and I decided to try and touch on the difficult times again, “Please tell me more about the times when you faced challenges.”

She gave a big sigh and put both hands in her hair. “Ok, there were many. After that first workshop I was very tough on myself. It was just not good enough. I could see exactly where I went wrong. I recorded the workshop – which was a good
thing. I could listen to it again ... to what I said and how I said it. And it helped me to refine the workshop. After this it was very challenging to get going again. I sent three thousand emails out, but there were no responses. I sent another three thousand emails out and two responses came through. This was terrible but I decided to run the course. I called on two of my friends to join in. So, there were four people and I was ok with that and I presented the course.

“Getting no reaction ... not knowing where to advertise ... made me feel trapped. I started to question whether I was doing the right thing. Was I on the right road for me? Why was I being blocked? Maybe this is not what I am supposed to do. You question where you are in life. You question everything about yourself. What do I radiate? What am I sending out into the universe that makes me attract blockages? It takes time to find answers to these questions...but if you seek, you find an answer. I have found someone with whom I had done courses and who helped me out of that slump. It was incredibly difficult for me ... terribly.”

Her voice dropped in tone and volume. “The first thing I do when things get tough is I go into a total depression. I am inclined to become depressed. So, I go into a total depression. Luckily in this case it was over the Christmas holidays so I was able to procrastinate ... I felt that I could ... there was nothing going on in any case ... I tend to do this ... I don’t know where to go. Stress causes the blockage ... so I am unable to think straight and I know all these things, but to practise it is so difficult. To get through this I did a variety of things ... and I went for massages.”

I wanted to know, “What triggers this slump in you?.Do you know?”

“Fear, absolute fear. I think it is the worst thing for me to conquer. Recently, I have hurt my knee. My knee is the physical manifestation of the fear.”

I needed to understand what she meant, “Please help me understand you correctly? How is the fear linked to your injured knee?”

“The fear is about whether or not I am on the right track. What am I to do? I don’t really have a product. My knee is a physical manifestation of not being able to walk along this road because I don’t know whether it is the right road for me. I
don’t have a map so I am following my nose. And, as I have said previously, I’ve made all the mistakes in the book.”

I had to challenge her on this. “This is quite ironical. Here you are a coach and the primary role of a coach is to help people to identify their goals ... where they want to go and build a map of the route to this goal, but you do not do it for yourself. Why would that be?”

She was quick to answer this question. “I think I don’t trust myself. One of the fears I am working on is my fear of success. I have been doing lots of EFT\textsuperscript{110} the last few months. So, I use all these techniques to help myself ... to get out of the slump. But I don’t really have a map ... not really a map. I don’t know ... I cannot tell you what my true passion is. This is what I want to do. This is where I want to go. That is my problem. I cannot really see myself as Dianne, the coach ... THIS is what she is’. I’ll go nuts if that is what I do all day.”

This was another contradiction in the same session. “You’ll go nuts if you coach all day?”

“Yes, I want to use my brain – too.”

I warned myself not to allow my personal viewpoint to cloud my vision. Dianne was saying things with which I did not necessarily agree but I should not allow this to influence my judgement and cause me to jump to all sorts of conclusions. My brain works overtime when I am sitting in front of a coaching client. I have to figure out the best way to explore hidden agendas while being completely engaged in the conversation. At the same time I need to be aware so that I am not dragged along dark thought alleys when I am supposed to keep an open mind. However, I decided not to challenge her on this. I did not want her to become defensive. Instead I asked, “What would you like to do all day?”

“I enjoy project management. I like to work with groups of people – something I have not done for a while. I am at the moment involved in project managing further development on websites. I liaise with the client, find out what needs to be done

\textsuperscript{110} Emotional freedom technique
and send the specs through to the programmer and designers and get the quotes. I check that everything is done.”

“Dianne, listening to you, do you think the coaching is too lonely for you?”

“Yes. I really enjoy it but I cannot sit and coach for a whole day. Yesterday morning I was exhausted when my client left. That session was enough for me ... for at least a week.”

“Well, Dianne, maybe it is a blessing in disguise that the coaching did not take off if you do not want to do it all day long ... and you have had the opportunity to explore this and realise it. You can now take all the lessons you have learnt and use them in your next venture.”

“I love coaching and I want to continue with it. It is so satisfying but I also need the other stimulation.”

Sitting there listening to her the following thought came to me, “Dianne, do you really want to work for yourself?”

“At the end of the day I think it is the nicest thing to do.”

I drilled down deeper, “Why?”

“You time is your own – depending on what you do ... your time is your own. You can work early in the morning or late at night. You can pick your child up in Pretoria if you want to. You schedule your own time. That is very important to me. I enjoy that.”

I also liked the freedom to choose how I schedule my time, but I have found that, when it comes to early morning or late at night it is AND rather than OR. I said nothing about that. “Any other reasons?”

I waited while she pondered the question. “I don’t have to become involved in company politics. I am reading the book Nice girls don’t get the corner office. According to the book, you need to become involved in the politics in a large organisation. It is not something I enjoy, I’ve never done it, and it has always put
me off … But the main thing is you are your own boss. You don’t need to ask someone for two hours off to do what you want to do.”

Almost two hours had slipped by and it was time to leave. I suggested, “It may make sense for you to take time to map the road to success for yourself.”

As we walked to my car we chatted about her personal life and I thanked her for her time and her willingness to share her experience with me. She took me completely by surprise when she said, “Thank you for your willingness to give of your time and energy today.” How hungry for an ear she must have been to feel like that after an interview that had been difficult for her. Tears filled my eyes.

4.4.3 Staring into the bush – reflecting
Driving home I was deeply concerned. If all my interviews with Dianne followed this pattern I might not obtain enough for my research from these interviews. At home I downloaded the audio file, backed it up on a CD and, with a cup of tea next to me, I started to write my field notes.

The atmosphere at Dianne’s home had been friendly despite the fact that it had not been an easy interview. In Afrikaans we have an expression, “Sy sit met haar hande in haar hare.” This means that someone is at their wits’ end. Literally translated, it means “She is sitting with her hands in her hair”. Dianne had done that at least three times during our conversation today – making that expression come alive for me.

4.4.4 Picking up the scent
On 1 April 2011, after the cat hotel morning routine, I was at my laptop transcribing my interview with Dianne and adding to my field notes. When I transcribed an interview verbatim so soon after the actual interview it was as if I were at the interview again and actions and emotions would come back to me as I listened to the audio recording.

In the late afternoon I had to stop transcribing to prepare the cat hotel dinners. It is usually a time I enjoy and I find very relaxing with lots of love and purrs. However,
it required some discipline to go outside as I was in the zone\textsuperscript{111}. By the time I went to bed the transcription was completed.

I did not record habitual sounds such as the “Ahem” pauses at the beginning of sentences, neither did I try to give an exact indication of the length of the silences in the conversation. Any thinking time was simply indicated with “…” or noted in the narrative as such. I found that focusing on these other sounds and measuring the length of silences distracted my mind from the meaning of the words while I transcribed the interviews. I have all the recordings and it would be easy for me to listen to any one of them again should I wish to make a note of the length of the silences or any other interesting idiosyncrasies.

The following day I read through the transcript while listening to the audio of the conversation – editing where necessary and adding detail with remarks indicating the hands in the hair situation using my field notes (Bryman & Bell, 2003). This took more than twice the time that the actual interview had taken.

Both Dianne and I are Afrikaans speaking so the interview was held mainly in Afrikaans. I thus had to embark on the laborious process of translating the Afrikaans sections of the transcribed interview into English. I had grown up in the Eastern Cape in a predominantly English-speaking community and had attended a parallel medium primary school with Afrikaans and English speaking learners in the same classroom. The children who grow up this way usually have a fairly good command of both languages and this made the task a little easier.

The translation process took two days as I spent time to ensure that every sentence was as true an interpretation of the original as possible. Sometimes there was an expression that was best left in the original Afrikaans and I kept it that way. Once I was satisfied with the translation I emailed it to Dianne. I wanted her to read it to ensure that she was satisfied that she had come across the way she had intended. In addition, it would also afford her the opportunity to change anything that bothered her and to add something if she felt like it.

\textsuperscript{111} When I am in the zone, I feel completely engaged in the process. It is as if time stands still and I become one with the process I am engaged in.
During the next few days I read and re-read the interview. I also listened to the recording a few times. I was surprised and relieved that – despite the looseness of the interview structure – there were distinct themes emerging.

4.4.5 Searching for the illusive lioness

By early May – more than a month after I had emailed the transcripts of her interview to Dianne – I had had no response from her. I phoned her to enquire about this and she confessed to having procrastinated. After our conversation I could not help thinking how Tessa, prior to her big launch, had found the time to return the edited draft within hours of receiving it. Tessa’s reasoning was that she had so little time that, if she did not do it immediately, she would not get to it at all. I have so often told students and mentees, “It takes more energy to worry about what you have to do than to just do it.”

A few days later I telephoned her again and Dianne said that she was happy with both the transcript and the translation from Afrikaans into English. I was not completely convinced that she had scrutinised it but I left it at that. I decided it was an indication of her mindset and that is what I was exploring.

4.4.6 Hunting with the lioness

About a year later I received a telephone call from Dianne. She asked “Can you do some brain profiles for me and what will it cost?”

“I can. What type? How many?” I wanted to know.

“I don’t know yet. Can we get together and discuss it?”

I checked my schedule and said, “I have Wednesday evening available. Will that suit you?”

It did suit her and, on Wednesday evening at seven, we sat down at my dining room table. Dianne gave me a memory stick and, while she unpacked the documents, I printed a copy of the document we were to use for my use. Looking through the papers while coming up the stairs from my office I saw that it was a tender document for a training programme for middle management at a large corporate. As I handed her memory stick back to her she said, “The last couple of
days I have mainly watched television and slept – trying to escape this process. Can we please brainstorm this process?"

I was taken completely by surprise. From our telephone conversation I had been expecting her to tell me what profiles she wanted and how many. Worst case scenario I had expected an argument over costing. Now it seemed she wanted me to help her prepare a tender document for a training programme. If she had not been a participant in my study I would have politely brought her back to reality as I understood it. However, I decided that this may be a good opportunity to see firsthand how she went about her business. I would write this investment in time and energy off as participant observation. “Ok, let’s start.”

Within minutes it was clear to me that she was in way over her capacity. She had no resources as regards most aspects in the tender document.

“How are you going to deliver on all these concepts?” I wanted to know.

“I’ll outsource. I’ve presented a change management programme before, but it didn’t work well ... You can do it ... and the emotional intelligence. I can do time management.” As we ran through the topics she suggested possible names of people who may be able to help. She had assumed without asking that I would be willing to be part of this just because I was helping her with the brainstorming. I could not believe it!

“Sjoe Dianne, I do have an emotional intelligence programme, but I haven’t done change management for a corporate before.” She looked at me. For a moment there was dead silence. “It’s all here,” she said, pointing at a pile of my books in front of her on the table.

“What guidelines do we have?”

“Just this.” She pointed to the document I had printed just minutes ago. “It’s very open.”

I flicked through the pages again. “Do you have any guidelines re duration?”

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112 Literally meaning “Ouch” but, in this sense, meaning “Wow”, indicating negative surprise.
“None.”

At this point I thought it might be a good idea to check whether she realised that she was out of her depth. “Maybe they throw it open as part of a sifting process – knowing that the people who have a tried and tested package will know exactly how long it will take.”

She was quick to answer. “I don’t think they know what they want.” I had not anticipated this answer. The corporate was the premier supplier of electricity in Southern Africa. I could not believe that they do not know exactly what they wanted but I kept my composure and said nothing.

She rattled off more topics to be covered in the training programme. It dawned on me she wanted to use me to fill in whatever gaps I would agree to. She continued running through the topics but committed to nothing other than the emotional intelligence module. I did not have either the time or the team to do this tender and I had no intention of doing it. I could do the honourable thing and tell her outright that I did not want to be involved in this process or I could use the situation for observation and commit to a small chunk of the project that was well within my abilities. I decided on the latter. When she took a break to drink her coffee I said, “OK. I will help you as far as my time and abilities allow me, because you are a participant in my study and I would like to use this as participant observation.” She was happy with that and obviously believed she could do this successfully.

By eleven that evening we had worked through half of the list of topics in the programme. The following afternoon she was back at my house. Between two and four we worked through the rest of the document. As long as I gave her concepts and procedural steps or placed the relevant information in front of her she operated swiftly. By the end of our interview she had an outline of the programme, but there was no content ... no substance. To my mind this was her project. She needed to put it all together.

Within days she had a line-up of curricula vitae (CVs) of people who she knew and could present the twenty modules. I was not convinced that they knew about it yet.

“Where did you get all these people, Dianne?”
“Oh, I know them from different places,” she said. “I have spent a day with Tom and I'll get to all the others.”

“So you haven’t spoken to all of these people, yet. What if they can’t do it?”

“I’ll sort it out if we get the tender,” she promised. I realised that Dianne had a lot more courage than I have. We thought differently about such things. When UJ asks me to write a programme for them, they know and I know that it is within my capabilities – it may be a push, but I have done similar projects to their absolute satisfaction. When I had done the first one for them I had just completed editing a first-year textbook for them and, thus, they had known what my level of knowhow and my work ethic, while and I had known that I I possessed a sound knowledge of the work on which the course was based. When I had appointed tutors for the bridging school I had selected people from the industry with proven experience in the subject they were going to teach. I would never even think of taking on something knowing as little as Dianne did about this. Did she have any idea of the risk she was taking?

I did not, however, voice these thoughts and Dianne left my house “ready” to take on the tender.

A few days later an email arrived. It was followed by a sms five minutes later because I had not responded immediately.

Tuesday, 15 May 2012, 14:00
Wanneer kry ek die goed? [When am I getting the stuff?]
Dianne

Tuesday, 15 May 2012, 14:12
What stuff?
Suzette

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Pseudonym
Tuesday, 15 May 2012, 14:20
The EQ work.
Dianne

I telephoned her and talked her through the email. In her state of nervous excitement she had not opened all the attachments.

At 14:55 she telephoned again, “What do you know about Talent Management and Negotiations?

I had decided not to become any more involved in this process. “Not enough to be of any use to you.”

“Then I’ll have to go with what I can find on the web,” she said.

I was sitting at my desk when I received an sms from Dianne telling me that she had delivered the tender documents to the corporate. In the next few weeks I vacillated between two extremes. For most of the time I thought that there was little or no chance that a major company would accept her tender but there were times when I thought, ‘What if we get it?’ and then I would have a five minute anxiety attack.

Staring through my study window I remembered the many times I had waited outside the matriculation examination hall for my students who were writing their physics exams. The students who did very well could usually tell me to within five per cent of their eventual marks the marks they expected to achieve for the exam paper. However, the students who struggled to scrape through were usually unable to estimate their final mark correctly. Their guesses were usually overly optimistic. They simply did not have an accurate enough reference frame in terms of which to measure their experience. I feared that this was also the case with Dianne regarding training programmes. She had not run enough successful programmes to know what it took to make a correct judgement of her programme.

About three weeks later I telephoned Dianne to schedule an interview in order to reflect on the tender process and I asked, “Have you heard anything, yet?”
“We didn’t get it.” I felt hugely relieved.

We scheduled an interview for 5 June 2012 at Olivia’s Bakery, one of my favourite delicatessens.

4.4.7 Meeting the lioness at the drinking hole

The moment we sat down at Olivia’s – even before we had ordered coffee – Dianne said, “I’m going to tender for their next training programme. We’ll have to change our strategy with this round of tendering. This time we’ll have to pull a rabbit out of the hat.”

My mouth literally dropped open and I had to close it not to appear ridiculous. She had immediately assumed I would be part of the process. I ordered my latté and pushed my agenda a little. I wanted to reflect on the previous tender in order for her to learn from it ... and for me to learn about Dianne. Hence I asked, “Once you had sent the previous tender off did you contemplate the odds of it being accepted?”

Dianne ran her fingers through her hair as she often did when in a difficult position. “No, I was too tired to think about it. I let it go and that was that.”

“So you did not have expectations at all?”

She pulled a face, indicating that she may have had and her body language indicated she was uncomfortable. We were in a public place and I did not want to upset her at this point so I stopped prying. She was definitely not as relaxed about the tender as she had pretended to be a few moments before.

“There was even a time when I had contemplated not sending the tender in,” she admitted.

“What made you send it in the end?”

Dianne stared into the distance, “If I got lucky it would have been a big deal ... High risk; high reward.” She shrugged her shoulders.

“Let’s pretend you got the tender. Do you have the resources to cope with it?”
“No, I source resources as I go along.”

“How certain are you of these resources once you have sourced them – their availability and capabilities?”

Dianne looked a little irritated, “Nothing is ever certain. Not even in a company. Nothing. Tom, who did the ISO for the previous tender, now wants money from me. He sent me an account for seven hundred and fifty rand for checking my ISO.”

“Maybe he sees it as a service provided to you ...”

“Yes, but I can only pay him once I have earned money. I did not get the tender nor did I earn money from it.”

Her argument did not make sense to me but, as I needed to stay focused, I moved the conversation back to her, “You’ve spent many hours on the previous tender and did not get it. Now you want to do it again. Talk me through it, please.”

“Yesterday I had almost decided not to continue with this one but then my brother told me that I had done most of the work with the previous tender. He said I may as well continue with this tender as it is based on the same work. So I decided to continue with this tender.”

“Yes, but you’ve started this conversation by saying that you would ‘pull a rabbit out of the hat’. What do you plan to do?”

“We need to do magic.”

My time was too limited. I had to be honest. “Dianne, I’m sorry. I cannot help you again. I am in over my head with responsibilities. I just cannot give you the time and energy that you will need for this.”

“Ok.”

I paid the bill and reminded her about the journal she had promised to keep during the first tender process. “I would really appreciate it if you would keep a journal of this tender process. It will help me understand you better and you may also learn about yourself in the process.”
“I’ll do it as soon as this tender is off my back.”

Somehow I knew I was never going to receive a journal from her.

4.4.8 Meeting the lioness in her territory – Monday 10 September 2012

More than three months had elapsed since our interview at Olivia’s and I had still not received the journal she had promised me. I telephoned Dianne. She sounded depressed but agreed to see me the next day at noon at her house. I immediately accepted the offer.

On my way to her I stopped in order to buy flowers for her to brighten her day. I arrived at her house but found no one at home. She arrived a few minutes after me. “Sorry, I had to pick up milk and a few other things at the shop.”

In the kitchen I handed her the flowers and started the conversation, “I haven’t heard from you since that day at Olivia’s. What’s happening?”

Her voice was low, “Thank you for the flowers ... I don’t know how I am going to help you, though.”

“Just tell me what has happened since our last interview.” I prompted.

“I went through the whole schlep and then the waiting started ... only two months later did we hear that we didn’t get it.”

I nodded, but said nothing so as to give her the opportunity to continue.

“In the meantime I have got my website up and it has been running for a month. And last month I started cold calling. The tender document I had done has given me a lot of insight into what the company needs in terms of leadership. So, I have developed some of the modules that were in the tender and they are also on my website.”

“Great. What is your website address?”
She gave it to me.\textsuperscript{114} “It’s actually my brother’s company. I am responsible for the leadership ... and yes ... now I have started telephoning and I see potential clients to find out whether there is an opportunity for training ... or coaching ... So that’s where I’m at ... It is very frustrating. I have always thought that cold calling is my Achilles’ heel but I am lucky to have a friend who was a sales manager for many years and she coached me. That helped a lot to conquer the fear...and that is the major obstacle ... the fear.”

Again I nodded, “What are you scared of? The worst that can happen is someone slams the phone down in your ear. They are not able to get to you physically – they probably don’t even know you.”

We laughed.

“My friend also coached me on the process of meeting potential clients. And that’s where I’m at ... It looks like most companies are looking at 2013 for training. So, I just keep going ... keeping the faith.”

She continued, “The moment I dropped the tender documents in the box I decided that company had taken enough of my time. The first time round I had been hopeful ...”

“Will you do it again?”

“Not easily. Not for another government department. With this company I did it because we had done work for them in the past. When they had cancelled the contract they had said that the people liked our courses. That gave me the idea that we stood a chance of winning a tender. At the end of the day I think we lost it because of the black economic empowerment (BEE) certification.”

She sounded down so I decided to change the subject to something more positive. “What would you consider your most valuable or highest developed skill or ability?”

For a moment you could hear a pin drop. “People ... managing people. It is easy for me to read people. It is always about people ... and strategy but, at the end of...

\textsuperscript{114} I have not been able to access the website. It reads “Website under construction.”
the day, it does not help if you have strategy but you cannot motivate the people working for you. I know I am a people person ... I can work with people...I can motivate people ... Actually, I should never work on my own ... I was not designed for working on my own ...”

She lit a cigarette and said “I have to stop.” Then she continued, “I must not work on my own. It’s not for me. I am going crazy.” She was close to tears. I did not want her to suffer unnecessarily (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999) and I stepped in. “It’s great that you’ve realised this about yourself – that you must not work alone ... that you need to be part of a group.”

She continued, “I am an E in Myers-Briggs ... According to Myers-Briggs I am actually suppose to work in a company. So, I’m also looking for a job.”

I needed to understand how she had made this shift. “What about your own business? You were very eager about working for yourself last year.”

She was quick to respond. “I’ll be eager if the business is successful. Then it will be amazing. I know it is one of my strengths – to lead people. It does not really matter whose business I work in – as long as it is successful.”

“I just want to confirm that I understand you correctly. Having your own business is definitely not that important to you anymore?”

“If a business is successful and I have people around me, it would be amazing, but it does not have to be my own business. It can be anybody’s business...as long as it is successful.”

I jogged her memory. “But there was a time when you wanted your own business. You said it was great not having to ask someone’s permission to take the time off to take your son to where he needed to be.”

“Yes ... There was no alternative then. I had to do something ... I needed an income. If I were offered a position in a company I would accept. I realise how much I enjoy working with people. It’s important to me. I also think the freedom ... the fact that I am now on my own. There is no one waiting for me at home with whom to share my life ... My friends are all busy with careers and families and ...
lovers (laughing) ... Human beings were not meant to be alone ... Up to a point, I thought I enjoyed being alone.”

“So you have learnt about yourself during this time.”

“So much ... so much.” For a moment she was lost in thought. “I can no longer handle the stress. It is getting too much.”

“What now?” I wanted to know.

“I am writing courses and I phone around. I phone in the mornings and develop course material in the afternoons ... except for Fridays. On Fridays no one wants to talk to you. So Fridays I sit and write in the mornings, but it takes time ... lots of time.”

“The writing keeps you busy, but there is still some uncertainty as to whether you'll get the opportunity to present it. How do you cope with that uncertainty, Dianne?”

“It’s very difficult. I cope with great difficulty. It gets to me.” I nodded to show that I understood. “It gets to me about once every hour, but what can I do? I cannot gnaw my wrists ... although I have considered doing that at times.”

There was sadness in our laughter.

“What do you do when you hit this low?”

“I pray.” She giggled again. This was an interesting shift. “You know ... I have moved much closer to religion again. So, it is currently a coping mechanism for me ... And I’ve asked myself whether that is the only reason why I am more into religion. I don’t know, but it’s possible.”

“It is very interesting. To what extent do you believe in it?”

Dianne frowned, “Believe what?”

“That your prayers will be answered?”

“That work will come my way? For about an hour ... then the counterargument comes ... telling you all the negative things. If you look at people ... the moment
you turn negative ... If you only look at the energy you radiate ... For many years, I was all about energy ... what you radiate you attract. Now I have discovered that, with religion, it is very similar. All the same principles are in the Bible ... I don’t know what your take on religion is.”

She had put me on the spot. I prefer not to discuss my religious beliefs with clients but, if I did not answer, her communication may become strained. “I do not see myself as religious. I am definitely spiritual and I use quantum physics as a way to communicate it ... So, I look at everything from an energy perspective, but in a very scientific way. If you want to know more about how I see it you can read my article Kwantum Fisika – Almagtig en Alwys\textsuperscript{115} on www.spiritualiteit.co.za. It will give you a fairly good idea of where I stand.”

Dianne continued with the religious theme – telling me about charismatic religious speakers to whom she listened on late night television. I allowed her to go on for a while as I wanted to ascertain the extent to which she was using religion as a crutch. I gave her the opportunity to tell her story and then I brought her back to the topic in which I was interested. “I notice an interesting shift in you since our first official interview.”

She checked with me. “How long ago was that?”

“More than a year ago ... early 2011.”

“That long ago!” I could see she was thinking back to that interview. “I think I have … but it doesn’t always feel like it, but I think I have. Sometimes I think I should go back on anti-depressants, but I know this is just about the situation I’m in. I cannot take medication for a situation.”

“What situation?” I checked

“Not having a regular income ... not knowing when or where the next opportunity will be.”

\textsuperscript{115} Quantum Physics – Omnipotent and Omniscient
I had not seen her at any of the networks meetings since that day in March 2011. “Do you network or have a system in place to contact potential clients – other than the telephone calls you told me about?”

She explained, “There are no networking opportunities for the bigger companies. The only networking opportunities I know of are for small businesses ... and small businesses do not need training. If something comes up I'll grab it. I am not scared to ask people ... You know ... When the man who serviced my printer came here I enquired about the company and business he worked for. So, I talk to people when I come into contact with them.”

However, her answer concerned me. Creating your own personalised networking sessions was essential. “It sounds like you wait for opportunities and, sometimes, the wait can be long. How do you survive financially? Do you have any sources of income, however, small to carry you over?”

Her answer was even more worrying. “My access bond.117 It is nerve wracking. It is just getting tighter and tighter.” Her tears were flowing.

My heart went out to her. “I understand. We've been there, too, from 2005 to 2009.” It was a difficult situation but I wanted to break through the thinking that was holding her hostage. “Have you considered doing something else just to get an income ... To carry you over until the training is a sustainable business?”

She sounded desperate, “I am considering putting my name up for temping. Maybe they can use me for something. If I had a teaching diploma I’d be teaching. I must be stupid, but I cannot think of anything to do.”

“It is not about being stupid. It is difficult to think creatively when your stress level is high.” I wrote down the name and number of Cara, a mentee of mine who runs a tutor centre, and who may have been able to offer Dianne a job. I handed her the note. “You’re welcome to phone Cara. I’ll contact her and tell her to expect a call from your – then it’s not a cold call from you. Are you ok with that?” Dianne agreed. After I had spoken to Cara I continued, “Networking is not always about

116 Please see Section 0.
117 In South Africa it is possible borrow money against your home loan in relation to the amount you have paid off.
attending an organised networking function. It is about staying in contact and so much more." I was bringing my experience as an entrepreneur and mentor into these conversations as it is sometimes necessary to contribute something to the conversation.

By the time we hugged at my car she was looking little more cheerful with the promise of a potential job interview on the horizon. I drove away knowing that this had been one of the most difficult conversations I had had as part of my research. I could understand how difficult it was for her to reflect on her situation. I had a fair understanding of what she was going through as Neill and I had recently gone through difficult financial times. However, I had a successful business with positive feedback from clients and Neill and I had each other.

4.4.9 Staring into the bush - reflecting

In my study at home I wrote down a few field notes before going to the cat hotel for the afternoon routine. It was difficult for me to keep my mind in the cat hotel as I was deeply concerned about Dianne. The interview had reminded me about my responsibility to safeguard my participants from the embarrassment and pain that may emerge during the interview sessions and I needed to respect the privacy of my participants (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). During our first official interview I had given her the option to use a pseudonym. She had thought about it for a moment but eventually brushed it aside. However, during our work together on the first tender document I had given her a pseudonym. The responsibility to protect her identity rested with me.

When I called Dianne the next day she told me she had arranged to meet with Cara. Unfortunately a year later this had still had not resulted in a job. In 2013 Dianne started working at an employment agency.
STALKING AN ALPHA FEMALE AND LANDING A BIG MALE TOO

At half past five on Tuesday evening, 5 April 2011, I was standing in the foyer of the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GiBS), feeling guilty about taking up the space of a potential student. It was the Entrepreneurship MBA open day and, although I was not planning to do a MBA, I wanted to listen to the five guest speakers – all successful entrepreneurs. My main aim, however, was to orchestrate a meeting with Natasha Sideris. I had been so impressed with her passion for her business and my experience at tashas that I had decided I wanted her as a participant in my study.

Sipping a cup of good coffee I watched two young people chatting to Natasha. When the three of them split up, I walked up to the one young man and started chatting to him. When I mentioned to him that I would like to meet Natasha about

118 I used teal in Natasha's narrative as it is one of her company colours and it also reminded me of her Mediterranean background.
119 Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane.
my studies he immediately took me up to her and introduced us. She was both warm and friendly. I told her, “I was so impressed with you at the Endeavour Networking session. I am doing research on the mental maps of entrepreneurs and would like to talk to you about it.”

Her immediate reaction was, “Email me and we can schedule a meeting.”

The evening proved to be even more rewarding that I had anticipated. Allon Raiz was one of the other forum members and I was very impressed with the way in which he answered the questions that were posed to him. After the event I went up to Allon and introduced myself. Once I had told him about my research he said, “You’re welcome to call me. I’ll share my successes and failures with you.” I was excited. Not only is he a serial entrepreneur, but he is also a very experienced entrepreneur mentor. There was little doubt that he would have deep insight into the entrepreneurial thinking process. In addition, he was an excellent communicator and very able to share his experiences.

I am so glad I had not allowed my guilt to prevent me from attending that evening. I used many sources to write the story that follows of how Natasha grew her business.

4.5.1 The lioness roars

That evening at GIBS, Professor Nick Binedell introduced Natasha to talk about her experience as an entrepreneur. This is what she told us:

“The food business is not an easy game. It is one that involves many variables. I had to learn and adapt and change very much in terms of getting involved in the corporate environment and, at the same time, having the drive and passion. I think keys things for an entrepreneur are vision – you need to have a vision … You need to have great tenacity and a will to succeed because, as Wandie said, your personal sacrifices are huge. One of the questions that people ask me, ‘How is your family life? What do you do? What are your hobbies?’ The reality is I have no hobbies. I work sixteen to eighteen hours a day. But, I think for anybody who wants to own their own business, this is inevitable … especially if you want to be a
success. You must love what you do ... and your business must have something that sets it apart from the competition.”

To a question as to what she attributed her success she said, “I attribute my success to the fact that I’m hands-on. I am spreading the passion by example ... I love what I do and we skill people up ... and we have merit awards.”

Photograph 4.19: A tashas cake display

Immediately after the function, Natasha flew to Cape Town where she was in the process of launching tashas Constantia.

Two days later I emailed Natasha:

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121 www.tashascafe.com
Thursday, 07 April 2011 15:48

Dear Tasha

Since the first time I saw you at Endeavor I was struck by your passion and commitment. The way you do business resonates with me.

Yesterday I left a voice message in which I promised to drop you an email, but the day sped by and now – at last – I am getting to do it.

Thank you for your willingness to meet with me. I know that you are very busy and, therefore, I think it makes sense that you pick a few possible timeslots that will be convenient for you. I shall choose a time from these to fit in with my schedule. Please inform me of a meeting place of your choice – preferably where we can chat for about an hour without too much disturbance.

Thank you so much for your time.

Suzette le Roux

On Monday 18 April 2011 @ 08:35 I received an email from Natasha.

Hi Suzette

Please accept my sincere apologies for the very late response. I flew back to Cape Town after the Endeavor forum to open my store in Constantia and, as you can imagine, things have been hectic.

Suzette, I would be delighted to meet you. However I will be in Cape Town until the 7\textsuperscript{th} of May and I am not sure if this is too late for you? If not I would be happy to meet you at the tashas in Atholl any morning after the 7\textsuperscript{th}.

Please let me know if this suits you and I will send you some dates on which I would be available.

Once again apologies for not getting back to you sooner and thank you for your very kind email below.

Thank you

Natasha
Monday 18 April 2011 @ 09:46

Dear Natasha

Thank you for your reply. I fully understand – being always on the run myself.

I have the following times available:

- Tuesday, 10.05.2011 from 11:00 onwards
- Friday, 13.05.2011 – you name the time
- Monday, 16.05.2011 – you name the time
- Friday, 20.05.2011 – you name the time

If none of these suit you we can look for a later date.

Wishing you lots of success with the Constantia venture. I’ll tell my CT buddies to explore it.

Warm regards from a wet Jo’burg.

Suzette

Monday, 18 April 2011 @ 20:16

Hi Suzette

I will let you know closer to the time but it will probably be on the 13th.

Thanks

Natasha

On 27 April she confirmed the date, time and venue of our meeting.

Late on the Thursday evening prior to our meeting on the thirteenth I received the following email from Natasha:

Hi Suzette, I realise that it’s late and I hope that you get this message in the morning.

I am going to be 30 minutes late for our meeting.
I have an emergency that I have to attend to.

Please accept my sincere apologies.

Thanks

Natasha

4.5.2 Meeting the lioness in her one den: tashas Atholl Square

Despite Natasha’s email I decided to leave at eight o’clock as planned. Just as well. I accidentally took a wrong turn-off and had to do a slow detour to reach to tashas in Atholl Square for our meeting.

I had arrived early enough to find the best possible table for my interview with Natasha. With a café latte next to me I went through the questions I wanted to ask her. I prefer to ask a more general question in order to evoke a story which contains the answers to my questions. However, I keep a checklist with the questions and, as the answers emerge, I just tick the question off on my list.

Photograph 4.20: My table at tashas, Atholl Square

While I was writing field notes the franchisee of tashas Atholl came up to me with a message from Natasha, sending apologies as she had been further delayed but she hoped be there in twenty minutes.

Just after eleven o’clock Natasha came rushing up to me in her usual white canvas shoes, loose black pants, white T-shirt and tashas duck-egg coloured scarf – apologising for being late as she approached me. A staff member’s daughter
had died as a result of malaria and she had had to attend to the mother who had been very upset.

She gave me a big hug. Despite the sad situation with which she has had to deal earlier Natasha was – as on every other time I have seen her – a powerhouse of energy. We went through the consent form and she – like Tessa and Allon – was completely comfortable using her own name. It was quite a relief to me. All three of them are well known and it would have been very difficult to ensure their anonymity.

I double-checked with her. “Although this study is not very sensitive or controversial in nature I want you to be certain that you are comfortable with this. You have family members, friends, colleagues and competition in the marketplace.”

“It’s fine.”

As I positioned the two audio recorders on the restaurant table between us, Natasha watched me with a slight smile. Nothing escaped her eyes. I explained, “These meetings are so important to me I want to know that there will be a recording at the end of our conversation.”

Talking like a machinegun on rapid fire, she admitted, “I’m somewhat of a control freak myself and I understand this completely.”

I elaborated on this confession of hers to find the answer to one of the questions on my list, “How do you handle the fact that, by franchising your restaurant, there is some degree of loss of control?”

“Good question. Before I decided to roll out – to franchise – I was approached by Famous Brands and I had to make serious decisions. I am a control freak. I want to control every aspect of the business and I think a big part of it is making sure you put systems in place that allow you to control it.”

Something caught her attention. She called a waitress who was standing about two metres from us to approach us and adjusted her uniform. Touching a small
tear in the pocket of the waitress’s uniform she addressed the waitress in a neutral, but firm tone of voice, “This does not look good.”

The waitress returned to her position and Natasha turned back to me and continued, “I’ve obviously reached a phase now where I walk into a store and I see things are not a hundred per cent right. So, I’ll see a waitress and her uniform is torn. And those kinds of things upset me because I can’t control them. But, I think in every entrepreneur’s life there comes a time where you realise that you have to relinquish control but that that does not mean that you’re relinquishing control of your standards. You’re still pushing the envelope. You’re still trying to maintain the standards. You’re still trying to make sure that, whatever your brand promise is, that you deliver it. But you have to realise that you cannot be everywhere at all times.”

“So how do you cope with it?” I wanted to know.

“It’s hard. It’s very stressful. I think a big part of my business is making sure that I am in the stores often. One of the reasons I’ve kept my own store in Bedfordview and only sold this one (Atholl) – which was my first one – in August last year was to make sure that I would always have somewhere to go to that is mine and where I can see what is happening with the brand...I can be hands-on all the time. I am lucky enough that it hasn’t been an issue in any of the stores because of the franchisees and the types of relationships I have with them. They want me to be involved. They want me to be in the stores. They want me to come and tell them, ‘This is wrong. This is right. Fix this. Change that’. They understand that we are striving for excellence.”

“To answer your question, I don’t really deal with it in any particular way. I think just every day is a battle ... going into the stores and, when I am in a store, to try and fix what I can there ... And then implementing enough controls and procedures that are measurable so that you can see where the guys are going wrong. So, we have a thing called the Standard of Excellence (SOE) and we have a franchise manager going into the stores and checking whether the sugar bowls are chipped, are the waitrons all in the right uniform and the guys get a score. It is one way of controlling and grading it.”
“So you put systems in place,” I checked with her.

“We have put systems in place. They are effective but they are not a hundred percent effective. I think you’ve got to look at the bigger picture. If you’re aiming, as an entrepreneur, for big numbers and you want to do the big turnovers and you want to see your brand being successful, you have to start relinquishing some control. Having said that, my partners all say to me that I don’t relinquish enough control. I control from the interiors to the ingredients to the food to the uniforms or what the branding is going to be, etc., etc., etc. So, have I relinquished control? No. But am I running the stores on a day to day basis? Also, ‘No’. That’s the balance, you know.”

I smiled, “Natasha, won’t you please tell me your story from where you were working for your father?”

Without a moment’s hesitation she started. “My dad had always been in the food business ... Squire’s Loft, Chicken Lickin, Fishmonger, the whole bang shoot ... I matriculated in 1993 from Saheti School and took a gap year. When I came back I went to Wits\textsuperscript{122} and I enrolled for a Psychology degree – BA Psychology. So, my dad opened and started building the Fishmonger in Rivonia. We were the third Fishmonger to open in the country. He said to me, ‘Listen, I need help. Come and see if you’re gonna enjoy it.’ I was head girl at school and I’ve always been a leader so it was quite an easy thing for me to do – to come and tell the waiters, ‘Do this. Do that.’ I did not have any formal training.

“The night we opened we had a queue. We were packed. It was the heyday of Fishmongers. Everybody loved it. We opened the store and, instantaneously, I was hooked. I loved the adrenaline and I have been very blessed to never have had a quiet restaurant. So it’s always been the adrenaline ... Go ... go ... go ... push ... push ... push.

“So we opened the Fishmonger and, while we were at the Fishmonger, I was still finishing my degree. If I start something I have to finish it. I had to go to varsity during the day and finish at about two or three in the afternoon. Then I would go

\textsuperscript{122} University of the Witwatersrand
straight to the shop with a change of clothes and work right through the night – go home ... sleep ... still trying to maintain a social life while I was doing that. It was the busiest Fishmonger in the country. It was packed. And ... that's how it started.

“After that my dad had decided to sell the Fishmonger he was appointed as MD of the company ... at Fishmonger. So, we sold our shares and Fishmonger did a deal with Hollard and they sold to a listed company and I went into head office – in total operation – having no experience of head office at all. I learnt. Whatever I know today, I've learnt as I've gone along. I joined head office as a training manager. It was all front of house. I started training for front of house – I did waitressing, service, pouring wine, customer liaison ... how to meet, greet and seat customers – the whole story. And I opened seven or eight Fishmongers while we were there.

“And then I started saying. ‘Listen, I want something of my own.’ So my dad got out of the Fishmonger – it was a complicated deal. The whole thing was dissolved and we sold the one in Rivonia. I then went to Greece and I saw a concept called Everest, which was a quick, fast food gourmet baguette, gourmet salads, gourmet sandwiches – that type of thing – and it was on the go. I fell in love with the concept. I copied it.

“So I went with my little video camera and looked at everything. I ordered all the spreads and sauces and put them in containers and brought them back here to be analysed. And I opened one but I had no money. So I went to two guys – investors – and told them, ‘This is the concept I want to do and this is how much money I need. Will you invest with me? We can go a third: a third: a third.

“I think part of being an entrepreneur is not being scared. And I think, if you are hesitant and afraid, it will be a hindrance. I'm always quite gutsy and, if I want something, I try and go for it. So the guys gave me the money and I opened the store AND I HATED it! I was missing the interaction with the customer. You know, a takeaway is quite a different kind of animal. However, I gave it a hundred and ten per cent. I used to work twenty-one hour shifts. I used to sleep at the back of the shop. I was exhausted. It was a nightmare. I got out of my partnership. We had a fall out. The shop was doing good turnover for what it was but it did not work out and I then said, ‘I am NOT getting involved in food again. I'm out.’

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“I went back to Greece and stayed there for six months. When I came back Ninos head office approached me and asked me to join them and help them to set the standards of the brand and re-invent the food, etc etc etc. I joined Ninos as an operations manager and I worked for head office for about two years. And then the opportunity presented itself to buy the Ninos in Bedfordview. I told my dad, ‘I want to buy this store.’ But I didn’t have the money. And again we went to money lenders.

“We paid them back huge amounts of money every month. I worked without a salary for two years. It’s not a cliché when people say that, to be successful, you’ve got to know that you’re going to make personal sacrifices along the way. There are huge personal sacrifices. It’s a mistake a lot of young people make today. They want to get into business but they don’t want to make any of the sacrifices. When the going gets tough they just throw the baby out with the bathwater and they’re like, ‘OK, I can’t do this. It’s too hard.’ The whole point is that nothing comes easily. Gone are the days when you could come up with a brainwave of an idea and make millions – unless you’re one of very few people in IT. Those times are past. You’ve got to work – you know?

“I have no problem with working. I’ve reached a stage in my life when I am thirty-five years old. Am I tired? Yes, I’m exhausted, but I love what I do. I don’t work as hard as I used to. I used to wake up at six in the morning and finish work at ten o’clock at night. When I’m opening a store I do ... I’ve just opened one in Constantia ... I was there for five weeks ... From six in the morning – I’d open the store and close the store. That’s a different thing. It’s for a short period of time. I think growing and recognising that you have to learn different things is part of the process. You can’t stagnate. If I’d just been running a restaurant ... running a restaurant ... running a restaurant, I would stagnate.”

“So, we bought the Ninos in Bedfordview. It was a huge success. We doubled the turnover because the owner who had had it before us had only focused on drinks. He did not care about service. He was not really too particularly fussed about the quality of the food – buying inferior products to make the food up. I really took that business and turned it around. That was the turning point in my career. People started to recognise me. They knew me at the Fishmonger. I had a reputation for
being a good operator, but here I was running the whole ship. I was doing the stock control, back of house, front of house, ordering, receiving. The manager and I worked hard ... for three to four months we did not take a single day off and I took no salary for about two years. I worked and worked and worked. Eventually we managed to sell a property of ours and we bought the investors out.

“In the meantime I have seen that there was this gap in the market between coffee shops and coffee shop franchises and I started working on a concept of a daytime café. When you think of a coffee shop in South Africa – you think muffins, croissants or toasted sarmies (sandwiches). I was driving around in the day thinking where I could I go during the day to have a meal in a really cool environment ... Somewhere that’s not like a traditional coffee shop, but I didn’t want to go to a formal restaurant or a steakhouse either. And at that stage in South Africa everything was themed – either Italian or Portuguese or Greek ... They all had a theme – especially the coffee shops – Ninos, Mimmos, Europa, Brazilian – all had similar themes.

“And then the landlord from this shopping centre (Atholl Square Shopping Centre) said to me, ‘Tash, listen, we want you to come into Atholl Square.’”

Natasha turned to the waiters who were chatting not far from our table, “You know you’re making a noise. You mustn’t shout at each other. Thank you.”

She turned back to me, “That’s what I mean by being hands-on. I’m not the type of person to come as the big boss and sits here. I like to be involved.”

She continued, “So this landlord approached me and said, ‘Listen, will you consider opening but we don’t want a franchise?’ I said, ‘Yes. I did not want to do it as a Ninos.’ So I came up with the concept of tashas. When I opened the store I had no idea that the shop – tashas – would land up to be what it is today – ever.

“The advice that I can give to entrepreneurs is: If you’re going to do something, do it well. Even if you don’t have a clear idea of what the outcome is going to be. The outcome might evolve. So I made sure the branding was spot on. I made sure the logo was right ... I made sure the menu was right. And all of that was correct because I’ve put my name up there,” she said pointing to the name of the store. “I
want to make sure it is perfect. I opened this place and the people arrived and it was packed from day one. We were pumping. I was expecting to do a small turnover. We doubled it ... we doubled what the expectations were ... I worked even harder than I had at Ninos. I certainly did not expect it to be so hard. The menu is big and we make everything on order. There’s no *mise en place*; we make everything on order. Again I worked four to five months – no day off. I ended up in hospital with a virus that attacked my heart ... from fatigue. I was finished.

“Anyway, I run the store and my landlady approaches me in 2007 – two years after this store opened. She said, ‘I want you to change the Ninos in Bedfordview to a tashas.’

“I said, ‘Listen, I’m bound by a franchise agreement. I can’t just go to Ninos now and tell them to p... off. They’ve really been very good to me. They’ve allowed me to do this, on my own. They haven’t pressurised me.’

“She said, ‘I don’t care. You either do it or lose your lease here. I’ll put something else in here or you’re going to change to tashas in Bedfordview.’

“I said, ‘I do not have the money.’

“She said, ‘Go find the money.’

“Today that landlady and I are very, very good friends. I have an immense amount of respect for her. She did the best thing for me. So again I scrambled to find the money. I was under-financed here. I did not have the money in the beginning to do this. I had to get money from another person. Anyway, despite all the financial stresses that came with it, I converted the Bedfordview Ninos into a tashas. It was probably the worst time of my life. If I look back at it now, it was THE WORST time of my life. I think financial stress is probably the worst stress in the world.”

Natasha paused and look around ... checking that everything was running smoothly. “So I converted the Ninos at Bedfordview to a tashas. Kevin Hedderwick from Famous Brands was a customer at Ninos and I had become very close to him and we’d established a good relationship. Every Saturday he used to come with his wife and I used to serve them, etc etc. So he saw this Ninos being
converted and one day he came in and said, ‘What are your hopes and dreams for the brand?’ I said, ‘You know, I haven’t really thought about it. I’d like to company own them. And he said, ‘Tasha, don’t company own them. You’re going to kill yourself worrying about the rent and the staff and the wages and who’s going to run them?’”

A regular customer walked past our table and Natasha excused herself, stood up and greeted him with a hug. “How are you? I haven’t seen you for ages. What’s happening? Are you alright?” They exchanged pleasantries and with a “Cheers,” she settled back into her chair, but she had already seen something else and called a waiter closer. Pointing to a family settling at a table close by she said, “Please drop that umbrella. They want to sit in the sun, OK?”

“So anyway, I said to him, ‘I really have not given this much thought.’ He said, ‘People want your brand.’ Lots of landlords started approaching me for a franchise. He said, ‘Let’s do a deal.’

“It took about eight months to do the deal because I really wanted to make sure that I was going to retain control over the things that are very important to me. OK? So it is not only about money. I think that is another thing that an entrepreneur must know. If it is ONLY about the money, you’re not going to succeed. If money is your sole driver you won’t succeed. You’ve got to have some love for what you do.

“I sold fifty-one per cent of tashas to Famous Brands. I am a perfectionist and find it hard to let go. It is very important to get the timing one hundred per cent when it comes to letting go. I kept control over all the creative decisions – decor and menu ... all the furniture is custom made for tashas.

“I had already secured Morningside and Melrose Arch before the deal went through. Since I did the deal with him, we’ve opened Melrose Arch, Morningside, Pretoria, Durban and Constantia ... and then Rosebank and now le Parc.123”

123 By 2014 tashas had gone international with a restaurant in Dubai.
I told her, “I mentor the owner of a bakery and coffee shop and I took him to tashas Rosebank so that he could experience the tashas service.”

She immediately wanted to know, “How did you find Rosebank?”

“My client was very impressed. The staff was friendly but it is difficult to compare a smoked salmon salad at tashas Morningside with eggs on toast at tashas Rosebank.”

“Did he enjoy it?”

“Yes, he did,” I assured her.

She continued. “Anyway, I’m on this journey. It’s been amazing, because I’ve learnt a lot about business. One of the most important lessons is that without your staff you are nothing. The importance of staff is absolutely key. And making sure that staff is motivated and happy is vital. So, what I am doing now over the next two weeks, I’m going around to all the stores and I am having meetings with the waiters, having meetings with the kitchen staff. I love my shops so I like to be hands on. I’ll spend two days in each store – meeting with them every morning that I’m in there – for those two days. Showing them, ‘Guys, come on this, is what tashas is about’, reminding them, refreshing, working with them, serving tables with them ... going into the kitchen. Staff is a major thing.”
Her phone rang and she asked if I minded if she took the call. It was her brother, who is also her business partner. He was looking for a file that they needed for a meeting later that day. “Look on the lower shelf. It’s an old file with a white spine. Yes, on the lower shelf…”

She ended the conversation, “Sorry about that.”

“No problem. It is valuable participant observation for my research.”

“You can come and see me operate in a restaurant,” she offered.

“Thanks, I’ll take you up on that.” I couldn’t believe my luck!

“What else have I learnt? I have learnt that understanding finance and having a good understanding of numbers are absolutely crucial. I’ve only learnt that since I have joined Famous Brands. It was one of the lessons there.”

She continued. “Attention to detail. It’s very important. Anyone can open a restaurant. Anyone can have a brand. Anyone can have a franchise. But it is the level of detail that starts becoming important as a differentiator …

“Customers … You’ve got to love your customers. You know you can’t do this business and not love people.”

I had to ask, “How does running tashas compare to the corporate experience?”

She admitted, “I do not have much of a corporate experience. I’m not a true corporate. I don’t have to wear a suit, I don’t have to be in the office every day, I’m a partner and I work for the company. I learnt all the good stuff in terms of corporate stuff – the income statement, the balance sheet, budget presentations, the business plans. I’ve got the best of both worlds.

“I wouldn’t be able to do corporate only. Never, never, never! It would kill me.” She waved an arm toward the busy restaurant, “This is what feeds my soul. That is what keeps the business side alive. I’ve been very blessed to be able to have both.”
Natasha pointed a new customer out to one of the waiters. Almost without hesitation she continued. “I am not a typical corporate person. It’s not part of my character. I’m a restaurateur. I am an entrepreneur. I might have the title of Managing Executive and do all the things that a Managing Executive has to do, but I am certainly not ... I could certainly not work in a corporate environment only. If someone had to tell me, ‘Sell tashas and go and work at Famous Brands as a corporate.’ I wouldn’t be able to do it because it’s not whom I am and I suppose that’s why they did the deal with me – because they aren’t restaurateurs. They do what they do well but they’re into typical franchising. That’s why the relationship works.”

For a moment she was quiet – almost as if this realisation had to sink in. I took the brief opportunity to ask one of my questions, “When a challenge presents itself – how do you handle it?”

“I think part of it is having entrepreneurial intuition. You have to think one step ahead. It’s also about having an understanding of your business and knowing what the next hurdles are going to be. I try to anticipate the challenges ahead. So, now I am growing and I’ve got eight stores. What do I need to do now to make sure that we maintain standards? That’s our biggest challenge. How do I make sure that your Rosebank experience was a tashas experience? So, I think having the foresight to understand all of that, is absolutely key. My challenge is how do I make sure that every contact – every customer – has the tashas experience? I can’t be there all the time but the franchisees must make sure that it is. How do I do that?”

“I remember that evening at GIBS the panel talked about the importance of the ability to see what is wrong and to make the necessary changes quickly. Can you please expand on that?” I prompted.

She took the bait, “It’s important. The ability to adapt and to be able to look at problems as they happen and be able to change – the willingness to change and the ability to change and not stick to doing one thing a certain way just because that’s how it is done. I think – you know what – true entrepreneurs ... truly

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124 le Parc was not yet a reality at the time of this interview.
successful people are people who reinvent classic ways of doing things. When you are presented with a problem you don't always have to use the same solution. You have to be able to adapt. You have to be able to think on your feet. To realise I’ve got this problem. What can I do about it? I don’t have to do it that way. And it’s funny that you ask that because we are now looking at the operational standards in our restaurants ... in our group. I’m meeting with the guys from head office. I said to them, ‘Guys, I want you to think outside the box. The SOE (Standard of Excellence) is a great tool,’ I said, ‘But it can’t be the only way that we measure the guys. It can’t be the only way to maintain standards. Think outside the box.’ I know it is not a problem now because we are hell of a busy. All the stores are performing well. We’re full all the time and people love us. Yes, we get complaints. I’m sure we get it wrong sometimes. You can’t be perfect all the time. But I’m saying, ‘Guys, we have eight stores – we’re very big now. If we don’t pre-empt what could become a problem – standards may drop. If they start buying from the wrong suppliers, they don’t do the cake displays properly, they don’t give the right service, their uniforms don’t look right. That will all snowball and, before you know six months down the line tashas won’t be what it should be. How do you pre-empt that? Is the SOE the only tool? No, it can’t be the only tool. We need to start thinking of other creative ways to fix things. You’ve got to be creative.

“We are busy with project Kung Fu – I’m working here next week on Friday and Saturday – full days – from opening and closing. Then I think the following week – Monday and Tuesday – we are in Melrose. What we are doing with this project is we want to get in touch with the day-to-day running again. If there is this threat of losing control or of the standards not being maintained, what do we need to do? We need to go into the stores – open and close them – work in them – see if we can find a pattern of the things that are incorrect and then find solutions. So, we look at this now and I opened this store today. One of the things that is an issue is the cake display. They’re not doing it properly. How can we fix it? Do we take pictures of the cake displays? Do we have one person who goes around every day to all the stores and fixes them? What do we do? So that’s the type of thing. You come and see me on any of those days. We’re starting this project next week Thursday. It’s going to take sixteen days and we are going to be in each store for two days.”
“Thank you, Natasha.”

Her mind was still on the staff issue. “We keep on saying, ‘How are we going to get the franchisees to think the way we do ... to act the way we do? How are we going to do it? They don’t get it. It does not matter what we present them with ... how many things you show them ... how many beautiful things you send them ... how many newsletters you send them ... how many franchise meetings we have with them. That’s still a piece of paper they’re going to read but the message does not sink in.

“There is a theory I have that people will mirror your behaviour. So, if you look at the stores that mirror my behaviour – these are the stores where I have actually run with staff that have been with me forever: Atholl, Bedfordview, Melrose Arch. I’ve actually physically worked there. At Melrose the staff has changed so I’ll have to go back. Maybe the solution is that the head office team physically work in the stores for a whole month – opening to closing – for people to mirror their behaviour. Then the staff will get it. Being manipulative is one of the traits of an entrepreneur.”

I started to pack up and thanked her for sharing her story with me and for the invitation to meet with her again. As we walked away she immediately started working in the business again.

4.5.3 Staring into the bush - reflecting

I drove home with a smile on my face. Although the setting had been a little noisy at times, it had never been a problem. Before I had left the parking area I had quickly listened to the recording to check whether I could hear our conversation clearly – which I could. Luckily I always record interviews. She had talked at such a fast pace it would be impossible to take notes and most of the conversation would have been lost. Later in my study at home I added notes on the body language and other nuances that audio recorders cannot capture.

Natasha had had one eye on the business at all times, but this had not bothered me. I know I do the same and some people find it very irritating so I have had to learn to do it subtly – or so I had thought until I had been caught out ... again. I
had also been comfortable with the interruptions – knowing that if she did not address each situation immediately her mind would have been with the problem and not with me. Dealing with the issue immediately had freed her mind up as soon as the issue had been resolved. It had also provided me with opportunities to observe her dealing with situations other than my interview. It was very clear that it is impossible for her to see something sub-standard happening and ignore it.

After every interruption she had always apologised and had taken up the conversation exactly where she had left it. There had been very little loss of flow for me and I had gained more insight into Natasha’s mind through these interruptions. I had no need to talk to her in a peaceful setting where all was quiet as this would probably leave her ill at ease rather than whom she is.

4.5.4 Reading Natasha’s scent marks
Nevertheless, the background noise did present a few challenges when I was transcribing my interview with Natasha. There were sections where I had to listen up to four times to the same sentence during the editing process to ensure it was absolutely verbatim. It was a long process that required focused concentration but it was an insightful process and worth the effort.

Once I was happy with the document I emailed the verbatim transcription to Natasha for her scrutiny and then went into the cat hotel to serve cat dinners and receive a sound dose of feline therapy to relax me.

4.5.5 Observing the lioness
A few weeks later I observed Natasha in action again while I was sitting with a café latté at one of the tables at tashas, Atholl Square. Natasha introduced me to Alex Avgitidis and Melpo Theodorou, her marketing team, who do the branding for tashas. They had arrived a little early for a meeting scheduled with Natasha. While Natasha interacted with customers and staff the three of us had time to chat about Natasha. I told them, “It amazes me how Natasha is always aware of what is going on everywhere.”
Melpo confirmed my observation, “She’s got an eye for detail. She can sit here but she knows exactly what’s going on at every table. That’s actually like superwoman.”

Alex reiterated, “She’s very aware. She’ll know what’s wrong immediately – before anyone else notices it. She’s very obsessive. I know her well. I don’t know whether that’s a thing of entrepreneurs but she’s obsessive ... very controlling ... and she always sees the glass half full.”

Natasha accompanied a group of clients to the door – hugging everybody. Alex had noticed how I watched Natasha and said, “It’s not an act. It’s part of who she is. She’s Greek ... Mediterranean. It’s her thing. Watch. You may see some of the other staff members who’ve built up relationship with the customers also hugging and kissing customers ‘hallo’ and ‘good bye’.”

Natasha came to our table a little later. I jokingly said to her, “You are always on the go. Is this how you keep fit?”

She grinned, “You’ve got to have stamina. I don’t live healthily but I’ve got stamina. I don’t know where it comes from. I think in every entrepreneur’s life you go through phases when you’re up and you’re on top of your game and then you get tired. You’ve also got to know when to take a break – when to take your foot off the pedal.” And then she dashed off to straighten a sugar bowl on a table ... and to welcome the next clients.

Looking at the staff, they seemed to be on their best behaviour that day. It reminded me of my visit to the Morningside tashas a few months before.

After one of our meetings Natasha had given me two signed vouchers of fifty rand each for a meal at the Morningside tashas. On a Saturday morning my daughter, Marizanne, and I arrived at a very busy tashas. The only table available was a high table on the edge of the pavement. It was not a table I would normally choose but, knowing that we were going to use the vouchers and not pay full price, we decided to compromise in favour of the full paying clients and we took the table.
At the end of the meal, when the waiter saw the two vouchers with Natasha’s signature on top of the money, he was visibly shocked and rushed straight to the restaurant manager who caught up with us as we left the restaurant. His “Did you enjoy your food?” was quite clever as he must have realised we had not had the best table in the establishment. I smiled and assured him that the food had been excellent. He knew that Natasha would enquire about my experience at the restaurant ... she always does.
4.6 ENTERING THE BIG HUNTER’S TERRITORY

I emailed Allon’s office and arranged a meeting with him on 13 April. I also Googled him and was surprised to find so much information on him in the newspapers and on his website that, once printed, it was enough to fill a thick file. I read everything in preparation for my interview with him.

The morning of the interview I left home early as this would be my first visit to Kramerville. With bumper to bumper traffic I had time to think back to the evening at GIBS. I remember him saying, “Previously I sold fear in the form of gear locks but, at Raizcorp, I sell hope.” Having a purpose is very important to him and I wrote down the following five important characteristics of an entrepreneur that he had listed that evening:

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125 The Raizcorp company colours are black and bright pink hence the pink in his narrative.
126 Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane.
127 www.raizcorp.co.za
1. Must have the ability to see opportunities – often in crisis situations
2. Must have a high pain tolerance
3. Must have a tolerance for risk
4. Must believe in their ability to muster resources. It is not the ability to overcome challenges but the belief in this ability that makes the difference.
5. Must believe you have the ability to learn the necessary skills when these become necessary

I was glad I had these notes from that evening with me as they focused my mind on my meeting with Allon at ten that morning. As I read “You don’t learn from your successes”, I remembered he had sounded proud of the mistakes he had made. Although I know how much I have learnt from my failures I have never been proud of them. At the traffic light I glanced through the last few of Allon’s quotes I had noted down that evening:

1. Red tape is a good way to sift the men from the boys as it makes it more difficult for the competitors to start up.
2. The ability to read feedback and change quickly when necessary are very important.
3. Mentor-relationships were crucial to my success.

The traffic was flowing faster so I was forced to focus on my driving.

It was just before ten o’clock when I arrived at the Raizcorp offices at 16 Desmond Street, Kramerville. Sitting in my parked car I took a couple of deep breaths and focused my attention on the interview I was about to conduct. I reminded myself that I must allow him to get into the flow of his story. I could always fill in the gaps later in the interview or during follow-up interviews.
4.6.1 Meeting the expert hunter in his territory - 13th of May 2011

With my notebook and audio recorder in my bag I walked into the reception area where I was offered a seat and something to drink. A few minutes later Faith Mokoena introduced herself to me as the hospitality hostess – handing me a small tray on which was a glass of water, her business card and a packet of forget-me-not seeds. “Please plant these seeds so that you may always remember Raizcorp.” She told me that everybody working in Raizcorp had to also have his or her own business venture. Faith had a catering business.

Photograph 4.23: The Raizcorp Entrepreneurial Oath
While waiting for Allon I read a plaque on the wall in the reception area. It read:

I undertake a journey of growth and pain.
I understand that there will be many dark days where I will want to
throw in the towel, but won’t.
I know that, for what might seem the longest time,
I will dread month-end.
I am comfortable with being pressured by my family and friends to get a
real job.
I am prepared to lie awake, for many nights, planning my way out of
perceived imminent failure.
I am ready to be told by my potential clients that I am too expensive or
too inexperienced.
I anticipate falling so many times that I will ache as I stand up again.
For I know that it will all be worth it in the end as I extinguish the words
of my naysayers
And the loudest of them all – the one that lives in my head.
For I am an entrepreneur;
I have chosen this life above immediate comfort as I strive to create
wealth and
to make a difference in the world around me (Raiz, 2010, p. 6)
Twenty minutes later than arranged Allon walked in and welcomed me warmly – inviting me into the boardroom. We were both a little nervous. Allon took a seat at the head of the table and I took the chair to his right. He has a doctorate and knows the process so we worked quickly through the documentation. He was comfortable with the voice recorder switched on and on the table in front of him. However, his arms were crossed in front of his chest and he did not make prolonged eye contact. I did not understand why the man who had invited me to contact him was so defensive. If I could not get him to open up to me I was in trouble. There was a moment of awkwardness. He was clearly choosing his words carefully, “What about my IP?”

The universe exhaled with me. Relief!

“I am not interested in your intellectual property, at least not for this study,” I assured him. “Please just tell me your story.”

He visibly relaxed, looked me in the eyes and sounded extremely surprised, “My story?”

“Yes, how you grew up and your journey to where you are today.”

Allon now sat forward with his arms on the boardroom table and his face looked relaxed. His eyes came alive as he told me his story ...

4.6.2 Desperate for territory – 2005

I gently put my baby boy in his crib and, as I looked at our firstborn, I was thinking, “What the hell am I doing?” I was thirty-four years old and I had absolutely no money. In desperation, I plucked up the courage to ask my father’s friend to lend me the money to pay the hospital bill. When he would not help me, I was devastated. Despite the willingness of our friends to assist me in this, I felt so lonely. Nobody understood me. Everybody was insisting that I must find a job. People who don’t have their own businesses don’t understand the highs and lows I was going through ... and the highs were actually worse than the lows. Even my wife – who had been very much part of my journey – did not quite understand the energy that goes into securing a deal. They all think it just happens but, once I’ve clinched a deal, I stress even more. Then I have to deliver on the deal. This had
been a tough one. I sank down on the floor next to the crib, sobbing like a little girl. What the hell should I do? Did I go to the job market ... or not?

4.6.3 When I was just a little cub

I remember when I was a little boy in my parents’ umbrella factory in Durban. There had been between two hundred and three hundred workers busy making umbrellas and cushions. I loved walking through the building, collecting metal umbrella frames, fabric off-cuts and chunks of foam, cones from the cotton and other bits and bobs that had been discarded. The excitement of setting myself a challenge to create something interesting with all the stuff I found lying around in the factory surged through my body once again ... taking me back to a time when my parents literally had had to reframe.

My parents had received a huge order for umbrellas but the order had been cancelled while they were waiting for the umbrella frames that were in transit from the overseas supplier. With hundreds of frames to pay for they had had to be extremely creative with these frames or they would have faced insolvency. The result was novel umbrellas hitting the South African market with great success. Through this I had learnt that there is often opportunity hiding in disappointment (Raiz, 2010).

I also remember the times when a machine broke down and there was a sense of urgency on the floor to fix it in order to re-establish the flow in the production line. Vicariously, the value of process and smoothly operating systems was imprinted in my subconscious mind. The fact that there was currently no smoothly operating system in my life ripped me out of me reverie.

To make matters worse the economy was booming. My brother-in-law was buying boats and a holiday house. I should not be without money. I should not be living this lie. There I was helping people to run their businesses and I was stone broke. I was mentoring entrepreneurs but my family and friends did not trust my ability to turn Raizcrop into a success story. This reminded me of my high school days when I had been an under achiever.
My parents had worked six days a week and could not schlep me around from friend to friend, so I started my own vegetable garden at home to fill the hours. I was often at home alone. Actually, on Saturday mornings I could not wait for my parents to leave for the factory so that I could go out and tend to my precious plants. I just loved putting seeds in and then taking care of the seedlings until they turned into crops. Always vegetables ... never flowers.

Then Durban experienced a massive drought. I wasn’t allowed to use a hose pipe but I was not going to lose my vegetables. So, I solved the problem by constructing my own drip irrigation system using an old drum, asbestos pipes and plastic Coke bottles with small holes pierced in the bottom to distribute the water coming from the roof that collected in a drum. I was very, very clever.

Still sitting in the baby room, I realised that I was smiling. Solving problems always made me feel good. Now I was in the midst of another — much greater — challenge with the company that I had started. Deep within me, I knew I must do this. I just could not let go of this dream and I had do this on my own. I had solved the water problem when I was just a kid. I could solve this one, too. I had to.

As an asthmatic child I had been on nethaprin dospan, which meant I had been effectively drugged out of my mind throughout my high school years. I could not do sport because of my asthma and my academic marks were below average. I was an underachiever and I scraped through school. However, seeing that I liked gardening and I was good at it — it felt like a good career choice. At seventeen I enrolled for a BSc Agriculture at the Pietermaritzburg campus. I was “independent” and it felt wonderful! I did well in Economics, I battled with Physics and Chemistry and managed only 19% for Maths in the mid-year examination. I went to negotiate with the dean to move across from Agriculture to B.Com. He made a deal with me — “If you pass Maths for Biological Sciences and either Physics or Chemistry at the end of the year, I’ll let you in.”

I objected, “But I would have to get over 80% in Maths for the final exam to pass.”

“This isn’t the marketplace where you can negotiate. I’m telling you and that’s that,” were his final words.
I said, “Fine.” There was my challenge ... and I did it. A 53% final mark for Maths\textsuperscript{128} got me into B Com and a new phase in my life.

The tension in my neck and shoulders was back and my body was stiff from sitting on my knees on the floor – so I sat in the chair next to the crib.

4.6.4 The young rebel

During the high school and university holidays I worked at the factory. My parents and I had a deal – half the month I worked and the other half of the month I was allowed to go on holiday. My salary covered the whole month. They created a wonderful grounding, work ethic and a sense of responsibility. Sometimes my friends phoned, “Come on holiday. We’re here in Cape Town” or Plet\textsuperscript{129} or wherever exciting and I had to say, “Fifteen more days” ... then “fourteen more days” and “thirteen ...” It drove me insane but I had to do it.

My parents’ business grew and they became very wealthy. I knew unequivocally that one day I was going to take over their business. All my friends were writing up CVs for their interviews with the big corporates talent scouting at the universities. I had no CV and I did not even contemplate meeting with Anglo or Barlows. I was going into the family business. That was my future.

While at university I met this wild redhead from a completely different background to mine. Both her parents were professional people and she was incredibly confident and incredibly smart. I was immensely attracted to her. She had a completely different perspective on life to mine. She challenged everything – and so I started to challenge all my preconceived, so-called knowledge. As a late bloomer I had not rebelled in high school but, at university, I made up for it. I was coming to terms with myself and my parents. They were very conservative and did not appreciate my attitude.

This girl believed in me and, in my honours year, this became apparent. It was as if somebody had just taken off the blindfold and the lights came on. I came top of

\textsuperscript{128} Almost 90 % for the Mathematics examination paper
\textsuperscript{129} Plettenberg Bay
my class. All of a sudden, I understood things and, ironically, I was no longer on asthma medication. At this late stage in my life I realised for the first time that I was smart.

Ha ... ha ... ha ... I honestly attribute this rapid growth in my academic performance to this girl. It wasn't me; it was the girl. I did not study more than anyone else but she believed in me and I had started to believe in myself. I was experiencing some proof that I was actually clever. I always had had a perception that I understood things differently ... that the world did not understand me. Maybe it was a coping mechanism ... or maybe it was real.

A few years after I had met the redhead and, after quite a tumultuous time, my parents took me to the factory next door to theirs. It belonged to a prominent businessman. There I was, twenty-three years old, and my father introduced me, “Meet Mr Smith’s son, Bob.” How terrible was that! Here was a forty-something-year-old man and he was not Bob Smith – he was so-and-so’s Smith’s son, Bob. All I saw was myself being introduced to people as my father’s son twenty years on. I saw Bob and I saw me. That was a wake-up call.

One day, about a week later, my parents called me in and gave me an ultimatum, “Son, you have to choose between the girl and the business.” My response was, “Stuff you and stuff your business. I’ll do it myself.” With that I lost a magnificent flat on the Durban beachfront and the car I had received for my twenty-first birthday. They immediately disinherited and fired me. In a heartbeat, my life had made a U-turn.

What do I do now?

4.6.5 Bridging the gap

Thinking back to that moment in my life – my confidence at the time bordered on arrogance. A friend of mine who was a clothing retailer offered me a job in his business. I had an honours degree that I truly valued, but I gave no credence to the level of experience I had acquired growing up in a factory environment. I did not even know what it was. I only realised it later in life.
So I was working for John\textsuperscript{131} and I was convinced I was clever. I had an academic qualification and I was going to make a difference in his shop. However, all I had was the four Ps of marketing because I remembered nothing else. What was supply and demand going to do in the real world – in the shop? If there was more demand and we had the same supply, we could increase the price. I could not apply what I had learnt but I tried a whole lot of things and most failed miserably although with intermittent moments of success. I was under massive pressure having had a string of failures before with other ideas. At that point John and his father said that they had completely lost faith in me and I knew I had to do something radical. It was a pivotal decision in my life when I tried this thing with the shoes. It was a very, very brave thing to do. I took a chance on an idea of printing flyers in English and Zulu (the local language) and handing them out to passersby outside the store.

Not only did it succeed, it was fun. It was different and I was glowing – basking in the glory of success. It was such a relief. The following article appeared in the newspaper (\textit{Daily News}, 19 April 1994):

\begin{quote}
\textbf{How the well-heeled can help the poor}

\textbf{Trade-in shoes shine}

Used shoes are a novel charity idea writes Terry McElligott.

Durban shopkeeper, Allon Raiz, has found a novel way to boost business – and help the city’s poor.

Customers can “trade in” their old shoes for new footwear or other clothing – and the old shoes are given to charity organisations or welfare workers.

Mr Raiz, a partner in an upmarket Commercial Road clothing store, gave three thousand pairs to the Ark home for the destitute recently and has donated another thousand for distribution to shack dwellers.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{131} Pseudonym
“We advertised in our window that we would give R20 vouchers to anyone who brought in a pair of old shoes, and we have been very pleasantly surprised at the response,” Mr Raiz said today.

“It’s similar to a scheme in Johannesburg where people could trade in old suits when buying new ones. Everybody scores – the shop, the customer and the poor.

Photograph 4.25: Newspaper clipping of a pivotal time

The shoes come in all conditions. About 40% look like they have been dug up from the grave, but the other 60% are reasonable, particularly
children’s shoes. Children often grow out of them before they have had much wear.

One woman had just brought in 20 pairs. The scheme had been so successful that we are going to continue indefinitely.”

Within two months we had five thousand pairs of shoes. And then I received a call from Mr Cohen\textsuperscript{132}. He had seen the article in the newspaper and sent his driver to pick me up to meet with him. I had no clue who he was but we had a meeting. He asked about my life, my experiences, my thoughts and then he said, “Come up with any business you like and I’ll invest in you.” I thought he was insane. I did not take him seriously. I had nothing. I caught a bus to work every day. This was not real. So I ignored it – only to get a call from him two weeks later to find out where I was.

I wanted to know, “Are you serious?”

He said, “I’m serious.”

Mr Cohen became my mentor and a new chapter in my life opened up.

I tiptoed out of the baby room. I needed to get out. And go for a run.

4.6.6 My first kill

So there I was running up and down a Durban beach thinking of a business to start. I’ve read that you have to be passionate about something if you want to make a business of it. I had to find my passion. What was I passionate about? Jogging puts me in a trance-like state, obviously affecting my judgement. I saw discarded fast food containers on the Durban beachfront as a sign from God [smiling] … the chances of finding fast food rubbish on the beach must be one in a gazillion to one; isn’t it? God had to be sending me a message. I knew I was passionate about fast food. I liked it. I ate it. I knew where all the open fast food joints were after two o’clock in the morning – particularly the ones that absorbed alcohol. Robby Brozin had listed Nando’s in 1987. Fast food must be good

\textsuperscript{132} Pseudonym
business. Now I had to find a niche. There were too many chickens – so I came up with a hot dog idea and called it the New York Sausage Factory.

I presented my business idea to Mr Cohen and he said, “I love the idea but you have to take it to Negative Ned.”

“Who’s Negative Ned?”

“He’s the accountant.”

To be more specific Ned was a forty-something year old bald accountant who told me, “You won’t make money out of this.” I did not enjoy this. It triggered a flashback. I had when I failed Accounts 101 twice. During the final examination at my second attempt my balance sheet was out by a hundred thousand rand. I wrote to the lecturer, “You take fifty thousand and I’ll keep fifty thousand and no one should know,” and he still failed me! Negative Ned was an authority figure. He became my lecturer again. He was old – about forty – and an accountant, so he knew stuff. I was young and I had failed Accounts 101 – I did not know stuff. The power struggle was intense.

Despite the feedback from a clever person who knew about accounts I convinced my mentor, “I know that Negative Ned said I won’t make it, but I will.” I was so enthusiastic and I honestly believed I would succeed. I had money, I had a mentor and I had opportunity. What could stop me from being successful? I’m clever ... I’ve got degrees ... Life was amazing ... I was going to do this.

My mentor said he’d back me and I opened my first store in Pinetown. I found a rental place next to a video shop. It all seemed right but I did not really understand anything about position. For market research I produced hot dogs and handed them out free to people who were starving and asked them if they liked my sausages. They said, “Yes. Yes”, while they were stuffing more in their pockets. The business was an absolute failure. However, instead of giving up, I worked seven days a week – waking up at four-thirty to catch the breakfast trade and working until late at night to cash in on the dinner trade. I had the work ethic but, no matter what I did I, could not make money.
I was losing weight and, one day, while I was driving I realised I was going to pass out. As I felt myself going I pulled to the side of the road and there happened to be an off-ramp right there. I went down the off-ramp as I started to black out. I don’t know how I crossed the road but I went straight into a parking lot in front of a building. I woke up about an hour or so later and it took me quite a while before I could stand up and walk. I couldn’t keep my eyes open. I fell asleep at home again but, that afternoon, I went straight back to work.

The business was not making money so there was no money to see a doctor. A few days later my mentor paid for me to have the MRI scan. To this day, I am convinced that it was just the stress of pushing myself. I always feel responsible and I can’t let anyone down ... so I work ... work ... work.

But, the New York Sausage Factory failed.

I started to drink lots of beer and I felt very sorry for myself. I made every excuse in the book but I knew I had had everything – private education, tertiary education, money behind me, a mentor, every privilege and opportunity you could ever need to succeed. So, it had to be me.

I am completely responsible for my own failure and I am in control of my success. That was the most important lesson I learnt at that point. It was pivotal in my personal development. If I had ever remotely had an external locus of control it shifted completely toward an internal locus of control at that point.

As part of my new found responsibility I went out to find a new place – a new, fifty-two square metre pavilion that was suitable for The New York Sausage Factory. I shared my realisations with my mentor and told him, “I take full responsibility for what went wrong. I want to fix it but I need you to back me again.” I had had the courage to fail and go back.

He replied, “I’ll back you on one condition. I put a team of people around you – including Negative Ned.” This was my nemesis. Imagine being back in the same room with the man who had said “I told you so.” But I had to suck it up and take it. I had a support structure around me and that was the beginning of the beginning.
The business did relatively well. Although it did not exactly fly I sold it about a year later for a fair price.

At about the same time my parents were making overtures and trying to effect a reconciliation. It became an internal battle for me. I was resisting any kind of conversation with them because I was afraid that, should I reconcile with them, I would lose my drive. The desire deep within to prove to them that I could make it on my own provided me with serious motivation.

Thinking of my parents brought me back to the reality of being a parent myself. I knew there was a way to make Raizcorp the success I believe it could be without the help of either my parents or my mentor. I wanted to show my mentor that I had learnt my lessons in the New York Sausage Factory and Bandit, the vehicle security company.

4.6.7 Learning humility

In the late nineties I was a partner and marketing director at Bandit, a vehicle security company. Initially, we were making amazing profits but a group of older business people realised this and followed us into the industry. Although many of my peers were afraid of authority, I was comfortable challenging people more than twice my age. I felt no one was more or less important than I was. I was not intimidated by the competition. Who the hell did they think they were? The wealthiest man in the country at that time treated me as an equal and I called him by his first name. I was so confident. I was successful and I had grown the business ten time its size in the first year. I was a glory boy – just give me any business and I'll sort it out. I walked on water. Right?

This arrogance was being replicated in my personal life. I thought I could take on the world and get any woman I wanted. But there was this little voice in me saying, “Not true. Not true.” However, the reality of the situation was different. Although the company was growing, it was increasingly cash-strapped and I was continually facing yet another month-end with not enough money to pay salaries (Raiz, 2012, p. 63).
We had grown so quickly. We never had cash in the business because we were always buying stock. It was going out the door and the cash came in too slowly. We had exhausted all our sources of finance and closure seemed inevitable. I telephoned my mentor and I said to him, “Could you second your clever accountant to come and help us fix up the cash flow?” And he said, “What do you mean?”

“We’ve grown from x to 10x ...” I went on and on, wanting him to give me the proverbial pat on the back but he was playing ignorant, “I don’t understand.”

“What do you mean you don’t understand? I’m telling you the business has gone from x to 10x, but we have no cash in the business. And I need you to sort it out.”

He remained calm. “Look, you have used most of our time together to tell me how good you are. Are you a director in the business?”

I can remember this as if it were yesterday. I said, “I’m the marketing director” – as if he did not know.

“Change your title and do it yourself,” was all he said before he ended the conversation.

I could not believe it. He had punched me in the stomach and I was angry and bitter.

He had noticed my arrogance and it was time for a reality check. His message was: Take responsibility. In a business, as a director, you take responsibility for all aspects of the business. You may not do all the aspects but you take responsibility. For the next three years, I was inside the business as opposed to being the face-man of the business. I spent three years learning to understand business and administration from a systems point of view. This built up my appreciation of the internals of a business as being as important as the externals. The way that money is collected, the way the credit process works – these processes can sink a business the same way not having any sales may. It was a massive learning curve from a business point of view.
Seven years in the business and I hated it. I had moved up to Johannesburg as, at that point, this was where the business was growing the fastest ... but I hated it. I was selling fear. Bandit used a small advertising agency and, during that period, it was in trouble. I turned it around. The bug bit me. I became addicted to turning small businesses around. That was where it all started.

4.6.8 Growing a mane

It has been a very interesting journey. For five years and two months we had not made one single cent profit. I was renting a place at R3500 a month, but there was no money for food. The fridge was completely bare except for condiments. My wife had graduated as a psychologist and had completed her internship at Sterkfontein. She had just started her practice. There was no money coming into the household. I had learnt how to borrow money from friends but I could not go to my in-laws and, with our history, I would not go to my parents. When I started Raizcorp in 2002, my mentor offered to back me but I said, “No, this one I want to do myself.” I needed to prove to myself – and to him – that I could pull this one off. I had courage, I believed in myself, and I believed that was what it took to be successful.

Although I must confess it was someone else’s belief in me that really changed my life. The good fortune of having a life that would probably have been insignificant compared to a life that has significance ... just because somebody else took the time to believe in me – both the redhead girlfriend and my mentor. Raizcorp is a paid-forward\textsuperscript{133}. It was now my turn to believe in other people but would they trust me if they found out that I was not making any money? I had to change how I thought about the world and myself in order to overcome the fear within me.

The next morning at the office I sat down for a brainstorming session – writing down every single person and thing that I could think of as a resource. I took a detailed look at my resources – my car, my wife, the office I worked in, the advertising agencies that were Raizcorp’s partner businesses, even my knowledge of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs. I kept on expanding my resources – all the while forcing myself to go beyond the obvious. I began to see

\textsuperscript{133} Paying forward is doing unto others that which someone else had done for you and that had made a difference in your life.
just how many resources I had available to me. Eventually, exhausted, with two
hundred and forty two resources listed, I began to explore the list – focusing on all
the clients and, more importantly, potential clients with whom I had had
unsuccessful meetings. Mentally, I revisited our meetings – reliving the pre-
meeting anticipation, the rejection and the post-meeting dejection. I knew that
somewhere on my list there was a potential client in need of my services (Raiz,
2012).

While in this semi-meditative state, I remembered the meeting I had had with a
marketing executive at a large bank. I had approached her to find out whether she
would be interested in sponsoring the launch of Entrepreneur’s Organisation (EO)
in South Africa. “EO is a highly successful, non-profit, international entrepreneurs’
organisation with over eight thousand members in more than forty-five countries
(Raiz, 2012, p. 87).” The marketing executive liked the idea but the EO, at the
time, did not reach enough people to justify the bank’s investment.

‘Knowledge of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship’ was also on my list of
resources. I had only shared my knowledge on entrepreneurship in person –
either in a classroom or as a personal mentor. I was also a shareholder in an
advertising agency. This triggered the idea to develop a deck of fifty-two cards
branded with the Raizcorp logo with advice and inspiration printed on each card. I
immediately started writing. When I asked the advertising agency to give me a
quote for designing the cards, they were taken by surprise. Their partner was
about to become their client. They trusted me and allowed me to pay them once
the sale of the cards had been concluded. Despite the bank’s initial resistance to
meet with me again, my persistence resulted in another meeting with the bank’s
marketing executive – this time with a mock-up of my cards in the hand. The night
before the meeting I hardly slept as I mentally delivered my presentation over and
over again, but it was worth it. A week later she telephoned me to share the good
news that she had the support of her superiors and the bank would place an order
for ten thousand decks of cards. They paid the fifty per cent deposit up front and,
with the first cash flowing into the company, I felt as if I had won the lottery (Raiz,
2012).
Entrepreneurs have to belief in their ability to muster resources 
(Allon, in communication).

Vision without action is delusion (Allon, 2010, p. 33).

Action is truly the kingpin to success (Allon, 2010, p. 44).

4.6.9 Fighting for my pride

In 2005, Raizcorp was in serious trouble and I did not know how to fix it. I kept on asking myself what I was doing wrong. In despair I turned, as I usually do, to my mentor who uttered the two words that would prove to be my saving grace. ‘Go away!’ he commanded. By this, he did not mean ‘Get out of here’ – he meant I should take a break. He suggested that I needed to create distance between myself and the business and that, more than anything, I needed time to think. He generously offered me the use of his holiday home in the quiet seaside town of Sedgefield.

I packed my car and included large sheets of white, flip-chart paper, coloured markers and Prestik. I intended to take my break very seriously! After arriving in Sedgefield, I unpacked and went for a quick swim in the sea. Then I stuck the paper all over the walls of the lounge. This would be my canvas for the next few days and I was convinced that I would find a way out of the financial impasse I was in.

Every morning, after my run on the beach and a swim, I came back to the house, made breakfast and stared at the paper. I was unable to write anything down (Raiz, 2012). All I could see were the things I didn’t have and the things I felt I needed. For six days I sat and stared at the white paper on the walls until I was not able to stare any longer. Then I would escape and do something that had nothing to do with the business. On the seventh day, returning from my run, without hesitation, I picked up a marker, drew a circle on one of the pages and, inside the circle, I wrote:

Hunter Thyne
Why the name had popped into my head, I have no idea. One afternoon, many years ago, driving from university in Pietermaritzburg to Durban I had picked up a hitchhiker named Hunter Thyne. Although we had not made an effort to remain in contact, we continued to bump into each other sporadically. I had probably seen him about five times in the seventeen years since we had first met.

Perhaps I had seen a hitchhiker while out jogging that morning and, without even realising it, it had triggered memories of Hunter. I will never truly know why or how this happened but it was all I had to show for my seven days of being away. Those seven days had been an utter waste of time and the only difference my wife saw on my return home was the tan I had picked up on the beach. I was still miserable and believed I was unable to fix the business.

Desperate to try anything, I looked for his card and called Hunter. After some small talk I recounted the story of how his name had been the only outcome of my week away. He thought I was crazy and, after the obligatory ‘we must get together’ statements, we said good-bye. The flicker of hope I had had before the call was extinguished. My despair was now complete but I continued to pursue leads.

Three weeks after my conversation with Hunter I had an unexpected phone call from him. He had met someone from a large bank, the topic of business incubation had come up, and he had immediately thought of our recent conversation. He had recommended me as an expert in entrepreneurship and incubation and told me to expect a call from the person who was looking to build a business incubator. We both laughed. Although I was excited by this call, a little voice in my head told me that this could not possibly be happening. The synchronicity seemed too far-fetched even by my standards of credulous faith in the ways of the universe.

On Monday I received a phone call from Mr Vundla, the head of new products at one of South Africa’s ‘big four’ banks, requesting a meeting with me later that same week. What a meeting it was! The bank offered to pay me to do research and complete a document for them on how to build a business incubator. I was asked to submit a quote for the research and the compilation of the research proposal. After the meeting I met with a colleague with the necessary knowhow
who would be able to help me with the project. We did some maths and presented the bank with a proposal to conduct the research and write the paper. We expected some resistance and negotiations on our quote of a quarter of a million rand, but Mr Vundla accepted it without a blink.

We wrote the paper. The money covered the company’s debt and the staff salaries for the next few months. It also led to more work from the same bank. This was the confidence booster I desperately needed at the time while also giving me the credibility to approach other banks for work. This additional income allowed me to do more marketing and this, in turn, resulted in more partner clients. It set in motion the ball of Raizcorp’s growth. My random decision to offer a stranger a lift had unlocked my path to success seventeen years later (Raiz, 2012). “Over the years I have trusted this process and acted on all messages ... no matter how strange they are” (Raiz, 2012, p. 138).

4.6.10 Growing my territory

At the beginning of each month I sit at my desk and write down my goals for the coming month in my trusted old filofax. I had started this habit of goal setting at the beginning of the month almost a year before. It keeps me focused and disciplined through the month. I knew that what I have written down for that month would be a bit of a stretch, but I also knew that it was realistically attainable if I put my mind to it. I closed my eyes and took a few deep breaths to calm and focus my mind. I slowly went through each of my goals in my mind – seeing not only how I would achieve them, but also the in-between steps I would take to ensure that I would be successful. I allowed myself the luxury of basking in my success and I became aware of a smile spreading over my face. My heart was filled with gratitude for the successes of the previous couple of months. I had been able to pay back every cent I had borrowed from my friends. It was amazing that a potentially dark time had turned into a blessing. It is not that every day is a breeze but I had put in place systems and disciplines to support my dreams and it was paying off.

Yesterday was a tough day. A deal I had been working on seemed to be slipping away. I had to go after it with absolute determination. Before I stepped into the shower, I mentally reviewed the successes of the previous week and then I focused on my current goals. I formulated my goals for the day clearly in my mind.
I stepped into the shower and I stretched up and then down to touch my toes. Stretching “is a physical sensation that brings me to the present and forces me to concentrate” (Raiz, 2010, p. 37). As I stretched, I repeated the following sentences: “I have the right to close this deal successfully. I have the ability to close this deal successfully. I will close this deal successfully.” As I stretched back up, “I am closing this deal successfully”. I then I visualised how I would close the deal successfully while I showered. As I stepped out of the shower I felt how I would shake hands on the deal. “I have achieved it! I smile” (Raiz, 2010, p. 38). I dressed and I was ready to climb the mountain.

A week later ... It was late afternoon and the office was quiet, but the adrenalin was still flowing. I had closed the deal that I had been working on for eighteen months. Before I went home I needed to attend to one of the pleasures of life. I opened my filofax at the goal sheet for August and, next to the third point on the list, ‘Close deal with XYZ’, I wrote ‘Done’ and the date. I loved it!

The following morning the sobering realisation that we had to deliver on my promise hit me. This deal was worth thirty-six times our annual turnover. It was an opportunity that could change everything for us. This was terrifying and I subsequently started to question my abilities. However, this distracted me so much that I forgot to shave. Catching my reflection in the rear view mirror en route to work and seeing the three day’s growth tinged with a bit of grey, I saw somebody else – a more mature, older me. I had committed to my staff that I would not shave until I had worked out exactly how we were going to deliver on this deal. The two months that followed had become known as my ‘bearded phase’. This deal took Raizcorp to the next level (Raiz, 2012).

4.6.11 Teaching other lions to hunt
Raizcorp is blossoming. I prefer to call it a business prosperator rather than a business incubator. I am paying forward the privilege of having a mentor – someone who believes in you. I find people in whom I believe and I partner with them to make them profitable. In fact, I had had a call that morning from a woman in the office block next door. She had been my partner for seven years. I was writing my second book, What to do when you want to give up because of her. I had had a meeting with her husband in this office when she had been thinking of
giving up. Luckily, she had persevered and, in the previous year, she had become very successful. She phoned me that morning, “Allon, I’ve been thinking about you for about a week. My business is flying. I was just thinking how you believed in me. I’m just phoning to say thank you and I’m blessed to have you as a partner.” I cried as I had cried the day the first cash had flowed into my business. What my mentor had been to me I want to be for others because I had felt the power of that.

Photograph 4.26: Books by Allon

Raizcorp focuses on established businesses which are struggling to make a profit. We do not take on start-ups. In exchange for a minority equity and profit share, we assist businesses to become sustainable companies. We also provide basic infrastructure – from telephones to the use of the boardroom and company accountant – to those businesses which are not able to afford such things. At a later stage, the entrepreneurs have the option to buy the equity we hold back. We guarantee businesses that, if we do not increase their turnover within a year, we will return the equity and write off any money they may owe us. Our interest lies with the entrepreneur and not with the business. We are able to fix the business but, if the entrepreneur does not have drive or passion, we cannot help and we do not take people without passion on board.

When things were extremely difficult I had become very creative. In an effort to bring money in I had done public speaking. “Despite the temptation to pocket the
money myself, every cent I made went to building my business” (Allon, 2010, p. 67). Today the only public speaking I do is when I promote my business.

I was previously involved in a television series guiding nine small businesses in pursuit of the one million rand prize money and, currently, I am involved in *The Big Small Business*\(^\text{135}\) on television and which is now in its second season\(^\text{136}\).

Allon leant back in his chair. “And that is my story.”

4.6.12 A conversation with the lion

For a moment we were both quiet. Then he continued, “The first question people always ask is ‘Are entrepreneurs born or made?’ And I tell them, it’s the wrong question. It’s a bit of both. Enjoying the journey and being sincerely interested in other people aids networking – which I see as the key to success in business. It is all about relationships and humility. To make money, I had to let go of my ego. Over time, I grew from arrogant to determined and resilient.”

“It is also important to dig deep to keep the fun alive. The passion and fun element carry you through the long hours. Many struggling entrepreneurs adjust their stories so that it appears that they are passionate about what they do. It is important to be very honest with yourself ... and to remember that there will be challenges. Challenges are like breathing. They are part of the journey and should be anticipated and accepted as part of the journey. I have no doubt that there will be a way to overcome them. My strong belief in how you overcome obstacles is to look at them all differently in different ways. My mindset is that, if I can't solve it, I'll reach out and find someone who can. I fail all the time and I am challenged every day. It is just part of this journey. I have also seen how a conversation with one person can change your perspective on the challenges in your business.”

“What is your modus operandi when you lose a deal?” I ask.

“When I lose a deal I have view scenarios I play with. One is that I'll understand why this has happened later. The second is the fantasy that they'll come back to me. I play that game and I know it's a game but, at another level, I believe it.

\(^\text{135}\) Available on Podcast on www.businessdaytv.co.za and click on The Big Small Business

\(^\text{136}\) Since the interview the series has continued for another season and, at the end of 2013, he signed for the next season.
Thirdly, I ask what I could have done better. If we lose a deal I go into a post mortem and it is actually a formalised process at Raizcorp. We go into the boardroom and we ask, What did we do wrong? What did we learn? Often I go back to the client with our findings and I go and fight for it again. I’m totally stubborn around losing deals. I go back to the point where I say to the client that I know they’ve said no and I know they’ve given it to somebody else but, as an entrepreneur one of my characteristics is that I’m stubborn and I’m going to get this – this and whatever else I can do, and I get deals back. That makes me feel fantastic and reinforces the fact that that is part of what I’ve got to do.”

“Can you hear how much I listen to and analyse how I think about things. I am completely self-aware when I am making excuses or bullshitting myself.”

Allon stared past me for a moment, “On the other hand, acting and thinking professionally are keys to growing a business (Allon, 2010). Often start-up entrepreneurs do not think of themselves as professional and it shows in their behaviour. My perception is there is a work ethic that is inherent in successful entrepreneurs. There is the ability to be prolific in terms of how much output you can produce and I’ve seen it in my peers who have become successful. They’re prolific in how much work they do and people think they’re just very lucky, but these people work long hours ... twelve o’clock at night I get emails from them while I am working ... and they’re working.”

I knew what he was talking about but I wanted to check something else before my time with Allon was up. “Do you want to elaborate on the statement you made in Finance Week (2005) that entrepreneurs are control freaks?”

“Look at control freak as a pseudonym for internal locus of control. There is a danger that people think control freak means I do everything. It doesn’t mean that but you have to control everything. You’re responsible for control. And the moment you let go of control it might mean – in my experience – that you’ll lose the business. Through your research you’ll find that I founded the Young Entrepreneurs Organisation (YEO) in South Africa. We’re a forum of eight who meet once a month. We’ve been meeting for years. The businesses of two of the guys in our forum started cracking. They were busy but they didn’t control. They
let go, they had a very laissez faire, New Age attitude, and both businesses went into a massive decline. Control does not mean doing everything yourself. It’s about knowing what is going on in your business at every level. Every day when I walk into my business, I drive the people insane asking, ‘What are the numbers? What are the numbers?’"

“On the other hand, it is not about doing everything yourself. That is a recipe for a slow death if the success of the business relies entirely on the value input of the entrepreneur. When I want to grow my business to the next level, I put people in place to take over from me and I mentor them. I ensure that all the systems are in place and, when I think they are ready to take my place, I go away for two weeks – preferably where they cannot reach me by electronic media. When I return I take stock of what did and did not work and we remedy what needs to be fixed."

4.6.13 Showing off his territory

The official interview was over and, as I collected me belongings, he told me, “When people talk, a movie opens up in front of me. My marketing department are super human beings. I will often start talking and then I get completely off-track...and I tell them up front, ‘You have to bring me back to what the subject is.’ I literally don’t look at them. I see pictures, I use my hands, and I’m spatial and right-brained so I see everything...I can see the success.”

I probed further, “How do you make decisions, Allon?”

“Decision-making is crucial and a small business cannot absorb a bad decision. It is about being aware so that you can react on what needs to be attended to, quickly. In my current partnership my partner, a chartered accountant, is the ‘finance man’. I am the ‘marketing man’. Our skill sets are completely different. Decisions in our business, while made quickly, are not made without discussion, analysis and debate. Once we have heard each other’s points of view we do not allow a stalemate situation to develop. If it is a financial decision, I allow his view to prevail. If it is a marketing decision he will concede to me. In all other areas, if we absolutely cannot agree, I am the agreed-upon leader and my decision will be respected (Raiz, 2010, p. 120). Making the best decision for your business is about using both sides of your brain and not your ego. This does not mean that I
have no ego but my ego and need to control take second place. The two biggest enemies of entrepreneurial success are fear and an inflated ego. I’ll never forget the day I spent the first half of the session with my mentor telling him how well everything was going in the business and he asked me whether I had any intention of making the session valuable in any way or if I was just there to talk about how great I was. He taught me humility.”

Allon walked me through his office suite and showed me the pictures he used for his presentation for the New York Sausage Factory. I took pictures of the plaques that hung in reception while he told me, “Mentors have played an invaluable role in my journey. This Sunday my original mentor is flying me to Singita – a private lodge – in a private jet. It is a birthday present from him. After twenty odd years I still have a relationship with him.”

Photograph 4.27: Plaque in Raizcorp reception
Before thanking Allon I asked him, “Does your book reflect how you think and can I use your book as a reliable reference for my research?”

“One hundred per cent ... It is a true reflection of me and how I think. If the next book is in time you can use it to show how I work.”

“I cannot wait to see what you are going to make of all this.”

I promised to keep him informed.

4.6.14 Staring into the bush - reflecting

Back at home I added to my field notes and I reflected on my conversation with Allon. During my interview with him I had hardly had to say anything other than making encouraging sounds. The fact that he had just written a book that was based on his own life and work as well as his experience as a television programme host had probably contributed to the smooth flow of the conversation in this interview.

I had not been able to conduct participant observation with Allon in the regular sense of the term as he was understandably extremely protective of his intellectual property. The fact that I was in the same industry, albeit on a smaller scale as compared to him, meant that it would not have been fair to him. As an entrepreneur mentor, watching him at work with his clients and partners would have given me access to his intellectual property. However, just reading his books and watching him on television has given me considerable insight into his processes.

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137 It was in time for me to use.
Albert, the overconfident lion

Photograph 4.28: The overconfident lion

4.7 THE OVERCONFIDENT LION

Albert had agreed during a conversation earlier in 2010 to become a participant in this study. It was now time for us to make it official.

4.7.1 Hunting the cub down

On 18 October 2010 I sent Albert an email.

Hi Albert

Thank you for your willingness to share your story with me. Please send me an indication of the dates and times you have available to meet with me.

Thank you.

Suzette

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138 Blue is the colour of conventional fountain pen ink and reminds me of academic life.
139 Photograph from the private collection of Ken and Nettie Kyle.
140 Please see Chapter 1 Section 1.1 for this conversation.
By early 2011 I had not heard from Albert so I phoned him to set up an interview, but he was in a meeting with someone at Oliver Tambo Airport. He promised to phone me back at a more suitable time. I was a little sceptical about whether he would keep this promise. However by mid 2011 my fifth call in as many months to Albert was successful. We made an appointment for 8 July. I preferred to meet my participants at their offices or businesses as this gave me an opportunity to see them in action but I always checked with them what they preferred. “Where do you prefer to meet?”

There was a moment’s silence. He sounded secretive. “Can we meet at the Wimpy? I don’t want the people at work to know about my flirtation with an own business.”

I was so grateful that he was willing to share the failure of his business with me that I immediately agreed.

The morning of 8 July started early with cat hotel duties. Then I took my eldest daughter, Marizanne, out for a brunch to celebrate her twenty-sixth birthday and, after that, I was on my way to my interview with Albert. While driving I did some slow, deep breathing exercises to focus my mind in the present moment. This interview had the potential to be difficult for Albert. He is highly intelligent and was my lecturer, but we were going to discuss a business he had had to close down. The last time I had seen him he had been convinced that, to be successful in business, you had to be tough and exploit people. One of my main concerns was how honest Albert would be. Not that I thought he would lie to me on purpose, but I did not know how honest he was being with himself about his situation. Any false beliefs he had may have caused him to tell me a story that covered up the true story.

4.7.2 Meeting the lion at the drinking hole

I arrived at the Wimpy a few minutes early for our interview and found a table towards the back of the restaurant. I had had time to think through my strategy to encourage Albert to be open and forthright during the interview. He arrived about

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141 A restaurant franchise
142 A shopping Mall in Auckland Park, Johannesburg – not far from the University of Johannesburg
twenty minutes later, “Sorry I’m late, but an important call came through at the last minute and I had to take it.”

“Relax.” The word came easily to me because of visualisation and hypnotherapy sessions with clients. “Let’s order some coffee and chat.” We were the only patrons in that section of the restaurant – ensuring a fair amount of privacy. However, there was the noise of the occasional delivery truck, but we were so engaged in the conversation that, although we had to raise our voices when the trucks arrived and departed, it did not distract us. I knew that Albert would relax only if his requirement for privacy was met.

As a university professor Albert is familiar with the formalities and paperwork but I had to reiterate that, by signing the informed consent form, his surname would not be completely confidential. He shrugged his shoulders, “It’s not as if this is criminal activity. Who in my department is going to get hold of this document?” I must admit I was relieved that he was comfortable signing the form as I really wanted him to be part of my research. I had once had a school and I had mentored another client who had started a private tutor centre in 2007. The tutor centre has been expanding from year to year. Although the three institutions were different they catered to a similar market and must have had some challenges in common. This made me an insider and would, hopefully, give me some insight into his business.

I addressed my concern regarding Albert’s openness at the very beginning of the interview. “Before we start I just want to tell you how I appreciated your honesty during our struggles with Merzbacher. You admitted to not knowing everything and I did not think any less of you. On the contrary, I thought you were very brave. Together we solved all the problems and I learnt so much in the process.” Albert smiled shyly, saying something about my level of commitment at the time under his breath. I continued, “Well, in a similar way we both stand to benefit from looking at your business experience with an open mind.”

To my surprise he seemed eager to talk about it, ‘What do you want? What elements are you looking for?’

143 My bridging school, the tutor centre of my mentee and Albert’s after care centre
144 The author of a quantum physics text book discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.1
“Just tell me your story.”

Albert looked puzzled. “How do you get results from a story?” I realised that Albert could be out of his depth on this one. “I know that you are a very experienced quantitative researcher. What do you know about qualitative research?”

“No much. Is that what you’re doing?”

“Jip,” His mind was so focused on analytical thinking that he was not going to give me his story unless he understood a little more about the qualitative process. “You tell me your story and we talk about it. I don’t just want the “left brain” information of how much at what time. I want all the shades of grey in between. The best you can do is to simply tell me your story...especially the time when you had the after-school centre.”

“How do you use that? It’s not as if you punch numbers into a computer and graphs pop onto the screen.” Albert was wide-eyed – interested and a little confused.

“When all the backups of this recording and the transcripts are in place I start to listen to the recording ... again and again and read the transcription ... again and again – much like with Merzbacher.” We giggled, remembering how we read and re-read that book.

Our coffees and his muffin arrived and brought me back to the current situation. “I’ll tell you more about analysing qualitative data some other time. Let’s get to your story.”

Albert smiled, “I was ready to fire the black-and-white facts about the after-school centre at you, but now you want shades of grey, too. You may have to help me with that.”

Albert continued, “How it all happened was ... My wife left me and, all of a sudden, I had only one income and I had two children to raise. I desperately needed additional income. Luckily there are always people wanting extra science lessons

145 A place where school children receive tutoring in specific subjects by qualified tutors after school hours
and I am good at that. The owner of this after-care centre heard about me and invited me to teach extra science lessons in the afternoon at her centre. I accepted the invitation and soon I was one of her primary teachers.

“One day, out of the blue, she called me in and said, ‘I want to retire. Don’t you want to buy the after-care centre from me?’ I had not expected this and I told her ‘I don’t have the money.’ ‘No, no, no I don’t want much for it,’ she countered. And when she told me how little she wanted I couldn’t resist.

“My primary motivation for buying the after-care centre was probably financial distress which was not of my own doing. I hadn’t had a salary increase in two years and the inflation rate was fifteen per cent at the time. It’s hard to admit but another reason for buying the centre was our divorce. I was emotionally uprooted and probably more reckless than usual … so I was willing to take a risk at the time.” Albert looked into the distance and, as there was only a blank wall in front of him, his mind must have been far away.

He smiled shyly, “If I must be very honest, I have always thought of myself as very smart. If I can do high level physics I can do anything. That gave me the guts for this leap of faith. I believed that I was going to turn this business into a roaring success.” He held the recorder with both hands to his chin as his mind wandered back to that time. “And I was correct. The turnover increased by three hundred per cent over the first two years. This was primarily due to excellent service delivery. Not once did we receive any complaints about our level of service. Rather, parents thanked us for how we helped their children to achieve higher marks.”

Albert was sitting with his elbows on the table – the voice recorder in both hands. Every time he spoke he lifted the recorder close to his mouth while looking me straight in the eyes, “How am I doing? Is this what you want?”

I did not want him to give me what I wanted. I wanted his story and the best way I knew how to do this was to make him feel safe and relaxed. “You’re doing great. I just want to hear your story. So you bought the centre and things seemed to be going well,” I edged him on.
“Yes, when I took over there were only two tutors other than myself. At one stage I had seventeen tutors. They were paid per hour per student they taught. I paid them seventy per cent of the fees received for the hours they worked. The other thirty per cent went into the running of the business – the rent, water and electricity, phone bill, secretary’s salary, etcetera. Financially I took good care of the tutors, but I did not engage with them on any other level. I did not want to know about their problems or their lives in general. I did not want to be involved in their lives at all. We had no staff socials.

“Right at the beginning I spent an exorbitant amount on advertisements and, in hindsight, I don’t think it had any effect at all. I wasted that money. The business grew through word of mouth. The after-care centre was across the road from a school. My clients were happy and people talk. That’s how we grew ... But I had no experience in running a business. Remember I come from a family of academics and I had followed in their footsteps. My parents were serious and conservative. They were introverts with hardly any display of emotions. Both were academics in the natural sciences. My brother was five years my junior and my parents were divorced shortly after he was born. My mom worked fulltime and, when she got home, she was tired and had my baby brother to take care of. So I grew up a loner although I had a few good friends. Although I’m an introvert I like people.

“I have given many public talks and I’m good at it. I’m good with people on a specific level ... a professional level. I treated my staff well. I was never rude, but I was definitely mechanical in my management ... ‘Here are your hours.’ ‘Here is your money.’ But I was not a mentor for them.”

Once again Albert looked past me. His mind was far away. “You treated your staff professionally?” My voice brought him back and he straightened up in his seat.

“Ja, but I should have spent more time getting to know them and I should have kept a closer eye on them. One tutor almost ruined me. Unfortunately I cannot say more about it as it is of a sensitive nature. I did not have to invite them for dinner but I should have spent more time talking to them. People are human; they are...”

\[146\] Yes
fallible. That way I would have noticed when someone was not in line. I have
learnt that you need to react very quickly when things go wrong, otherwise it may
be too late. And your decision must be in favour of the business – not the person
in the wrong. I couldn’t do it. I felt too sorry for the people and looked after them at
the expense of the business. Remember they were all teaching after hours
because they were in financial difficulties. I blame it on my Christian education. I
was taught to have empathy with others and put their needs in front of my own.”

He continued, “When I look at it now, I know that all those people for whom I felt
sorry would have been better off in the long run if I had built a sustainable
business ... but, after four-and-a-half years, I threw in the towel. The business was
draining me financially. I think my lack of experience in running a business caught
up with me. I thought because I could do physics, I could do anything. I was
blasé.”

While he took the last bite of his muffin I asked, “How did the business drain your
finances?”

“When the landlord saw the business was doing well, he doubled the rent within
two years. I knew that some of my parents were struggling financially. I couldn’t
just double my fees overnight. I'd lose my business.”

From experience I knew that pricing was not what made a business successful but
it was often what killed it, so I asked him, “Did you not consider raising the fees
gradually and offer scholarships or even lowered rates to those who could prove
they could not afford the higher price?”

Albert nodded his head, “There were a few kids who couldn't pay and we taught
them for free, but the school was in a middle income group suburb. I could only
ask so much and it was not the only problem. I was no good at addressing non-
payment. So, parents who could afford to pay, but didn’t pay, got away with it. I
reasoned if ninety per cent of the pupils paid their bills we’d pull through at the end
of the month. This, plus the fact that we had to become a VAT\textsuperscript{147} vendor, hit us
hard.

\textsuperscript{147} Value added tax
“First I poured all my saving into the business. Then, for eighteen months prior to closing the business, I tried to establish a partnership with someone involved in private education to save the business, but it did not happen. And, during all of this, I still taught and raised my own two children. I was very, very busy.”

“Albert, did you ever consider inviting the tutors to become partners in the business?”

He was quick to answer, “No, not one of them was nearly at the right level. They were just grateful to teach ten to twenty pupils per week. At that point in time I would have appreciated a colleague walking in and sharing the burden with me.”

I pushed further, “Did you ever consider going to the tutors to negotiate the seventy–thirty split ratio to say sixty–forty?”

Once again the answer came immediately, “No, not at all. It never crossed my mind. Thinking about it now, there may have been one teacher who was strong enough to run the after-care centre. As a matter of fact, I think she started her own centre after I closed that one down. You know, this is the first time in nine years that I am reflecting on that business. Everything I tell you is formulated as I sit here. Maybe I didn’t explore all my options at the time.”

Now that he had acknowledged that I enquired further, “Do you think things would have worked out differently if you had had a mentor?”

“Ja ... but only if it were the right person. The person would have had to impress me on an academic level. I would not have listened to the previous owner. I know it sounds terrible, but it is the truth. She was just a teacher who rushed to the after-care centre after school to teach extra lessons all afternoon. She did not have vision. I would only have listened to someone who had been successful running something similar. I was blind in this thing. I had no sounding board. Zip. My children were in primary school and they sat at the after-care centre from two to six o’clock in the afternoon – waiting for me. When we got home I had to make supper and check their homework. Emotionally I had too much going on to handle all the stress. I had no support system at all. I felt completely isolated.”
“So you closed the centre. How did it make you feel?”

“That was that. There was no emotional impact. I was completely neutral. I thought what a waste of time and money it had been. There was a little bit of guilt. People lost their incomes but I knew they would understand. They knew that we were battling financially.”

I could see how Albert was gaining insight as he reflected. “Have you learnt anything in the process?”

“I’ve learnt a lot. For my next business I’ll do proper homework. I’ll try to learn from the mistakes other people have made. I’ve also learnt that business is more than just income statements ... and I’ve learnt that the people who work for you are not just numbers. I’ll have to invest time and energy in their development but, most importantly, I have learnt that there will always be the unexpected – increases in overheads and other challenges that you did not budget for. Luckily I have always been conservative with money.”

“Next question, would you start a similar business again?”

“Definitely not the same kind of business, but this experience did not put me off business completely. Now I will approach a business as I do my research – with proper planning and care. The after-care centre grew too rapidly in the two years after I took it over. Next time round I’ll go for more organic growth.” Albert put the recorder against his face again ... deep in thought. Then he continued, “Operating on the academic level I am on and having had formidable achievements along the way, it’s easy to think, ‘Goodness, what is managing ten tutors and a hundred kids? How can that be complex?’ I hope I will not be that arrogant again.”

“So are you planning another business again?”

“Yes. The children have left home. This has given me the opportunity to start bigger things but I cannot talk about it yet. We are four partners and it’s in sustainable energy and that is all I can say at the moment.”

“Maybe we can talk about it next year?” I probed.
“Maybe.”

Albert shook his head, “I cannot believe that I – who like to reflect – left this situation unexplored for nine years. Between the ages of sixteen and thirty I even kept journals. Nowadays I reflect while out jogging and, even though I don’t write it down, I remember the important stuff. It’s as if the current reality has a specific texture and then there are pinprick-sized holes in this fabric. There is this special moment during reflection where one of these tiny holes in the fabric is right in front of my eyes and I get a glimpse of a greater reality. In that moment I gain tremendous insight and it supplies the energy that pushes me forward.”

It was time to go. I paid the bill and turned to Albert. “Thank you for sharing all of this with me.”

“Suzette, you mentioned in the beginning that this is a two-way street and that I’ll also get something out of the process. You were right. I now understand the situation leading up to closing that business and I feel so much lighter.”

“I am glad you also got something out of this.” As we said our goodbyes I asked, “Do you still want to know more about qualitative research and data analysis?” He did and we decided to talk about it once I had heard all his stories.

4.7.3 Staring into the bush - reflecting

Back in my car I wondered whether Albert fully realised how to avoid what had gone wrong in his previous business ... especially now that he was starting a new business. The lessons learnt from the past business would be invaluable for the survival of the new business.

It was impossible to prove that every word Albert had said was true – especially since it had all happened at least nine years ago. He may even have forgotten important details. However, he had seemed honest and I have known him to be an honest person since the early nineties. I did not think he would have misrepresented anything on purpose. Tanggaard (2008, p. 1500) suggests the text is about personal meaning rather than actual events as they occurred. There were moments where Albert had been trying to rationalise his decisions – playing tricks with his own mind. This was not rare with retrospective data and Allon had
also admitted to rationalisation. However, there was a major difference as Allon had been very aware of his doing it and Albert had not seemed to realise it until I had questioned it.

As soon as I arrived home I wrote up my field notes. Albert was the only participant who had insisted on anonymity and he had not been completely relaxed when we had started our conversation. However, once we were immersed in conversation and, as he gained more insight into the situation, he had become more relaxed. The almost nine years of success at the university since that experience has created the distance necessary for him to see his first business in perspective. We could reflect together and learn from the process. I have read how Lindgren and Packendorff (2007) define the social constructionist perspective on empirical research as interactions between the researcher and the participants with all the knowledge that is constructed being a result of these interactions. The research process is a process of mutual learning. I had hoped to learn about the entrepreneurial process through Albert and he had confessed to learning about his process through our conversation.

The next three days I followed the same regime as with Dianne’s narrative. I transcribed my conversation with Albert verbatim, edited the transcription and then translated it from Afrikaans into English before sending it to his private gmail address for his approval.

4.7.4 The lions meet at the drinking hole
On 4 December 2012 I met with Albert again and, as with our first official interview, he chose a Wimpy close to his work. I was eager to hear how the new business was progressing. As soon as we had ordered our drinks I asked, “How’s the new business coming on?”

Albert jumped right into the story. “That process is still ongoing but, because it is in a new business sector, there is some resistance to it. The banks are so conservative and we need to educate the large corporates about the benefits this process will have for them. It is about a new way of doing things. So, the business is moving forwards, but there is a continuous process of product development taking place. Many lessons have been learnt over the past eighteen months.”
Albert was talking as if he were writing a quantitative paper, but I allowed him to continue. “There is continuous need to educate people to enable them to realise the immenseness of the opportunities available to them. We want to offer a service to large corporates that can save them a respectable amount of money plus there is an ethical contribution. Unfortunately, people are creatures of habit and they believe second hand stories that are not true. So, it is difficult to create a real market for our service, despite the fact that we’ve been at it for much more than a year. We haven’t made a single cent from it.”

He continued without encouragement. “I have once again realised the value of a trusted network. We are getting more and more people with very specific skills that we trust emphatically in the group. We want to subdivide the work into smaller projects with people focusing on what they are really good at...but only with people we truly trust. I am comfortable with the increase in the number of partners. The more people I have on board the smaller the chances of one person overturning the applecart.”

Albert remained silent – looking into the distance. I also kept quiet to give him time to think. “I feel great about the process. It is so important for the environment and that motivates me. Even if I don’t make any money from it, I’ll still feel good about it. Morally it is the right thing to do, so we are continually working on refining the process. We’re all permanently employed so there is no financial – or any other – stress linked to this business.”

There was another quiet spell while Albert turned the recorder round and round in his hands with his arms resting on the table. “However, I am frustrated by the blind conservatism and material greed of so-called successful business owners. Their only focus is the number of zeros in their bank balance. I find that so narrow-minded and short-sighted, but it seems to be the norm in the world of business. I find it frustrating. Our service will improve their bottom line and – more importantly for me personally – it will decrease the damage being done to the environment. From December 2012 South Africa no longer qualifies for carbon emission credits. We are waiting for the impact of the carbon emission tax. Then the financial impact will be more concrete. Not everybody sees the bigger picture. At the moment it depends on how far people are looking into the future, but it will
definitely become more viable as we are forced to become more conscious of the environment.

“I see this whole process as a personal calling. The biosphere – which includes humans – is under pressure and this pressure is going to get worse. Everybody who is aware of this is under a moral obligation to address the problem. I see it as part of my contribution. It will be nice if there is a monetary benefit from our business, but I am not depending on that. I shall continue with this process even if there is no financial gain in it for me. This is a very ambitious project and it is going to take time to get off the ground. I am building a cathedral.”

I nodded while he was talking to show that I was following and, after a while, I confirmed, “So you are not in this business to make money?”

“No, I am not an entrepreneur.”

Again I nodded my head. “Is there anything else you can tell me about the business?”

“Unfortunately it is still in such a sensitive stage. I cannot talk about it but tell me about this study.

I gave him a brief overview of the qualitative process but we were soon engrossed in the role of quantum physics and possible ways of using it in my study. The conversation flowed and it was with a shock when we realised that two hours had flown by. I paid the bill. Both of us had other responsibilities to attend to. I thanked Albert again for his time and energy and – to my surprise – he gave me a hug, thanking me for my input.

I did not want to address Albert’s bias about business people being hard-hearted during this conversation but, before we say our final goodbye at the door, I said, “Maybe you need to reflect on possible biases you may have concerning being a business person as you are trying to build a business.”

Albert promised to do so during his next run.
4.7.5 Staring into the bush - reflecting
Later that evening in my study I had time to reflect on my interviews with Albert. During our first official conversation Albert had attributed part of the failure of his business to his low level of engagement with his staff. He had also admitted to bad financial management. After our last conversation I was not convinced that he understood the role of asking a sustainable price in return for his services.

After my first official interview with Albert I had thought he would use his learning from the failure of the after-care centre to get the second business off the ground. However, after almost three years, the new business was still not showing any signs of sustainability. Nevertheless, that was not my primary concern as Allon had taken longer than that to get Raizcorp off the ground. What concerned me more was that Albert had said that all the partners were financially secure and that it did not matter if the business never made any money.

Albert is an excellent Physics lecturer and he seemed to have learnt the basic business principles. I had discussed the findings of my study with him and we had engaged in an interesting academic conversation, drawing links between the mental processes of entrepreneurs and quantum physics. Nevertheless, he was like a domestic cat that knows good food will arrive on time in a clean bowl. Like this cat, Albert knows about prey and has heard of hunting skills. He may even have some experience in hunting for survival, but he definitely does not know about the excitement of the hunt or the thrill of out-strategising the prey. As Albert had said at the end, he is not an entrepreneur.
PART III

OUT TO KILL

Photograph part 3: An oil painting of lions fighting over a warthog by Douw van Heerden

For the hunter, survival on the African plains depends on effective hunting skills while for the hunted survival is about outwitting the hunter. Each species of animal possesses its own unique set of hunting skills and “secrets” to ensure its survival. Lions, the most social animals of the cat family, hunt as a pride and, thus, like entrepreneurs, they make use of their networks to assist them. The core of this network may consist of up to four male lions of which one is the dominant lion. Likewise in the adult female “harem” one of the females is dominant, the young adult lions (teenagers) and cubs (Stuart & Stuart, 1992). The young members learn by watching the experienced members of the pride hunt and through play; hunting insects. However, there are other important role players in this context, including competing young male lions who are seeking territory, the wind that carries the scent of the prey, the body language of other animals and the alarm
calls of the birds, such as the “ghwaaaaay” call of the grey loerie\textsuperscript{148}, which warns game about approaching predators.

In the business world entrepreneurs, like the lions, have to seek out customers or clients to whom to sell their products or services. If they want to prosper they need to be acquainted with their “territory” and also be aware of who travels through such territory, both customer and competition. It is one thing to become the leader of a pride but quite another to retain that position. Like the lion the entrepreneur has to wage a constant battle to win and to keep market share.

For the purposes of this study, the hunt itself represents the researcher hunting for a greater understanding of the mental models that entrepreneurs use in their decision-making. Phrased differently, I am hunting for the mental models the eight participants employed that contributed to their success.

**Part 3, Out to Kill, consists of the following three chapters:**

**Chapter 5** is called The Hunting Ground. This chapter examines the mental models and the processes of sensemaking, rational and intuitive decision-making, the various types of learning which are relevant to entrepreneurial learning and the use of heuristics. This is where I expect to find the prey.

**Chapter 6**, The Prey, describes the hunt for the prey – the themes and concepts that I “hunted down” in the real-life experiences of the entrepreneurs who participated in the study.

When the lion has hunted down the prey, the prey becomes the kill. With these concepts that I “hunted down” as the “prey” for this study as a basis, I developed a model which I discuss in **Chapter 7**, The Kill. It is imperative that the research involved in doctoral studies makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the form of a typology, model or theory in the study field in question. The model developed in this chapter will serve as part of the theoretical contribution of the study to the field of entrepreneurship.

\textsuperscript{148} *Corythaixoides concolor* or the “Go-away bird” as the indigenous people call it
CHAPTER 5

The Hunting Ground

Photograph 5.1: Blue wildebeest quenching their thirst at a waterhole – a life-sustaining but dangerous place.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The waterhole is an essential part of life in the wild as it is where all the animals quench their thirst. However, the waterhole is also where the lions lie low in the tall grass, waiting for their prey. For the purposes of this study the waterhole represents the body of scholarly literature which informed the concepts (prey) for which I hunted in the experiences of the research participants (other lions) while I watched them hunt. I then took these concepts to the waterhole of existing knowledge to ascertain whether they matched up with the many reflections thereof in the relevant academic literature. Hence, I quench my thirst for knowledge at this waterhole.

Photograph from the private collection of Ken and Nettie Kyle.
The tall grass in the wild represents the human mind. The concepts were hidden in the minds of the entrepreneurs where I searched for them. I, who hunted these concepts, also operated using my mind. Thus, I was also among the tall grass. This tries to give some indication of the complexity of the process of exploring mental models. Also, there is the additional complexity of a double layer of metaphor as, while the entrepreneurs who participated in the study were hunting for success amid many challenges, I was trying to discover their mental models as I hunted for concepts (my prey).

This chapter discusses mental models and schemata as well as the role of sense-making during the decision-making and learning processes which are necessary for the survival of a business. The chapter then outlines the decision-making process. Decision-making may be divided into rational and intuitive decision-making. The chapter then considers the role of heuristics and bias in the decision-making process and, lastly, the chapter explores the various types of learning demonstrated by the entrepreneurs.

Every time I introduced the scholarly concepts and key research findings that I regarded as relevant in shedding light on the world of the entrepreneurs and then described pertinent practical experiences of the participants, I was engaging in digging. Thus, digging serves as a metaphor for the way in which I searched through the data which I had obtained in order to unearth these concepts (my prey).

Thereafter, a summary indicating how each concept emerged from the data provided by the participants is tabulated. In addition, I offer some indication, on a continuum, of the position of the eight entrepreneurs relative to one another in respect of the specific concept.

Under Got it! I draw a conclusion on the appropriateness of the relevant concept to the success of the entrepreneurs.

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150 In Section 5.6, Heuristics and Biases, there are only tables at the end of the representative and the control heuristics.
5.2 MENTAL MODELS AND SCHEMATA

It is clear from the literature that the intention to exploit an opportunity is driven by critical attitudes and the deeper structures of cognition – in other words, our mental models or schemata (Krueger & Day, 2010). The ability to make an accurate decision about whether or not a particular venture or a solution to a challenge is feasible is crucial to entrepreneurial success. The mental models of the entrepreneurs inform such decision-making and, thus, their mental models have a major impact on their success. This, in turn, highlights the need for a better understanding of the mental models or schemata of successful entrepreneurs than is currently the case (Krueger, 2003, p. 128).

According to Gaglio and Katz (2001, p. 97), schemata are “dynamic, evolving mental models that represent an individual’s knowledge and beliefs about how physical and social worlds work”. Senge (1990, p. 8) defines mental models as “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalisations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” while Theron and Roodt (2000, p. 15) define mental models as “unitary, spatial models where distance has functional consequence, and which are used to give meaning and understanding to complex systems or phenomena”. On the other hand, Rowe and Cooke (1995, p. 243) define mental models as “internal representations of a system that is formed by one’s knowledge of a system”.

Carley and Palmquist (1992, p. 602) summarised mental models as “internal representations in which language plays a key role and that can be represented as networks of constructs”. Thus, mental models may be regarded as the knowledge structures which, accompanied by the knowledge processes, are used to explore phenomena that cannot be observed directly because they are beyond immediate perception (Weick & Bogan, 2001). They are built through our sense-making of our experiences and are the external imitation of role models. They are used for decision-making (Autere & Autio, 2000). For an individual, the meaning of a construct or concept is embedded in the relations of the construct to other concepts which exist in the individual’s mental map. The social meaning of a concept is not defined in a universal sense but is relative to those of the participants in this study.
All incoming information and knowledge are filtered through our mental models or “cognitive structures that shape what we ‘know’” (Grbich, 1999, p. 66). Thus, they are representations of patterns of interconnected concepts and are very important in entrepreneurial success as they lead to apparently intuitive decisions (Neneh, 2012). During reflective thinking they assist the entrepreneur to devise a problem-solving strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Although we may not always be consciously aware of our mental models, they often influence what we believe to be possible (or impossible) and determine what we do and how we react to situations.

Closely linked to mental models, scripts are “commonly recognized sequences of events” that aid experts in rapid decision-making (Mitchell, Mitchell, & Mitchell, 2009, p. 112) and where an expert is regarded as someone who performs in a predictably superior way in a specific domain. Scripts represent the organised knowledge of a person with regard to a particular concept and include the relationships between the attributes of the concept (Busenitz & Lau, 1996). In the context of entrepreneurship, scripts “refer to the knowledge structures that entrepreneurs use to make assessments, judgement or decisions regarding the assessment of opportunities, enterprise creation and business growth” (Sánchez, Carballo & Gutiérrez, 2011, p. 434).

Krueger (2003) points out that it is possible to recognise whether a person is operating from either an expert or a novice script by identifying clues that signify expertise, where expertise is “associated with deep personal ability and knowledge derived from extensive practice and experience based on immersion in the relevant domain” (Dew, Read, Sarasvathy & Wiltbank, 2009, p. 3). Thus the differences in the schema content – expert versus novice – become visible in the differences in the decisions and performances of individuals. According to Krueger (2009, p. 45), “the content of an expert’s knowledge base need not differ from that of a novice, but experts typically organize or structure the content differently”.

The use of cognitive models in this study was based on the assumption that the participants would “edit their personal experiences into patterns of personal knowledge” (Weick, 2001, p. 311). The effectiveness of individuals depends on the continual improvement of their mental models and, the better the mental
models, the more easily the owners adjust to change. As we become skilled in an activity or process, the mental models of such an activity or process become more accurate and we become better at accurately predicting the outcome of similar situations or processes (Brännback & Carsrud, 2009). Individuals who use different schemata as compared to other individuals will interpret and react differently to the same situations or market signals in business.

These cognitive structures are continuously reshaped as the entrepreneur acquires greater expertise in accommodating his/her changing perceptions and they evolve to become more integrated and differentiated than was previously the case, thus providing the framework for generalisation during quick decision-making. This mapping process is both iterative and non-linear and it occurs when we organise experiences into some form of coherent pattern in our minds. In view of the fact that the process is usually intuitive experts are often unable to explain in detail the reasoning they used when they solved problems (Mitchell et al., 2009).

According to Mitchell et al. (2009, p. 127), experts use domain specific specialised scripts and this is the main reason why they are able to outperform novices. Simon (1987) postulated that experts possess a recognition and retrieval process which is based on patterns stored in their long term memory and which enable them to arrive at problem diagnoses and solutions rapidly and intuitively. Thus, experts make sense of new situations by drawing on previously stored knowledge and industry specific experiences (Mitchell et al., 2009).

Professional entrepreneurs possess different mental models compared to non-entrepreneurs (Mitchell, Smith, Morse, Seawright, Peredo, & McKenzie, 2002). Glaser (1985) explored the difference between experts and novices during information retrieval from the long-term memory and came to the conclusion that experts develop the capacity to distinguish large, meaningful patterns and that this ability becomes intuitive. On the other hand, the patterns which are recognised by novices are smaller, not well articulated, surface orientated and more literal than those recognised by experts. There are three approaches to pattern recognition. Firstly, there are feature-analysis models in terms of which a pattern is identified by its distinctive features. Unfortunately, however, this approach works for simple
patterns only. Secondly there are prototype models which use the prototype models we have constructed through experience. These models are able to deal with complex patterns. Lastly, exemplar models are used for specific knowledge (La Pira & Gillin, 2006; La Pira, 2011).

The schemata of experts differ from those of novices in their “elaboration, content complexity, and the cross-linkages with other schemas” (Gaglio & Katz, 2001, p. 102). These linkages enable experts to see patterns emerging and they assist in the early detection of anomalies which assist in decision-making. These differences in the accuracy of the mental models of experts and novices are evident in the more successful behaviour of the experts as compared to the behaviour of novices (Gaglio & Katz, 2001). Expert entrepreneurs are sensitive to cues in the environment that trigger information in their memories and they initiate actions that are appropriate to the situations which are marked by these cues (Simon, 1992). We are alerted to all the subtle patterns that we are not able to detect consciously detect by the fluctuations of dopamine that helps us to keep track of reality (Lehrer, 2009).

Expert models are area specific and, thus, within their particular areas of expertise experts outperform novices as they are able to immediately recognise what novices discover with difficulty. A wider range of experience and knowledge enable us to acquire a wider perspective and greater insight into a situation than was previously the case. In other words, these “multiple mental models bring multiple perspectives” (Senge, 1990, p. 189). Over time the habitual use of a particular schema automates the schema and it may then become second nature or a chronic schema (Gaglio & Winter, 2009). Chronic schemata support disequilibrium and assist us to quickly and yet accurately notice ambiguous situations, thus triggering entrepreneurial alertness (Gaglio & Katz, 2001). Everyone has several chronic schemata in operation despite the fact that these chronic schema are not always appropriate to the situations in which we use them and that is what we would prefer to avoid.

Entrepreneurs are not born with entrepreneurial expertise and the process of becoming from a novice into an expert does not come about as a result of experience alone (Mitchell et al., 2009). In the activating of events in life and our
choices in enacting such events our mental models act as filters which process our behaviour and determine both the choices we make and the resultant outcomes (Dweck, 2006). Expertise is the result of a process of enactment and reflection, making sense and learning from the results of the enactment. During sense-making the individual forms links between the “new” knowledge and prior knowledge in the brain. As the number of connections interlinking experiential knowledge increases the individual gains a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial process and develops a clearer conceptual model of the experience than was previously the case. As portrayed in Figure 5.1 below, with regard to the entrepreneur this learning is then assimilated as an interconnected network and becomes available to the entrepreneur for use during the next enactment of an opportunity.

Figure 5.1: Developmental experiences and mental model change

The entrepreneurial mindset is indicative of the way in which the entrepreneur thinks about business and the opportunities that capture the benefits of uncertainty (Dhliwayo & Van Vuuren, 2007). The perception of opportunity may vary both quantitatively and qualitatively across individuals with different mental models and also for the same individual according to the situation as the mental
models become more intricate and, hopefully, more accurate (Krueger, 2003). An entrepreneurial mindset is crucial if a business is to succeed (Bruwer, 2012). Bruwer (2012), Shepherd, Patzelt, and Haynie (2010) and Scheepers (2008) all believe that the entrepreneurial mindset involves the innovative and energetic pursuit of an opportunity with this pursuit using awareness, mobilised responses and action in order to realise possible gains. Opportunity recognition may be regarded as a form of pattern recognition. “Schema theory assumes that people engage in a kind of pattern matching between environmental stimuli and the information stored in the activated schema” (Gaglio & Katz, 2001 p. 100). Research into pattern recognition may be complex as it requires an understanding of the theories behind human pattern recognition as well as rigorous methodologies (Krueger & Day, 2010).

Herbert Simon (1992) has suggested an alternative way of exploring cognitive research, namely, a way that involves investigating of layers of human cognition (Krueger, 2009). The most accessible layer is known as the semantic layer. This layer represents surface phenomena and becomes visible through the medium of everything we say and do. Below this layer lies the symbolic layer which houses our beliefs, attitudes and assumptions. The neurological layer, which is the seat of cognition, is below the symbolic layer. For the purposes of this study the focus will be primarily on the symbolic layer where we find the mental models or schemata that drive the decision-making process. However, the knowledge derived from the different layers is interconnected and it would be fascinating for future studies to examine the neurological layer human cognition in entrepreneurs.

Our mental models reflect our past experience and we use them to make decisions about our future. However, mental models are always incomplete and are based on assumptions; and not truths (Senge, 1990). If mental models are accepted as the absolute truth and not merely as a heuristic they become a handicap rather than an aid. At the same time, the usefulness of mental models as heuristics during decision-making limits their accuracy and precision (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). These models, schemas or scripts are sense-making tools that we may use to find explanations for human behaviour (Brännback & Carsrud, 2009).
Although reflective sense-making plays an important role in learning\textsuperscript{151}, it also plays an important role during decision-making and will be discussed below.

5.3 REFLECTIVE SENSE-MAKING

How can I know what I think or feel until I see what I say and do? (Weick, 2001, p. 463).

The sense we make of the world is not based on absolute reality but rather on our perceptions as they are filtered through our mental models. Brain cells measure the mismatch between expected observations and actual observations (Lehrer, 2009). Any gap between the two presents the brain with an opportunity for sense-making and learning.

In order to attach meaning to a situation it is necessary to slow down the thought processes in order to examine the situation from several different angles in the search for a “deeper knowing” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2008, p. 85). During this critical reflection on one’s experience of a situation one becomes increasingly aware of the way in which the experience has influenced one’s actions and mental models (Senge, 1990). Weick (2001, p. 362) states that “reflection is synonymous with wisdom” when it is understood as a style or form of knowledge that endeavours to understand the consequences of actions in a “holistic, systemic way”.

People construct meaning when they link perceived cues with the cognitive structures that already exist in their minds (Weick, 2001). Thus, sense-making is retrospective and involves biased reconstruction. It is, thus, not about the truth but rather about “the interplay between action and interpretation” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2005, p. 409). Weick (2001, pp. 461–463) summarises sense-making as follows:

(i) It is influenced by the actual, implied, or imagined presence of others and takes place in a specific social context.

(ii) A person’s sense of whom he or she is in a particular setting provides a centre from which judgements of relevance and sense fan out. Hence,

\textsuperscript{151} See Section 5.5
sense-making is dependent on the *personal identity* of the individual involved in the sense-making process.

(iii) It is *retrospective* as people make sense of a situation that has already happened, even milliseconds, prior to the meaning making.

(iv) It involves the resourcefulness with which a person elaborates *salient cues* into full-blown stories using successive rounds of searches for confirming evidence.

(v) It involves an *ongoing process* which is constrained by both past events and the speed with which events flow into the past and interpretations become outdated.

(vi) It is about coherence and *plausibility*.

(vii) What one sees in any moment of sense-making is a partial reflection of oneself. Remaining detached from the situation detracts from the sense-making process and, hence, sense-making is about imposing more (or less) order on the situation.

Sense-making is often triggered when the outcome of a decision or action differs significantly from the expected outcome (Lehrer, 2009). Thus, it involves the constant retrospective building of models by rationalising experiences. Sense-making is, therefore, linked to heuristics. (Heuristics will be discussed in more detail shortly\(^\text{152}\).) One of the challenges which arises during the construction of maps or models during sense-making is the forever changing territory.

**Digging**

Albert was convinced that he reflected on a regular basis. However, in the nine years following the closure of the After Care Centre (ACC) he had not made sufficient sense of the experience to learn from the mistakes he had made. After my conversation with him I realised that we do not all dig to the same depth when we reflect. Albert was not as honest with himself as were many of the more successful entrepreneurs in the study. The failure of the ACC had hurt his highly

\(^{152}\) Please see section 5.6
intelligent academic ego. This may, in turn, have contributed to the fact that he had not dug very deep in order to make sense of the experience. Hence, at the time of the study, he had still not built the mental models which support entrepreneurial thinking and this was reflected in the start-up of his second business.

Allon is an almost obsessive reflector and sense-maker. Initially, when he had started the New York Sausage Factory (NYSF), the process had been considerably less refined than at the time of the study. His considering of his thinking, analysing and making sense of his rationalisations had supported the construction of the mental models that had come to serve him well. Allon has the ability to shift his thoughts to support changes in his actions and, thus, to create the habits that support his success in his business. Hence, his reflection and sense-making has resulted in the changes in his behaviour that support business growth.

Dianne indulges in counterfactual thinking but she does not seem to reflect critically. She, too, had not been very honest with herself and had often, apparently helplessly, observed her thoughts spirally rapidly downwards. This may, in turn, have contributed to her repeating the same mistakes.

Lily had reflected on and made sense of the critical incidence, for example, a sudden drop in occupation, in her business. Initially her insecurity had allowed other people’s negative mindsets to influence her mental models. However, over time this happened less frequently. She did not realise that her negative thoughts reflected her perception of reality in a specific context at a specific time and not the absolute, independent truth. Accordingly, she did not indulge in contemplation in order to manipulate her thoughts by examining the situation from a different perspective.

Natasha had not admitted to sitting quietly in reflection and sense-making. Her extremely quick mind, coupled with her extensive experience in her field of business, had resulted in almost immediate sense-making as she dealt with situations. Natasha has an extensive, interconnected set of mental models.

153 Please see Section 5.6.5
Neill was not comfortable with deep critical reflection. On the other hand his wife was extremely comfortable with it and she had pushed him to engage in sense-making during the critical phases of his first businesses. With time he had realised the learning that accompanied these sense-making sessions and he had started to request that more such sessions take place. In some cases he was able to translate this learning into changes in his actions.

Tessa reflected and made sense of what happened in her business. She also possessed the ability to make sense of her thoughts and to change the way in which she thought about issues. This had stood her in good stead when it had been necessary for her to change in which the way she did business. To change the way one does things requires that one looks at things differently.

Suzette bordered on being a compulsive reflector and sense-maker. During the first years of their marriage she had been sad that she could not share this with Neill as he was not comfortable with critical sense-making. She had started to keep reflective journals and had found that recording her thoughts added clarity and insight. The physical act of writing probably also helped her to focus her thoughts while it also served as a reference and reminder, enabling her to discern patterns emerging by comparing the written documents from different sessions. For example, she discovered that every time she was upset by something that had impacted negatively in her confidence she did physical labour. This physical labour usually had a tangible outcome. In other words, she could see the positive results of her efforts and this, in turn, helped to build her confidence which made her realise that she possessed a mindset in terms of which confidence is built through success.

In Table 5.1 below, the critical reflection and sense-making tendencies of the entrepreneurs are ordered from the weakest (at the bottom) to the strongest (at the top).
Table 5.1: Critical reflection and sense-making of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Strong reflector and sense-maker that changed his habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Strong reflector and sense-maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Automatic reflector and sense-maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Reflector and sense-maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Needs a mentor in order to reflect and make sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Reflects and makes sense, but had not yet seen the bigger picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Thought he reflected but was not honest with himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Felt helpless as her thoughts spiralled downwards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The entrepreneurs who were involved in more successful entrepreneurial activity compared to the others demonstrated a stronger tendency than the others to reflect and make sense of their situations. It would appear that there is great value in critical reflection and the sense-making of incidents in the life and business of an entrepreneur. We all have many mental models, but through sense-making during the entrepreneurial process some of these mental models are developed to serve entrepreneurial endeavours. Through this process mental models are refined and, ultimately, this may lead to changes in behaviour that support business growth. Hence, changes in the symbolic layer became visible in the semantic layer.

Before we consider the mental models of entrepreneurs we will examine the decision-making process that is informed by these mental models.

5.4 DECISION-MAKING

There is no secret recipe for decision-making. There is only vigilance.

(Lehrer, 2009, p. 238)

When a lion decides to act there are two drivers behind his action. Firstly, there is the instinctive behaviour which is based on genetic programming, typical survival behaviour and, secondly, learnt behaviour such as hunting skills. Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, use rational and intuitive decision-making.
Before we take explore how the participants made decisions and the belief structures that supported these decisions we will examine what the literature has to say on decision-making.

5.4.1 Cognitive styles

According to Mitchell, Busenitz, Lant, McDougall, Morse, and Smith (2002, p. 97), entrepreneurial cognition may be defined as “the knowledge structures that people use to make assessments, judgments, or decisions involving opportunity evaluation, venture creation, and growth”. Thus, entrepreneurial cognition plays an important role during decision-making and the learning from one’s mistakes (Leonard, Beauvais, & Scholl, 2005). Cognitive complexity is “the capacity to construe social behaviour in a multidimensional way” (Pervin & John, 2001, p. 401). Cognitive complexity determines the ability of the individual to differentiate the elements of a system, thus discovering the embedded patterns and integrating these elements in a way that leads to positive outcomes during decision-making (Bakker Curscu, & Vermeulen, 2007, p. 207). In the case of entrepreneurs, cognition is formed when the entrepreneurs perceive and interpret the information that enables them to exploit opportunities (Kickul, Gundry, Barbosa, & Whitcanack, 2009). As the individual makes sense of the information, it is organised in his/her mental models.

Entrepreneurial decision-making is an iterative rather than a linear process (Brännback & Carsrud, 2009). According to Alvarez, Barney, and Young (2010, p. 37), the decision-making process is incremental, iterative and inductive. Hence, entrepreneurs make small decisions using their current resources and capabilities while working toward the achievement of desired outcomes. This process may be evaluated only in hindsight.

Chell (2008, p. 155) and Bird (1988, p. 443) point out that entrepreneurial decision-making is characterised by the following two cognitive dimensions. Firstly, there is rational, analytical or explicit thinking which is mediated by conscious appraisal and justified with logic and evidence. This thinking is relatively slower as compared to the second type of thinking. Secondly, there is intuitive holistic or implicit thinking which is mediated by past experience and is self-evident
(experiencing is believing). This thinking is relatively rapid compared to the first type of thinking (La Pira, 2011).

Alvarez et al. (2010) suggest that decisions may be made by applying biases and heuristics when the amount of information available is less than the amount of information required for more rational decision-making. Entrepreneurs tend to make decisions swiftly and do not procrastinate (Bygrave, 2003).

La Pira and Gillin (2006) are of the opinion that entrepreneurs use the following three levels of intelligence during decision-making, namely:

(i) Intellectual – uses cognitive processes and is extremely powerful in linear processes with fewer variables

(ii) Emotional – necessary for interpersonal relationships with staff, clients and networking and reaction to challenges and external stressors

(iii) Spiritual – uses intuitive, non-linear processing and is valuable in complex situations.

We will now explore the roles of rational and intuitive decision-making and the use of heuristics and biases by entrepreneurs.

5.4.2 Rational decision-making

Rational decision-making is extremely accurate in situations in which there are few variables and no uncertainty. In cases in which there are several variables rational decision-making requires a vast computational capacity (Hickey, 2013) and this, in turn, presents a challenge. However, in cases which are characterised by uncertainties rational decision-making fails. An additional limitation is the fact that the conscious brain – prefrontal cortex where conscious decision-making takes place – is able to handle approximately seven bits of information at any moment (Jordaan & Jordaan, 2003). When the prefrontal cortex is overloaded with information decision-making automatically becomes intuitive as working memory and rational thought share the same cortical source (Lehrer, 2009, p. 148). It is at this point that heuristics and biases come into play.
In view of the high levels of uncertainty associated with the entrepreneurial environment rational decision-making has limited value in entrepreneurship (Gustafsson, 2009). The uncertain environment in which entrepreneurs operate favours an intuitive, cognitive style if the entrepreneur is to be successful (Allinson et al., 2000; La Pira, 2011). Based on very little information and relying on subliminal cues known as heuristics the emotional brain makes quick decisions (Lehrer, 2009). However, even if rational decision-making has a lesser role in entrepreneurship, this study did, nevertheless, find that this role is not unimportant. There are important decisions, for example, financial decisions, that must be left to intuition alone.

As some of the participants had learnt it sometimes makes sense to alternate between the rational and the intuitive decision-making styles. During the intuitive decision-making phase knowledge patterns from the subconscious – mental models – drive the decision-making process. This is followed by rational decision-making with the focus on the details to ascertain whether the mental models used during the decision-making make sense. This is especially important in the case of novel decisions. By alternating between these two decision-making processes the individual gradually moves to making an informed decision that makes sense in the wider scheme of things and without bogged down by too much detail or missing important details.

5.4.3 Intuitive decision-making

Intuition refers to the immediate apprehension or insight by the mind without reasoning (Le Mesurier & McIntosh, 1965). The word intuition may have its origin in the Latin intueor or intueri which means to contemplate or look within (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). According to Bradley (2006, p. 1), intuition is “a process by which information normally outside of the range of conscious awareness is immediately sensed and perceived by the body’s psycho-physiological systems”. Bernstein (2005, p. 488) offers a similar definition, stating that intuition is “the appearance in the mind of accurate information about the external world, which can be shown to have come not through the five senses, nor through a rearrangement of stored memory content.” Based on the research conducted by McCraty (cited in McCraty,
Atkinson & Bradley, 2004), this type of non-local\textsuperscript{154} intuition is not cognitively based but involves the entire psycho-physiological system (La Pira & Gillin, 2006).

Bradley (2006) draws on quantum holography – a theory that explains how information about future events exists on the quantum level in an energy field. According to quantum holography everything in the universe is interconnected (Bohm, 2005; Talbot, 1991). Thus, when we focus our awareness on an object or process with which we are emotionally involved, we become attuned to the activity and potential energy of the object or process and which are spectrally encoded in the electromagnetic field as a quantum hologram. This ability to exchange information about non-local events may be the result of the interconnectedness of everything in the universe (Bradley, 2006).

However, there is another school of thought that perceives intuition as the mind accessing memories which are stored in the subconscious mind (La Pira, 2011). Lieberman (2000, p. 111) defines intuition as “the subjective experience of a mostly non-conscious process that is fast, a-logical, and inaccessible to consciousness that, depending on exposure to the domain or problem space, is capable of accurately extracting probabilistic contingencies.” Simon (1987) postulated that experts use a recognition and retrieval process which is based on patterns stored in long term memory and that enables them to arrive at problem diagnoses and solutions rapidly and intuitively. This implicit learning may be the result of non-verbal cues and experiences that were outside the conscious awareness of the individual at the time it took place (Lieberman, 2000).

Although there may be two different understandings of what intuition is, there is, however, no disputing that intuition is a quick, holistic and non-linear way of decision-making (Bradley, 2006; Allinson, Chell & Hayes, 2000; Talbot, 1991). Although not all researchers agree on exactly how intuition is accessed, most researchers agree on the following two things. Firstly, when we know something intuitively we are extremely certain about our convictions (Bradley, 2006). Secondly, intuitive decision-making is significantly quicker than rational decision-making (Allinson et al., 2000). Despite the fact that intuition is used extensively by

\textsuperscript{154} Non-local as in the quantum physics concept of being related to the interconnectedness of everything.
entrepreneurs in their decision-making (Chell, 2008), it is still surrounded with mystery and uncertainty.

Mitchell, Friga, and Mitchell (2005) position entrepreneurial intuition within the opportunity identification phase of the entrepreneurial process. I decided to include the growth or scaling opportunity identification situations in this study and not merely those during the start-up phase. Intuition may also play an important role in decision-making regarding most other aspects of entrepreneurial activity including staff and product related decisions. Determining the marketability of a product or service and decisions about acquisitions, sell-offs, lay-offs and investments may be included in the decisions which are made based on “gut feelings” (La Pira, 2011).

Research conducted by Kickul et al. (2009) found that those entrepreneurs who displayed more confidence in their ability to recognise opportunities than in their capability to manage resources in the business preferred an intuitive style of thinking. On the other hand, those with a predominantly analytical, cognitive style were less confident about their ability to recognise opportunities but more confident in their capability to manage the resources in the business. While the prefrontal cortices of novices may be flooded with new information pertaining to the situation at hand experts possess larger mental databases from which to draw during decision-making as compared to novices. The experts are able to see the bigger picture as a result of the higher level of integration of the knowledge in these databases. Novices, on the other hand, tend to focus on the specific issues and they do not always see situations in context (Dew et al., 2009). Entrepreneurs may not always have clear cognition of what they believe but they do have an intuitive sense (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). Thus, entrepreneurs are able to tell you what they think but not always why they think it.

Let us now consider the decision-making of the participants in order to explore the styles of decision-making they preferred.
Albert was a prime example of a predominantly analytical thinker. Unfortunately, however, he preferred to focus on the details that he was comfortable managing, for example, work schedules, and he ignored those issues with which he was less comfortable, for example, clients defaulting on payment. He tended to procrastinated in the hope that these issues would be resolved by some external agent and he neglected to stand back from time to time in order to see the bigger picture. His lack of experience in business and the fact that he did not have a mentor meant that there were no built-in checks and balances to warn him when he made the wrong decisions. Although he thought he had considered all his options before making major decisions, during our interviews he realised that this was, in fact, not the case.

Allon was an intuitive thinker who had learnt to engage in analytical thinking where and when necessary. His decision-making had improved dramatically with the increasing complexity and accuracy of his mental models since the days of the New York Sausage Factory. At the time of the study he was putting systems in place to help him stay focused during decision-making and he had initiated a decision-making protocol at Raizcorp. When he had started out his decision-making had been fraught with biases which had not supported accurate decision-making but he had since learnt to manage these successfully.

Dianne used intuition during decision-making but she did not have the expert mental models necessary to support the level of pattern recognition that successful decision-making requires. She was also a procrastinator and often vacillated for an extended period between yes and no until she was pushed to make a decision. This is contrary to entrepreneurial decision-making which tends to be a quick process (Bygrave, 2003).

Procrastination had definitely adversely affected the businesses of Dianne and Albert.

Lily was a predominantly analytical thinker and appeared to manage her resources well although she did not always see the bigger picture. She felt safe when her decisions involved few variables and no uncertainties. She admitted to refusing clients merely because she did not trust them. However, these people
had then become loyal clients at other catteries without a single one defaulting on payment. Her judgement of these potential clients had stemmed from her suspicion of people and her fear of having cats dumped at her facility. This, in turn, had led to a loss of income.

The intuition she had used in these decisions had not been based on non-verbal signals which were indicative of dubious intentions on the part of the clients but on her own mental model that people who wanted extended periods of accommodation for their cats and moved house were not to be trusted. However, this approach did not support accurate risk evaluation.

**Natasha**’s spontaneous and jovial way of working with people had stood her in good stead in her business. In view of the fact that she had spent most of her working life in the hospitality industry she had expert mental models of every aspect of the business. Her decision-making was primarily intuitive. She had learnt many business lessons and had arrived at this point where her decisions were often correct.

**Neill** was a dreamer who preferred intuitive decision-making although he had admitted that his intuition had been significantly better in his property rental business as compared to that in HR/IR. His emotional engagement in situations sometimes caused him to ignore the little voice within (intuition).

**Tessa** was a predominantly intuitive thinker. She had expert mental models to support her decision-making. It was impossible for her to explain to me how she “knew” what would be the trend in the following year when she selected her product ranges. However, she had admitted that her awareness of world issues may have sensitised her to relevant concepts. She regarded intuition as tapping “into universal energy”.

In order to cope with her tendency to make careless mistakes at school **Suzette** had taught herself to alternate between “zooming-out” in order to see the bigger picture and “zooming-in” in order to focus on the detail during problem solving. Once she had realised that problem solving is merely a series of decision-making situations she had extrapolated this method to decision-making in general. Thus, she moved between intuitive and rational thinking when making decisions. She
also used breath control to increase self-awareness. However, this strategy was necessary only during major decision-making in completely novel situations such as acting on a new opportunity. When making decisions that were not novel the process was an automatic, simplified version of the above.
Table 5.2: Thinking style preference, thinking style utilised and success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Intuitive (I)</th>
<th>Analytical (A)</th>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Level of Expertise</th>
<th>Opportunist (O)/Manager (M)</th>
<th>Indication of success achieved in this business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Business was unsustainable although potentially viable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Business was unsustainable until it restarted under mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon Raizcorp</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Business had taken time to take off, but had become an extremely successful international business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Business did not get off the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Potentially sustainable lifestyle business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Extremely successful international business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill AFC</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Business had got off the ground but was financially unsustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill IR</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Successful when working as a sub-contractor in association with successful businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill Property</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette Ballet</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Unsustainable as a result of inexperience and also the lack of a support structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette School</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette P Place</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Extremely successful lifestyle business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Extremely successful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

155 New York Sausage Factory
156 Purrfect Place
Natasha and Allon had not verbalise that they combined intuitive and rational thinking processes but, during the time I spent with them, it had become clear that this was they did. Whereas Dianne’s had intuition caused the demise of her business Tessa’s intuition had made her a trendsetter.\(^{157}\)

Kickul et al. (2009) suggest that researchers should explore the relationship between thinking style preference and actual success. This relationship in the context of the participants is presented in Table 5.2.

Got it!

There was no clear indication from the accounts of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study that preferring one style of thinking over another had resulted in success. However, the participants who had used both rational and intuitive decision-making and who had possessed a medium to high level of expertise in business had been more successful as compared to the others. It seems that stimuli from the environment could be pattern matched more easily with information stored in the activated schema by the more successful entrepreneurs.

Tessa was an anomaly as she had achieved success by using mainly intuitive decision-making. However, this may possibly have been a result of the fact that her business field demanded both high levels of creativity and expertise in the industry, both of which she possessed. On the other hand, while Lily’s use of intuition had been fraught with mistakes, she had also employed rational decision-making. It would, thus, appear that the most important factor here is expertise in business to support the use of intuition.

Experience reflects learning. When we have learnt the proverbial “tricks of the trade” we are perceived by others as possessing experience in that trade. Learning plays a fundamental role in the process of becoming an entrepreneur. In

\(^{157}\) It was this type of discrepancy that triggered this research. It became very clear to me during this study that decision-making is a very complex process in which multiple factors come into play and, in the context of entrepreneurship, with an interdependent network of knowledge concepts that support entrepreneurial activity (Chapter 6).
the following section I explore how entrepreneurs learn and the factors which motivate them to learn.

5.5 LEARNING

By watching the adult lions – the experts – hunt, the cubs learn vicariously how to hunt themselves. By the time they are teenagers they practise their hunting skills on birds until they are old enough to join the adults when they hunt real prey. It takes many hours of practice to learn to hunt and the young lions often make mistakes – charging too soon or venturing upwind in their excitement and, hence, alerting the potential prey to their presence and losing their opportunity to make a kill. It is the same in business with individuals becoming experts after many hours in the business and learning from the mistakes they have made.

Learning is not unique to humans. I remember a scene that I witnessed many years ago in the south of Botswana. It was early afternoon and a pride of lions was asleep under a huge Mashatu tree. A few metres from the sleeping adults, five young cubs were playing. Their attention was never focused on one object for long. Close by a crested francolin couple was scratching in the sand for seeds and insects but the cubs soon charged at them and they flew away with a loud chirrrrr-chirrr-chirrr. One of the cubs had seen his mother pull down many an impala and even bigger game and he put in a concerted effort to catch the one francolin. However, the birds landed unharmed in a nearby thorn bush.

Another cub had been completely focused on a tortoise she had found under a small shrub. She rolled it over and over in an effort to get to the soft flesh but without any success. When the other cubs approached her she picked the tortoise up in her mouth and ran a few yards to the east. Then she dropped the tortoise again and her game with the tortoise resumed for a short while. When she saw the other cubs running after a grasshopper that was desperately trying to escape from the cubs she joined them. At least with the grasshopper there was a chance of success. The grasshopper did not survive and eventually the cubs joined the adults in the shade to rest. Later that afternoon they would have the opportunity to watch an experienced pride in action and learn from the pride.
As we shall see a little later it would appear that some entrepreneurs also learn much from watching their parents.

Learning may be defined as “knowledge acquisition through cognitive processing of information. It is a continuous process and independent of enforcement” (Cope & Watts, 2000, p. 105). Cope & Watts (2000, p. 106) identify the following three types of learning:

(i) Level 1 learning – The assimilation of factual information that has an immediate utility but no long-term impact and is applicable to routine tasks. It does not signify personal development. Every one of the participants in this study had done level 1 learnings158.

(ii) Level 2 learning – The assimilation of something in one situation that may be used in other situations. Although the individual’s perception has changed it is still situation specific.

(iii) Level 3 learning – The stimulation of fundamental change, encouraging the individual to reflect on and question not only his/her established ways of doing things but also the underlying values and perceptions that drive his/her behaviour. This learning is not situation specific and it impacts on the individual’s self-awareness and personal understanding on a deeper level159.

Although learning may be an informal and unconscious process, the use of critically reflection may lead to level 3 learning (Cope & Watts, 2000).

Let us now consider the different ways in which entrepreneurs learn.

5.5.1 Entrepreneurial Learning

*Entrepreneurial learning* is the process by which people acquire new knowledge from direct experience and from observing the behaviours, actions, and consequences of others; assimilate new knowledge using heuristics to confront discrepancies that are common with information acquired in uncertain contexts;

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158 This is similar to the single-loop learning of Argyris and Schon (1978, as cited in Cope & Watts, 2000, p. 105).
159 This is similar to the double-loop learning of Argyris and Schon (1978) as cited in Cope & Watts (2000, p. 106).
and organize assimilated knowledge by linking it with pre-existing structures (Holcomb, Ireland, Holmes & Hitt, 2009, p. 168).

However, entrepreneurial learning is not only about acquiring new knowledge and assimilating it with prior knowledge. The sense-making and deeper understanding of this knowledge must become visible if the entrepreneur’s actions are to lead to success in his/her entrepreneurial ventures. Thus, the learning, knowing, acting and sense-making are interconnected (Rae, 2000).

However, the entrepreneur often has to deal with incomplete and complex information under uncertain circumstances and the sense-making and learning process is much more complex than the diagram presented in Figure 5.1 in Section 0 suggests. Even experienced entrepreneurs, let alone novices, do not always have exact scripts to follow (Baron, 1998; Mitchell et al., 2000).

Pittaway and Cope (2007) mention that there are researchers who maintain that entrepreneurial learning refers only to the learning which is experienced during the venture start-up phase. In view of the fact that we are interested in the mental models of entrepreneurs, how these may have changed over time and whether or not these mental models support decision-making for venture growth, the focus of this study will be on the entrepreneurs and how they learn, no matter what stage they are at the entrepreneurial process.

How entrepreneurs learn is important because "it is through learning that entrepreneurs develop and grow" (Cope, 2005, p. 379). It would appear from the literature that there are two predominant types of entrepreneurial learning, namely, vicarious learning and experiential learning (Holcomb et al., 2009). There is evidence that entrepreneurs do not learn successfully from books alone (Krueger, 2009).

5.5.1.1 Vicarious learning
Vicarious learning takes place when a person consciously or – as is often the case when children learn from their parents – unconsciously pays attention to another person’s behaviour or actions (Holcomb et al., 2009). However, vicarious learning

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160 Figure 5.1 in Section 5.2 presents the basic outline of the learning process.
is far more complex than mere imitation (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001). In vicarious learning the learner retains the information which has been learnt, assimilating and organising it in his/her memory as a template for evaluating his/her behaviour. This may become the basis for subsequent action in unfamiliar situations (Holcomb et al., 2009). Bandura (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001) suggests that a person’s behaviour is influenced by the mental images of past experiences. Hence, our mental models reflect our past experience (Senge et al., 2008).

People assimilate and organise knowledge in distinctly different ways (Allinson & Hayes, 1996; Kolb, 1984). There has been a suggestion that people use heuristics to give meaning to newly acquired knowledge. By using heuristics during learning – absorbing that which is available, representative and anchoring – in an effort to ensure that information is not lost, it may be that entrepreneurs are weakening the learning process (Holcomb et al., 2009). Holcomb et al. (2009) suggest that heuristics affect learning in much the same way as they affect decision-making. Learning would depend on the awareness of the individual and the quality of the reflective sense-making that was employed by the specific individual involved during the learning process.

Vicarious learning may open the learner up to the availability heuristic. The more prominent the relationship between the vicarious learner and the person from whom the behaviour or thought pattern is learnt, the more available the learning will be to the learner. When the individual is exposed to a situation of possible learning and the vicariously accumulated knowledge serves as prior learning to which the new learning attaches, the new information may be easier to learn because of the high availability of the prior learning.

Vicarious learning is also open to the representativeness bias. In such a case the source of prior learning, for example, the father, may be a specific person who had his/her own context and who may have had an own set of heuristics. These would then have become embedded in the learning process. It is, thus, essential that the entrepreneur such learning through his/her own experience.
5.5.1.2 Experiential learning

It’s fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure.

(Bill Gates)

The fact that it would appear that serial entrepreneurs improve as they start up a second or third business highlights the role of experiential learning (Lamont, 1972). This, in turn, suggests that the entrepreneur has learnt through the experience of starting up the first business. It seems from the literature that much of entrepreneurial learning is experiential in nature and takes place within the entrepreneurial context (Deakins & Freel, 1998; Minniti & Bygrave, 2001; Sarasvathy, 2001; Sullivan, 2000; Douglas, 2009; Krueger, 2009; Dew et al., 2009). Thus, entrepreneurial learning from past experiences is of great importance in increasing our understanding of entrepreneurial learning per se. However, it is not about the experience alone but also how the entrepreneurs make sense of their experiences in developing expert mental models on business creation.

Researchers have various perspectives on the experiential learning process, including how to recognise and act on opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), how to overcome the initial challenges (Shepherd, Douglas, & Shanley, 2000) and the importance of transforming experience into knowledge (Politis, 2005). All of these learning triggers are based on outcomes feedback.

Haynie and Shepherd (2007) discuss the advantages of cognitive feedback compared to outcomes-based feedback. They are of the opinion that people who understand the “How?” and the “Why?” of a decision and its desired outcome are in a better position to learn from the process than would otherwise have been the case. “Reinforcing feedback processes are the engines of growth” (Senge, 1990, p. 79). An important component of becoming successful is cognitive adaptability – the ability to evolve or learn effectively and appropriately from given feedback (Haynie & Shepherd, 2007).

Experiential learning may be the result of simply going through the experience but it may also be triggered by changes, challenges and failures along the way. There is a learning process embedded in acting on the perception of change. The brain learns through experience and mistakes while becoming an expert usually takes
time and practice. Lehrer (2009, p. 237) suggests “[b]ecome students of errors.” The anterior cingulate cortex in the brain plays an important part in our detecting errors and making sense of our mistakes (Lehrer, 2009). Novices have yet to build up veridical or realistic industry specific models of causal patterns and interacting factors through experience en route to their becoming experts. However, evolutionary leaning increases their ability to handle both change and greater complexity and this, in turn, leads to more realistic schemata and greater success in projecting the future. Nevertheless, in order to do this they require a growth mindset and a willingness to make mistakes and fail (Dweck, 2006).

People with a growth mindset believe that people are able to change and grow through experience and, therefore, they are more open to failure than would otherwise have the case (Dweck, 2006). In addition, they have the ability to turn setbacks into future successes – building up perseverance and resilience in the process and thriving even in the face of adversity (Markman, Baron, & Balkin, 2005). On the other hand, people with a fixed mindset believe that the abilities they have are immutable. It is difficult for these individuals to admit to and correct their deficiencies. They prefer not to take risks to ensure they do not fail as they fear that failure indicates limitations in their abilities. According to Dweck (2006, p. 11), people with growth mindsets are usually “amazingly accurate” in their assessment of their own abilities and limitations and often more so than people with a fixed mindset. Thus, it would appear that an openness to learn from your mistakes removes the anxiety about your own abilities and helps you make more accurate judgments. A growth mindset is, therefore, important for entrepreneurs who aspire to becoming experts.

In essence growth is about change. “[M]anaging the growth of a small business also proves to be a difficult and traumatic process, with entrepreneurs often having to learn harsh and expensive lessons as their ventures move through the business life-cycles” (Cope & Watts, 2000, p. 116). Simon (1992) regards the human mind, which is designed to store new knowledge and skills, as an adaptive system that chooses behaviour that is appropriate to the context and which supports the goals of the individual concerned. As entrepreneurs learn through their mistakes they become better equipped for their role – becoming through learning. However, not
all people learn equally fast from the mistakes they make and not even everybody is prepared to place themselves in a position where they may make mistakes.

If the entrepreneur is not willing to learn and self-correct it is difficult for the business the entrepreneur is operating to thrive (Dweck, 2006). The knowledge gained from studying failures assists with making sense of success (Gartner, Carter, & Reynolds, 2010). “Failure to learn from these entrepreneurial experiments will almost certainly prevent the entrepreneurs from ever creating opportunities, unless they are lucky” (Alvarez et al., 2010, p. 30). This viewpoint is supported by both Sitkin (1992, p. 231), who argues that “failure is an essential prerequisite for learning and adaptation” and by Lehrer (2009, p. 237) who states that “the brain always learns the same way, accumulating wisdom through error”.

On the basis of neuroscience Lehrer (2009, p. 51) suggests that if “the brain is denied the emotional sting of losing, it never figures out how to win”. This may, in turn, imply that, when an individual does not experience and acknowledge the negative emotional impact of failure, the individual may be denying his/her brain the opportunity to learn. Based on an interpretative phenomenological research study using eight entrepreneurs as participants Cope (2011) came to the conclusion that venture failure is a very real thread in entrepreneurial life. He constructed a learning framework for venture failure and incorporated the impact of failure on various aspects of the entrepreneur’s life (entrepreneurial, emotional, financial, professional, physical and social), the grief recovery time which may include a rationalisation of the failure, the learning from the experience (generative, double-loop and transformative) and the outcomes of the learning process. Cope’s (2011) conclusion emphasises the need to learn from one’s mistakes to avoid repeating them.

Although Shepherd, Covin and Kuratko (2009) remind us that learning after a failure takes time not every start-up entrepreneur learns the lessons which are necessary to support his/her next venture. It would appear that there is an important step between knowing and learning during the sense-making and the change in behaviour. It is only when entrepreneurs assume the responsibility for where they are going that they will develop the motivation to enact their learning. This motivation may differ from individual to individual and some entrepreneurs
may require a mentor to challenge their mindsets for the learning to take place and for it to become evident in their actions.

5.5.2 Motivation for learning

According to Carsrud, Brännback, Elfving, and Brandt (2009), there is every likelihood that entrepreneurs possess the same motivations as other people but it is the way in which they apply these motivations that will determine their success or lack thereof in their business ventures. There are two broad types of motivational theories (Carsrud, et al., 2009, p. 144):

(i) Drive theories suggest that an internal stimulus or push and a need on the part of the individual to reduce tension serve as the motivation to act. There is, therefore, personal interest in the process while the need for self-development and self-actualisation may play an important role in the motivation.

(ii) Incentive theories are based on the motivational pull of external incentives and rewards.

Quoting the work of Cohen and Zimbardo (1969), Carsrud et al. (2009, p. 145) discuss the roles of cognitive dissonance and risk avoidance as strong motivators for learning. They suggest that “entrepreneurs will do anything” to avoid the failure of their ventures including persisting long after any non-entrepreneur would have given up. The possibility of failure, which is ever-present in entrepreneurship and especially during the start-up phase, often causes cognitive dissonance and it is highly likely that entrepreneurs possess the ability to reduce this dissonance. However, according to Carsrud et al. (2009) this has not been studied.

We do, nevertheless, know that learning serves to refine a person’s mental models of a situation and that expert mental models may be built over time.

5.5.3 Learning and mental models

Critical reflection and sense-making support learning. This is highlighted by the statement of Lehrer (2009, p. 231) that “introspection is the best predictor of good judgment”. During this reflection process it is essential that the individual is present in the moment and with self-awareness. The individual must also be
aware of the emotions and mindsets that may be clouding his/her judgement and be able to explore the thinking behind the thoughts.

Learning takes place in incremental steps which connect the new learning to prior knowledge (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001), hence constructing and modifying one’s mental models.

Constructing expert mental models is an ongoing process. As individuals make sense of the uncertain and changing business environment it is essential that their mental models continue to evolve so that they remain relevant. It is imperative that the mental models of those individuals who are operating in a complex environment are tightly coupled across domains as this well assist in learning by aiding the individual to see connections between seemingly independent occurrences (Weick & Roberts, 1993). The ability to see these links may enhance learning as what is being sensed makes more sense than would otherwise have been the case. The better the entrepreneur understands a situation, the more accurate his/her judgement becomes in that specific or similar types of situations as he/she has a better understanding of the impact of these occurrences than he/she may otherwise have had.

Mental models which are formed as a result of repetitive exposure to similar events increase the likelihood that the individual, who has learnt from these events, will rate the occurrence of such types of events as more probable than would otherwise have been the case (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001; Holcomb et al., 2009;). Hence, the learning from these events becomes more available to the individual. Growing a business involves difficult and often expensive lessons. However, support for the entrepreneurs during these stages of business development in the form of a mentorship programme may mean the difference between success or failure (Cope & Watts, 2000). A mentor can be of immense value to the inexperienced entrepreneur during reflection and sense-making sessions.

The role of a long-term mentor\textsuperscript{161} is to \textit{be available} to the entrepreneur during the critical incidents of starting up and growing a business so that the entrepreneur

\textsuperscript{161} Please see Section 6.3.2
feels supported and understood. The mentor assists the entrepreneur in critical reflective learning and helps the entrepreneur to understand how experiences of the past inform the present and also how to use this understanding for strategic and development planning to ensure that the entrepreneur does not repeat the mistakes of the past.

**Digging**

In the first nine years after the failure of his first business **Albert** apparently did not learn lessons from this failure and it was only during our meeting in 2011 that he reflected on the failure of his business. Despite the realisation that he should have conducted more research into how to run a business before he took over the ACC, he had not applied the learning which should have resulted from his reflecting on the failure of his first business when he started his second business. Thus, his learning did not result in a change in behaviour while the fact that he had not made sense of his experience at the ACC had limited his learning from the experience. His vicarious learning did not benefit his business endeavour.

Both a personal calling and moral obligation are important to Albert. However, at the ACC money had been his prime motivator and this, in turn, was foreign to him. His lack of internal motivation at the ACC may have contributed to the failure of that business.

**Allon** had vicariously learnt more in the umbrella factory of his parents than he initially realised. With the help of his mentor he had also learnt from the mistakes he had made at the NYSF and Bandit and he was still actively learning from every mistake he made. Allon used reflective sense-making and was focused, intrinsically motivated and committed to learning from his mistakes and failures. He had shown great tenacity and proactively constructed expert mental models that were interconnected. Finally, he had the ability to make sense of the complex situations in which he often found himself as a business accelerator.

**Dianne** had not had the benefit of learning vicariously from a successful entrepreneur and she had also not made the necessary sense of her business experiences to learn enough to make decisions that supported business growth.
Instead of learning from her mistakes she became easily discouraged by the slightest indication of failure. In addition, she did not show tenacity and she tended to lose her focus quickly.

Although Lily had not had the opportunity to learn about starting up and growing an own business she had learnt both integrity and a work ethic vicariously from her parents. She had soon learnt most of what she needed to know through the mentorship of a group of conscientious cat hotel owners and through the experience of running her own cat hotel. Even if Lily was a little slow in learning from her own mistakes she did eventually learn from them. She showed a fair amount of tenacity.

Natasha had learnt vicariously from a young age in her father’s restaurants. She had also learnt through experience by working in her father’s and her own restaurants and at the head office of franchisors. She had, thus, developed expert mental models of every aspect in the industry. In addition, she had learnt quickly from experience, for example, she had learnt that she did not enjoy the fast food industry, and from mistakes she had made. She had assimilated this learning without hesitation. Her need for achievement, her tenacity and the fact that she took responsibility for both her successes and her failures had probably played a strong motivational role in her being proactive in transforming her learning into tangible outcomes.

Neill had not learnt entrepreneurship vicariously although he enjoyed listening to the stories of successful entrepreneurs and had learnt lessons from their experiences. In his IR consultancy and rental properties business he had learnt many lessons as part of the experience. Even in the businesses he had had and that had been short-lived he had learnt from his mistakes although he had often needed a mentor to assist him in the process. Neill had sometimes repeated mistakes before he had learnt from them and changed his modus operandi. In addition, he was tenacious.

Tessa had grown up in a family who was in the textile industry and had learnt vicariously from a young age – not merely about fashion trends and textiles but also about business. She had also learnt from her experience of working in the
industry and from the mistakes she had made along the way. She was not scared to make mistakes, had great awareness and often learnt through exploration.

From a very young age Suzette had been exposed to her mother starting-up and running small businesses. Her mother’s work ethic, service delivery, time management and the mindset that “anything is possible” had rubbed off on her. From her experience with her ballet school she had learnt that, although it is important to have a passion for what you do, passion is not enough. She had also learnt the importance of the right timing and the value of a sound and reliable support structure. Like Natasha and Allon Suzette had learnt that there are many sacrifices to be made when you run your own business and that not everybody would be prepared to support you in your decisions.

Table 5.3 presents the types of learning used by the participants and provides an indication of the extent (level) to which each type of learning was used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vicarious learning</th>
<th>Experiential learning</th>
<th>Learnt from mistakes and failures</th>
<th>Learning became visible in actions</th>
<th>Showed tenacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Allon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tessa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Tessa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Suzette</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Lily</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Albert</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td>Dianne</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 indicates the levels on which the participants reflected critically, recognised patterns, made sense of their experiences and were self-aware.
Table 5.4: Exploring the critical reflection, pattern recognition, self-awareness and sense-making demonstrated by the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Critical reflection</th>
<th>Pattern recognition</th>
<th>Sense-making</th>
<th>Self-awareness</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Allon</td>
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<td>Albert</td>
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Got it!

It would appear from the results presented in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 that extensive business experience, honest critical reflection, acute self-awareness, sense-making and the willingness to learn from mistakes play an important role in successful entrepreneurship. The eight entrepreneurs participating in the study had learnt:

(i) vicariously from their entrepreneurial parents if they came from an entrepreneurial family.

(ii) vicariously from their parents to develop mindsets or behaviours such as a work ethic that supports entrepreneurial endeavours. This had happened even if their parents were not entrepreneurs. However, vicarious learning is beneficial to entrepreneurs only to the degree that it is relevant to the situation.

(iii) vicariously from other entrepreneurs and by listening to the life histories of successful entrepreneurs.

(iv) experientially in their own businesses or while working in the businesses of other entrepreneurs.

(v) explorationally and
(vi) assisted by a mentor.

Sense-making contributes to learning and, hence, it had contributed to the success of those participants who had practised it. Allon, Natasha and Suzette had invested time in honest critical reflection and sense-making and had learnt from their mistakes and experiences. On the other hand, Lily had not always been completely honest with herself and, therefore, her learning had sometimes taken a little longer as compared to that of Allon, Natasha and Suzette.

The data collected from the participants supported the findings of Dhliwayo and Van Vuuren (2007) that successful entrepreneurs perceive challenges as learning opportunities for developing creative strategies to address challenges. The majority of the participants had learnt much during the challenging times they had experienced. Allon, Natasha, Neill, Tessa and Suzette had changed their perceptions and behaviour as their expertise increased but, on the other hand, challenging times had led to the realisation on the part of Albert, Dianne and Lily that they were not entrepreneurial. Albert and Dianne had not taken responsibility for their decisions and actions and, in fact, they did not believe that they had had any control over the circumstances that they felt had contributed to their lack of success. It may be that the differences in learning depended on the self-awareness of the entrepreneur concerned.

It is essential, however, that the evolving knowledge and understanding of the situation generate action that reflects the learning if the entrepreneur is to benefit from the learning. This was not, however, necessarily true of all the participants. Despite the fact that all the participants possessed the cognitive ability to learn it was their willingness to learn that made the difference between their learning from their mistakes or their continuing to repeat them. Experience did not translate into expertise for all the participating entrepreneurs. It does, nevertheless, require courage to change one’s actions because changing one’s actions often means that one ventures into new, uncertain territory. Some of the participants had been prepared to do this while others had resisted doing so.

It would appear that critical reflection and sense-making are crucial to the success of a business provided that the entrepreneur is honest with him/herself and is
willing to take responsibility for his/role in the process. It also seems that a growth mindset and, thus, the willingness to learn from one’s mistakes and failures play an important role in the eventual success of an entrepreneurial business.

These mental models influence the decisions which entrepreneurs make. Entrepreneurs often have to make important decisions under uncertain conditions and without the benefit of a solid support structure such as elaborate policies to guide them or a board of directors to advise them. An additional complication is that entrepreneurs often find themselves in an emerging industry in which little market related information is readily available to assist them in their decision-making (La Pira, 2011). It is for this reason that entrepreneurs, sometimes unknowingly, appear to prefer to use heuristics during decision-making (Sarasvathy, Simon, & Lave, 1998; Keh, Foo, & Lim, 2002; Baron, 2004). Heuristics and biases will be discussed next.

5.6 HEURISTICS AND BIASES

The ability to make accurate decisions about the feasibility and growth potential of a venture is so crucial in entrepreneurial success that it is imperative that we consider the heuristics and biases that influence such decision-making. Whether or not we believe that intuition “is nothing more and nothing less than pattern recognition” (Simon, 1992, p. 155) or that “these holistic thought processes potentially engage the thinker beyond the explicate order” (Talbot, 1991, p. 10), it does seem that our intuition improves if we enact opportunities and reflect critically on and make sense of mistakes we make to ensure that we learn from such mistakes (Weick, 2001).

Heuristics, also referred to as cognitive shortcuts (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001), are “simplifying strategies that individuals use to make decisions, especially under uncertain and complex conditions” (Busenitz & Barney, 1997, p. 12). In the entrepreneurial context heuristics provide an automatic organising strategy for using information in judgement and decision-making (Baltes, Glück, & Kunzmann, 2002) and allow for less effortful information processing as compared to the information processing that involves the following of systematic analytical rules by the entrepreneur (Shah & Oppenheimer, 2008). This, in turn, speeds up the
process of decision-making (Kahneman & Frederick, 2001; Baron & Ward, 2004) and also sense-making in complex situations (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). Biases are heuristics with a negative connotation (Gustafsson, 2009, p. 294).

Tversky and Kahneman (1974) introduced the notion of heuristics and biases. There is reason to believe that entrepreneurs favour heuristic thinking (Baron, 2004; Busenitz & Barney, 1997) and make extensive use of it (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). Frese (2012) indicates that entrepreneurs have to be innovative opportunists, strategists, marketing gurus and technicians all at the same time and that heuristics assist them in addressing the multiple challenges that they face. Shah and Oppenheimer (2008, p. 209) propose the following five principles for effort reduction when heuristics are used during decision-making: (i) the examination of fewer cues, (ii) reduction in the difficulty of storing and retrieving cues, (iii) simplification of the weighting of different cues, (iv) integration of less information and (v) the examination of fewer alternatives.

Heuristic decision-making is based on pattern recognition (Simon, 1992) with the mind matching the information pertaining to the current situation to that saved in the mental models of the individual. In an attempt to make sense of new or unfamiliar situations they are compared to familiar situations, experiences and concepts (Krueger & Day, 2010). The individual intuitively looks for cues to match and find a link between the old and the new knowledge. In view of the fact that heuristics influence the way in which we perceive situations, the way in which entrepreneurs use heuristics may play a significant role in the way in which they perceive and, hence, deal with overcoming risk, uncertainty and complexity (Busenitz & Barney, 1997; Bakker et al., 2007). Thus, entrepreneurs influence the level of success they enjoy by the way in which they engage and manage heuristics.

According to Baron (2004), although entrepreneurs tend to favour heuristic thinking, it is important that they also engage in a careful analysis of situations. He further suggests that the less successful entrepreneurs may not be as adept in shifting between heuristics and analysis as compared to the more successful entrepreneurs.
There are many heuristics mentioned in the literature. However, I have decided to discuss only those that I found to be prevalent among the participants in this study. These include: (i) anchoring and adjustment, (ii) availability, (iii) counterfactual thinking, (iv) escalation of commitment, (v) optimistic, negativity and affect infusion, (vi) planning fallacy, (vii) representativeness, (viii) illusion of control, and (ix) self-serving or self-justification.

5.6.1 Anchoring or adjustment

This heuristic involves “starting from an initial value that is adjusted to yield the final answer” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974, p. 1128). The individual will establish an initial value – the anchor – and will make adjustments to this value as he/she acquires more information which is relevant to the situation. This heuristic is often used in risk and uncertainty estimates where prior exposure to similar situations may lead to more reliable estimates (Wright & Anderson, 1989).

The uncertainty and complexity involved in entrepreneurial settings make this a challenging heuristic for novice entrepreneurs who usually possess little prior knowledge with which to determine the anchor. In the main, it would appear that entrepreneurs tend to overestimate the probability of success and underestimate the probability of failure and, thus, their loading of the adjustments to the anchor tends to the optimistic side (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). When this bias is present in conjunction with the planning fallacy bias – as in Neill’s case – it may lead to serious financial challenges.

Let us now examine how the eight entrepreneurs applied heuristics.

Digging

Albert misjudged the number of paying clients necessary to ensure the financial success of ACC. He set the anchor too low but when he realised this, he did not have the courage to make the required adjustments to secure the business financially.

He had a very negative mindset with regard to money and business owners and believed that entrepreneurs are concerned only about making money. In view of
the fact that he had always received a salary at the end of the month he did not see either the need for or the positive impact of money on the profitability and, thus, the sustainability of a business. This mindset that entrepreneurs are greedy and money is the root of most evil had underpinned in his decision-making on issues.

When Allon had started the NYSF his adjustments to the anchor of expected sales were extremely unrealistic and, in an attempt to address this, he had made decisions that had resulted in more work but without a sufficient increase in profit to make the business sustainable. During his time at Bandit, the vehicle security company, he had gained a better understanding of finance and this had, in turn, improved his ability to set realistic anchors. Working with the day-to-day financial management of the company over an extended period had enabled him to build expert mental maps in this area and this had, in turn, improved the accuracy of his decisions on an anchor when required.

Dianne had been disappointed with the number of people who had responded to the email marketing of her workshops. As a complete novice with very little prior knowledge she had based her anchor on hope. This, in turn, had resulted in a completely overoptimistic expectation of the numbers of people who would respond to her emails. Her ability to choose an anchor did not improve during the duration of the study.

Lily had based her estimate of her expected turnover on information she had received from established cat hotel owners and, thus, on reliable, expert sources of information. Subsequently she had had to lower her estimate as the established cat hotels from which she had gleaned her information had already had a strong presence in the market, sound reputations and loyal client bases – all of which she had still to establish.

Despite the estimated figures which Suzette had given her Lily had completely underestimated the building costs of her cat hotel while she had overestimated the amount she would save by employing her husband to build the cat hotel.

During difficult financial times Lily had decided to lower the prices of her cat accommodation. However, this had placed pressure on her cash flow, especially
during the winter months, as she had also underestimated the cost of heating her south-facing\textsuperscript{162} cat hotel. Nevertheless, all of these challenges had provided Lily with learning opportunities.

By the time Natasha had opened tashas she had in-depth knowledge of the industry which she had accumulated over many years of working in the restaurant industry and on which to base her anchors. This rich source of relevant prior knowledge had minimised the uncertainty involved in establishing anchor values in her business. However, from the queues waiting outside tashas restaurants it was clearly evident that there were not enough tables during peak times and that Natasha had underestimated the demand. Nevertheless, she was used to queuing customers from her time at Fishmonger and she knew it projected an image of desirability. She also knew how to balance the income in peak times with the lowered turnover in off-peak times to cover the cost per square metre of floor space in a prime position. She also managed to cash in on the waiting customers by providing a beautiful lounge area for pre-meal drinks.

Neill had started each of his businesses in a new field. Thus, every time he had set new anchors these had been based on minimal prior information and, thus, were often far off target. His rental properties were the exception as he had had prior experience as an estate agent. These rental properties and his IR practice, where he worked in association with well-established businesses, were also his two most profitable businesses ever.

Tessa’s business was based on the sale of luxury items in terms of which the customer pays for an exclusive brand. In order to price each novel product she introduced, often from abroad, she had had to use her experience of the industry and her market to set the anchors. This was also true of her decisions on the number of each novel product she imported. The fact that her business depended on the novelty of products posed a constant challenge with some items selling out quickly while others went on half-price sales after a few months. However, Tessa was not risk averse and, consequently, she had coped well with the ambiguity of this process.

\textsuperscript{162} In the southern hemisphere the south facing aspect of a building usually receives little or no sun.
For **Suzette** determining the prices of her schools – ballet and other – was easy as she had had many years of experience teaching extra lessons. However, when she decided to build a cat hotel she was in new territory. Her estimate of the construction cost of the buildings proved to be a quarter of the actual amount only. Consequently, she had had to borrow half of the money required against the bond on her house to pay for the building costs. However, while this may be seen by some as increasing the risk, it soon proved to have been a calculated risk as she had managed to pay back the bond within eighteen months of start-up.

Setting the price structure for Purrfect Place (PP) was a mixture of intuition and a once-off check against the price structure of one other cat hotel which belonged to her short term business mentor. The fact that she had previously used the services of catteries for her own cats during December holidays provided her with enough prior information to set a suitable price structure for PP. Other than the usual annual inflation-based price adjustment she has not had to adjust the PP prices once in the past thirteen years.

**Got it!**

It is important to make informed estimates when deciding on an anchor and, if necessary, it is as important to adjust that value in the right direction as soon as possible. Although intuition may play a significant role in the choice of the anchor, rational thinking is also important when that value is adjusted to ensure sustainability.

### 5.6.2 Availability or accessibility

Availability or accessibility is a common heuristic used by entrepreneurs (Douglas, 2009). This cognitive heuristic is influenced by recent or easily recallable information, assumptions about other people or situations or judgements “anchored according to proximity” (Chell, 2008, p. 148). It enables individuals to access current, easily accessible or chronic mental models.
It appears that the availability heuristic plays an important role in the identification of opportunities (Gaglio & Winter, 2009). People “are likely to perceive that which they are predisposed to see” (Palich & Bagby, 1995, p. 428).

We will now examine how the participants in this study used the availability heuristic when dealing with challenges they faced. Did this heuristic either help or hinder their finding of solutions?

**Digging**

When Albert had used the availability heuristic to make decisions related to the quality of the lessons offered at the ACC it had had a positive outcome because his expert, subject-specific mental models had supported such decisions. However, his financial decisions were not successful as he had used his novice mental models on financial management. This shows that this heuristic may have either a negative or a positive impact depending on the quality of the mental models that support it.

More importantly, the financial stress Albert was going through when he bought the ACC was so extreme that it had impacted on his decision-making when clients defaulted on their accounts. When it had become crucial to increase the price of the service offered by ACC because of rising costs, his recent personal experience of financial hardship had triggered too much empathy in Albert. He concern for the financial impact of his increasing his prices on people’s lives overpowered his ability to increase the price and this, ultimately, had pushed his business so deep into the red that he had had to close it down. Clearly this heuristic may have a significant impact on the decision-making process of entrepreneurs.

Expert mental models or a good business mentor may have alerted Albert to the riskiness of his decisions and of the importance of finding alternative ways of dealing with the financial challenges he was facing but he had had neither. Such misjudgement is a common cause of the failure of a venture (Le Roux, Pretorius &

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163 Reaction to change and challenges in the business is dealt with in Section 6.2.8.
Every bad decision has a major impact on the success of a small business and especially incorrect pricing.

The availability heuristic had also caused Allon to make bad decisions when he started the NYSF. As a result of his prior negative experience – all his own doing – with a forty-something year old accountancy expert (his lecturer), Allon had not been open to the mentorship of Negative Ned; also a forty-something year old accountant. His past experience in this case had a significant impact on his decision-making.

Raizcorp was born when Allon realised the value of professional mentorship in his life as an entrepreneur. His positive experience with a mentor had made him aware of the opportunity available for him to be a mentor for other entrepreneurs.

Both these diverse influences stem from the availability heuristic. However, in the one case it had been an obstacle that Allon had had to overcome with the help of a mentor while, in the other case, by which time Allon had acquired greater expertise, it had played a positive role in the start up of a business that eventually grew into a big organisation.

Dianne’s “passions” had changed continuously over time and had been influenced by her recent experiences. This had caused her to continually change direction in business. Hence, this heuristic may cause confusion in one’s priorities and self-perception.

In early 2014 when her cat hotel was empty Lily had become extremely anxious and she had lowered her prices. Like Albert she had been overly sensitive to price as a result of her own recent financial stress. However, soon after lowering her prices she realised it was a bad decision and it was not generating more business. In addition, by giving her existing clients a discount, she had actually lowered her income in an already tight month. Once again this is a case where a lack of expert mental models had resulted in the availability heuristic having a negative impact on the decisions of the entrepreneur. Despite her three years’ experience in the business Lily had not gained sufficient expertise to manage this heuristic. Stress may also aggravate the impact of this heuristic.
**Natasha** starting Everest, a fast food outlet, in South Africa after she had seen a similar concept in Greece is another example of opportunity enactment as a result of the availability heuristic. In this case the heuristic played an important role in opportunity enactment.

When **Neill** lost his job at RB his negative experience in management made him determined that he did not want either to manage people or to be involved with company politics ever again. His loss in confidence caused him to reflect on his childhood experiences in woodwork – a time when he had felt extremely secure – and resulted in his starting AFC Creations. However, five years later, the memory of his negative experience at RB had faded and he started working as a human resource consultant in the corporate world. This is just one example of how Neill used the availability heuristic. As it had done in the case of Dianne, this heuristic also influenced his awareness of opportunity enactment, which is, starting a business after seeing someone else doing it.

**Tessa** had used triggers from the environment, often from a source unrelated to her business, when she had started a new trend.

**Suzette**’s decision to start Purrfect Place had been triggered when someone had casually mentioned the need for reliable catteries to her. Approximately ten years prior to that conversation she had dreamt of buying a cat hotel, but had not had the money to do it.

Got it!

The study showed that the availability heuristic had been common during the opportunity recognition phases in the businesses of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study and that it had played a role in subsequent decision-making situations while they were growing their businesses. While not a mental model, the availability heuristic draws on the mental models of the individual with the most recent or available mental models often being accessed during decision-making.
Information saved to memory during emotional situations – either positive or negative – may be evoked in similar emotional situations\(^\text{164}\). It was clear that the experience of financial pressure had had a major impact on the role played by the availability heuristic as regards the eight research participants.

The availability heuristic requires considerable self-awareness and also expertise on the part of the entrepreneur to ensure that the decisions triggered by this heuristic make business sense.

5.6.3 Counterfactual thinking

Counterfactual thinking is “thinking in a way that is contrary to existing facts” and “it is very useful for guiding educated guesses” (Gaglio, 2004, p. 539). As we saw in the study the accuracy of these educated guesses varies with the study showing that the participating entrepreneurs with expert mental models made more accurate guesses than the novice entrepreneurs.

The manner in which an entrepreneur engages in counterfactual thinking is important. Weick (2001, p. 25) is of the opinion that there is little advantage in “reflecting on the advantage of the rejected alternatives or disadvantages of the chosen alternative”. The questions arise as to whether this type of reflection addresses what if or if only scenarios, whether it serves to improve performance and the search for better alternatives in future or whether the person concerned is a victim of his/her own circumstances. Thus, counterfactual thinking may range from valuable sense-making in hindsight to feeling sorry for oneself. In addition, it is essential that, when the entrepreneur uses counterfactual thinking, he/she looks at plausible options in order to improve the outcome of similar situations in the future (Chell, 2008).

According to Baron (2000b), entrepreneurs are less likely than other people to engage in counterfactual thinking and they seldom have regrets over their failures. This viewpoint is supported by Douglas (2009). Forlani and Mullins (2000, p. 234) state that “entrepreneurs reported engaging in counterfactual thinking significantly less frequently than non-entrepreneurs”. Gaglio (2004, p. 540) suggests that, although if only counterfactual thinking may not be dominant in entrepreneurs,
“their behaviour regarding other forms of counterfactual processing...is unknown and, indeed, may be quite likely.”

It appears that Baron (2000b) and Gaglio (2004) may be in opposition, as Baron (2000b) focuses on regrets while Gaglio focuses on sense-making or looking for alternatives (Gaglio & Winter, 2009). Lehrer (2009, p. 236) suggests that it is always advantageous to “entertain competing hypotheses”. Counterfactual thinking may be a trigger for entrepreneurs to challenge their existing mental models (Krueger, Jr., 2009).

Whether starting-up or scaling-up a business or working through a difficult situation the majority of entrepreneurs tend to discuss their businesses with their significant other, a close friend or a mentor. As Chell (2008) points out, counterfactual thinking usually features in these conversations.

Albert had not reflected on his business situation during his involvement in ACC and, in fact, through that period of his life he had operated without being fully engaged in the process – staying close to the surface rather than “digging” into the heart of the business. Hence, he had not engaged in either critical reflection or in counterfactual thinking. It appeared that he had learnt very little from the experience other than that he did not want to do it again. However, more than nine years after the closure of ACC he did engage in reflective thinking while out jogging and, although he occasionally experienced “aha” moments it was too late to have any bearing on ACC.

Initially, when Allon had used counterfactual thinking while involved in the NYSF, his scenario planning had been unrealistic and it had, in fact, resulting in his working himself into a state of exhaustion. However, over time he had learnt to use counterfactual thinking often and in a positive way. When he lost a deal he thought of alternative scenarios and how he may have handled the situation more effectively. He also tried to think of ways to be more successful. He would often return to clients and sometimes he even won deals back. In order to make sense
of these interactions with clients he used counterfactual thinking. It was clear that Allon had applied counterfactual thinking to serve his business growth.

When Dianne had had a negative experience she had engaged in if only type counterfactual thinking; wishing things had gone better. She had also used this type of thinking in combination with the self-serving bias when she had received negative feedback and had then blamed external sources for what had happened. This thinking had had no positive impact on either Dianne or on or on her business. She had also blamed her fear of success for the failure of her endeavours. The way Dianne engaged in counterfactual thinking had not change during the duration of the study. Her behaviour was contrary to the way in which Allon, Natasha and Suzette had tried harder when they received negative feedback. The latter is indicative of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006).

From the start Lily had engaged in “what if starting a cat hotel was a big mistake” type counterfactual thinking. Hence, her mindset toward the business had been negative from the outset. However, over the following three years she had started to use counterfactual thinking in a more positive way in scenario planning.

Natasha, the franchisor of the tashas restaurant group, carried out numerous quality inspections while her counterfactual thinking explored ways of improving what was happening in the restaurants.

The same was true for both Tessa and Suzette. These dominant thought patterns of these three women were about how to improve business and not about what would have happened if they had done things differently. I had met Natasha and Tessa when their respective businesses were already successful on a national level and neither of them had given any indication during the interviews that they had previously engaged in other forms of counterfactual thinking. Natasha and Tessa had both come from entrepreneurial families and, as children, they may have learnt to use counterfactual thinking vicariously.

Suzette also used counterfactual thinking during reflective sense-making to ensure that she had taken into account various different perspectives of the situation under scrutiny. As a teenager she had started analysing social situations in her reflective journal and had tried to answer questions such as: What
happened? Why did it happen? What was my role in the process? How should I address situations differently in future?

Neill had sometimes used counterfactual thinking in order to learn from past experiences such as not buying more stands at Leeupoort and, on other occasions, in order to rationalise negative outcomes. Unlike Allon he had not acted on his counterfactual thinking immediately but had used the learning experiences to take advantage of future situations. Thus, his counterfactual thinking had resulted in action, even if years later. However, he had also sometimes engaged in if only type thinking when he had made mistakes.

Got it!

It emerged from the study that when the participants involved in successful entrepreneurial activities had used counterfactual thinking they had done so in a positive way. Their focus had been on improving the way they in which they did business by using what they had learnt from their reflections. The fact that they thought about the influence of their previous thinking meant that their counterfactual thinking had encompassed a meta-cognitive element and had changed the way in which they viewed the past.

Clearly, it is difficult for entrepreneurs when they use counterfactual thinking in conjunction with novice mental models in order to anticipate when the scenarios they are considering are viable. Thus, the use of a mentor as a sounding board during active involvement in counterfactual thinking may be useful.

5.6.4 Escalation of commitment

Escalation of commitment happens when entrepreneurs either increase their investment in projects that are not doing well or else continue with strategies that may have served them well in the past but are currently not successful (Douglas, 2009). According to Gustafsson (2009), entrepreneurs are willing to invest in projects with uncertain futures. Hence, their ability to judge the viability of a venture is crucial in order to prevent an escalation of commitment.

Causal (goal driven) entrepreneurs run the risk of being so overly focused on their goals that they are not willing to deviate from these goals even when the outlook
starts to look bleak. Some entrepreneurs may even be unaware of other opportunities, thus becoming vulnerable to the escalation of commitment bias (Kraaijenbrink, 2010). An overconfidence bias or high self-efficacy may even exacerbate this tendency.

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**Digging**

Toward the end of his first business venture **Albert** had tried unsuccessfully to save ACC. Although the right leadership could not be saved the business staying on and NOT doing what was required to rescue the business may be considered as a form of escalation of commitment.

**Allon** had showed extreme commitment with both the NYSF and Raizcorp. In both cases he had persevered until the businesses were successful, even though this had taken years. There was, however, no evidence of any escalation of commitment. As a business mentor he had realised the difficulty of making the – usually – emotional decision of whether to persevere or to give up in a time of great uncertainty. This, in turn, had inspired him to write a book giving guidance to other budding entrepreneurs.

**Dianne**, on the other hand, had not persevered with any one project or business for long and no escalation of commitment was evident.

**Lily**’s business had been growing slowly since start-up. Thus, this bias was not relevant in her case.

Soon after **Natasha** had started Everest she had realised that she “hated” the fast food industry. Accordingly, she had not stayed in the industry for any longer than was necessary and had left the business as soon as her partners were able to buy her out.

Despite advice to cut his losses **Neill** tended to persevere for too long, even when it was not his own business (RC and the recruitment agency) and. His strong positive bias had contributed to the escalation of commitment bias. He had lost

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money in every case of over-commitment although the therapeutic value of AFC Creations for him had compensated for the low income.

The escalation of the commitment bias was not evident in the cases of Tessa and Suzette. They had cut their losses immediately when they realised a particular business was not working for them and had moved on to another business. Suzette knew intuitively that success required a minimum input. The moment she realised that she was neither willing nor able to invest the required amount of energy and time in a business she walked away from the situation to avoid wasting these two precious commodities.

Got it!

By definition, escalation of commitment is about investing in a business that is failing. In the cases of Albert's ACC and Neill's AFC Creations the businesses had had the potential to be successful but neither Albert nor Neill has taken advantage of this opportunity. If an individual decides to stay in a business that is in trouble it is essential that he/she addresses the challenges involved proactively and changes what needs to be changed if the business is to be saved. Not taking responsibility for such change may be indicative of an external locus of control – the hope that someone or something else will save the business.

There are two possible reasons why entrepreneurs may decide to stay on in a failing business. Firstly, the individual may not realise that the business is failing. This may, in turn, be the result of: (i) overconfidence, (ii) a strong positive bias, and/or (iii) a total lack of insight into the situation because of novice mental models.

Secondly, the individual may be right to decide to stay on because success may be possible provided he/she addresses the challenges involved effectively. It is imperative that the entrepreneur is to be alert to external signals in order to know what the decisions are that he/she needs to make in order to turn the business around. This requires: (i) self-awareness, (ii) self-honesty, (iii) alertness to opportunities or possibilities, (iv) swift enactment and (v) expert mental models and/or a mentor.
Escalation of commitment is not to be confused with tenacity or perseverance. It is important to know when to persevere and when to abandon the failing business. It is vital that the entrepreneur comes to this realisation sooner rather than later in order to minimise the financial losses. However, without expert mental models or a mentor it may be difficult to make the decision to leave.

5.6.5 Optimistic and negativity biases and affect infusion

Entrepreneurs who tend to expect positive outcomes demonstrate an optimistic bias while those who pay more attention to negative information demonstrate a negative bias (Mitchell et al., 2002).

Baron (2008) provides evidence that people who are in a positive frame of mind are more likely to perceive their surroundings and other people in a positive light, they tend to be more creative, and are more likely to engage in heuristics than those who are in a negative mood. This may, in turn, have a positive effect if the heuristics – supported by expert mental models – result in quick and effective decision-making.

Quick decision-making opens up the possibility for the agility of enactment which is be an extremely important factor in business success (La Pira, 2011). However, it is important that the decisions that are made are the correct decisions. This is especially true in the case of SMEs as SMEs seldom have the resources to recover from bad decisions. Entrepreneurs sometimes tend to be overly optimistic and overestimate their chances of success. This is especially true of causal entrepreneurs (Kraaijenbrink, 2010).

Baron (2008) investigated the influence of affect on opportunity recognition, the acquisition of financial and human resources, the ability to respond effectively to highly dynamic situations in business, and the ability of the entrepreneur to tolerate high stress levels. He suggests that strong, positive emotions may enhance the tolerance for stress. Entrepreneurs often have to make decisions in potentially stressful situations that are fraught with uncertainty and unpredictability. In stressful situations affect may tip the balance to favouring specific actions or decisions (Baron, 2008). However, optimism alone is no guarantee of successful

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decision-making although being optimistic and stress tolerant may impact positively on decisions that contribute to success. According to Krueger and Day (2010, p. 336), “where emotions are closely engaged in decisions the successful entrepreneurs clearly outperformed the managers”).

Digging

Initially Albert was very optimistic and he had believed that it would be easy to run his own business. As a result he had not invested sufficient time and energy in understanding situations that prevailed prior to decision-making. Consequently his stress levels had risen as the gap between his expectations (running a business is easy) and reality (financial struggles) widened. In addition, he had also underestimated the abilities of his staff members in his first business. This negative bias toward people had limited his options as he had not recognised the value of his resources.

In his second business Albert had had a negative attitude toward the very people he was trying to sell to. This had prevented him from securing sales and this, in turn, had left him stressed and emotionally drained.

Allon had had a very strong optimistic bias when he had started the NYSF. However, this had made him less cautious during his market research than he should have been and this, in turn, had resulted in some bad business decisions. While working for the vehicle security company he had learnt, with the help of his mentor, to be honest with himself. He was also willing and able to learn from his mistakes. He still had had a positive bias at the time of the study but his expert mental models were providing him with the ability to discern what was realistically possible. Hence, he was able to manage his positive bias. He reflected critically and made sense of his experiences. He also realised that he tended to see the positive in situations and that he needed to ensure that his actions would support his expectations.

Dianne had started off with a positive attitude. She had believed that it would be easier to start a business than it really was but would become very discouraged the moment something went wrong. She was prone to vacillating between extreme
optimism and extreme pessimism with her lack of in-depth, professional knowledge fuelling this tendency. When she initiated an endeavour, her inability to appreciate the true magnitude of the situation gave rise to her optimism. However, when the reality check came later she went into a state of depression. This had happened multiple times during the course of this study.

**Lily** tended to become anxious easily and embraced negative beliefs such as “To be successful you have to rip people off”. During the course of the study she had made business decisions while in a negative emotional state and had later regretted these decisions. She also demonstrated a negativity bias and displayed distrust and criticism toward her clients.

**Natasha** had a generally positive outlook with realistic expectations and her actions matched her expectations. She proactively did what was required of her to reach her goals and I did not recognise either a positive or negative bias during our interactions.

**Neill’s** positive bias had given him the courage to start AFC Creations although the business had extended his abilities beyond what I thought possible in the circumstances. He had tended to underestimate most of the projects and, although they had given him a deep sense of satisfaction, they had not always been financially viable. Although AFC Creations had been an expensive lesson it has been extremely therapeutic for Neill. On the other hand, his expectations and decisions in his property business had been extremely realistic. He clearly had more expert mental maps with regard to property as compared to woodwork\(^{167}\).

**Tessa** tended always to look at the positive side of every situation and this had carried her through difficult times. She quickly turned negative situations into positive ones. Her optimism may have been too positive with some of the expensive luxury products she offered, but fortunately her business was big enough to weather a few less successful decisions.

Although **Suzette** had a positive outlook in general her business expectations were realistic. The fact that she had started businesses in fields in which she had

\(^{167}\) AFC Creations
a fair amount of expertise may have contributed to her realistic expectations and supported successful decision-making.

As mentors for entrepreneur Allon and Suzette had learnt to look at the worst and best case scenarios and were able to plan how to cope with both.

Got it!

Depending on the quality of the entrepreneur's mental models either a positive or a negative attitude may contribute to bad judgement. Not one of the successful entrepreneurs in the study had demonstrated a negative bias and they had all displayed both realistic expectations and the ability to generate positive results.

A positive bias provides entrepreneurs with the courage to start businesses that may appear to be too daunting for other people. However, if a positive attitude is not accompanied by the appropriate action it may lead to wishful thinking and not success. If an entrepreneur has a positive bias but lacks expert knowledge, finding a sound business mentor should help bridge the gap until the entrepreneur has acquired the necessary expertise.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, depending on the context, prior knowledge and one's attitude, one may demonstrate positive bias in one situation but a negative predisposition in another situation.

5.6.6 Planning fallacy

The planning fallacy is a “derivative of the optimistic bias” (Michl, Welpe, Spörrle & Picot, 2009, p. 173). It refers to the tendency to overestimate what may be achieved in a specific time frame (Keh et al., 2002; Michl et al., 2009).

Alvarez et al. (2010) point out that sense-making and learning are more important than rigorous planning during the phases of business growth. While Keh et al., (2002) emphasise that the planning fallacy bias does not appear to influence opportunity perception, it may have a bearing on the effectiveness of the entrepreneur and, hence, influence the success of the entrepreneur. Overestimating what may be achieved may result in a stressful situation in which
the entrepreneur is late in delivering products or services and this, in turn, often leads to stakeholder dissatisfaction (Michl et al., 2009).

The planning fallacy bias is more about short term than long term planning. Rigorous planning during start-up or times of specific growth in a business when the uncertainty levels are high is rarely effective. As the eight participants in this study experienced, although rigorous planning may set one on a specific path, there is a good chance that one will have to find alternative paths in order to accommodate unexpected or unforeseen situations along the way. This is probably the main reason why the majority of successful entrepreneurs favour effectuation rather than causation (Dew et al., 2008). According to Krueger (2009, p.58), “[u]nder effectual thinking the pathway to the goal is likely to change as the entrepreneur works to find feasible and desirable paths toward a goal (which itself may well be a moving target)”

Digging

I could find no evidence of planning fallacy in Albert’s case.

Although Allon was a disciplined, goal-orientated individual he was aware that he tended to digress during meetings. Accordingly, he had put systems in place to help him manage his time during meetings. He had managed this fairly effectively and it did not seem to have a negative impact on his business decisions.

It is difficult to tell whether Dianne suffered from planning fallacy as the only deadlines she had to meet during the course of the study involved the drafting of the tender documents and she had met this deadline.

Initially Lily had underestimated the time required to complete the daily cat hotel routine. She had sometimes struggled to cope and had considered scaling down. At the end of each day she was physically and emotionally exhausted. However, she could have appointed staff to help her. Therefore, this should not necessarily have had a negative impact on the business provided she had made provision for the staff wages in the pricing of the service.
For Natasha timing was extremely important. In view of the fact that she had to juggle so many responsibilities simultaneously, she always seemed to be on the run. Squeezing as much as possible into every day clearly challenged her time management. I did, however, observe that she sometimes ran late. Nevertheless, she was a people-orientated person and was able to deal with interruptions.¹⁶⁸

Neill really struggled with the planning fallacy. His experience in any specific field had made very little difference to the inaccuracy of his planning both in AFC Creations and his IR consultancy. He admitted that projects usually took him three times longer to complete than he had anticipated. This had not improved noticeably over the years.

Tessa was comfortable with the pace she set for herself and it appeared that she managed her time well. When her company did not deliver on time it was usually because her suppliers were late in delivering. However, when this occurred she did not become upset. In fact, I once heard her say to an irate client whose curtains had not been delivered on time, “Nobody is going to die. We are talking about curtains not heart-lung machines!”

Suzette did not show any difficulty in planning. This may have been because she worked in fields in which she had considerable experience and, thus, she had a good idea of how long specific tasks would take to complete. She believed that her parents had been a major influence in her ability to manage time; her father had been a perfectionist and her mother had always ensured that everything ran according to a tight schedule so as not to upset her father. For example, if they had to be ready at eight, they were usually at half past seven.

Got it!

It emerged from the study that the entrepreneur often had to deal with several interruptions because he/she was involved in every aspect of the business. This, in turn, sometimes placed pressure on the entrepreneur’s time management.

¹⁶⁸ She always communicated delays regarding our meetings to me.
It was also apparent that some of the participants were, by nature, more punctual than others. The ability to be punctual sometimes evolved out of the planning fallacy as they gained expertise while others struggled with punctuality, no matter how much experience they gained. If a business is based on hourly rates an underestimation of the time required for a particular process may have a negative impact on the success of the business.

It makes good sense for entrepreneurs to learn to manage the planning fallacy because, if not, this may cause frustration or even stress with regard to their ability to deliver goods or services to their clients and this, in turn, may lead to dissatisfaction among on the part of their clients.

5.6.7 Representativeness heuristic or decisions based on small numbers
The tendency to make decisions based on a relatively small number of observations is known as the representativeness heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). This bias has also been described as “the willingness of decision-makers to generalise from small samples” (Alvarez et al., 2010, p. 37). Entrepreneurs often make decisions based on their personal experience only (Chell, 2008). However, using small samples obviously implies an extremely low probability of representing the full range of possibilities and, thus, this heuristic may lead to entrepreneurs underestimating the risks they are taking (Douglas, 2009).

When confronted by options the decision-maker matches what he/she believes to be apparently significant features of the situation with similar features from the previous experiences stored in his/her mind. During intuitive decision-making people do not match every feature but rather they match those features that “spring to mind” and use this representative sample in order to make a judgement. The more often an individual is confronted with similar situations the more available\(^{169}\) these features become. According to Holcomb et al. (2009), the more representative the stored features are of the specific situation at hand the better the judgement will be. The combination of the availability and representativeness heuristics play a prominent role in intuitive decision-making and, thus, the

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\(^{169}\) Please see Availability heuristic in section 5.6.2
accuracy of the features involved in these heuristics are crucial to ensure accurate insights.

According to Kraaijenbrink (2010, p. 3), representativeness is an extremely important bias which affects the quality of entrepreneurial predictions. It is one of the two cognitive biases for entrepreneurial decision-making identified by Busenitz and Barney (1997) with the other cognitive bias being the overconfidence bias.¹⁷⁰

**Digging**

**Albert** had bought his first business as a going concern. As a staff member of the ACC he could, potentially, have talked to a fair sample of people before he decided to buy; however, because he was also an insider he had had access to much of the information regarding the business. However, in the course many of the subsequent decisions he had made, he had felt he had no one with whom to talk and he indicated that he had often had to base his decision on what he thought would be best. This was not always ideal as he had had no prior business experience and some of his decisions were not as wise as he had hoped they would be.

When he had conducted his market research for the NYSF **Allon** had not only used a small number of people as a sample to whom to talk but the people in the sample had not been part of his target market. This had led him to choose an extremely inappropriate location for the business and this, in turn, had had negative implications for the business. However, in view of the fact Allon had had a mentor from early on in business he had always had at least one other person against whom he could test his arguments against and who could point out what he might be missing. At Raizcorp he also had a partner and they had put a system of decision-making in place to avoid making bad business decisions based on insufficient information.

**Dianne** also admitted to conducting inappropriate market research for her training programme. Her decision to tender for the training programme at the premier supplier of electricity had been based on her own experience and also motivation

¹⁷⁰ Please see *Self-efficacy and Confidence* in section 6.2.5
from her brother. Her attitude had been “What do I have to lose?” She had been willing to take the risk because she had nothing other than her time and energy to lose as she had had no other deals on the table at the time. She had not regarded the hours of preparation involved as a possible loss. Furthermore, she was a novice entrepreneur and did not realise the extent to which her knowledge about the relevant product had been lacking.

Both Lily and Suzette had consulted an extremely small sample before starting their cat hotels. However, their samples had comprised highly relevant groups of people, including other cat hotel owners, who understood the supply and demand in the cat hotel business, and veterinarians, who were the main referral agents for their service. When Lily had started up Suzette had assisted her, especially during her first year in operation. Thus, the representativeness heuristic had not increased her risk during start-up as she had communicated with experts in the field. Subsequent decisions which she had taken while running her business had been based on her own experience but even then she had often called on a small group of cat hotel owners for advice.

Natasha had grown up in the hospitality industry and, thus, she had extensive experience on which to base her decisions. When she had started Everest she had had only her father, who was her mentor. Her decision to start the first tashas had been based on her own considerable experience in the restaurant industry. When she had turned tashas into a franchise she had done it in the Famous Brand group under the leadership of Kevin Hedderwick. Thus, even when she had used a small sample, the sample comprised experts.

Of all the participants, Neil stood out as the one person who had been willing to consult with as many people as possible before he made decisions on how to do things. He had networked with experts in respect of every business he had had and he had also had mentors. However, when it came to “What to do?” he tended to follow his own head.

Tessa had grown up in the textile business. She was the trendsetter in the industry and did not consult with anyone on trend decisions. Something – a person or an experience – would trigger her next collection and she would discuss
it with a confidante only. However, her experiences at international trade shows and a lifetime of experience had created a global reference frame for her decision-making.

**Suzette** had often made decisions based on small samples. However, she was extremely analytical and usually conducted thorough research. She would consider several alternatives and talk to one or two experts before making decisions. However, she made decisions quickly and tended to become impatient if things moved too slowly.

Table 5.5 presents a summary of the various people with whom the participating entrepreneurs had consulted before starting their businesses.
Table 5.5: Representativeness heuristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Number of people consulted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon NYSF</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon Raizcrop</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill AFC</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill Property</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette Ballet</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette School</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette PP</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Got it!

It emerged that the majority of the participants in the study had consulted with a small number of people only before they had made decisions and they had often relied on their own experience only. The following emerged from the data:
(i) If you are going to rely on your experience only, ensure that your experience is substantial and that you have an expert mental model to support your decision. In addition, you must be willing both to fail and to learn from your mistakes.

(ii) If you are going to have just one or two members in your sample choose people who are experts in the field, and

(iii) If at all possible have an experienced mentor.

Decisions on the price of products and services are extremely important, especially in a small business where there is little margin for error. Some of the novice entrepreneurs had not costed in their time and they had also underestimated the hidden costs when they had calculated their expenses. This, in turn, had often resulted in an unsustainable price structure. These novices would have benefited from consulting with an expert on pricing. In addition, they might also be unaware of the risks they are taking if they do not consult with a person with the relevant expertise.

5.6.8 Illusion of control

The illusion of control bias is indicated by a person overemphasising and/or overestimating his/her ability to control external situations or future events (Keh et al., 2002). Some entrepreneurs may have more confidence in their ability to control the outcome of future events than is realistically possible. According to Simon, Houghton, and Aquino (1999), it would appear that entrepreneurs are particularly susceptible to this bias. Having the decision-making power does not necessarily translate to being in control (Senge, 1990). Thus, the illusion of having control may increase the likelihood of the entrepreneur enacting an opportunity but it may also blind the person to the genuine risk involved (Krueger, Jr., 2003). Kraaijenbrink (2010) suggests that this bias may affect means-orientated entrepreneurs more than it does goal-orientated entrepreneurs.

The illusion of control is situation specific and indicates whether you think you have the control in a specific situation (Chell, 2008). In situations in which entrepreneurs think they know that which is uncertain, this encourages more risky behaviour (Chell, 2008). Keh et al. (2002) have studied SMEs specifically and they have found that the representativeness and illusion of control biases play a
mediating role in the risk perception of entrepreneurs when they evaluate opportunities. This finding has been confirmed by Le Roux, Pretorius, and Millard (2006), who add that these biases often results in entrepreneurs taking higher risks than they realise. Thus, it would appear that the illusion of control encourages risk-taking.

**Digging**

**Albert** apparently had the illusion of control bias but he had also suffered from – what one might call – the illusion of no-control bias. He had felt that he was not able to control important aspects of his business, such as debt collecting. As a result he neglected to address unpaid debt and increased his risk to a point where it had contributed to the failure of his business. Albert’s arrogance had strengthened his illusion of control bias.

When **Allon** had started the NYSF he had been overconfident, demonstrating a need to achieve and an illusion of control bias which had resulted in challenges to the business. However, experiential learning and his mentor had aided the development of his expert mental models and this, in turn, had enhanced his judgement, enabling him to become realistic about what he was able to achieve and also what he could or could not control.

As with many of the participants, control was very important for Allon. As a business owner the ultimate responsibility for controlling the risks, resources and finances of the business had rested with him. Using self-awareness and reflective sense-making, he had made a tremendous effort to overcome his illusion of control and to put control systems in place.

The need to control her resources did not seem to be important to **Dianne**. However, she had often acted as if she had no control over the circumstances or fate of her business; thus demonstrating the illusion of no-control bias.

**Lily** had also thought that she had everything under control but she had found could not control her clients. Over a period of three years she had discovered what she could and could not control and in this time she had developed a better
understanding of business and the industry in which she operated. She had gained control over her risk-taking, her resources and the quality of her service.

Natasha had used the word *control* often in our interviews. She admitted to being a control freak and indicated that when she had franchised her restaurant chain she had negotiated for months to retain the control to which she aspired. She had soon she realised that it had been easy to control most aspects of the business when she had owned one or two restaurants but that that became a challenge in a rapidly growing chain of restaurants. Even with systems in place, lucrative incentives and regular inspections it was difficult to ensure that the franchisees implemented all the guidelines they were given. It was, thus, a constant challenge to ensure that the restaurants lived up to the tashas standard. Natasha had realised how illusive control could be and had put systems in place to support her in her relentless pursuit of maintaining the quality of her brand in a rapidly expanding business.

Neill had been in many different industries and had exercised a different level of control in each. In the physical businesses – Sprightly Sprouts, AFC Creations and his rental properties – he had overcome his initial illusion of control within a reasonable time as the practical reality of running these businesses had left him with no doubt about what he could and could not control. However, with regard to the more abstract processes, he had occasionally experienced that there were too many variables for him to control or that he did not have control over certain aspects of the business. This had frustrated him. However, Neill ensured that he had control over his rental properties.

Having grown up in the textile industry Tessa had known exactly what she could and could not control and she did not stress about the things and situations she could not control. While Tessa had controlled the creative side and the quality of her brand, she did not like dealing with technical glitches. Accordingly, she had appointed people to deal with the issues she disliked dealing with.

Like Allon and Natasha, Suzette admitted to being somewhat of a control freak when it came to her business. She believed that putting systems in place not only
controlled the quality of her service, but it eliminated frustrations and freed her pre-frontal cortex up for the more creative processes.

Table 5.6 illustrates the relative differences in the need for control displayed by the eight participating entrepreneurs while Table 5.7 provides an indication of the illusion of control versus actual control manifested by the participants.

**Table 5.6:** The participants' need for control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need for control</th>
<th>Allon</th>
<th>Suzette</th>
<th>Natasha</th>
<th>Tessa</th>
<th>Lily</th>
<th>Neill</th>
<th>Albert</th>
<th>Dianne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>Tight control. He maintained that when you lose control in your business you lose your business.</td>
<td>Her need to control is so strong that it sometimes limited the growth/expansion of the business.</td>
<td>She admitted to being a control freak but had had to relinquish some control in order to grow her business.</td>
<td>She had a strong need to control her brand.</td>
<td>She needed to feel in control of her service and cash flow.</td>
<td>Financial control was important for him.</td>
<td>Although he did not feel the need to control either the resources or finances he did want to control the quality of the product.</td>
<td>She showed no need to control anything in the business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.7:** The participants' level of control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illusion of control</th>
<th>Level of control</th>
<th>Real control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Lily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Got it!

The lower the level of expertise of the participants the more prevalent was their illusion of control. Expertise in this context not only refers to the amount of time spent in the business or industry but also the level of knowledge, skill and understanding the entrepreneur has accumulated. As the entrepreneur becomes more experienced and acquires expertise in the business he/she is running the probability of the entrepreneur overcoming, or at least managing, the illusion of
control bias successfully, increases. The control beliefs of an entrepreneur influence his/her risk perception.

If entrepreneurs are to manage their illusion of control it is essential that they are sufficiently self-aware to realise when they are being honest with themselves in respect of what they are able to control and what is truly outside their sphere of influence. In addition, the level of the entrepreneur’s expertise in the business and, more specifically, in the specific industry in which the business operates, influences their ability to judge the level of control they actually have in specific situations. This, in turn, influences the risks they take. The less control the entrepreneur has in a situation the more risky the situation.

Thus, if the entrepreneur has an expert mental map of the industry in which he/she is operating and if the entrepreneur is honest with him/herself about the level of control he/she has in the business, this will assist the entrepreneur to overcome the illusion of control bias and lower the risk taking. If the illusion of control bias was accompanied by a strong overconfidence bias this had, in turn, increased the level of risk taking on the part of the participating entrepreneurs – as illustrated by Albert and a younger Allon.

Entrepreneurs are able to control the quality of their products and services and to put systems in place to assist them in this, but they are not able to control the reaction of the market to their products and services. However, they do have control over the way in which they react to the reactions of their clients. This requires awareness, being honest to oneself and a willingness to act proactively on the indications given by the market reaction to improve their products and services and, hence, enhance their chances of success. This awareness and alertness to external signals and the agility with which some of the entrepreneurs in the study reacted to such messages indicated that they had either overcome their illusion of control or they were managing it effectively.

Taking control is also about taking responsibility. The participants who had demonstrated a strong need for control in their businesses (Allon, Natasha, Suzette and Tessa) took full responsibility for both their successes and their failures. Natasha and Suzette struggled to relinquish control. Natasha, Allon,
Suzette and Neill (in his property rental business) had developed systems to ensure control when they had had to relinquish a measure of control as their businesses grew. Senge (1990) quotes fear of loss as a possible reason for the resistance to relinquishing control.

The illusion of no-control or avoidance bias had occurred the when participants had been uncomfortable with, overly sensitive to or had even feared a specific issue and, thus, they had avoided dealing with it instead of addressing it. When a participant had not taken full responsibility for the outcomes of his/her decision this had, in turn, increased the actual risk taken. As suggested by Senge (1990) the perception of some of the participants that they could not influence circumstances had undermined their opportunity to learn from situations. Thus, the individual with the illusion of no-control bias does not acquire expertise from experience.

The study revealed that the participants with expert mental models did not suffer from this bias.

5.6.9 Self-serving or self-justification
Entrepreneurs with a self-serving bias attribute their successes to their own contribution and their failures to external sources (Chell, 2008; Shaver, 2009; Shaver, 2010). This appears to be similar to both the self-justification heuristic – the tendency to justify past decisions whether such decisions had positive or negative outcomes (Gustafsson, 2009) – and to the attribution style which reasons that, when one is successful, it is all one’s own doing; but when one fails it is the fault of someone or something else (Krueger, Jr., 2003). Chell (2008, p. 158) suggests that this bias of not taking responsibility for negative outcomes “may be one factor that distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs”.

The findings of the study demonstrated a close correlation between those participants with a self-serving bias and those with an external locus of control and, thus, the role of locus of control as discussed in the literature on entrepreneurship will now be explored.
Locus of control

According to Rotter (1990), internal locus of control refers to the degree to which individuals expect the outcome of their behaviour to be dependent on their own behaviour. Both Shaver and Scott (1991) and Bygrave (2003) suggest that entrepreneurs appear to have a stronger need to be in control of their own destiny as compared to other people.

“People with an external locus of control believe that the things that happen to them are unrelated to their own behaviour” (Karren, Hafen, Smith & Frandsen, 2006, p. 534). In other words, when entrepreneurs believe that the problems in their businesses are the result of external influences over which they have no control, they do not accept responsibility for the situation. They maintain that the solution to the problem lies outside their sphere of influence or power and, as a result, they do not learn enough from the experience to avoid the recurrence of similar problems in the future. An external locus of control is linked to people perceiving their actions as “less effective at producing outcomes” as much of the control is out of their hands (Koppl & Minniti, 2010, p. 233). This was clearly visible in the cases of Dianne and Albert.

People with an internal locus of control believe that what happens to them whether negative or positive, is the consequence of their actions and, therefore, within their control (Rotter, 1990). Koppl and Minniti (2010) link an internal locus of control to increased alertness and suggest that it leads to incidental learning.

“People higher in internal locus of control are more likely to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities” (Eckhardt & Shane, 2010, p. 66). They are able to enact opportunities and grow their businesses because they feel that they understand and, thus, they control the outcome of events. They experience greater control over their income and job security when they have their own businesses and this, in turn, lowers their stress levels as compared to people who feel that they have no control over what happens to them.

An individual’s locus of control has a physical impact on his/her mind. According to Karren et al. (2006, p. 541), when we experience a lack of control there is a drop in the secretion of the following three hormones: (i) serotonin that regulates our
moods and releases endorphins, (ii) dopamine that is responsible for the sense of reward or pleasure we experience, and (iii) norepinephrine – a lack of which causes depression. A drop in these hormones increases the stress levels with high levels of stress impacting on the quality of our decisions. This clearly presents a problem for entrepreneurs who have an external locus of control.

The participants with an internal locus of control took responsibility for their actions and they learnt through their mistakes while those with an external locus of control learnt lessons only after they had repeated the same mistakes a few times while they sometimes did not even learn from their mistakes at all. Some of the entrepreneurs in the study had benefited from mentors and sounding boards while others would have benefited from the assistance of mentors to help them to discover the learning embedded in their experiences.

Digging

**Albert** took credit for growing his business by three hundred percent during the first two years but he felt the business had failed because of external changes that were beyond his control. He had justified his resistance to addressing the financial issues by stating that he was too kind-hearted to be an entrepreneur. Even after our discussions Albert continued to blame external circumstances for the fact that his second business had showed no growth in the two years since start-up. He believed that, in order to be successful, one has to be callous and he took no responsibility for his failures.

**Allon** accepted full responsibility for both his successes and his failures. He was not embarrassed to admit to and talk about his failures and how he had learnt from them.**171** Allon took responsibility for, reflected on and learnt from the outcomes of his actions and did not have a self-serving bias. He had an internal locus of control.

**Dianne** had blamed external agents for her lack of business success in every case. She even blamed her lack of business success on her lack of a good

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**171** Sometimes during the interviews he would rationalise his mistakes although he immediately acknowledged that he was doing this. He was fully aware of when and why he did it.
product although this was within her control. She had not taken responsibility for improving her product and was simply not honest with herself about why her business had failed. By the time she closed her business she had still had not accepted responsibility for her lack of success. She had an external locus of control.

**Lily** took credit for her own success. When clients did not do repeat business with her she tended to question them about this as it bothered her. However, she was unable to relate this behaviour on the part of her clients to anything she had done. Although she had an external locus of control she was willing to take responsibility and, therefore, she did not have the self-serving bias.

**Natasha** questioned the impact of everything that happened in her business. She took responsibility for the control of everything, including the outcomes of her decisions, both positive and negative. This does not, however, imply that she tried to do everything herself but she put systems in place to manage outcomes. The quality and success of the tasha's brand was so important for her that she was always looking for ways in which to improve these systems. She had an external locus of control and did not display the self-justification bias.

**Neill** enjoyed taking credit for his successes. However, when things went wrong he would initially look for external reasons. Nevertheless, after critical reflection with a mentor he was usually more than willing to accept his role in what was happening at the time. While he tended to rationalise why things had gone wrong instead of making sense of the situation, he was always willing to discuss it and this opened up learning opportunities even if it took him a while to learn the lessons. He had an external locus of control.

**Tessa** enjoyed her success and took full responsibility for her role in it. She was not afraid to fail and was fair in her judgement about the role each person played in her successes and failures. She had an internal locus of control.

**Suzette** took full responsibility for the outcomes – successes and failures – in her businesses. She valued everybody’s contribution in making her businesses a success and/or providing her with the freedom to do what she needed to do. When something went wrong, she took responsibility and sought ways of
preventing it from happening again. Neill maintained that she had an over-developed sense of responsibility. However, she disagreed with this assertion and claimed that people have different perceptions of responsibility and she did what she deemed necessary.

Got it!

The study provided no evidence of any of the participants benefiting from a self-serving bias. It was clear from the experiences of the eight participants that the ability to be honest with ourselves, take responsibility for the outcomes of our decisions and learn from our mistakes, play an important role in our successes and failures.

5.7 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed mental models and schemata and considered the role of sense-making during the decision-making and learning processes which are required if businesses are to survive. The chapter also explored decision-making and considered the role of selected heuristics and biases in the decision-making process. Finally, the chapter focused on the various kinds of learning which characterise entrepreneurs.
CHAPTER 6

The Prey

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6, The Prey, highlights the themes and concepts which emerged from the data collected from the accounts of the eight entrepreneurs (including myself) who participated in the research study. The aim of this chapter is to introduce scholarly concepts that I believe have the potential to explain the behaviour of entrepreneurs. More specifically, I relate abstract concepts with the decisions of the research participants (including my own decisions) during our enactment of business opportunities. Hence, I examine the experiences and views extracted from the everyday experiences of the participants – the first-order concepts (Schutz, 1962; Wigren, 2007) – and which I deemed to be important in illuminating how the participants started up and grew their businesses by relating these first-
order concepts and the key research findings I derived to the second-order concepts found in the literature (Schutz, 1962; Wigren, 2007).

The discussion of each concept or group of concepts is divided into four parts. Firstly, the scholarly literature informing the concept(s) is discussed. This is followed by Digging during which the experiences of the entrepreneurial participants that fall under a particular concept are analysed in order to position each participant in respect of the concepts\(^{173}\). A synopsis of the analysis is then tabulated\(^{174}\) to position each participant relative to the other participants in relation to each concept. Finally, in Got it!, there is a conclusion or “the construction of a whole out of parts” (Mouton & Marais, 1996).

In this chapter I distinguish between myself, Suzette, as the participant, and myself Suzette, as the researcher. My experiences and views as an entrepreneur are presented in the third person while my views as the researcher are presented in the first person. All the concepts derived from the lived experiences of the participants are presented in the concept identification table\(^ {175}\).

The concepts that informed the mental models of the eight participating entrepreneurs are now discussed.

### 6.2 MENTAL MODELS

Mental models were discussed in detail in section 5.2. I considered the following concepts based on the mental models and are discussed in this section as crucial to the successful decision-making of entrepreneurs.

#### 6.2.1 Opportunism

What is the difference between an obstacle and an opportunity? Our attitude towards it. Every opportunity has a difficulty and every difficulty has an opportunity (Unknown).

\(^{173}\) To assist the reader to keep track of the individual participants I used the colours allocated to each participant in Chapter 4.

\(^{174}\) These tables are intended to aid the reader in cross-checking the information in Chapter 7.

\(^{175}\) Please see Appendix B. Also note I have reduced these concepts to a more manageable number as described in Chapter 8 (section 8.10) and presented it in the concept reduction table (Appendix C).
The most distinctive difference between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs is the entrepreneurs’ intentional pursuit of opportunities (Krueger, 2003). According to Gaglio and Katz (2001), opportunity identification is fundamental to entrepreneurial behaviour. *The Pocket Oxford English Dictionary* (Le Mesurier & McIntosh, 1965) defines opportunity as “a time, juncture, or condition of things favourable to an end or purpose, or admitting of something being done or affected”. Thus, entrepreneurial opportunities consist of the ideas, beliefs and actions which support the creation of products and services in the future but without there being current markets for them (Sarasvathy, Dew, Velamuri, & Venkataraman, 2003). Hindle (2010) questions whether the existence of opportunities represents either an objective reality or a social construction. He is of the opinion that the evaluation of opportunities is a core entrepreneurial skill. I agree with this assertion and I do not believe that an entrepreneurial opportunity has to present a completely novel product or service. Instead, an entrepreneurial opportunity may be a novel way of looking at an existing product or service; for example, Starbucks did not invent coffee but they did revolutionise the coffee vending industry.

The execution of a viable opportunity may depend on a positive perception of the desirability and perceived feasibility of that opportunity (Krueger, 2003). No matter how desirable a venture may appear to an entrepreneur there must also be a minimum level of feasibility for it to succeed. Both the possession of the information or prior knowledge necessary for opportunity identification and the cognitive style required to exploit the opportunity are crucial elements in the enactment of an opportunity (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Cohen and Levinthal (1990) suggest that prior knowledge of a subject may aid the recognition of the relative importance of specific information on that topic. Creative ideas are crafted as opportunities from the innovative person’s prior knowledge (Ward, 2004). This viewpoint was confirmed by Eckhardt and Shane (2010).
Alvarez, Barney and Young (2010) and also Sarasvathy et al. (2003) identified three epistemological traditions of opportunity formation. There is debate among entrepreneurship scholars as to whether:

(i) Opportunities exist and entrepreneurs discover them (Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Kirzner, 1997; Shane, 2000; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Venkataraman, 1997). This is the realist – also termed the positivist (Chell, 2008, p. 132) – approach in terms of which the real world regarded as being independent of our perceptions of it. According to this approach, entrepreneurs are more alert to opportunities than non-entrepreneurs and they use their personal experience and knowledge to exploit opportunities (Shane, 2000). It is important that the entrepreneur is able to predict whether there will be a demand for their product in the future and whether the price of the product will exceed the costs of such product (Eckhardt & Shane, 2010). There may, however, be considerable uncertainty in this prediction, for example, a lack of information on many levels in respect of price, demand, and alternative suppliers. Thus, prior knowledge about the product, industry and situation may be beneficial in the process (Eckhardt & Shane, 2010; Shane, 2000).

(ii) Entrepreneurs enact opportunities by constructing such opportunities mentally from their perceptions of the world around them (Krueger, 2003; Weick, 2001; Gartner, Carter, & Reynolds, 2010). Gartner et al. (2010, p. 115) are not convinced that opportunities are discovered and they support the enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities. Enactment, as part of active sense-making, resembles a self-fulfilling prophecy and links organising with sense-making (Weick, 2003). From a constructionist point of view, “opportunities exist in the perceptions” of the entrepreneur (Alvarez et al., 2010, p. 27). Non-entrepreneurs may even see opportunities in the same light as a lion sees a snake – the lion knows the snake is there but does nothing about the snake; perhaps even seeing it as dangerous or trying to avoid it. Thus it may be said that that entrepreneurs perceive and make sense of conditions and phenomena

A comparison between the three views of entrepreneurial opportunity is available in Sarasvathy et al. (2003, p. 146).
differently from non-entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs have a goal, they scan the environment for information which they interpret and they use their findings in order to take the relevant action and make the opportunity a reality (Daft & Weick, 1984; Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Weick, 2001). For example, Starbucks started making coffee from their coffee beans only after clients had asked to taste the coffee before buying the beans (Gartner et al., 2010). This approach is in accordance with effectuation logic in terms of which a set of means is taken as a given and the focus is on selecting “between possible effects that can be created with that set of means” (Sarasvathy, 2001, p. 245).

(iii) Opportunity recognition may be included in the debate between opportunity discovery and opportunity creation. This third approach – opportunity recognition – characterises the evolutionary realist who combines the strengths of opportunity discovery and opportunity creation. Opportunities are not perceived as existing independent of the individual’s action but, instead, the actions and reactions of the entrepreneur form new opportunities and the individual entrepreneur changes during the enactment of such opportunities (Alvarez, Barney & Young, 2010). The ability to sense and adapt quickly during uncertainty is a critical quality of an entrepreneur (Ireland, Hill, & Simon, 2003). However, the need for constant path adjustment may mean that the entrepreneur will probably be unable to see where the business will go and what it will look like in future.

Alvarez and Barney (2007, p. 145) suggest that future researchers will have to “examine the context under which entrepreneurs are operating”. This is, in fact, what I have attempted to do in this study.

Shane and Venkataraman (2000) identify the existence, discovery, creation and exploitation of opportunities as the four dimensions of entrepreneurial opportunity. While the discovery or recognition of opportunities is crucial to starting up a business the focus of this study is on the exploitation of these opportunities. I believe that an understanding of the way in which entrepreneurs exploit opportunities successfully will provide an insight into the entrepreneurial mindset. According to Allen and Economy (2008), the entrepreneurial mindset includes a
high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, self-discipline, tenacity, strong inner drive, personal responsibility, and no fear of failure as well as being opportunity focused.

In South Africa many opportunities are enacted but, sadly, the majority end in failure (Kelly, Bosma & Amorós, 2010; Rwigema & Venter, 2004; Bruwer, 2012) with people often not assessing the potential of opportunities accurately or else not exploiting opportunities effectively. As Hindle (2010) emphasises, it is the ability to evaluate the opportunity correctly that is crucial. However, although it is true, the key question to ask is how can an individual improve the chances of success of a business start-up?

It is important at this point to explore the concept of enactment. Enactment refers to the process by which people bring events and structures, the enacted environment, into existence and set them in motion. Prior to taking action the individual had to bridge the gap or uncertainty which existed between the prevailing situation prior to enactment and the potentially enacted situation. Weick (2001) points out that, in such a case, the individual anticipates that the enactment process will make sense.

Using the work of the French philosopher, Jean Baudrillard, as a basis, Williams (2010) illustrates how the enactment process helps the novice entrepreneur to become more expert or, at least, to come to resemble the image which the novice entrepreneur has of what an entrepreneur acts and sounds like. By acting in a professional way the actor becomes more professional, as people tend to become what they do repeatedly (Williams, 2010).

In addition, the enactment of opportunities of growth improves with experience. The enactment process provides entrepreneurs with opportunities to use their special capabilities and resources in order to generate a competitive advantage (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). Allon (Raizcorp), Natasha (tashas), Tessa (Tessa Sonik Fabrics) and Suzette (Purrfect Place) had all managed to achieve this. More opportunities may also emerge as a result of the enactment process (Alvarez et al., 2010).
The majority of the participants in the study who became serial entrepreneurs had experienced first-hand how to grow their businesses successfully in ways which they had not foreseen during start-up. The enactment process involves a series of course adjustments which are, in turn, interrupted by periods of sense-making. As Alvarez et al. (2010) emphasise, it is a non-linear and often messy process.

Frese (2012) is of the opinion that enacting opportunities is more about changing the environment rather than adjusting or reacting to it. Entrepreneurs create new realities by turning their ideas into reality (Weick, 2001). However, it is also essential that the entrepreneur must be discerning and, as previously mentioned, a number of incremental adjustments are often necessary in order to establish a new product or service.

It was clear from the participants’ accounts that they viewed opportunities in different ways. This will be discussed next.

Digging

Albert was a necessity entrepreneur who had had no prior business knowledge or experience when he had bought his first business – the ACC. Initially he had been reluctant to buy the ACC but, once he had done so, he focused on growing the business. Although the ACC had taken off immediately because of the need for and quality of the service offered, this success was short-lived because of the poor financial management and interpersonal relationships Albert admitted to.

His second business was an opportunity enactment and, by the end of this study, had not yet taken off. Albert was not making the incremental shifts necessary to align the business with the need in the market. He had expected the market to adjust to the business. In 2012 he had stated that he was not an entrepreneur. He believed entrepreneurs were cold hearted people and this was contrary to his perception of what he was.

We learn from Albert that an excellent education, a high quality product, a business opportunity – a need for the product – and willing, paying customers are not sufficient to ensure the success of a business.
Allon was a serial opportunity entrepreneur who had started out using a radical, if not completely novel, idea to trigger his shoe sales in a retail business. This had attracted the attention of a multimillionaire entrepreneur and this, in turn, had changed the course of Allon’s life. Once he realised the value of an experienced mentor he had enacted an opportunity to start Raizcorp – a business which supported the opportunity enactment of other entrepreneurs and completed the cycle by paying forward what had helped him. Allon rated the ability of an entrepreneur to recognise opportunities highly and believed that opportunities were everywhere. He had enacted opportunities in various fields and worked in the field of opportunity enactment as a business accelerator.

Dianne was another necessity entrepreneur who had actively sought out opportunities in order to earn a living. However, desperate to make a living she had often chose opportunities that were not suited to her skills level. The opportunities she identified became insurmountable barriers and caused her deep distress. During the latter part of 2013 she had realised that she was not an entrepreneur as she was not able to handle the uncertainty and the constant battle for financial survival involved in being an entrepreneur. Consequently, she had started working for a recruitment agency. Dianne illustrated the importance of effectuation – using our real resources – and matching our skills with those required for successful opportunity enactment.

Lily had taken early retirement and had started her own business. Initially she had continued in her original field as a human resource consultant. However, shortly thereafter she had used part of her pension fund to enact an opportunity to start a cat hotel. Lily was a lifestyle entrepreneur who was working hard to transform her passion into a successful business.

Neill was an opportunity hunter and often obtained ideas from other people. Although he had been excited by numerous opportunities he had enacted a fraction of those opportunities only. Not all the opportunities he saw had suited his personality and resources. He had started businesses out of both need and opportunity. The businesses which had involved enacting opportunities, namely, IR and rental property, had outlasted those business that he had started out of need, namely, AFC Creations and the recruitment agency. Sprightly Sprouts had
had the potential to last much longer, but he had looked upon it as a hobby rather than a business as he had had a full time job at the time.

In May 2014 he had decided, with great enthusiasm, to start a training centre. However, a month later he admitted to me that he had realised that he worked better as a sub-contractor or in association with other entrepreneurs in the human resources (industrial relations) field. He had, therefore, relinquished the idea of the training centre in favour of his IR contracts.

**Natasha** was a serial opportunity entrepreneur. She had, over a period of many years, developed great expertise as a restaurateur and this had, in turn, enabled her to recognise and enact opportunities in this field successfully. She had opened several restaurants and franchised tashas extremely successfully.

**Tessa** was also a serial opportunity entrepreneur who had enacted multiple opportunities in the high-end textile and interior decorating industries.

Natasha and Tessa had remained in one field of expertise throughout their careers. They had built up expertise in their respective fields and had both grown their businesses into sought-after brands in South Africa.

Although **Suzette** was also a serial opportunity entrepreneur she was operating a lifestyle business at the time of the study. Her reason for keeping Purrfect Place a single boutique venue rather than franchising it had been to provide her with the opportunity to start a second business, Quantum Gain, as an entrepreneur mentor and networker. Scaling up the cat hotel in order to increase the net income derived from it significantly would have made it extremely difficult for Suzette to pursue her studies and run her mentoring business. Although the cat hotel was a lucrative, fun business that she loved, Quantum Gain satisfied her strong need to develop human and business potential. During the three years preceding this study she had placed Quantum Gain on hold but planned to grow it once she completed her doctoral study. She was hoping to use the insights she gained from her doctoral study in Quantum Gain.

Table 6.1 below summarises the opportunism of the participants and compares their entrepreneurial behaviour.
### Table 6.1: The participants as necessity versus opportunity entrepreneurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Entrepreneurship Type</th>
<th>Business Experience</th>
<th>Business Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Opportunity entrepreneur</td>
<td>Serial entrepreneur and entrepreneur mentor</td>
<td>Enacted multiple opportunities in different fields. Considerable tenacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Opportunity entrepreneur</td>
<td>Serial entrepreneur</td>
<td>Enacted multiple opportunities in the same industry. Considerable tenacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Opportunity entrepreneur</td>
<td>Serial entrepreneur</td>
<td>Enacted multiple opportunities in the same industry. Considerable tenacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Opportunity entrepreneur</td>
<td>Serial entrepreneur and entrepreneur mentor</td>
<td>Enacted multiple opportunities in different fields. Lifestyle entrepreneur. Considerable tenacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Opportunity and necessity entrepreneur</td>
<td>Serial entrepreneur</td>
<td>Started multiple businesses in different fields. Lifestyle entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>One, short-lived, necessity business</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enacted a single opportunity – her cat hotel. Lifestyle entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Necessity entrepreneur in first business</td>
<td>Minimal business experience</td>
<td>Opportunity enactment in his second business which was still not sustainable at the time of the study Had a negative perception of entrepreneurship NOT an entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Necessity entrepreneur</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low self-awareness – Did not realise when she was out of her depth. Changed focus area frequently NOT an entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When we consider the entrepreneurial activity of the participants, it is clear that those based on opportunity enactment were more successful than those driven by need alone. The possession of the information required for opportunity identification and the cognitive style necessary to exploit the opportunity which has been identified are crucial elements in the enactment of opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). The necessity entrepreneurs in the study were not always in possession of sufficient relevant information. When we consider the information in Table 6.1 the opportunity entrepreneurs experienced greater success than the necessity entrepreneurs. In the case where an individual pursued both opportunities and started businesses out of need the former were more successful than the latter.

Although every participant had enacted opportunities – even when driven by need – their intentions had varied. It is, thus, appropriate to consider entrepreneurial intentions next.

### 6.2.2 Entrepreneurial intentions

For the purposes of this study the African lion was used as a metaphor for the entrepreneur. It is important to note that the lion is discerning in what it hunts. The energy gained from eating the prey must more than compensate for the energy expended during the hunt. Accordingly, lions hunt with focused intent and will hunt prey of the right type and size (desirable) only and when they intuitively know that there is a high probability of their making a kill (feasibility). It is worth noting that this was not true of all eight of the participating entrepreneurs. Krueger (2003, p. 109; 2009, p. 51) defines intention as “the cognitive state temporally and causally prior to” action. Clearly if there is no intention there will be no action. Entrepreneurial intentions play an important role in opportunity enactment and must be underpinned by the belief that the entrepreneurial behaviour is both feasible and desirable (Krueger, 2003).

Hindle, Klyver, and Jennings (2009, p. 39) highlight two entrepreneurial intention models; namely, the entrepreneurial event model and the theory of planned
behaviour. The entrepreneurial event model of Shapero (1982) suggests that entrepreneurial intentions depend on the “ability, feasibility and propensity of the entrepreneur to act”. The ability of the entrepreneur to correctly evaluate or judge these factors is extremely important to prevent the failure of the venture (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). The entrepreneur remains in a state of inertia until a specific occurrence triggers the assessment of possible opportunities.

According to the theory of planned behaviour entrepreneurial intentions depend on the individual's attitudes and subjective norms as well as the perceived feasibility of the opportunity. Krueger (2000, 2009) discusses an intentions model which incorporates perceived desirability and feasibility and also the role of exogenous factors such as family, social network or mentor influences. Krueger (2000, 2009) emphasises the importance of enhancing the above-mentioned perceptions. Regardless of which model one considers, it is clear that perception plays an important role in the entrepreneurial intention process. The accuracy of the perceptions of the entrepreneurs in this study was influenced by the level of his or her expertise or the mental models supporting the decisions he or she made.

People’s intentions also change over time and it is relatively easy to talk about one's intention to start or expand a business. However, it is only when these intentions are enacted that there is any possibility of success. Entrepreneurial intention – the antecedent to enactment – is not only about creating new ventures but also about "creating new values in existing ventures" (Bird, 1988, p. 443). However, as Bird (1988) points out, this requires both perseverance and courage177.

It is clear that the intention of the Africa lion to hunt is driven by instinct and hunger. Let us explore the type of hunger to build a business which was demonstrated by the participants.

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177 I discuss courage in more detail under Risk Taking Propensity, Courage and Fear of Failure – section 6.2.11.
Albert's need for additional income, his vulnerability after his divorce, his high self-efficacy\textsuperscript{178} and his overconfidence\textsuperscript{179} bias had opened him up to the opportunity that was presented to him.

In Allon's case, it was his need for autonomy\textsuperscript{180} and achievement\textsuperscript{181} that had triggered his intention to become a successful entrepreneur and his mentor had supported him in this process. Despite all the difficult times his intention had never faltered. He had even resisted reconciling with his parents because he feared that he would lose his drive to succeed if he did so.

When the vehicle security company where he worked experienced cash flow problems his mentor had encouraged him to take responsibility for the business. Allon had realised that he needed to improve his skills if the business were to survive. Not only did the business survive, but the experience made him more resilient than had previously been the case. He persevered and used the challenges he faced in order to learn and grow. With more than five hundred companies in his portfolio at the time of the study Allon had learned to remain focused and he had also become extremely effective in opportunity enactment.

Dianne had been driven to start her own business by her need for a primary income. However, her intentions had not been either clear or consistent. She was inexperienced and without a mentor and she took on projects at random; some of which were beyond her capacity and capabilities. However, she had been too inexperienced to realise that.

When projects did not materialise Dianne had become depressed. In addition, she had often self-sabotaged the process she was involved in because she had known subconsciously that she did not have either the product or the service to deliver on a project. Despite the seven years she had spent trying to establish the business it had never been successful enough to sustain her financially. Eventually, her

\textsuperscript{178} Please see section 6.2.5 for more details on self-efficacy.
\textsuperscript{179} Please see section 6.2.5 for more details on overconfidence.
\textsuperscript{180} Please see section 6.2.3 for more details on autonomy.
\textsuperscript{181} Please see section 6.2.10 for more details on the need for achievement.
intentions had changed from running her own business to finding a job, as long as she received a salary at the end of the month.

**Lily’s** love for cats and her need to earn an own income in an environment in which she felt in control had prompted her to open her cat hotel. However, her intentions were focused on the needs of the cats rather than on the needs of the owners who paid the accounts.

**Natasha’s** intention to become a successful restaurateur had been triggered by her success in the industry. In addition, her need to be in control had meant she wanted to own her own restaurant.

**Neill** often obtained ideas for opportunities from the people round him. Both his restless nature and his need for his own business had enticed him to consider many business options although he had started only a few of these businesses. Although he had a strong need for autonomy, he eventually realised that he operated more successfully as a subcontractor in association with successful businesses. However, this had not changed his intention to have his own business and, at the time of the study, his rental properties were fulfilling that need.

**Suzette** had a deep need for autonomy and she also enjoyed the excitement of running her own business. However, her need for control had limited the size of her businesses. At the time of the study her intention was to grow Quantum Gain once she had more time available.

Her keen need for creative expression had been **Tessa’s** the driving force. She needed to be a trendsetter and have fun in her own business. She had a sound support structure and good resources. This had reduced the stress involved in starting and running her own business.

Table 6.2 presents a summary of the different needs that had driven the eight participants to start their own businesses.
Table 6.2: Primary reason(s) for the participants for starting an own business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Need for autonomy</th>
<th>Need for independence</th>
<th>Fun excitement</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Passion for the business</th>
<th>Need for control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon 1\textsuperscript{183}</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon 2\textsuperscript{184}</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill 1\textsuperscript{185}</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill 2\textsuperscript{186}</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill 3\textsuperscript{187}</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette\textsuperscript{188}</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette\textsuperscript{189}</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Got it!

The need for autonomy, independence and control all emerged as primary intentions on the part of the participants to enact opportunities. The thrill of the adrenalin rush that comes with closing a deal or increasing the business turnover and profit margins adds energy to the process of growing an own business. The study revealed that passion for a specific field had featured in the opportunity entrepreneurs only while the necessity entrepreneurs had not considered their passion or lack thereof for the industry in which they had started their business.

\textsuperscript{182} Please see section 6.2.11 for more details on control and the illusion of control.
\textsuperscript{183} New York Sausage Factory
\textsuperscript{184} Raizcorp
\textsuperscript{185} AFC Creations
\textsuperscript{186} IR Consulting
\textsuperscript{187} Rental properties
\textsuperscript{188} School
\textsuperscript{189} Purrfect Place
In view of the fact autonomy emerged as one of the primary reasons for the entrepreneurs starting their own businesses, I discuss is next.

6.2.3 Autonomy

The need for autonomy is not unique to entrepreneurs. Male lions also have a strong need for autonomy. For the first two years of their lives the young lions remain with their mother in the pride but, as they grow older and more assertive, their need for autonomy drives them to start challenging the authority in the pride. By the time they are four years old the young bachelor lions are no longer willing to live under the authority of the older male(s) and they start looking for their own territory; ready to fight another lion for his pride. When one of the young lions takes over the territory and pride of a defeated older male, the young lion usually kills the small cubs in the pride. This, in turn, means that the females come into oestrus again and the young lion mates with them; thereby establishing his own bloodline and also his autonomy.

Autonomy refers to the “independent action of an individual” and “the ability and will to be self-directed” (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996, p. 140). The majority of entrepreneurs demonstrate a marked preference for autonomy and independence in decision-making – primary drivers of entrepreneurial action (Carter, Gartner, Shaver & Gatewood, 2003; Douglas, 2009; Rwigema & Venter, 2004). Starting an own business may be a way of reducing uncertainty and, thus, it is often an attractive option for risk-averse individuals (Gifford, 2003). In addition, the individual who has started his or her own business feels in control of his or her destiny, especially in times of job insecurity.

The need for autonomy was a major reason for most of the participants starting their own businesses. Table 6.3 presents the participants’ need for autonomy in business on a continuum of the lowest need on the left to the highest on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need for autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: The participants’ need for autonomy in business
The study revealed that the experiences of the participants as entrepreneurs demonstrated a strong need for autonomy underpinning the successful enactment of opportunities. However, together with autonomy comes the responsibility of managing resources. The topic of resources is discussed next.

6.2.4 Resources

Rwigema and Venter (2004, p. 33) and Dollinger (1995, p. 25) define resources as anything that is useful and of quality. Kayo (2006) cites education, knowledge, attitude and mindset, including specific skills and abilities, as less-tangible entrepreneurial resources. According to Rwigema and Venter (2004), the entrepreneur blends opportunity, resources and workforce to add value and produce a new venture. According to Barney (1990), human resources may contribute to the competitive edge of a business.

Certain resources may be extremely rare and valuable for a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, Wright & Ketcher, 2001). It is one of the responsibilities of the entrepreneur to secure sufficient valuable, unique, rare or difficult to substitute resources of the right quality to ensure that the competitive advantage is maintained (Rwigema & Venter, 2004).

The entrepreneurs who took part in the study had all had multiple resources at their disposal, including finance, physical assets and human capital. Some had used combinations of resources to retain a competitive advantage to ensure the success of their businesses. According to Schuler and Jackson (1987), this is very important. Although not all the participants had valued their resources equally, those who did had reaped the benefits.

The mental models of the participants regarding their resources and how this affected the growth of their businesses are discussed next.
Albert had focused on service delivery as a competitive advantage although the proximity of ACC to a school had been equally as important. However, he had not valued the fact that children were able to walk from school to ACC and, hence parents, who were not able to transport their children straight after school and who required after school care would find his services extremely valuable.

Albert’s mindset that money was the root of all evil had also prevented him from pricing his services correctly. In addition, his inability to manage the finances of the business – including pricing – pro-actively, had contributed directly to the closure of the business. Thus, although he had felt too sorry for the parents to increase his prices, he had robbed them of one of their resources – an educational haven for their children.

The fact that he did not manage this valuable resource responsibly meant that his staff members lost their independence and the income upon which they depended. In addition, he had not valued his staff members as a resource highly enough to draw on their knowledge and insight to help address the financial challenges ACC experienced and neither did he mentor them to enable them to develop optimally. Albert was of the view that by treating them fairly he had done what was right. He did not realise that his product was not his only resource and he overlooked the location of his business, his customers and his staff as valuable resources.

Allon had maximised his resources by listing each potential resource and, true to his competitive nature, he had used shift questions to ensure he optimised each resource. His use of resources had improved as his expertise and confidence grew.

He maintained that he did not have “staff” and that everyone working in his businesses was a colleague; even the lady who made the tea or the hospitality hostess as she was known. He developed each member in his team optimally and his mindset was that “if someone is better than me at something, they become
responsible for it”. Hence, his aim was to employ people who were better than him.

**Dianne** had had very few physical resources but, even so, she had not fully utilised the physical resources she had. In addition, she had often lacked the resources required to deliver on her promises. When she had obtained resources they had often not been suitable for their intended purpose. Her mindset was that she could obtain the resources she required. However, this was clearly not the case as her judgement regarding the resources which were necessary had not been sound. She had not had staff and had haphazardly made deals with people she knew, manifesting little, if any, control over the quality of her resources.

**Lily** had used her physical resources fairly effectively. She had sometimes committed to situations that limited her resources, albeit temporarily, and this had, in turn, resulted in major stress for her.

**Natasha** was always alert to possible resources and used them to their maximum advantage. When tashas became part of the Famous Brand group she had retained control over the high impact resources. Despite her vast array of material resources she regarded the tashas staff as her most important resource. The fact that she was both aware of this and that she ensured that her staff members were motivated and happy was very important in her industry; an industry where the staff are often the face of the business.

**Neill** had started with few resources but had expanded his portfolio of resources and managed them well. He was also good at recognising the resources he had at his disposal.

**Tessa** had had extensive financial, physical and human capital and she had used these well and, to my surprise, also autocratically.

A lack of resources, especially in the form of a support structure, had contributed towards the failure of **Suzette’s** ballet school. However, since that time she had learned to build resources and, by the time, she started Purrfect Place she had had sufficient resources to support the process. She believed that one had to accumulate resources before one actually needed them. Although the staff at
Purrfect Place was not the face of the business, she valued their contribution to the smooth operation of the business. She regarded her staff as an extension of herself, providing her with the opportunities to achieve increasingly more.

Tables 6.4 and 6.5 present the mental models of the eight participants on physical resources and human capital.

### Table 6.4: The participants’ mental models with regard to resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental models of resources</th>
<th>Most effective</th>
<th>Least effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allon</strong></td>
<td>Everything and everybody is a resource.</td>
<td>Made good use of her limited resources but not always for financial gain (charity mindset).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natasha</strong></td>
<td>Treasure resources; staff is key.</td>
<td>Focussed on product/service only; overlooking all his other resources. He saw money as the root of all evil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neill</strong></td>
<td>Get the most out of resources.</td>
<td>Had limited resources and they were not always suitable for their intended purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tessa</strong></td>
<td>Manage financial, physical and human capital well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suzette</strong></td>
<td>Treasure your resources and use them creatively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lily</strong></td>
<td>Made good use of her limited resources but not always for financial gain (charity mindset).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Albert</strong></td>
<td>Focussed on product/service only; overlooking all his other resources. He saw money as the root of all evil.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dianne</strong></td>
<td>Had limited resources and they were not always suitable for their intended purpose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6.5: The participants’ mental models with regard to staff as a resource

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental models of staff</th>
<th>Most effective</th>
<th>Least effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natasha</strong></td>
<td>Without them I am nothing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allon</strong></td>
<td>They are a super-extension of me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suzette</strong></td>
<td>They are an extension of me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neill</strong></td>
<td>Staff is a resource. Use it well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tessa</strong></td>
<td>Staff is a resource.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lily</strong></td>
<td>A help and a hindrance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Albert</strong></td>
<td>Staff is a tool.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dianne</strong></td>
<td>No staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Got it!**

Those participants who identified, secured, valued and managed quality resources and which were optimally suited to the situation were more successful as compared to the other participants. The ability to identify all the resources available is clearly very important, while the ability to know when and how to utilise
which resource is also crucial for success. In the main these abilities improve as the entrepreneur gains a greater understanding of both the business and the resources required. In addition, this increased understanding also leads to the development of realistic self-efficacy and confidence on the part of entrepreneurs.

6.2.5 Self-efficacy and confidence

When I think of the role which confidence plays in achieving success I immediately think of lions during a hunt. Insecurity and overconfidence almost always guarantee that a hunt will be unsuccessful. In my mind I see the lioness crouching low in the tall grass. She stops and sniffs the air. The breeze carries the distinct scent of zebra to her. She has already singled out an older zebra grazing at the back of the herd. Her intention is clear and her focus is single minded. Finally, like a huge, golden bullet she shoots out of her hideout. There is no hesitation and, tonight, she and her pride will have full stomachs. The confidence that comes from many kills provides her with expert timing.

According to The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (1965, p. 162), confidence is a “firm trust in oneself or one’s chances”. It would, thus, appear that confidence may be regarded as the delicate point of equilibrium between insecurity and overconfidence. Overconfidence, self-efficacy, the illusion of control\textsuperscript{190}, and the belief in small numbers\textsuperscript{191} all play a role in whether or not entrepreneurs start a business (Simon, Houghton & Aquino, 1999; Krueger, 2003). However, more is required if a business is to succeed.

Self-efficacy was described by Bandura (1997) as a person’s belief in his or her ability to achieve a desired outcome. Thus, self-efficacy refers to the confidence a person has in his or her ability to accomplish a specific task or related set of tasks (Douglas, 2009; Eckhardt & Shane, 2010) or to their judgment regarding their task specific ability (Pervin & John, 2001). It must, however, be noted that a person’s perceived self-efficacy is not always the same as their real self-efficacy or actual ability to cope successfully with a specific task or project (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001).

\textsuperscript{190} Please see Control and the illusion of control in section 6.2.11
\textsuperscript{191} For Representativeness bias please see section 5.6.7
Empirical research has shown that “high self-efficacy is fundamental in most human functioning” and that it is also a “predictor of success” (Markman & Baron, 2003, p. 288). However, there remains uncertainty as to whether high self-efficacy leads to success or whether success results in high self-efficacy (Mauer, Neergaard, & Linstad, 2009). Individuals who perceive themselves as possessing low self-efficacy tend to be prone to anxiety. In the business context it would appear that self-efficacy also influences the amount of effort an individual is willing to invest in a business as well as the individual’s reactions to failure (Markman, Baron, & Balkin, 2005). When self-efficacy drives entrepreneurs to prove to themselves that they capable of achieving what they have set out to do, this enhances possibility of success.

People who are high in self-efficacy welcome opportunities for growth while they also tend to show more perseverance when faced with challenges as compared to people who are low in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Markman et al. (2005) define perseverance as the tendency to persist in misfortune. Cope and Watts (2000) point out that perseverance is linked to learning. In order to learn it is essential that we persevere and learn through our experiences. This is necessary in the building of a successful business (Van Gelderen, 2012). Both self-efficacy and perseverance are important in entrepreneurship. Baron (2004, p. 224) believes they play a key role in the motivation to become an entrepreneur. Krueger and Brazeal (1994); Krueger (2003) and Eckhardt and Shane (2010) emphasise that they also underlie the important perceived feasibility of a venture. Urban (2006) and Krueger (2003, p. 124) found that self-efficacy has a significant impact on perceptions of both opportunity and threat. Finally, Monsen and Urbig (2009) link the perception of self-efficacy in combination with the illusion of control¹⁹² to risk taking.¹⁹³ Overestimating our abilities may cause us to underestimate the risks we take.

Overconfidence is the result of a tendency on the part of the decision-maker to be initially overly optimistic about a situation. In addition, the decision-maker may also overestimate their ability to obtain all the information required about the situation (Gustafsson, 2009, p. 291). Entrepreneurs who are overconfident tend to

¹⁹² For Control please see section 6.2.11.
¹⁹³ For Risk taking please see section 6.2.11
overestimate their knowledge or abilities relative to what is required for achieving success (Douglas, 2009).

Overconfident individuals often do not realise how removed from reality their perceptions are (Simon et al., 1999), regarding their assumptions about their abilities as facts. Accordingly, there is a high possibility that they will jump at opportunities (Friedman, 2007). If their assumptions are based on the law of small numbers\textsuperscript{194}, as is often the case, and they are incorrect; the outlook may be very bleak (Busenitz & Barney, 1997; Chell, 2008). According to Busenitz and Barney (1997), entrepreneurs have a greater tendency than the managers in organisations to overestimate their ability to succeed. This was very obvious in the study in the first businesses of the participants; notably, Albert, Dianne and a young Allon.

Overconfidence is not the same as high self-efficacy and it is, by definition, an overinflated level of confidence. A high level of self-efficacy may be an overinflated perception of self but it may also be based on real skills and knowhow and not inflated in way at all. The self-efficacy perceptions and confidence levels of the eight participating entrepreneurs are discussed below.

\textbf{Digging}

\textbf{Albert} displayed a high level of self-efficacy and he had believed that making a success of ACC would be easy. However, he had not been completely honest with himself and, hence, there had been a large gap between his perceived and actual self-efficacy and this had, in turn, contributed to his overconfidence.

His ongoing success in his academic career may have contributed to his overconfidence. He admitted that he had been arrogant about his ability to make a success of his first business and stated that he had believed that, because he had a PhD in physics, he would also be good in business.

He had often had a laissez faire attitude to important decisions; underestimating the impact of wrong decisions. This had been especially true for financial

\textsuperscript{194} This is also known as the \textit{representativeness bias}. Please see section 5.6.7.
management and it had contributed to the failure of his first business. Albert lacked the mental models that supported entrepreneurial success and his arrogance had prevented him from acquiring these mental models because he was not able to acknowledge his responsibility in the mistakes he had made. He maintained that the failure of his business had not been the result of anything he had either done or not done.

During our first official interview he became aware of some of the mistakes he had made in his first business and undertook not to repeat them. However, the last time we spoke it emerged that he was making some of the same mistakes in his second business that he had made in his first business.

Allon’s self-efficacy was high and his mindset was “If I don’t have/know it, someone I know, will”. When he had started the NYSF he had expected that success would be easier than it had, in fact, been. Learning from his failure and with the help of his mentor his self-efficacy had become more realistic and, by the time Raizcorp had become successful, his initial arrogance had gradually transformed into confidence and humility. However, he did not lose the stubbornness which had stood him in good stead.

His initial unrealistically high self-efficacy and arrogance had served as a double edged sword. On the one hand it had prevented him from listening to the expert advice of people such as Negative Ned and it had contributed to the challenges he had experienced at the NYSF but, on the other hand, it had given him the courage to try again after failure. Every time he recovered from failure with a little more expertise. He fully understood the role overconfidence had played in the failure of his first business, the NYSF. Once he had learned to manage his ego, his decision-making had improved. This was clearly evident in the success of Raizcorp.

Allon believed that self-efficacy was crucial when one started a new business. He was extremely driven and resilient and had persevered even when failure appeared imminent. He had often turned “lost” deals around.

Despite Dianne’s initial high level of self-efficacy business success had eluded her. On the one hand she was apparently so overconfident that she did not
prepare adequately for workshops she held and she had also tendered for training programmes that were beyond the capabilities and capacity of her business. Clearly her self-efficacy had been stronger than her discomfort with the uncertainty of the tender process. On the other hand, when she was not awarded the tender, she had not questioned the quality of her programme but had, instead, blamed outside sources. Her overconfidence and unrealistic self-efficacy had not only prevented her from questioning herself but also from learning valuable lessons. She also lacked tenacity and had abandoned projects at the first indication of possible failure.

She was not always honest with herself and did not make enough sense of her lack of business success to understand why success was so elusive. A lack of in-depth knowledge and experience in business, combined with a high level of self-efficacy, may have contributed to her overconfidence bias. Her judgments were not anchored in past experiences but in, what Chell (2008) terms, visions of the future. Unlike most of the other participants she did not learn from her mistakes and, towards the end of the study, she was still not being completely honest with herself.

Lily had low self-efficacy and had been insecure and anxious about her ability to succeed in business. She had definitely displayed no indication of an overconfidence bias. Despite her passion for cats her high anxiety levels had prevented her from having fun in her business. Although she was very confident about her ability to take care of cats, she had overestimated her ability to cope with the amount of manual labour involved in running a cat hotel and she had struggled to cope with the workload. At the time of the study she had been making ends meet but had started to question whether it was worth all the effort.

Natasha believed in her ability to successfully complete whatever she set out to do. She was accurate in her judgement of her own abilities. Her self-efficacy was high, but realistic as she had achieved success every time she had started up a business. She had a healthy confidence level which was the result of her experience of successfully overcoming the challenges of each new business she had started. She was driven and displayed tenacity and resilience. When she made mistakes she learned quickly from these mistakes and moved on without
repeating the same mistakes. During the time I spent with Natasha she did not show any indication of an overconfidence bias.

Neill had a high level of self-efficacy and he believed he could do anything to which he set his mind. He was also willing to learn from his mistakes. While he tended to underestimate projects his perseverance and self-efficacy stood him in good stead in physical endeavours.

In AFC Creations he had displayed an overconfidence bias. His lack of knowledge of and experience in the industry specific processes and his high level of self-efficacy had contributed to this. He had taken on novel and complicated projects that he would not have done if he had not been overconfident. He had had to learn new skills in almost every project he took on. This meant that these projects had taken much longer than he had anticipated while he experimented with the materials and tools required. It was only when he worked on a project that he had realised the challenges involved. This had resulted in his hourly rate dwindling to unsustainably low amounts.

Neill was confident in his real estate rental business about which he was passionate, but negative past experiences had left him with major insecurities in the IR business. In addition, he tended to become frustrated during the more abstract or long term processes which were characterised by a high level of uncertainty. Thus, the uncertainties inherent in the rental business had not diminished his confidence while the uncertainties in the IR, where he was already insecure, had impacted more strongly on his confidence.

Tessa was very optimistic and it was important for her to have fun in her business. Her self-efficacy had sometimes failed her and she had also, on occasions, overestimated the expected sales of a product. However, her many years experience and the size of her business had meant she was able to absorb the occasional mistake. Her decisions were based on chronic mental models which had evolved from a lifetime of exposure in the industry. Accordingly, her sound understanding of her market and the business meant that, intuitively, she was able to do the right thing most of the time. She admitted that her confidence had given
her the courage to fail but that she was not overconfident in her ability to deliver on her business promises.

In common with most of the other participants who were honest with themselves Suzette knew intuitively what she could and could not achieve. When she was calm and centred – not buffeted by either her emotions or ego – she was able to integrate information in her head freely. When this happened she would know what was possible for her and whether she was willing to do what was required to carry out the task or project at hand. Her mental model would be “I can do anything if I really want to and am willing to do what is required to get it done.”

Although she used this mental model often she had not used it when she started Purrfect Place as her passion for cats had provided her with the self-efficacy and confidence required to start the business. Purrfect Place was the first business she had started that had a substantial financial commitment. Nevertheless, determination and resilience had carried her through the more difficult times. She had been driven and confident and she had had fun in this business, but she had never been overconfident.

While all the participants had believed they would be successful not all of them were, in fact, successful. Natasha, Lily and Suzette had not expected it to be easy to start up and grow their own businesses.

Table 6.6 presents the confidence levels of the eight entrepreneurs, from the highest to the lowest, also indicates, where applicable, where these confidence levels changed with experience. The table also provides an indication as to the reasons why some of the entrepreneurs were overconfident as well as how long the business in which they were involved had managed to survive. In addition, the table indicates whether the participants were driven to achieve success. In Table 6.7 the participants are grouped according to their self-efficacy levels.
Table 6.6: The participants’ confidence levels and sense-making related to the survival of their businesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Confidence level</th>
<th>Making sense of it</th>
<th>Survival of business</th>
<th>Driven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Arrogant</td>
<td>Past academic success meets lack of understanding of business</td>
<td>Failed within 3 years.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon – NYSF</td>
<td>Arrogant</td>
<td>A pocket of success drew the attention of an important mentor.</td>
<td>Second attempt succeeded.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill — AFC Creations</td>
<td>Overconfident</td>
<td>Lack of experience and expertise in the field</td>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Apparent overconfidence</td>
<td>Lack of understanding of business, both in general and specifically</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Extensive experience built up incrementally; Good business fit</td>
<td>Successful on an international level</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill – Sprouts</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Good business fit</td>
<td>Lasted less than one year but successful throughout this period</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon – Raizcorp</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Learnt lessons from a series of failures and successes; sense-making; good business fit</td>
<td>Very successful on an international level</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Extensive experience built up incrementally; Good fit</td>
<td>Still successful. twenty years on</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill – Rental property</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Experience; good fit</td>
<td>Successful – in tenth year of existence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette – Bridging school</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Extensive experience and expertise</td>
<td>Successful until sold after eight years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette – Purrfect Place</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Good fit, acquired expertise quickly</td>
<td>Successful – In fourteenth year of existence.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette – Ballet</td>
<td>Slightly insecure</td>
<td>Lack of business expertise and support structures</td>
<td>Successful for eighteen months and then handed over to another teacher</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill – IR Consulting</td>
<td>Insecure</td>
<td>Negative past experiences in IR</td>
<td>In fifth year and successful as a subcontractor</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Insecure</td>
<td>Negative past (business) experiences</td>
<td>In its fourth year and still operating</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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195 Please see section 5.3.
Table 6.7: The participants’ self-efficacy levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High and unrealistic</th>
<th>High and realistic</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert (N)</td>
<td>Allon – Raizcorp (Y)</td>
<td>Neill – IR (Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon – NYSF (N)</td>
<td>Natasha (Y)</td>
<td>Lily (Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne (N)</td>
<td>Tessa (Y)</td>
<td>Suzette – ballet (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill – AFC (N)</td>
<td>Suzette – B school (Y)</td>
<td>Suzette – P place (Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neill – rental property (Y)</td>
<td>Neill – sprouts (N)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When self-efficacy is combined with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) and supported by actual skills it has a positive effect on the growth of a business. While self-efficacy had certainly given the participants the courage required to start their businesses it did not, however, guarantee success. Perceived self-efficacy – if not realistic – and combined with overconfidence may actually have contributed to the downfall of some of the businesses. This is in line with the research finding that overconfidence on the part of entrepreneurs in respect of their skills increases the possibility of the failure of new businesses (Köllinger, Minniti, & Schade, 2005).

Those of the participants who demonstrated a healthy level of confidence were more successful than those who were overconfident. In particular, the study revealed that those entrepreneurs, for example, Allon, whose confidence was realistic rather than too high had been more successful in their endeavours. A possible reason for this is that, when an individual is confident, they are more honest with themselves and have more realistic expectations of what they are capable of than when they are arrogant or overconfident.

Overconfidence provides individuals with the courage to seize opportunities they may not have considered if they had approached the situation more rationally while this courage also supports their ability to move on after failure. On the other
hand, they may take leaps that are well beyond their capabilities and land in
trouble – underestimating the input requirements and overestimating the expected
output of the business. It was clear from the experiences of the participants that
confidence was a more desirable trait than insecurity, overconfidence or
arrogance.

It would appear that that true confidence develops from perseverance, learning
from experiences and challenging our judgements before trusting them. However,
experience does not always protect an individual from the overconfidence bias.
While Dianne’s overconfidence had been the result of her lack of experience,
Albert’s overconfidence had stemmed from positive past experiences.
Nevertheless, their overconfidence had handicapped both of them. Albert’s
success in the academic field was not necessarily relevant to entrepreneurship.
The study showed that relevant business experience only modifies the
entrepreneur’s mental models in the field of entrepreneurship and ensures a more
realistic level of confidence.

The study revealed that, when an entrepreneur’s self-efficacy was realistic, the
chances of success apparently improved dramatically. It would seem that the self-
efficacy–success relationship resembles an iterative loop rather than a linear
process. The participants all demonstrated high self-efficacies which were the
result either of past experience or a lack of understanding of the business in
question. The former had a positive and the latter a negative effect. High self-
awareness enables us both to realise when overconfidence or unrealistic self-
efficacy is blinding us to dangers and pitfalls during opportunity enactment and to
manage it.

Bandura (1997) suggests that a shift in an individual’s self-efficacy is associated
with change at a deeper level and which should lead to changes in the individual’s
mental models. While some of the participants in this study had achieved this by
making sense of their experiences, others had required the assistance of a mentor
to do this.

Sense-making requires both self-awareness and alertness. We will discuss the
concept of alertness.
6.2.6 Alertness

Alertness is key for both the lions (hunters) and the antelope (hunted or prey) of they are to survive on the African plains. The senses of the prey must be sharp enough to detect the subtle signals of approaching danger such as the scent in the air and movement in the tall grass. On the other hand, the hunters use stealth and camouflage and must stay downwind to avoid giving their presence away. The lioness reads the body language of the potential prey in order to select an easy target. In order to succeed it is imperative that the hunter is fully engaged in the hunt as well as interconnected with both the environment and the hunted.

Like the lion the entrepreneur must be alert. This alertness includes a sensitivity to the needs and reactions of the market in respect of the product or service offered, a sensitivity to the quality, relevance and price of that product or service as well as a sensitivity to a multitude of factors that may influence the success of a business. Kirzner (1979; 1985), who coined the term entrepreneurial alertness, defines alertness as a person’s “ability to notice without search opportunities that have hitherto been overlooked” (1979, p. 48) and posits that the vigilant entrepreneur is especially sensitive to signals denoting market disequilibrium. Gaglio and Katz (2001) also found this to be true. Gaglio (2004, p. 534) noted that entrepreneurs perceive and reason differently as compared to non-entrepreneurs in business. According to Gaglio and Winter (2008, p. 209), novice entrepreneurs are more focused on the quality of the service or product while serial entrepreneurs are more alert to networking and cash flow generation. Baron (2004, p. 232) suggests that alert individuals aspire to being more objective and accurate and have more complex models regarding change as compared to non-alert people. Alertness also affects the way in which the entrepreneur perceives risk.

People who are more aware are better than the less aware at monitoring and processing changes in information while they are also more easily alerted by cues from their surroundings notifying them to reassess or adjust their service, product or actions. This enables them to adapt to changes sooner than may otherwise have been the case (Gaglio & Katz, 2001).

According to Puhakka (2011, p. 86), the alertness process, as it appears in the majority of the relevant theories of entrepreneurship, refers to the mental
processes of entrepreneurs and results from a combination of intrinsic qualities and the environmental conditions of the entrepreneurs. Sarasvathy, Simon, and Lave (1998) suggest that alertness depends on the cognitive schema of the individual and assert that it resembles the entrepreneurial schemata as indicated by Amanjee, Crous, and Crafford (2006). Gaglio and Katz (2001) suggest that the alertness of individuals is a result of their more accurate mental models or schemata. The entrepreneur’s alertness schema seeks out anomalies, and assists the individual to notice the unexpected, new, or different in the emerging patterns in their business (Gaglio & Katz, 2001, p. 99). According to Gaglio and Katz (2001), it makes sense that an alertness schema will include mental models of the types of changes and signals or cues that would indicate the actual presence of anomalies or disruptions and even their potential presence. Furthermore, Gaglio and Katz (2001, p. 105) suggest that non-alert people tend to react to unexpected events in a typical way that will involve trying to normalise the “surprise” and alert them react to unexpected events in such a way so as to utilise the “surprise”. Hence, non-alert individual may perceive only the challenge in unusual situations whereas alert entrepreneurs perceive the opportunities presented.

Gaglio and Katz (2001) warn that failure by the entrepreneur to notice and integrate messages regarding market disequilibrium is not the only mistake non-alert entrepreneurs can make. An alertness schema induces a healthy scepticism about the information perceived and provides the entrepreneur with the opportunity to question and challenge information. Excessive optimism in non-alert individuals may lead to bad business decisions.

According to Gaglio and Katz (2001, p. 101), when alertness becomes a chronic schema, “the trade-off between timeliness and accuracy is blurred because an advantage of a chronic schema is that information about key schema attributes can be processed quickly without sacrificing accuracy”. They believe that alert individuals may be expected to engage in one or more of the following: (i) changing category labels in order to activate different schema, (ii) using analogies to make connections between schema, (iii) looking for the counterintuitive and (iv) engaging in counterfactual thinking.
Entrepreneurs with more realistic perception and interpretation abilities tend to demonstrate “a better grip on reality because they perceive it more accurately and are better at inferring the likely implications and consequences” (Gaglio & Katz, 2001, p. 97). These entrepreneurs are able to discern when, as a result of changes in the market and social environment, their existing service and products may have become less effective. This ability to notice messages from the market as quickly as they appear is important (Douglas, 2009). While we all need some level of alertness to survive, it is alertness to what is essential during the decision-making process in the starting-up and growing of a business that appears to be important for successful entrepreneurship. Mitchell, Busenitz, Bird, Gaglio, Morse and Smith (2007) add that alertness to all possible options when making an informed decision aids the decision-making process.

It has been suggested that prior knowledge and experience influence the alertness to opportunity and also that the environment influences entrepreneurial alertness (Shepherd & DeTienne, 2005). Douglas (2009) mentions that successful entrepreneurial endeavours demonstrate that the possession of prior or proprietary knowledge triggers the alertness of nascent entrepreneurs. Baron (2008) suggests that positive emotions enhance the entrepreneurial alertness in an individual while Hills, Lumpkin and Singh (1997) are of the opinion that the quality of an entrepreneur’s network may also contribute to greater alertness on the part of the individual.

In an empirical study comparing the alertness of business managers to that of small business owners Gaglio and Taub (1992) found no difference between the two. Shane (2000) generated empirical evidence that confirmed this finding. However, alertness is not specific to the entrepreneur as it is also present in successful sportsmen and women (Lehrer, 2009). Alertness schemata guide the perceptions and information processing of individuals so that they become more aware of the subtle cues in the environment and this, in turn, enhances their success (Gaglio & Katz, 2001). It would, thus, appear that alertness is essential for success.

In view on the fact that we are focusing on entrepreneurial alertness to opportunities for growing business, the entrepreneur has, by implication, already
started the business and is alert to new possibilities to expand, transform or turn around the business in order to increase its profitability (Koppl & Minniti, 2010).

I was impelled to ask myself whether entrepreneurs have more accurate mental models because of their perceptive skills and attention to detail or whether they perceive situations more accurately because of the quality of their mental models and, hence, they know what to look for. The question that then arises is what schemata does the not-so-alert entrepreneur activate that interferes with or prohibits an accurate assessment of the situation? A possible answer is that the specific individual would probably not be in possession of the prior knowledge required to inform the situation in a positive way.

Valliere (2011, p. 481) discusses the role which alertness plays from the moment the individual notices a change in the environment and how prior knowledge supports the schema of the person in bringing a specific image of the situation into focus and leading to the situated attention that recognises the opportunity that is presenting itself. Valliere (2011) also stresses the importance of the enactment of situated attention in noticing environmental change in a business.

Despite suggestions that IQ may play a role in alertness to opportunities (Hisrich, Langan-Fox & Grant, 2007) I was not able to find a direct link between either IQ or the level of academic education and the level of success of entrepreneurs. Despite the fact that intelligent individuals may be alert to opportunities their (re)action to the signals may not be appropriate or rapid enough.

It appeared from the study that the perceptions of the eight entrepreneurs were dependent on the quality and relevance of their mental models for the context of the situation.

Digging

During my interviews with Albert he stated that he regarded himself as a very alert person. It was clear that he was alert to the quality of the service offered by his business. His alertness schema had also supported his role as a physical science tutor. However, a lack of experience may have led to the fact that he had not been
alert to the cues regarding price, cash flow and staff development in his business. He had only realised that his business was in serious financial trouble when his bank account was deep in overdraft. Once he had realised that the business was in trouble he had not been proactive in addressing the issues at hand. This indicates that he had not realised the seriousness of the situation because he had not had a reference frame – mental models – with which to compare the situation.

He had also been alert to people who were experiencing financial difficulty because he had experienced such difficulty and, therefore, he had a mental model of “price increases are scary”. In his second business, instead of listening to the messages from potential clients, he had blamed their lack of interest in his product on their being narrow-minded, conservative and greedy and he had not questioned either his or his partners’ contribution to their inability to obtain a contract. He had been unaware that the market was sending him messages because he had expected the market to listen to them instead of the other way round.

Allon – an experienced entrepreneur and entrepreneur mentor – emphasised the importance of reading the feedback from clients even if such feedback was often couched in subtle “language”. Even as a first time start-up he had displayed alertness. He had not, in fact, been a novice in view of his experience in the umbrella factory of his parents and where he claimed he had developed his alertness vicariously. With time and experience his alertness schema had developed into a schema and this had later also benefited the businesses of his mentees. He possessed a deep-seated, relevant, prior knowledge that sensitised him to disequilibrium in both the market and his competitors. He was quick to adapt to changes in the business environment and reacted in innovative ways in order to capture the attention of his market.

Like Albert, Dianne had not been alert to the feedback from both her actual clients and potential clients – especially during the tendering process. When she had lost the tenders she had rationalised this failure by blaming the client for a perceived lack of capability. She had failed to realise that she was not offering a valid product. When she had realise this she had not address her lack of product in any way. Firstly, her lack of expert mental models in the business field had meant she
did not a relevant context in terms of which to evaluate her work. Secondly, her
tendency to become withdrawn and depressed at the first indication of negative
feedback had made it difficult for her to be alert, think clearly and reflect effectively
about the causes of the negative feedback.

**Lily** had an expert mental model for taking care of cats and was, thus, able to pick
it up immediately when a cat was not well and she would usually know what to do.
However, she had not always been sensitive to the needs and feelings (emotions)
of the owners of the cats. Her alertness schema resonated with the findings of
Gaglio and Winter (2008, p. 209) who suggest that, for novice entrepreneurs, the
quality of service they offer is more important than networks and cash flow
generation.

Lily had often misread the signals from the market and had reacted to these
incorrect signals in a way that was detrimental to her business.

**Natasha** had grown up in the restaurant industry and possessed a full spectrum of
industry specific, expert mental models for the establishment of a new restaurant.
Her attention to detail was excellent and she was extremely alert to both gaps and
opportunities in the industry, as well as to the expectations of her customers
whose needs she pre-empted to a point that was almost obsessive. She often
sensed the needs and requirements of her customers before they themselves had
realised what they were. Her alertness to the quality of the products and services
she offered was excellent and she soon picked up the most insignificant object
and/or behaviour that was out of place at tashas.

**Neill** had soon developed a lasting alertness schema in the rental property
market, thus enabling him to detect and seize opportunities. At AFC Creations he
had also been quick to recognise opportunities although he had been slow to
realise the financial challenges involved. His planning fallacy bias had played an
important role in his having to reduce his hourly rate to an unsustainably low level.
Despite the fact that this had caused him tremendous stress and financial loss he
had failed to address the issue. In the industrial relations industry he was a
reliable sub-contractor although his alertness to opportunities in the field was still
not high enough to enable him venture out on his own.
As the trendsetter in her industry Tessa had brought novel products and fabrics to her market. She was extremely alert to trends and stayed up to date about happenings in the world in order to stay ahead of the fashion wave. Growing up in an entrepreneurial family in the fabric industry had equipped her with a comprehensive prior knowledge of the field as well as a high level of alertness to both the reactions and needs of her sophisticated, fashion conscious clients and also changes in trends in the world. Tessa possessed a sound understanding of the psyche of her target market and, as a result, she was alert to their interior decorating needs. She was able to relate to their need to be different and to be noticed.

Customer satisfaction was extremely important to Suzette. When a client left she would reflect on the interaction that had taken place, seeking possible clues to enable her to ascertain what she could improve upon in her business and also indications of client satisfaction. She was also very alert to cash flow and resource utilisation and she maintained a close contact with her competitors in order to inform her of any necessary innovations in a specific area.

She claimed that her experience as an entrepreneurial mentor had increased her alertness to opportunities as she had to be very open to her clients' ideas and endeavours. In addition, she had to be able to see their dreams as a whole while also noticing the smallest details such as flaws that could, potentially, sabotage the realisation of their dreams. She had found that, over time and with experience, her confidence level in business had increased and she had become more perceptive in distinguishing those signals which needed to be addressed.

Table 6.8 presents the relative alertness levels of the eight participating entrepreneurs.
Table 6.8: Level of entrepreneurial alertness displayed by the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alertness</th>
<th>Natasha</th>
<th>Allon</th>
<th>Tessa</th>
<th>Suzette</th>
<th>Neill</th>
<th>Lily</th>
<th>Albert</th>
<th>Dianne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Extremely alert on every level.</td>
<td>Very alert on every level.</td>
<td>Extremely alert on the product level.</td>
<td>Very alert on most levels.</td>
<td>Alert on several levels.</td>
<td>Alert to product, service and cash flow levels.</td>
<td>Alert to product and service levels.</td>
<td>Not sufficiently alert enough on any level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study revealed that the level of alertness to the opportunities available to start up or to grow a business varied from person to person. The participants with the least business experience had been the slowest to read cues in the market place – especially those cues that should alert the entrepreneur to emerging problems in the business. This suggests that the alertness of individuals who have made sense and learned from their mistakes improves as their mental maps become more complete or accurate with their growing expertise. A novice such as Dianne was scarcely aware of what indicators she should look for when she judged the progress or potential of a project. In addition, she had been unable to perceive any disequilibrium accurately. On the other hand, entrepreneurs such as Albert had realised that there were problems in the business but had not addressed such problems in a proactive way.

The participating entrepreneurs had acquired expertise at different rates, depending on our individual processes. In addition, there were also other factors that may have influenced the level of alertness, including whether the participants had grown up in entrepreneurial families\textsuperscript{196} or whether they had had mentors\textsuperscript{197} to guide them.

\textsuperscript{196} Please see section 6.3.1.
\textsuperscript{197} Please see section 6.3.2.
It appeared from the study that those entrepreneurs who were involved in less successful entrepreneurial endeavours had been oblivious to their competitors and had also still been in the process of developing the mental models required to support their business decisions while the more alert individuals had already developed frameworks that were attuned to reality.

Not only did the participants display different levels of alertness but the alertness level of the same individual had also differed depending on specific industries. Thus, it would seem that alertness is context dependent. The alertness of the participants when considering more than merely the products and services they offered had depended on their level of expertise. With greater expertise came greater confidence in their judgement and this, in turn, had led to increased alertness on a wider scale than had previously been the case.

Neill had demonstrated that the level of expertise achieved in a particular industry had more impact than the length of time spent in that industry. This suggests that there is a business-personality fit that results in an individual developing expertise and alertness at varying rates in different industries.

I agree with Chell (2008, p. 259) when she points out that the cognitive process of making the right decisions at the right time is very important although, to my mind, enacting the decision is even very important. An individual may be aware of challenges or the need for change but, if the individual does not address either of these, it makes no difference.

It is the timing of this reaction that I discuss next.

6.2.7 Agility

Intent without the right action is not intent, it is dreaming

(Krueger, 2009, p. 69).

Let us, for a moment, consider the following scenario. Imagine we are lions lazing about in the African sun. A heard of impala is grazing in the tall grass within our sight. Led by the oldest lioness a few of us get up lazily and stroll across to the impala where we sniff at them one by one while deciding which two should be lunch. We all agree that this scene is ridiculous. In reality, alertness, a clear
strategy, and quick action are required of the lions if they want to eat impala for lunch.

However, alertness to the messages from the market is only the first step in becoming successful and, unless this alertness is followed by focused action, nothing will happen. Bygrave (2003, p. 14) is of the opinion that entrepreneurs are quick to act and states that “(i)deas are a dime a dozen. Developing the idea, implementing it, and building a successful business are the important aspects of entrepreneurship.” Thus, a crucial factor is the speed with which the entrepreneur seizes the opportunities which present themselves (Koppl & Minniti, 2010, p. 218) and either addresses whatever the market does not find satisfactory or exploits a positive reaction from the market. Ability, effort, task difficulty and luck are the most factors in successful action (Shaver, 2009, p. 228). However, I should like to add agility of opportunity enactment to the list.

In a qualitative study conducted by Amanjee et al. (2006) on a group of South African male entrepreneurs, agility emerged as one of the important adaptive schemata for entrepreneurial success. For the purpose of this study, agility of enactment refers to the ability, in addition to the requisite skills, expertise and willingness, having the propensity to act, of the entrepreneur to act quickly on opportunities in order to grow their business (Mitchell, Mitchell & Mitchell, 2009). The main focus of this study has been on the opportunities available to grow the venture after start-up. Agility of enactment may be a reaction to a variety of changing aspects such as a gap in the market, the reaction of clients to a product or service, the behaviour of the competition, the financial climate or the discovery of new, but relevant, needs in the market.

An entrepreneur may be said to be proactive when he or she enacts the opportunities which are available either to start up or grow a business even before there are clearly detectable signs that action is necessary or desirable. Thus, entrepreneurs act on intuition. Proactive behaviour has also been linked to the need on the part of an entrepreneur to achieve (Chell, 2008) and also competitive aggressiveness (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Where proactiveness is about market
opportunities, competitive aggressiveness\(^{198}\) is more about competing for market share.

When an entrepreneur reacts on a clear message from the market, I refer to such behaviour as *reactive* as the participant has reacted in response to a message from the environment. The study revealed that there had been situations in which the participants, Albert in particular, had detected clear signals about potential problems but had chosen to ignore these signals. I regard such behaviour as denoting a *passive* reaction. Once a decision has been made to take action, there is no sense in wasting time as taking action makes more sense than merely reflecting on either the disadvantages of the course of action selected or the advantages of the alternatives which have been rejected (Weick, 2001, p. 25).

We will now explore the impact of the type of reaction preferred by the participants as revealed in the study.

**Digging**

Initially **Albert** had been reluctant to buy ACC. However, once he had bought it he had immediately tried to grow the business and he had been quick to ensure that the business was offering a good quality service. Unfortunately the business had not been successful because he had not managed either the cash flow or the pricing correctly. With his second business he did not make the incremental shifts which were necessary to align the business with the need and requirements of the market. He had expected the market to adjust to the business.

**Allon** rapidly became proactive in the building up of the NYSF. He had learnt through the valuable process of enacting, making mistakes, working through challenges, observing, learning and acting again. As a business mentor, Allon (Raiz, 2010, p. 119) had found that it was unlikely that a “business that cannot make decisions, and adapt quickly” would survive. However, the agility with which challenges were addressed offered only part of the solution; the way in which they were address also needed to be effective. Initially this had not been the case at

\(^{198}\) Please see section 6.2.10.
the NYSF, but Allon had learnt quickly and he had soon become very effective in addressing the feedback he received from the market.

He was proactive and had addressed his need to do things differently on many levels. He had implemented a system at Raizcorp which enabled staff members to “replace” him so that he had more time in which to work on the business instead of in the business.

Dianne was the most passive of the participants. She had ignored the messages from the market. Even in situations in which she had been aware what needed to be done to improve her chances of success she had not done so, blaming her fear of success for her failure to act. As soon as she had received any negative feedback she had retreated for a while and then changed direction. She had ventured into different territories as they appeared in her line of vision but had never stayed long in these territories or been sufficiently proactive to achieve success.

As soon as Lily had noticed that something was wrong in her business she had become frantic and had spent considerable looking for solutions although she acknowledged that she had not always been certain what caused the problem in the first place. She operated in a reactive way and had addressed certain situations in a counterproductive way.

Natasha insisted that, in order to be successful, it was imperative to pre-empt both the needs of her customers and also challenges that may arise in her business. She became extremely focused and proactive when she detected something requiring her attention or an emerging issue that needed to be addressed.

Although Neill was alert he tended to wait for matters to become urgent before he reacted. He also tended to be slow in enacting opportunities and spent considerable time vacillating between “No” and “Go”. However, once he took action, he usually became very enthusiastic and effective. In industries in which he had felt in control, for example, Sprightly Sprouts, AFC Creations, and his rental properties, he had been more agile than in his businesses in other industries. Despite his sound knowledge in the IR field it appeared that his negative past
experiences in IR had inhibited his confidence and, hence, his enactment agility in that industry.

Tessa's business depended on her being very proactive. She was ahead of the pack in her industry and she dictated to the market. She also knew how to create a need in the market and start a trend. However, if the market did not react as she had expected it to react there was always a chance that she could lose vast sums of money. During such incidents she was extremely alert and quick to react to salvage the situation.

Suzette's need for achievement had definitely contributed to her proactiveness as had her work ethic. She was quick to react to the slightest indication of change in the market in terms of either supply or demand. In addition, she always tried to pre-empt challenges or, at the very least, address them as soon as she was alerted to them. She also tried to instil in her entrepreneur mentees that it was important to attend to matters before they became urgent.

Table 6.9 presents the enactment agility demonstrated by the eight participating entrepreneurs from the most to the least agile while Table 6.10 presents the grouping from the most passive to the most proactive.

Table 6.9: The participants' enactment agility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enactment agility</th>
<th>Tessa</th>
<th>Natasha</th>
<th>Allon</th>
<th>Suzette</th>
<th>Lily</th>
<th>Neill</th>
<th>Albert</th>
<th>Dianne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Be the first one to do it.</td>
<td>Do it before it becomes an issue.</td>
<td>Do it before it becomes necessary.</td>
<td>I want to be the best.</td>
<td>Please help me do it.</td>
<td>Do it when it is urgent.</td>
<td>Somebody else will do it.</td>
<td>Hide until it is over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10: The reaction type of the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Reactive</th>
<th>Proactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Tessa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Natasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Got it!

The study revealed that those participants who were involved in successful businesses possessed the ability to notice the smallest opportunities for growth with the majority of them tending to address any need for course adjustments at the slightest indication from the market. It is important to note that an awareness of the need to take act does not always result in success unless it is quickly followed by the appropriate action. It appeared that the level of expertise and confidence either to act or enact an opportunity played an important role in the reaction time of the participants.

It emerged from the study that some the entrepreneurs had tended to be passive and ignore challenging situations – hoping that they would dissipate. On the other hand, other participants were reactive and addressed problems as they were arose with the more successful participants even pre-empting problematic situations and looking for solutions before the situation developed into a major crisis. It is clear that during the start-up phase – when the business is still fragile and resources often limited – the timing of decision-making and the resultant play a major role in whether or not the business succeeds. It would, thus, appear that proactive thinking and behaviour are important for success.

If agility of enactment is important, then proactive behaviour is also essential when the entrepreneur is confronted with changes and challenges in either the business or the business environment. This topic will be discussed next.

6.2.8 Reaction to change and challenges in the business and perseverance

On the African plains the lions have to deal with the scorching summer sun and icy winters, drought and floods, feast and famine. And so, too, must the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial activity – the start-up and growth of an enterprise – is about change and discontinuity and, as suggested by Smith and Anderson (2007), this is often fraught with challenges. According to Kirzner (1979), the entrepreneur is willing to challenge the status quo and find alternative and innovative ways of doing things in order to realise their vision of the future of the business.
Entrepreneurs are, in fact, often even the catalysts or agents of change and most of them thrive on challenges (Chell, 2008). Entrepreneurs constantly have to face changes and challenges.

The reactions of entrepreneurs to changing circumstances are vitally important (Gaglio, 2004). These changes may either originate with the entrepreneur him/herself as an agent of change or from outside as a result of changes in the environment or even in the business itself. There may be an interplay between the externally and internally driven changes and it is important that the entrepreneur is aware of such an interplay (Rwigema & Venter, 2004).

Alert entrepreneurs are able to sense patterns, and even predict changes, in market conditions (Chell, 2008). This ability is enhanced by the accuracy with which the individual interprets the change or challenge in the business and requires sense-making and, preferably, the construction of expert mental models prior to the decision-making process.

Kraaijenbrink (2010, p. 6) suggests that goal driven entrepreneurs will try to avoid unexpected changes and challenges. Their focus may be too narrow to maximise the opportunities inherent in such challenges and changes while they tend to be prone to an escalation in their commitment bias. On the other hand, effectual (means driven) entrepreneurs will often use the challenges and changes as opportunities although they may run the danger of overextending themselves. According to Dew, Read, Sarasvathy and Wiltbank (2008), successful entrepreneurs prefer effectuation to causation.

Certain challenges may test the entrepreneur’s attitude to problem solving. The way in which the entrepreneur approaches and addresses these challenges will determine the outcome of the situation. In addition to pattern recognition, a growth mindset represents a sound starting point for working with change and challenges while it also often enables to thrive during challenging times (Dweck, 2006). A growth mindset means that the individual is not intimidated by the fear of failure because failure, as we have seen from the experiences of the majority of the participants, presents a learning opportunity. Thus, a growth mindset usually means that the individual is able to confront the challenge, find alternative ways of
dealing with the situation and enlist the help of other people if necessary or even ignore the challenge in the hope that it will disappear (Van Gelderen, 2012).

According to Lehrer (2009, p. 92), “[i]t’s not easy for the brain to choose a long-term gain over an immediate reward – such a decision takes cognitive effort.” It is essential to engage the pre-frontal cortex constructively in order to do this (Lehrer, 2009). In addition, the ability to delay gratification helps with the prioritising of the items on the mind’s “to do list” and may be crucial to successful challenge resolution.

The solving of a problem starts with certain initial conditions. When we solve mathematical or quantitative problems the initial conditions have numerical values. However, when an entrepreneur is called upon to solve a physical problem, the prior knowledge, resources, attitude and skills of the entrepreneur in the specific context represent the initial conditions for solving the problem. The more relevant and advanced the knowledge, skills and resources, the better informed and equipped the entrepreneur will be either to solve the problem or to address the challenge. This involves effectual problem solving (Sarasvathy, Dew, Read & Wiltbank, 2007) and, according to Simon (1992), constitutes the basis of the differences between experts and novices.

Schumpeter (1934; 1942) was quoted, among others, by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) as one of the first researchers who linked innovativeness to the entrepreneurial process. This is not merely about providing innovative products or services but entails innovative and creative ways of thinking and addressing both change and challenges.

**Digging**

Although Albert was aware of the financial challenges confronting ACC he did not address the problem – hoping the challenge would either disappear or be solved by an external agent. He had also been passive in his relationships with his staff. Changes in both the financial and the people management had been necessary for the success of the business. The ACC had eventually been in such deep financial trouble that he had had to close it down.
Both his belief that business owners were greedy for money and exploited their customers and also his need to feel that he always did what was right had prevented him from adjusting the pricing of the services offered by ACC to a sustainable level. He had also decided in advance to keep his interpersonal relationships with the staff at ACC cordial, but formal. As the introvert son of two introvert and conservative academics by keeping to himself he had felt safe during the time after his wife had left him with two children to care for and a very tight budget.

Although we had discussed the way in which he had dealt with the challenges that arose in his first business, in his second business he had continued to regard business people as both heartless and greedy. He had not considered adapting to the market but had expected his potential clients to change if they were to realise the value that his business would bring to him.

In addressing challenges he was usually passive; sometimes reactive; but never either proactive or innovative.

Despite the hardship Allon had experienced in his first businesses and also in the early days of Raizcorp, he welcomed barriers to entry and he enjoyed solving problems. The latter was indicative of his growth mindset. He tended to become disheartened if he could not find a solution to a problem although this would not stop him from trying again and being creative in his search for solutions. His mindset was such that, if he could not solve a problem, he would find someone who could and he was prepared to invest both the time and energy to achieve his goal. He was extremely innovative in addressing problems and challenges.

In fact, he thrived on challenges and problem solving and saw these as an integral part of being an entrepreneur. Challenges helped to inform his mental models on an issue and he had acquired resilience through dealing with challenges. He was not easily intimidated and could be very stubborn when challenged. He considered challenges as the breath of a business. He placed considerable emphasis on being alert, detecting changes quickly and taking immediate action to deal effectively with challenges. He was proactive and enjoyed finding innovative solutions to the challenges in his business.
He realised that it is essential to often change the way in which one perceived situations in order to improve one’s understanding of such situations and utilise them better than may have been the case previously. He believed that a willingness to adapt – sometimes quickly – so as to accommodate change was integral to success.

Challenges caused Dianne to become withdrawn and depressed while barriers to entry made her question everything about herself. Rather than perceiving them as opportunities for innovation she saw them as God telling her not to follow that particular further. She had also tendered for projects that were far beyond her capabilities, thereby creating challenging situations for herself. However, she would go into hiding when the challenges became too much for her. She admitted to hating challenges and escaping from them by watching television or sleeping. Her fear of failure paralysed her and, rather than engaging fully in problem solving she would self-sabotage by investing the minimum effort. This would cause her to fail because she would not try hard enough despite the fact that she would do her best as this would, to her mind, expose her limitations to the world. In keeping with her fixed mindset she did not regard failure in the light of presenting her with opportunities for growth or building resilience but as revealing the limits of her abilities. This, in turn, limited the learning embedded in the processes she was involved in.

Lily did not enjoy change and was apt to panic when she felt challenged. However, she would consult people in her small network to help her to find a solution to a problem. She also had to deal with internal challenges such as self-doubt, anxiety and over-reacting to client behaviour. She also tended to mistrust people including her colleagues and potential clients. She avoided clients whom she regarded as dubious. However, her judgment was not always accurate and this had caused her to lose a fair amount of business.

She tried to survive with the minimum of staff to save costs but found the amount of manual labour involved a challenge. It was slightly easier for her to cope with physical challenges rather than with emotional challenges, uncertainty and stress. She was reactive but was slowly learning to cope with challenges.
Natasha embraced change and challenges. She sought ways in which to pre-empt problems before they arose and continuously checked for any loopholes in the systems she implemented. She was an expert in the restaurant industry and enjoyed finding practical and workable solutions to the challenges in her business. She liked to be hands-on and to generate the change she wanted to see. She believed that a product that was not constantly evolving would not survive. Not only was she proactive in dealing with challenges but she also found innovative strategies in order to address issues. She had changed the day restaurant experience and other restaurants were following in her footsteps.

Neill thrived on change and soon became bored when there was not enough change. His need for excitement had driven him to spend considerable time considering opportunities that had led to nothing while he had lost his focus in the venture that he was in and which had appeared to offer significant opportunities.

Neill had enjoyed the physical challenges involved in AFC Creations. He enjoyed solving practical problems but tended to procrastinate when it came to the less physical problems as he did not enjoy mental or the more abstract challenges such as marketing his business or implementing a system. In the case of physical challenges the “finishing line”, competition or complicating factors were more visible and real to him than in the case of mental or more abstract challenges and would hold his attention for longer. It was, thus, necessary for him to have a mentor to help him to deal with mental or abstract challenges.

Tessa was a trendsetter and an agent for change in her industry. She was always at the forefront of what was new and fashionable. She hated the mundane. She also enjoyed solving the problem of improving space utilisation. However, she disliked tedious challenges and did not enjoy dealing with anything that did not work properly. She placed both people and systems in place to help her to ensure the smooth running of her business and, thus, utilised people effectively and in such a way that they dealt with the challenges she did not want to address.

Suzette thrived on all challenges with the exception of the financial challenges she had experienced between 2004 and 2009. She dealt with these as proactively as possible but still found financial insecurity which she could not control.
extremely stressful. However, the relentless financial stress with which she had lived for five years had built up her resilience. She found that challenges focused her attention on finding innovative solutions and alternative ways of dealing with such challenges. She welcomed barriers to entry in a business and believed that these barriers of entry separated the serious contenders from the less serious contenders.

She continuously changed and upgraded Purrfect Place provided this made sense to her, guaranteed quality of service and did not compromise consistency of quality. She believed that inconsistency in either a product or service was one of the primary reasons for people no longer using that product or service.

Tables 6.11 and 6.12 respectively present the reactions of the eight participating entrepreneurs to change and challenges. Table 6.13 depicts the perseverance demonstrated by the participants on a continuum, while Table 6.14 distinguishes between the mindsets of the participants – a growth mindset or a fixed mindset.

Table 6.11: The participants’ reaction to change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction to change</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Agent for change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Innovative and pre-empted change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Innovative and enjoyed change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Liked change but it did tend to waste his time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Innovative and comfortable with change if it made sense.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Change stressed her.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Change made her anxious.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Resisted change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 6.12:** The participants’ reaction to challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction to challenges comfortable</th>
<th>Reaction to challenges uncomfortable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most</strong></td>
<td><strong>Least</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Dianne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrived on challenges and problem solving and saw it as an integral aspect of being an entrepreneur. He was resilient and innovative.</td>
<td>Withdrew from challenges, hoping they would disappear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought problems through in a quiet place and used excellent resources which were always available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited and focused by challenges and problem solving. Triggered her creativity. She was resilient and innovative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought through problems in a quiet place and used the resources required repeatedly until she found a solution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-empted challenges and tackled them head-on. She was resilient and innovative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively hunted for solutions in multiple places – repeatedly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked creative challenges but hated tedious (operational) challenges. Paid someone else to address the tedious challenges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative solutions came to her when the problem was in her field.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked physical challenges but procrastinated with non-physical challenges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found solutions when under pressure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked for guidance from her network, hoping that someone would suggest a solution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked people to help her to find solutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealt with challenges selectively, addressing those he enjoyed and hoping others would sort themselves out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagined that solutions would arrive from an external source.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.13: The perseverance demonstrated by the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Natasha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14: The participants' mindset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindset</th>
<th>Fixed</th>
<th>Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Extended himself and was willing to fail and learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Did not expect business to be easy but knew she would succeed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Lifelong learner. No situation was too small to learn from.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Possessed the courage to fail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Willing to learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Worried constantly that she may fail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Willing to learn from clever people only.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Felt that life was both difficult and unfair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Got it!

The reaction of the entrepreneurs in the study to change and challenges in their business played an important role in their success, with those who were creative and proactive in pre-empting and dealing with changes and challenges experiencing greater success than those who were either reactive or passive in dealing with challenges. In particular, the participants who were passive about addressing challenges had not experienced long term success.

However, it is essential that the action taken, no matter how quickly, is also effective. The study showed that resolving some of the challenges that the participants had encountered had required perseverance. The ability to persevere and accurately evaluate when it was prudent to give up and when not to give were clearly extremely important in achieving success. It appeared that this ability was more highly developed in those participants who, as compared to the other participants, possessed greater expertise in business; especially expertise in their specific field of business. In addition, those participants who were self-aware and flexible in their approach to issues were also more effective than those who were
less self-aware and less flexible. Hence, it was not about blind perseverance. Entrepreneurs often react to the challenges in a way that non-entrepreneurs may regard as strange or unexpected while they build up the resilience to sustain them during the next big challenge.

I found that it was important for the entrepreneurs to be honest with themselves and to take responsibility for dealing with changes and challenges. This required them to be adaptable but without losing their focus or interest. Although the most successful participants had started with some means, they had also engaged in focused goal setting once the opportunity was enacted.

It is sometimes necessary to put systems in place or pay someone to address the challenges that arise when there was time or personal resource constraints. However, the responsibility for this still rests with the entrepreneur. Those participants who did not take responsibility or who perceived themselves as helpless had been unsuccessful in their endeavours. In addition, a growth mindset contributes to success in dealing with change and challenges as it supports learning from failure. Growing a business is a process of continuous becoming—without stagnation.

A proactive approach, creative strategies, expertise in the field in question, and a willingness to be flexible and adaptable all open up possibilities when change and challenges are addressed. However, change and challenges may be regarded as forerunners of uncertainty and that is what I shall discuss next.

### 6.2.9 Tolerance for complexity and uncertainty

Entrepreneurs—especially during the start-up phase—often have to fill multiple roles as few businesses are able to start up with a financial manager, human resource manager, and marketing manager on the staff. Even when a business is able to employ all the relevant staff members, entrepreneurs usually operate under more complex and uncertain conditions than non-entrepreneurs (Le Roux, Pretorius & Millard, 2006).
According to Lichtenstein and Kurjanowicz (2010), complexity science offers a method for elucidating emergent entrepreneurship. Complexity is a trigger for transformation and for becoming. It entails the study of living, adaptive systems; including their elements, how they are maintained, how they self-organise, evolve, and change as well as their patterns of relationships (Karpiak, 2006). The unpredictability of a complex environment such as the entrepreneurial environment is not the result of either chaos or randomness; it is about the close interconnectedness of the many variables and the constant shifting of energies with the movement of the system. However, if one examines the system over a sufficiently long period of time, one may start to detect patterns. Expert entrepreneurs, instead of experiencing chaos and losing their way, sense this order, detect the patterns and utilise possible synchronous situations. Novice entrepreneurs, on the other hand, often experience chaos and uncertainty and they do not recognise any patterns, nor do they recognise any synchronicity.

Uncertainty is one of the many challenges which entrepreneurs have to confront (Low & MacMillan, 1988). Uncertainty is a conceptual cornerstone in the majority of on entrepreneurship (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). According to Eckhardt and Shane (2010, p. 66), “[p]eople high in tolerance for ambiguity are more likely to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities.” McMullen and Shepherd (2006) discuss two different ways of looking at the role which uncertainty plays in entrepreneurial action.

Firstly, the difference in the amount of knowledge which the entrepreneur has, determines the level of perceived uncertainty. Uncertainty often does not arise from the opportunity itself but rather from the lack of objective information about the opportunity and from which the entrepreneur has to form conjectures (Eckhardt & Shane, 2010). The more situation-specific knowledge an individual has, the more complete the individual’s mental model of the situation or process and the less uncertainty the individual will experience in the context in question (Kirzner, 1979; Busenitz, 1996; Gaglio & Katz, 2001). Hence, experts will usually experience less uncertainty than novices.

Secondly, it is possible to distinguish between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs on the basis of either their tolerance for uncertainty (McMullen &
McMullen and Shepherd (2006) accept that the two ways of looking at uncertainty reveal different aspects of the entrepreneur and that both are important in the theorising about entrepreneurship. “No matter how desirable a venture might appear, there is a threshold level of perceived feasibility below which decision makers will tend to deter the intent to launch that venture” (Krueger, 2003 p. 118). The personal judgement of entrepreneurs during decision-making is put to the test on an ongoing basis (Casson, 2010).

Linked to tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity are the three mindsets which have been identified as being essential for the correct balance required to support successful entrepreneurship (Gerber, 1995). These mindsets include:

(i) The entrepreneur as the visionary is creative and innovative, has a tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity and craves to be in control. This person lives in the future and is willing to learn from failure.

(ii) The entrepreneur as the manager is pragmatic and ensures that all the systems run smoothly, detects problems, wants to preserve the status quo and does not enjoy uncertainty. The manager lives in the past.

(iii) The entrepreneur as the technician is hands-on, wants to do one thing at a time and is happiest when in control of all processes – ensuring that everything is done. The technician lives in the present. The only thinking that makes sense to the technician is the thinking that focuses on how to improve processes.
While Albert was able to handle academic complexity he found managing staff stressful. He was efficient with organising schedules and the tasks he deemed necessary and, thus, he preferred the technician role. He ignored tasks with which he was less comfortable. In view of the fact that he had been in a secure academic post for the whole of his working life uncertainty, and especially the financial uncertainty in his first business, drained him emotionally.

Allon had experienced long stretches of huge uncertainty in all of his businesses and for periods of up to five years. Although this had been extremely stressful he had a high tolerance for stress and discomfort and both he and the businesses had eventually flourished. His tolerance for uncertainty had improved and his perception of the level of uncertainty in his businesses had become more accurate as he gained expertise. Uncertainty motivated him to work harder and smarter.

Although he was responsible for more than five hundred businesses in his programme, he was very comfortable with complexity. He was a strong manager and technician and possessed a clear vision of growing a strong business, mentoring other entrepreneurs to do the same.

Although none of the participants enjoyed financial uncertainty, Dianne had been in the middle of it at the time of the study and her suffering had been clearly visible. The fact that she had limited resources and lacked a support structure had made it difficult for her to survive financially. She had become very depressed without a regular income and also because of uncertainty about when or where the next opportunity would come from. This had caused her to withdraw into her bedroom in a state of apathy. Although she feared uncertainty, it was ironical the she had created more uncertainty and complexity for herself when she had tendered for projects beyond her skills level. She had appeared to be slightly more comfortable with complexity than with uncertainty. Her dominant mindset was that of manager.

Even a relatively small increase in the level of complexity stressed Lily. She also admitted to having a very low tolerance for uncertainty. An anxious person by
nature she tried to control the factors that could increase the level of uncertainty in her life. When the uncertainty had affected her Lily had consulted the more experienced people in her network. She had the technician and manager mindsets but lacked the mindset of the entrepreneur.

The entrepreneur, manager and technician mindsets were fairly well balanced in Natasha. She apparently coped well with both complexity and uncertainty. She had made deals with loan sharks more than once and admitted that financial uncertainty was by far the most stressful type of uncertainty. Her long term, successful involvement in the restaurant industry had given her confidence. She had also had her father as a mentor when she had started out on her own. This had helped her cope with the complexity and uncertainty. When she and her father had opened the Fishmonger she had started building up a reference frame of the challenges usually encountered when starting up a restaurant. However, this had not prepared her for the different set of complexities which accompanied opening a fast food outlet such as Everest. However, as she had dealt with the new sets of circumstances and challenges arising from each experience she had added a new layer of expertise to her mental models on starting up and growing a restaurant. She found complexity exciting and had, in fact, raised the complexity in her business to new heights when she had turned tashas into a international franchise.

Neill displayed the mindset of a visionary. He manifested very low tolerance for complexity and avoided it as far as possible. Nevertheless, his positive bias and willingness to take risks helped him cope with uncertainty in business. He displayed a relatively high tolerance for uncertainty and enjoyed the excitement that accompanied risk taking. Thus, uncertainty was not an unpleasant experience for him. In order to reduce his stress levels he did physical exercise.

Tessa demonstrated strong visionary and technician mindsets. She appointed staff members to fulfil the managerial role. She had a fairly high tolerance for

200 Micro lenders charge extremely high rates of interest.
complexity and she was able to tolerate uncertainty because of her strong support structure and entrepreneurial parents\textsuperscript{201}.

**Suzette** thrived on complexity – seeking patterns in what may appear to be chaos. This supported her in her role as an entrepreneurial mentor and she could not afford to be naive or short-sighted when working with other people’s dreams. In an effort to support growth in the businesses of her mentees her ability to identify patterns had become fine-tuned.

In her own businesses she coped fairly well with uncertainty, except in financial matters. As far as possible she dealt with financial uncertainty in a proactive, mind-over-matter way. However, when the financial uncertainty moved beyond her sphere of influence she experienced considerable stress. Every time she had started a new business she had used the income from her older, established business to finance the new business and, in so doing, had managed the uncertainty arising from starting-up and lowered her stress levels. With experience Suzette had learnt to balance her visionary, manager and technician mindsets.

Tables 6.15 and 6.16 present the tolerance for uncertainty and complexity of the eight participants, while Table 6.17 depicts the dominant Gerber mindsets of the participating entrepreneurs.

**Table 6.15:** The participants’ tolerance for uncertainty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncertainty tolerance</th>
<th>Natasha</th>
<th>Allon</th>
<th>Tessa</th>
<th>Neill</th>
<th>Suzette</th>
<th>Albert</th>
<th>Lily</th>
<th>Dianne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Uncertainty brings opportunities.</td>
<td>Uncertainty is part of entrepreneurship.</td>
<td>It is what it is.</td>
<td>Uncertainty will go away.</td>
<td>Manages uncertainty.</td>
<td>Uncertainty is draining.</td>
<td>Uncertainty causes anxiety.</td>
<td>Uncertainty is debilitating and stressful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{201} See section 6.3.1
Table 6.16: The participants’ tolerance for complexity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity tolerance</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Thrives on complexity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Complexity is exciting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Good with physical complexity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Enjoys visual and physical complexity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Is able to handle complexity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Copes with physical complexity but avoids more abstract complexity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Complexity is to be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Complexity is draining.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.17: The participants’ mindsets in terms of Gerber’s typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visionary</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Technician</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Got it!

The higher the participants’ tolerance for uncertainty the longer they had survived uncertain times. Prior knowledge, business expertise as well as their attitude towards uncertainty had played a role in the level of uncertainty they had experienced during the start-up and growth phases of their businesses. Those participants who had had good support structures, who had come from an entrepreneurial family and/or had had a good mentor had coped better with uncertainty as compared to the other participants. Meek (2010) confirms that the support of family members provides support for entrepreneurs during short-term
Some of the participants appeared to be inherently better than others at coping with uncertainty. While this may have been the result of their personalities, their past experiences and the quality of their resources and support structures may also have played a role.

It would appear that an increase in the level of expertise may have resulted in a higher tolerance for complexity on the part of the participants than may otherwise have been the case. All eight of the entrepreneurs had had to deal with complexity in their ventures; although some more than others. Not only is growing a business a process which is fraught with complexity and uncertainty but, when you are a novice, you seldom have a reference frame in terms of which to measure your progress. This, in turn, contributes to the uncertainty. However, as one discovers the connections between the various elements in the entrepreneurial process, one starts to build up a reference frame of the patterns relevant to one’s business.

Serial entrepreneurs lay down a further layer of experience every time they start a new business. These serve as road markers and help the serial entrepreneurs to assess their progress during subsequent start-up experiences. Consequently, they appear to experience less complexity and uncertainty than does a novice entrepreneur who has no entrepreneurial family, friends, or mentor. Nevertheless, the tolerance of complexity and uncertainty demonstrated by the participants did not display the same correlation with success as did their reactions to change and challenges. In addition, the degree of tolerance for both uncertainty and complexity as displayed by the participants was not demonstrated clearly in Tables 6.15 and 6.16.

With regard to the Gerber typology, those participants with either the technician or the manager mindset only had not experienced long term, entrepreneurial success; whereas those participants who displayed all three mindsets had enjoyed long term business success. Tessa was the exception but she had compensated for her weakness spot by appointing staff to deal with the managerial tasks.

With all the uncertainty and complexity involved very few businesses that start-up actually succeed (Herrington, 2010). However, the study showed that reliable risks. For a discussion on the influence of coming from an entrepreneurial family and the role of risk-taking please see sections 6.3.1 and 6.2.11 respectively.
support structures and developing the necessary expertise tend to lower the perceived uncertainty and complexity.

In the main, entrepreneurs appear to experience a sense of achievement when they overcome the challenges involved in growing a start-up business into a sustainable business. The role of competitiveness and a need for achievement in the entrepreneur’s pursuit of success will be discussed next.

6.2.10 Need for achievement, competitiveness and work ethic

It has been suggested that people with a need for achievement would be attracted to entrepreneurship (McClelland, 1961; Kickul & Gundry, 2002; Tasnim, Yahya, & Zainuddin, 2014). Collins, Hanges, and Locke (2004) also found a significant correlation between the motivation to achieve and the choice of entrepreneurship as a career and entrepreneurial performance. People with a high need for achievement tend to prefer situations that allow them more control over the outcomes of their efforts as they are more likely to overcome obstacles and utilise the resources available to achieve their goals. Collins et al. (2004) point out that entrepreneurs tend to be competitive by nature and, therefore, willing to invest in improving their skills. Driven by a need to achieve the majority of the participating entrepreneurs had developed a high level of work ethic.

Although the need for achievement may not play a role in motivating the start-up of a business this heuristic may serve as motivation during the lonely months of dealing with the complex challenges and uncertainties of growing a business (Carsrud, Brännback, Elfving, & Brandt, 2009). Douglas (2009) believes that entrepreneurship definitely has the potential to satisfy people’s need for achievement. However, as Low and MacMillan (1988) indicate, while the need for achievement is often present in successful individuals, this does not suggest that every person with such a need will or should become an entrepreneur.

The need for achievement may be said to be identical to aggressive competitiveness. The study explored whether any of the other participants were also very aggressive and revealed that, although Allon, Natasha and Tessa were clearly very aggressive, Tessa was more subtle about her aggressive streak.
Consequently, I also link the need for achievement with the concept of aggressive competitiveness as used by Lumpkin and Dess (1996).

When referring to the competitive nature and need for achievement of entrepreneurs, Collins et al. (2004) investigated successful entrepreneurs only and did not include those entrepreneurs who had not experienced any degree of success. However, this study included entrepreneurs who had failed to achieve long term success in business in order to explore whether they, too, were competitive and manifested a strong need for achievement.

**Digging**

**Albert** manifested a strong need to feel that he was doing what he considered to be the “right” thing. However, I was not able to detect any indication of a need for achievement and neither did he show competitiveness although he possessed a strong good work ethic.

Driven by a strong need for achievement and autonomy Allon had walked away from a good position in his parents’ business, a luxury car and a beachfront apartment. He had refused to remain Allon, the son of Mr Raiz.

This desire to prove to himself, his parents and his mentor that he could be successful in his own right had inspired him during difficult times in all his ventures. His need for achievement was so strong that it had, in fact, prevented him from reconciling with his parents out of fear that he may lose his competitive edge.

He had displayed aggressive competitiveness by winning deals back even after he had initially “lost” them. He also demonstrated a very strong work ethic.

I did not detect any signs of a need for achievement or aggressive competitiveness during my interactions with **Dianne**. In addition, her work ethic was not on the same level as that of the other participants.

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203 Please see section 6.2.3.
Although Lily did not show a need for achievement, her fear of failure had engendered some degree of competitiveness in her. She also had a strong work ethic.

Natasha was a workaholic with tremendous stamina and she displayed a great work ethic. It was very important for her to be proud of her ventures and she had always striven for perfection in all her restaurants. This was indicative of her competitiveness and her need to achieve. Unfortunately, however, this had caused her to be hospitalised for exhaustion a few years prior to the study.

Although not as outspoken as some of the other participants about his need for recognition, Neill needed recognition. As the eldest son of a school principal there had pressure on him from a young age to perform. However, he preferred physical challenges and would push himself hard to achieve success in physical challenges. However, he was not competitive in non-physical endeavours.

Tessa had a strong need to stand out from the crowd and being the trendsetter was crucial to her personally as well as in her undertakings. She did not readily admit to being competitive but it was clear that she would never settle for being anywhere but top in her industry.

From a young age Suzette had had a deep need for achievement and autonomy and she accepted that she was fiercely competitive. However, she claimed that she competed only against herself and her own expectations. Early in her life she had realised that confidence is built through success and this had contributed to her work ethic. Neill enjoys teasing Suzette about her aggressive competitiveness.

Tables 6.18, 6.19 and 6.20 present the need for achievement, competitiveness and work ethic of the eight participating entrepreneurs on continuums in order to provide an indication of the relative positions of the mental models of the participants in terms of these aspects.
Table 6.18: The participants' need for achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need for achievement</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>I will prove to everybody I am able to be a successful entrepreneur in my own right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>I have a need to excel and have often taken on projects that others considered impossible. I like proving people wrong.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>I need to be proud of my endeavours and will ensure I am the best.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>I need to be the first one doing/wearing it and I need to be noticed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>It can be done. I need to be acknowledged.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>I need to do the right thing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>I need to play it safe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>I need a salary at the end of each month.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.19: The participants' competitiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competitiveness</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>I will fight to win back deals and I will strive to stay number one in the industry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>I’m NOT competitive. I’m the best.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>We are always pushing the boundaries of perfection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>There is a best way of doing things. Find that way and do it. Competition inspires me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>If there is a physical challenge, I will succeed – no matter what.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>I am good.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>I am trying my best.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>I have tried.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.20: The participants' work ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work ethic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear from the accounts of the entrepreneurs that the strong need for achievement of Allon, Natasha, Tessa and Suzette may have contributed to their business success. In addition, it had possibly also played a role in their developing a strong work ethic in their efforts to achieve success although there may have been other triggers for this as well. Those participants who had enjoyed the most success were also the ones who were the most competitive. On the other hand, those participants who, by the final round of interviews, had admitted to not being entrepreneurial clearly had a lower need for achievement and were the least competitive as compared to the other participants. It seems fair to state that the need for achievement in nascent entrepreneurs may be one of the indicators of potential success.

Their growing expertise in business often enables entrepreneurs to become more accurate in their ability to judge or predict the input required for success with the more realistic expectations about their achievements lowering the risk of failure.

The topic of discussion will be the risk taking propensity of the participants. This was linked with the need to control the return on their investments, the illusion of control\textsuperscript{204}, their fear of failure and their courage.

### 6.2.11 Risk taking propensity, control, courage and fear of failure

According to Baird and Thomas (1985, p. 231), risk taking may involve “venturing into the unknown”, committing a relatively substantial amount of assets or borrowing a relatively large sum of money. Risk taking is a multifaceted process and it is dependent on a specific person and on his or her unique abilities, attitudes and resources in a specific situation (Krueger, 2003). When studying an individual’s risk taking propensity or aversion other influences on the decision-making process should also be taken into account (Kihlstrom & Laffont, 1979). It is

\textsuperscript{204} Please see sections 5.6.8 for more details on \textit{illusion of control} and \textit{control}.
for this reason I have included control, courage and fear of failure here\textsuperscript{205} as it would appear that they are intertwined with risk taking.

By definition entrepreneurship is about growing a business and this represents a condition of disequilibrium and uncertainty where disequilibrium is typified by a continuously changing situation. This disequilibrium may be unpredictably random at times and may be perceived as risky by those without the necessary expertise.

According to Baron (2004), entrepreneurs tend to display a positive bias\textsuperscript{206} while they also tend to place more weight on small probabilities as compared to people in general. However, this may blind the entrepreneur to potentially serious risks. Past research which has compared entrepreneurs with non-entrepreneurs does not support the notion of a difference in risk taking propensity although the tendency to risk taking seems to point a difference in risk perception (Busenitz & Barney, 1997; Palich & Bagby, 1995). Pallich and Bagby (1995) found that, compared to non-entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs tend to perceive greater potential for gain in highly uncertain situations while Baron (1998; 2004) suggests that, under identical circumstances, entrepreneurs may perceive less risk and greater chances of success than non-entrepreneurs. Thus, it would appear that entrepreneurs are less risk averse than non-entrepreneurs. However, if entrepreneurs have a history of success, their ability to draw from past experience may create the perception that they are taking risks when, in fact, this is not the case (La Pira, 2011). To observers it may seem that they are risk takers. However, the entrepreneurs themselves may actually experience that they are minimising risk by either starting or growing their businesses (Chell, 2008, p. 103).

According to Kraaijenbrink (2010), goal focused entrepreneurs tend to choose ventures which appear to offer the highest expected returns. They may sometimes be overly optimistic in their expectations with this leading to increased risk taking. Effectual entrepreneurs, on the other hand, may err on the conservative side as they tend to suffer from the loss aversion bias and, thus, they appear to be risk averse (Kraaijenbrink, 2010).

\textsuperscript{205} The ability of the entrepreneur to manage his/her use of the other concepts discussed in sections 6.2 and 5.6 are all, to a greater or lesser degree, linked to risk-taking in entrepreneurship, especially self-efficacy (see section 6.2.5).

\textsuperscript{206} See section 5.6.5.
Khilstrom and Laffont (1979), Knight (1921) and Eckhardt and Shane (2010) hypothesise that entrepreneurs possess a high risk-taking propensity. Gifford (2010) and Khilstrom and Laffont (1979) add that wealthy, successful entrepreneurs appear to be less risk averse than their struggling counterparts – the less successful entrepreneurs.

However, there is also another aspect to risk-taking. Entrepreneurs often invest in knowledge, either information or human capital or both, in order to address the experience of *limited attention* (Gifford, 2003; 2010). This may cause them to appear more optimistic and less risk averse as compared to those individuals who have less knowledge than them about the venture or field in question. However, the behaviour of the former is informed by information asymmetry and, because they possess better knowledge, they are in a better position to predict the outcome of their efforts (Hayek, 1945). This is not the same as an optimistic bias which may result in an exaggerated expectation that things will turn out well (Baron, 2004). However, merely transferring the relevant information to a person will not make him/her entrepreneurial. Thus, reading a good book on successful entrepreneurship will not necessarily transform the individual into a successful entrepreneur. It is essential that the deeper structures of the mind or a person’s mental models are changed if the way in which he or she processes the new information is to change (Krueger, 2003).

According to Gifford (2003; 2010), entrepreneurs who have already invested in human capital and who have acquired more information increase their own ability to recognise a profitable opportunity. By reducing the uncertainty and the risk of a venture they are in a position to make more informed decisions than may otherwise have been the case. Thus, it is just that they appear to behave as if they have a higher risk propensity as compared to entrepreneurs who have not yet made the necessary investment in human capital (Kihlstrom & Laffont, 1979). “This, and other, acquired abilities may lead the entrepreneur to be more optimistic about the outcome of the venture and make the entrepreneur appear to view the venture as less risky” (Gifford, 2003, p. 41). Over time entrepreneurs learn and, with more information and experience – both general business and field specific experience – an entrepreneur’s risk perception changes. “Successful
entrepreneurs are not gamblers – they are calculated risk takers” (Kuratko, 2009, p. 34).

Busenitz and Barney (1997) found that, while entrepreneurs may be overconfident in their ability to make sound judgements, they do not enjoy taking risks more than non-entrepreneurs. Elfving, Brännback, and Carsrud (2009) believe that, when entrepreneurs are overly optimistic in their assessment of business opportunities, this may result in their not perceiving themselves to be taking risks. In addition, if they also make their decisions based on insights gained from consulting a small sample of references, the lack of information may lead them to believe that the decisions they are making are less risky than they actually are. Thus, the perceived risk is lower, but the actual risk may be huge and may lead to the demise of the business (Simon et al., 1999). Thus, these entrepreneurs may not necessarily have a higher risk propensity but their perception of the risk is lower than the risk is in reality.

There is also the possibility that risk taking is not only about low risk aversion but is the result of the cognitive biases\(^\text{207}\) – mental shortcuts – used in decision-making (Simon et al., 2000; Forlani & Mullins, 2000), as well as the entrepreneurs’ ability to innovate (Gifford, 2003) which comes from experience in the field.

Alternatively entrepreneurs may also appear reluctant to take risks because their focus is invested on more than one project simultaneously\(^\text{208}\) (Gifford, 2003; 2010). The brain has limited capacity for holding different concepts\(^\text{209}\) in the prefrontal cortex – where conscious decision-making takes place – simultaneously (Miller, 1956). An individual is able to pay limited attention only to each situation and, thus, acts in a way that decreases the opportunity cost of attention. The resultant behaviour appears to be generated by lower risk aversion than may otherwise have been the case.

Gifford (2003) compared two managerial entrepreneurs and found that the one entrepreneur was willing to innovate more frequently and maintain more current ventures as compared to the second entrepreneur. This resulted in the former

\(^{207}\) See section 5.6.

\(^{208}\) Also called limited attention

\(^{209}\) The number usually quoted is seven bits of information at any one time (Lehrer, 2009a).
appearing less risk averse than the latter although the type of behaviour manifested may be have been the outcome of either the higher innovative ability on the part of this entrepreneur or else greater expertise in the field. Innovativeness may cause entrepreneurs to appear less risk averse that they actually are. It would, thus, appear that risk aversion is often more a perception rather than an absolute reality.

Risk perception is also influenced by self-efficacy and the efficacy of external factors, which, in turn, depend on the entrepreneur's control beliefs. According to Monsen and Urbig (2009), control beliefs determine the degree to which outcomes will be affected by the various sources of risk while efficacy beliefs enlighten the expectations associated with these sources. Monsen and Urbig (2009) hypothesise that, if external factors control the outcomes of our businesses because we are not able to control these external factors, then our beliefs about the efficacy of external factors will drive our risk perception and, ultimately, our decisions.

It appears as if entrepreneurs with high self-efficacy, excessive confidence, an illusion of control and a belief in the law of small numbers possess a greater risk taking propensity because they are more positive about the probability of being successful (Shaver & Scott, 1991; Palich & Bagby, 1995; Busenitz & Barney, 1997; Simon et al., 1999). In short, this means that entrepreneurs whose mental models are far removed from reality and who do not manage their mental models may make riskier decisions than they themselves realise.

When embarking on an opportunity the entrepreneur usually expects a positive outcome and he or she does not see the threats inherent in the uncertainty (Krueger, 2003; Dutton & Jackson, 1987). According to Kraaijenbrink (2010), this is especially true of goal driven entrepreneurs. When the heuristics which an individual employs lead to unrealistically low risk perception this encourages business start-up and growth but, as was apparent from the accounts of some of the participants, it may also lead to business failure. Risk is not limited to the start-up phase and each decision taken and each step of growth in the business may, potentially, be fraught with risk.
Monsen and Urbig (2009) identify three sources of risk, namely, self, others and chance. The perceived control of the entrepreneur over these three sources of risk is weighted according to their perceived influence on the success of the venture. Time, investment costs, technical problems, staff, clients, customers, social networks and the competitors in the market all fall under other (Le Roux, 2005) whereas chance is about luck, either good or bad.

Where there is decision-making; there is risk. Kahneman and Tversky (1979; Tversky, & Kahneman, 1991) developed a theory to address the process of decision-making under risk. The theory takes the concept of subjective value as its centre and defines gains or losses in terms of a reference point (Baron, 2004). A key assumption of the theory is that losses weigh more heavily than gains during decision-making. When it comes to losses people tend to be risk-seeking but, on the other hand, they tend to be risk-averse when it comes to gains. Thus, they try to avoid risks when they make decisions which may involve possible gains but are willing to take risks when their decisions involve possible losses. For example, people tend to accept a possibility of losing rather than a definite loss but a definite gain rather than a chance of gaining.

When one considers regulatory focus theory (Monsen & Urbig, 2009) it appears that people demonstrate a preference for either gains or losses. People with a promotion focus tend to make decisions to maximise gains and they do anything possible to attain positive outcomes. On the other hand, those with a prevention focus will make decision to minimise losses and they will do anything possible to avoid making mistakes (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p. 230). Thus, there are people who think of what may go wrong if they start a business and there are those who think how they will lose out if they do not start the business.

Shane and Venkataraman (2000, p. 231) suggest that the achievements of successful entrepreneurs may be the result of tempering “this promotion focus with some aspects of a prevention focus”. They add that less successful entrepreneurs tend to favour a purely promotion focus and they are less concerned about avoiding negative results as compared to those who favour a prevention focus. It would appear that experts focus on affordable loss and
novices on expected returns when they take risks (Dew et al., 2009; Kraaijenbrink, 2010).

Although numerous external factors, such as the prevailing economic and political situation, affect the financial success of a new business some entrepreneurs are successful while others have to close their businesses. According to Baron (2004, p. 233), successful entrepreneurs are more accurate than unsuccessful ones in gauging the risk associated with a specific situation.

The accuracy of the entrepreneur’s perceptions of risk and how well they manage risk are particularly important for the purposes of this study. The closer these perceptions are to the actual risk involved the better the entrepreneur’s chance of managing the risk involved. Depending on the situation all the biases may work either for or against the success of an entrepreneur’s decision-making. The ability of the entrepreneur to manage his or her biases and to switch to the bias which is best suited to a specific situation will contribute to either the success or failure of the entrepreneur (Baron, 2004).

The questions arise as to whether the eight entrepreneurs who participated in this study were courageous, how did they manage risk and did fear play a dominant role in their decision-making? These issues will now be discussed.

**Digging**

Albert did not like taking risks although he was willing to take a risk when he was upset and he felt he had nothing to lose. He did not control the resources at his disposal properly and he also did not understand the riskiness of his people management. However, it was his underestimation of the risk involved in his financial management and the pricing of the service offered that ruined the business.

He appeared to have a higher risk propensity than was actually the case as a result of his inaccurate perception of risk. His risk perception had been flawed because of his lack of business expertise and the way he thought about it. Although he had demonstrated no fear of failure when buying the ACC it had,
nevertheless, been a courageous step for him to take as it was outside of his comfort zone. He demonstrated a promotion focus when it came to decision-making under risky circumstances.

When Allon had started his first business he had not been able to judge the level of risk involved correctly and neither had he been willing to listen to the experienced Negative Ned. However, he had had a good mentor and sound financial back-up and this had, in turn, provided him with the opportunity to learn from his mistakes which he did.

When I compared his decision-making at Raizcorp with that at the NYSF, there was a definite increase in the accuracy of his risk perception. He had grown from taking very risky decisions during the start-up of the NYSF to being a responsible risk manager at Raizcorp.

Throughout his journey he was courageous and resilient while the fear of failure had never featured. He had demonstrated both a promotion and a prevention focus when it came to decision-making under risky circumstances.

Dianne saw herself as risk averse. Although she had blamed her “fear of success” for the failure of her business, this was not what I had observed when I had visited her in her business. She had taken on big projects but, at the first hurdle, she had started to doubt herself and she had then withdrawn completely, needing someone to encourage her to move forward with the plans.

She had appeared to be more courageous and less risk averse than she actually was as she had completely underestimated the level of risk she had taken. She had been courageous to take on such big projects without the systems or resources required to deliver on her promise. Her decision-making had often started with a promotion focus but, when she withdrew, her decisions were often driven by external pressures, such as her brother talking her into doing the tender. Her fear of failure had caused her to focus on the challenge she was facing rather than on mechanisms required to deal with the challenge. This had happened to such an extent that it prevented her from seeing the relevant situation such as the tender process in perspective.
Fear of failure had played an important role in Lily's experience in her business. Her lack of confidence and tendency to become anxious may have contributed to her high level of risk aversion. This behaviour is in line with the work of Michl, Welpe, Spörrle, and Picot (2009).

When she had started her cat hotel her need for both an income and autonomy had temporarily overshadowed her fear of risk and uncertainty. As she had gained expertise in the industry she had tended to take fewer risks than before. However, she tended to distrust people and perceived slightly risky deals as overly risky – resulting in her missing opportunities. Lily took responsibility for the decisions she made in her business and had a prevention focus when it came to decision-making under risky circumstances.

Natasha hated taking financial risks but, nevertheless, she had taken huge risks in the past by using loan sharks to finance more than one of her businesses. However, her risk perception was very accurate. She had understood the huge financial risk she was taking and it had been very stressful to her but she was fearless and gutsy. She was resilient and courageous and definitely did not suffer from fear of failure. She balanced her promotion and prevention foci when it came to decision-making under risky circumstances. When she had closed the deal with Famous Brands Natasha had retained control over every aspect she considered essential to ensure brand quality.

Neill was not risk averse but he was often not fully aware of the magnitude of the risks he was taking. He was courageous and fear of failure was never a problem for him. He expected good luck to follow him and he acted accordingly. However, this sometimes lured him into taking risks that did not make financial sense. However, he did appear to learn from his mistakes eventually.

Neill demonstrated a promotion focus in decision-making under risky circumstances. Of all the participants in the study Neill, who was an adventurer at heart, was the participant who really enjoyed the thrill of risk taking. He admitted that, if he were not married with a family, he would have taken many more risks than he had.
Tessa was courageous and had no fear of failure. She was also comfortable taking risks. Meek (2010, p. 108) cites previous research which had indicated that the support of family members make it easier for entrepreneurs to take short-term risks. Tessa confirmed that the physical support of her father – financial and the use of buildings and staff – and the fact that she was not the bread winner had given her the freedom to take risks she would, otherwise, not have been able to take. This confirms that the access to resources (Kihlstrom & Laffont, 1979) and access to information (Gifford, 2010) may enhance the entrepreneur’s apparent willingness to take risks. Tessa definitely had a promotion focus and did not display a strong prevention focus.

Suzette believed in risk management and took what she considered to be calculated risks. She was resilient and did not suffer from fear of failure. She put systems in place to assist her in quality control, to control the finances and to lower risk. She combined a promotion and prevention focus during business decision-making. Over time she had become less risk averse, attributing this to the confidence that comes with increased expertise in business.

Tables 6.21 and 6.22 present the risk taking propensity and courage demonstrated by the eight entrepreneurs on continuums. Table 6.23 summarises the promotion and prevention foci of the participants during decision-making under risk and the presence of fear of failure on the part of the participants.

Table 6.21: The participants’ risk taking propensity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk taking propensity</th>
<th>Natasha</th>
<th>Tessa</th>
<th>Neill</th>
<th>Alion</th>
<th>Suzette</th>
<th>Albert</th>
<th>Dianne</th>
<th>Lily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Comfortable with risk and has taken some bold risks.</td>
<td>Comfortable with risk because of support structures.</td>
<td>Comfortable with risk but careful because of family responsibilities.</td>
<td>Courageous risk manager.</td>
<td>Takes calculated risks – a risk manager.</td>
<td>Does not like to take risks. However, took a significant risk and called it recklessness.</td>
<td>Does not like taking risks but took some risks unknowingly.</td>
<td>Tries to avoid taking risks but took some unknowingly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The risk taking propensity demonstrated by the eight participants was not indicative of their success. On the other hand, their ability to accurately assess the level of risk they were taking had played a more important role in their success/lack thereof than their risk taking propensity. Managing risk suggests some level of control over risk taking decisions. When entrepreneurs demonstrate excessive confidence in their ability to control future events this, in turn, influences their risk taking. It is interesting to note that Natasha, who had taken the biggest risks of all the participants, was also the one who wanted the most control. She admitted that the period during which she had been indebted to the money lenders had been tremendously stressful. However, her tolerance for discomfort was well-developed and she had coped.

The risk perception of certain of the participants had become more accurate with their growing expertise, in particular, Allon and Suzette. As their reference frame
of the variables in their businesses became more detailed it became easier for them to judge whether or not a decision would result in a viable situation.

Combining the promotion focus and the prevention during decision-making under risk helps to manage the risk taking. Albert, Neill and Tessa had used the promotion focus only. However, according to Shane and Venkataraman (2000), this is not ideal for success. Both Albert and Neill had experienced the negative impact of using the promotion focus only. However, towards the end of the study Neill had started to use the prevention focus in the property rental business which was doing well.

Tessa had remained in the same industry for her entire career. Accordingly, she had expert mental models of the field and this may have compensated for her lack of prevention focus. Her deep insights into her specific industry meant that she often appeared to be taking greater risks than she was actually doing. Every time Neill had changed industries he had had to start to build expert mental models from the beginning.

The study has revealed that entrepreneurs learn vicariously and also experientially; from the mistakes they make. The influence of their parents, mentors, role models and networks on the eight participants in the study will now be discussed.

6.3 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

This section explores the role of families, friends, mentors and networks on the mental models of the entrepreneurs who participated in the study.

6.3.1 Entrepreneurial parents as the co-creators of mental models

Ever since the days of Plato the concept of learning through observation has been accepted. In 1965 Bandura (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001, p. 320) demonstrated that children’s behaviour is influenced by vicarious experiences. The following four important points have been identified at which family and entrepreneurial dynamics intersect (Dyer & Handler, 1994, p. 72), namely:

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210 Please see section 5.5.
(i) Childhood experiences of the entrepreneur within the family,

(ii) Family involvement in the entrepreneur’s start-up activities,

(iii) Employment of family members in the entrepreneurial firm, and

(iv) Management succession in the firm.

In view of the fact that I have already considered vicarious learning\textsuperscript{211} I will focus here on the influence which being a member of an entrepreneurial family has on the mental models of the entrepreneur. Growing up with entrepreneurial parents exposes the children to entrepreneurial behaviour and thinking. The parents may, by what they say and do, inadvertently condition their children to think in ways that will or will not support entrepreneurial behaviour in future. This may happen even when the children are very young (Mauer, Neergaard & Linstad, 2009). Through these experiences the children from entrepreneurial parents acquire information – common knowledge – that is unavailable to those whose parents do not run their own businesses (Shaver & Scott, 1991).

Bygrave (2007) does not believe that entrepreneurs learn much from mom-and-pop businesses. However, I do not agree with this assertion. Growing up in entrepreneurial households may not teach children how to read financial statements or negotiate with trade unions but the chances are that they will learn about a work ethic and business habits and they will adopt deep seated entrepreneurial attitudes and mental models that will stand some of them in good stead in the starting up and growing of businesses (Carsrud, Brännback, Elfving & Brandt, 2009).

A child growing up in a successful family business experiences that being entrepreneurial is possible with this enhancing the child’s self-efficacy (Krueger, 1993; Krueger, 2003). Not only do the attitudes and industry specific skills of the parents rub off on the child (Krueger, 1993), but the expectations of family members and/or entrepreneurial friends may, either implicitly or explicitly, influence the nascent entrepreneur’s decision to start an own business and influence their perception of the entrepreneurial role (Bird & Schjoedt, 2009; \textsuperscript{211} Please see section 5.5.1.1.)
Thus, the possible success of the child as an entrepreneur is not just the result of the genes the child has inherited but is also the result of the growth mindset which has passed down to a child growing up in such an environment (Dweck, 2006, p. 80).

In addition, “people who have personally known an entrepreneur in the past six months were two to three times more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activity” (Orford, Herrington, & Wood, 2004, p. 19). Such family members and friends may serve as role models and, by influencing key attitudes, they have a positive impact on the success of the novice entrepreneur (Krueger, 2000). Role models play an important role in the promotion of entrepreneurial thinking and “modelling entrepreneurial behaviour and attitudes” (Krueger & Day, 2010, p. 349) with good role models serving as a reference frame for action for novice entrepreneurs, thus decreasing the perceived danger and uncertainty in the unknown territory (Mauer, Neergaard & Linstad, 2009, p. 238). This assertion is in agreement with the findings of Carsrud, Gaglio and Olm (1987). Parents, friends and professional mentors are all possible role models while they also provide access to valuable entrepreneurial networks.

Entrepreneurial activities may also have a dramatic, even a negative, impact on family life. Entrepreneurs work long hours and are often unable to take long family holidays, thus putting strain on family relationships. Allon confirmed Meek’s (Meek, 2010) statement that, if an entrepreneur is married to a non-entrepreneur, the road to success may involve a lonely struggle. Particular during start-up or times of intense business expansion the stress levels of the entrepreneur may complicate relationships. On the other hand, an entrepreneurial family may have a better understanding of the challenges involved as well as a greater appreciation of the amount of time and energy required to get a business off the ground as compared to a non-entrepreneurial family.

Finally, growing up in an entrepreneurial family may also provide the young entrepreneur with succession opportunities. However, as in Allon’s case, a nascent entrepreneur with a strong need for autonomy may prefer to start his or her own business. Nevertheless, the experience of growing up amidst
entrepreneurs may provide multiple mental models on which the nascent entrepreneur may draw during decision-making.

Digging

Both Neill’s and Albert’s parents were conservative people in fulltime employment in secure, academic institutions which provided housing subsidies, medical aid, regular holidays and thirteenth cheques. Thus, they had had no immediate exposure to entrepreneurship while growing up. Dianne also did not have entrepreneurial parents.

Allon, Natasha and Tessa grew up learning vicariously in the businesses of their parents – developing an entrepreneurial mindset and reference frame. The possibility of one day running successful businesses of their own was very real to them. They had gained valuable experiences in the family businesses and they had been aware that they had the support of their families when they had started their own businesses.

In addition, Natasha and Tessa had both started businesses in the same fields as their fathers and, hence, they had had extensive, industry specific mental maps.

Allon suggested that the creative way in which his parents had dealt with the cancelled umbrella order had contributed to his positive attitude towards problem solving. However, the initial plan that he would work in the family business had not materialise. His need for autonomy, achievement and independence had been so strong that he had walked away from his luxury lifestyle and position in his parents’ factory in order to prove that he could be a successful entrepreneur on his own – without either their backing or their assistance. It was only then that he had realised the massive impact which his time spent on the factory floor had had on his creativity and systems thinking.

Suzette had an entrepreneurial mother and had spent the first nine years of her life surrounded by chickens and eggs and playing with the fabric off cuts under the sewing table as her mother had also been a part-time dressmaker. Suzette’s mother had worked in her sewing room next to Suzette’s bedroom until late at
night, thus providing Suzette with the opportunity to learn vicariously about work ethic, quality service delivery and financial management.

Table 6.24 illustrates the presence of entrepreneurial parents in the lives of the eight entrepreneurs.

Table 6.24: Entrepreneurial parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No entrepreneurial parents</th>
<th>One entrepreneurial parent</th>
<th>Two entrepreneurial parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Allon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>Tessa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Got it!

The findings of the study confirm that, as compared to the children of non-entrepreneurs, there is a higher possibility that the children of entrepreneurial parents will become successful entrepreneurs. In the case of the participants, when one parent had been entrepreneurial but not the other one, the personality, attitude and other factors of the entrepreneurial parent had played a more pertinent role in the lives of the children as compared to the non-entrepreneurial parent. For example, Suzette was entrepreneurial while her brother had opted for full-time employment with a large corporate. Of the two Suzette was the more daring extrovert with a deep need to achieve. In addition, she was not willing to sacrifice her autonomy while he was an introvert who needed the security of thirteen cheques per year and a long, annual holiday. However, in Natasha’s case her brother was also involved in her business. They had an entrepreneurial father. It would, thus, appear that coming from a family where at least one of the parents was an entrepreneur had had a positive influence on the success of the participants in this study but that that alone was not sufficient to inspire individuals to become entrepreneurs.

When the businesses of the participants, namely, Tessa and Natasha, were in the same field as those of their parents, the participants had started out with almost
expert, industry specific mental models that had been formed from a young age. When they had made intuitive decisions these decisions had been better informed than those of the novice entrepreneurs who had started up in a new field and had not had the same reference systems of Tessa and Natasha.

The participants who came from entrepreneurial families had all started their own businesses. Clearly, their need for autonomy had been too strong to allow them to operate in the shadow of their parent(s). However, they were all grateful for the valuable skills and lessons they had learned from their parents.

These entrepreneurs had also had mentors who were neither family members nor friends. We will now discuss the role of professional mentors in the mental models of the participants.

6.3.2 Mentors as the co-creators of mental models
An experienced mentor is often of immense value to an entrepreneur. Originally mentoring referred to a hierarchical relationship through which knowledge, skills and experiences were passed on from a wiser and more experienced person to a younger, less experienced person. However, modern mentoring shares certain similarities with coaching as “a more mutual, equal and collaborative learning alliance” (Zeus & Skiffington, 2006, p. 17). The mentor may act as a sounding board, advisor, inspirer, developer, role model, networker, knowledge broker, communicator, listener, story teller, teacher and coach (Meyer & Fourie, 2006).

A mentor assists the entrepreneur to reflect on his or her actions, thus enabling the individual to effect behavioural and attitude changes where necessary (Sullivan, 2000). Mentors encourage entrepreneurs to learn the professional roles they have to fulfil and ensure “a sense of competency” (Regis, Falk, Dias, & Bastos, 2007). In addition, mentors provide a moderating role during risk taking, especially in the case of overconfident entrepreneurs (Cull, 2006).

Cope and Watts (2000, p. 117) highlight the value of a long-term mentoring programme for small and medium enterprises (SME). Firstly, the mentor must be there for the entrepreneur who is going through critical times in the business and this requires that the mentor to possess a sound knowledge of both the
entrepreneurs and the business in question. Secondly, the mentor plays a strategic and developmental role in the life of the entrepreneur with regard to engineering the scaling of the business and facilitating the learning along the way, thus helping the entrepreneur to make sense of the experience and optimise the experiential learning. In this context Cull (2006, p. 9) writes: “A mentor’s many years of experience can save a business from major errors and costly mistakes with just a few words”.

Digging

**Albert** admitted that a mentor would have made a difference. However, he made it clear that he would only have been prepared to work with someone who possessed the right academic qualification and experience. Even in hindsight he was not able to think of anybody who would have met his requirements. The fact that he had supervised several doctoral students meant that one may have expected him to show some appreciation for the value of an experienced mentor. Even after our conversations on the importance of a mentor and while he was trying to start up his second business he had made no effort to find a mentor.

**Allon** had experienced the value of mentors. He felt so strongly about the importance and value of mentors that he had built a business – Raizcorp – based on this belief. Having had someone who had believed in him had changed the course of his life and, at the time of the study, he was paying it forward to other entrepreneurs. His interactions with Mr. Cohen, one of his primary mentors, had helped him to make sense of his experiences, especially the more challenging ones. Mr Cohen had allowed him to fail during his first attempt at the NYSF but had picked him up at the right moment. During Allon’s time at Bandit, a vehicle security company, his mentor had helped to him to control his ego which had been hindering his success. When he started Raizcorp his mentor had played a more subtle and specialised role than previously, especially when Allon was confronting specific challenges. At the time of the study Allon was the mentor of more than five hundred SME owners.
In hindsight Dianne thought that a mentor would have made a difference to the success of her business. She had used a friend as a mentor but believed that the friend had not had the right experience. Nevertheless, she had made no effort to find a more appropriate person. Although Dianne had done a number of coaching courses she did not realise that random meetings with a friend were hardly likely to serve the purpose of a proper mentoring relationship. This had strengthened my observation that, at the time of the study, Dianne had still had a novice mental model of the coaching process. However, just before my last interview with Dianne she had found a mentor who was helping her with cold calling and sales. Thus, it would appear that our reflections on the importance of a mentor had eventually influenced her behaviour.

When Lily had started her cattery I had mentored her pro bono for a year as I had done for others before her. When I had stopped mentoring her, she had started telephoning other cat hotel owners for free advice every time she experienced a challenge. As “cat ladies” we were all friendly with one another. We referred overflow clients to one another and also shared cat care advice and the names of clients who were unreliable in paying their accounts. In addition, we networked to find lost animals and to place cats in need of a permanent home. However, despite the fact that we referred clients to one another, our businesses were in competition with one another and, hence, it was unfair to expect of us to share all our business secrets. This meant that Lily should have employed an independent, professional mentor.

Natasha had started working for her father and he had been a superb mentor for her. In addition, in view of her previous involvement with leaders in the restaurant industry she had had a network of experts whom she could consult. It was, in fact, one of these prominent individuals who had partnered and mentored her in franchising tashas\textsuperscript{212}.

Like Lily, Neill found it easy to ask for advice and had built up a small, but very effective, network with important connections in the right places. For each business he had opened Neill had used mentor(s). He was very adept at persuading experts in a specific field to mentor him for free. In the case of

\textsuperscript{212} They recently opened their first international tashas in Dubai.
Sprightly Sprouts the person who had mentored him had not been aware that Neill was growing sprouts and, for a while, they had been in competition with each other.

When he had started AFC Creations he had engaged with a variety of mentors – ranging from a professional kitchen company owner to the hardware supply personnel. In his IR business he had worked in association with at least one good mentor. This willingness to engage with more experienced people in a specific field has stood him in good stead in every business with which he has become involved.

As Tessa had pioneered an industry, other than her father and his business partner, she had not had actual mentors.

During the first two years at Purrfect Place Suzette had had an industry specific mentor who had helped her understand the industry. During that time a group of cat hotel owners – the cat ladies – had also had regular lunches together to discuss common challenges. This pooling of knowledge and experiences had been of immense value to her.

Before Suzette opened her ballet school she did a year internship at a professional ballet school in the afternoons. At the time this network served as her mentors. In 1994, when Suzette started the bridging school for university entrance, she had no mentors. However, she did have the requisite academic qualifications as well as her experience as a senior school teacher and lecturer. She had also worked in education and training since 1980. Thus, her level of expertise in the field meant that she did not really miss having a mentor.

In 2006, Suzette did a business course and studied coaching and mentoring skills in order to address a need in her household. Although the course cost her more that the services of a professional coach or mentor would have cost her, it provided her with many hours of free business coaching and mentoring as the course included a substantial amount of practical work during which the students coached one another.
Table 6.25: The participants’ use of mentors and the influence of such mentors on the mental models of the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>A mentor…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>No mentor</td>
<td>May have made a difference but I did not know anybody good enough to fulfil the role of mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon NYSF</td>
<td>Experienced, long term mentor</td>
<td>Believed in me and changed my future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon Bandit</td>
<td>Experienced, long term mentor</td>
<td>Challenged my mindset and checked my ego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon Raizcorp</td>
<td>Experienced, long term mentors</td>
<td>Taught me the value of a mentor – now I am I mentor for other entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Inexperienced, short-term mentor</td>
<td>Was any person willing to fulfil the role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Short-term mentor</td>
<td>The people in the same industry who were knowledgeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Experienced, longer-term mentors</td>
<td>The powerful experts in the restaurant industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill SS &amp; AFC</td>
<td>Random, short-term mentors</td>
<td>Every relevant person willing to contribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill IR</td>
<td>Experienced long-term mentors</td>
<td>My respected expert associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill Rental properties</td>
<td>No mentor</td>
<td>In the books I read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Experienced, short-term mentors</td>
<td>My intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette Ballet</td>
<td>Experienced, short-term mentors</td>
<td>My ballet teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette Purrfect Place</td>
<td>Experienced, short-term mentors</td>
<td>Experienced cat hotel owners and veterinarians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.25 presents the participants’ use of mentors and the influence of such mentors on the mental models of the participants. The participants are listed in alphabetical order only.

Got it!

It was clear from the interviews with the research participants that a mentor often plays an important role in the success of entrepreneurs – at least during the first few years in business. With the exception of Dianne and Albert, who had not had mentors while starting up and running their businesses and they were no longer in
business, all the participants had acknowledged the positive influence of mentor(s) on their business lives.

Not one of the participants appeared to have paid large sums of money to their mentors. Thus, a lack of financial resources should not have prevented someone such as Dianne, who had been extremely short of money, from having a mentor. However, the expertise and relevance of the mentor was clearly more important than Dianne realised when she used a friend who was not necessarily suitable for the specific situation.

It emerged from the study that the four participants who had had at least one entrepreneurial parent and a mentor had been more proactive and had experienced long term success earlier in their lives as compared to the other four participants. This supports the notion that having a role model – mentor and/or entrepreneurial parents – has a positive impact on the success of an entrepreneur. Both Neill and Lily, who had not had entrepreneurial parents but had used mentors, had also experienced success although both had struggled as they had not been proactive in their actions while growing their businesses. Albert and Dianne, who had had neither entrepreneurial parents nor proper mentors, had not experienced long term business success.

The participants’ mental models on networking and networks are discussed next.

6.3.3 Networking and networks

*Network* is a very general concept. For the purposes of the study an entrepreneur's *network* is defined as the individuals or organisations with whom the entrepreneur is connected. These relationships may be direct or indirect depending on whether the entrepreneur knows, or is known to, the people or organisation directly or via one of his or her direct connections.

According to Robinson (2011), an entrepreneur's networks represent a form of social capital that is a valuable resource of the entrepreneur. Zhang, Souitaris, Soh, and Wang (2008, p. 597) incorporate the work of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) when they define *social capital* as “the sum of the actual and potential resources that individuals obtain from their direct and indirect ties in social
networks”. They investigated the effect of network resourcefulness and the ability to interact with strangers on network utilisation.

Granovetter (1973, p. 1361) is of the opinion that the strength of a network tie depends on a “combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy and the reciprocal service that characterize the tie”. According to Hoang and Antoncic (2003), the content of the relationships in a network, the governance of the network and the density – the interconnectedness – of the network all influence the quality of the network. Hoang and Antoncic (2003) suggest that strong network ties to family and friends have a positive impact on the early stages of the business although it would appear that the weak network ties with acquaintances do not make any difference.

The network of an entrepreneur may fulfil various roles during the different phases of the business, including construction, fully operational and establishing national or international branches or franchises. However, it is clear that a strong network seems to impact positively on the success of a venture (Greve & Salaff, 2003; Chell, 2008).

Certain social connections may give an individual access to information that is either not readily available to everybody, thus facilitating access to opportunities for either the start-up or growth of an existing business (Eckhardt & Shane, 2010) or that may contribute to the success of the business (Terjesen, Acs, & Audretsch, 2010). Allon, Natasha and Tessa had all benefited in this way.

According to Nijkamp (2000), it is essential that the modern entrepreneur is also a network operator and a manager. Having investigated the possible impact of network ties can do and what makes them valuable resources we will now return to the main focus of the study; namely, the mindset of the participants and, specifically, their mindset about networks and also how networks may influence their mental models and the success of their businesses.
In his first business Albert had not made use of a network. He had not even utilised the staff at the business as part of a network. In his second business he had had a group of trusted friends although he had still failed to understand the value of a network. His mindset was to surround himself with a small circle of trusted, highly skilled people.

For Allon networking had been key to his success. He had a vast international network and he ensured that he kept his networks active. He also held networking sessions – inviting expert entrepreneurs into the network to relate their stories to the younger entrepreneurs – a clever way to network and learn from other strong role models.

Dianne had had a small group of friends in her network. However, when she had needed it, her links had not provided the mentorship, information or opportunities she had required. She did not organise networking sessions or proactively expand her sphere of influence in any other way and had attended one networking session of young start-ups only who had, in fact, not been potential clients for her services. When she had needed a network she had paid for electronic networks to market her workshops. Unfortunately, these networks had consisted of names and email addresses only and had resulted in a few, once-off workshop attendees but no lasting network. Her network, although sometimes with the best intentions, had not been able to provide her with the right type of advice and, in fact, may even have been counterproductive at times as it had made her feel supported but the support had not been at the correct level.

Lily had built up a small, but effective, network which included other cat hotel owners and veterinarians.

Natasha was a natural networker. She built relationships with the people she met and with the customers who frequented her restaurants. The fact that she always remembered faces and family stories helped her to build relationships with these people. She also had a vast professional network of restaurant franchisors from her past employment.
When Neill had started Sprightly Sprouts he had not initially had a network. However, he had then built one but had utilised it for Sprightly Sprouts only. With AFC Creations he had had a few weak links – one of them an expert – and many strong links with his suppliers which he had utilised optimally. However, with his IR consultancy he had had connections which stretched as far back as 1977. He had run this business in association with a few trusted members in his network.

Tessa was extremely well-connected to a select group of influential people and she had become an icon in influential social circles. The fact that her family had been in the fabric industry for years had also contributed to the size of her network.

Suzette was a natural networker. She had run networking sessions for her business clients as part of her mentoring service and, hence, she had built up a large network. Some of the clients of Purrfect Place had also become part of this business network. She also had a network of cat hotels and veterinarians who were valuable resources for Purrfect Place. She had learned from the latter that a small group of the right people constituted a powerful network.

Table 6.26 presents the mental models of the entrepreneurs on their networks and their perceptions of these networks on a continuum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Who comprised your network?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allon</td>
<td>Every connection was valuable. He listed and used them all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Every interaction with every person was important – social capital. “People are key”. Natural networker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzette</td>
<td>All her clients, co-workers and suppliers. She built relationships – “By helping others; I help myself.” Natural networker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Influential and loyal individuals. She was socially well-connected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>Past co-workers and friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Her clients, a small group of veterinarians and cat hotel owners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>Trusted friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low
It emerged from the study that the mental models of the entrepreneurs and that drove the enactment of business opportunities were enriched by interactions with other entrepreneurs. This appeared to be particularly beneficial for the entrepreneurs when it happened at a young age and over time.

The study showed that children who grew up in entrepreneurial households often had access to often vast social networks which supported their businesses. Through their parents and entrepreneurial friends they came to know the right people and they were given the opportunity to build the networks which are important when growing a business. This supports the view of Hindle, Klyver and Jennings (2009) on the importance of the influence of both human and social capital on an individual’s intention to become an entrepreneur. It is clear that, when designing educational programmes for entrepreneurship, institutions should take this process into account.

The participants who had started their businesses using their established networks had benefited from the situation. This is in line with the suggestions of Plummer and Pe’er (2010). Through their networks both Natasha and Tessa had had access to information and resources that “outsiders” would not have had. Both Suzette and Lily had entered a close-knit community of catteries and veterinarian practices and this had, in turn, provided them with extremely valuable information.

The participants who enjoyed a strong network had benefited from these connections. The study also showed that the more similar the current business is to the previous employment of the entrepreneur, the more valuable the previous network is to the entrepreneur (Zhang, Souitaris, Soh & Wang, 2008). The participants with a small group of “friends” did not appear to have benefited as much from their networks as those participants who had connections with people on a more professional level.

I am thankful to all those who said NO to me. It’s because of them I did it myself (Albert Einstein).
6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the abstract concepts which researchers use to explain entrepreneurial behaviour and which, I believe, illuminated the everyday experiences and views of the eight entrepreneurs, including myself, who participated in the study.

It is clear that it is not possible to attribute either the failure or success of an entrepreneur to a single factor but, rather, it is the result of the culmination of a combination of factors within a particular context. The concepts that emerged as the mental models of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study suggest that expert mental models for entrepreneurship do exist but that the role they play is more complex than merely selecting a list of beliefs and using these as a measure of success.
CHAPTER 7

The kill

Photograph 7.1: Members of the pride feeding on their kill.²¹³

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the hunt is to make a kill as this is what is necessary for the survival of the pride. Once the lions have hunted down the prey, they feast on the kill. The order in which they devour the prey is determined by their position in the pride. For the entrepreneur the kill is about making a sale, doing a deal or obtaining a contract. On the other hand, the researcher in the field of entrepreneurship may regard the development of a conceptual framework as his/her theoretical contribution to the field of entrepreneurship as the kill.

The initial aim of this study was to identify the critical elements in the mental models of successful entrepreneurs and to explore how these mental models differ from or correspond to those of unsuccessful entrepreneurs. In addition, the study

²¹³ Photograph from the private collection of Ingrid Dane
aimed to suggest ways in which to change the mental models of unsuccessful entrepreneurs into those mental models that do support success.

In this chapter all the concepts that informed the mental models of the participating entrepreneurs and that were identified and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 are assembled into a conceptual framework. The aim of the study is to contribute to the existing theory of entrepreneurship and, in particular, to the theory relating to the mental models that influence the decision-making of entrepreneurs. In order to generate new knowledge, I used abductive reasoning (Neergaard, 2007; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Abductive reasoning refers to the process by which we move from the everyday observations, descriptions and meanings people attach to phenomena – concepts and categories – in order to create a basis for the understanding or explanation of such phenomena.

However, before developing a conceptual framework, we will first consider the analytic tools used in such a process.

### 7.2 ANALYTICAL TOOLS

Mouton and Marais (1996, p. 125) list concepts, definitions, hypotheses, models, theories, typologies and paradigms as analytical tools that the researcher may use in order to make sense of the phenomenon under investigation. Anfara and Mertz (2006, p. xxvii) define theoretical frameworks “as any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels...that can be applied to understanding of phenomena”.

I shall first discuss concepts as they played a major role in this research study and then I shall briefly discuss conceptual frameworks – typologies, models, and theories. Although a conceptual framework does not aim to predict outcomes in a complex system its value lies in the understanding it offers of how to navigate with awareness in a complex environment during the sense-making process.
7.2.1 Concepts

I used the eight prides\textsuperscript{214} on the African plains as my hunting ground\textsuperscript{215} where I hunted for concepts.\textsuperscript{216} In the research context a concept is a labelled, “abstract representation of an event, object or action/interaction” that addresses the aim of a research study (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 103). According to Mouton & Marais (1996), concepts are the most elementary symbolic constructions that we use to make sense of or ascribe meaning to our life worlds. The identification of concepts in the narratives of the entrepreneurs enabled the differentiation of the data which had been collected. In other words, I dissected the textual data gathered into the smallest bits or concepts in order to distinguish between phenomena and, thus, to make sense of the research. These concepts became the first-order constructs or concepts, with concepts and constructs being synonyms for the purpose of this study. First order constructs\textsuperscript{217} are “the thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp social reality” in his/her social world (Schutz, 1962, p. 59).

Based on the first-order concepts, I then incorporated the second-order concepts which I had derived from the relevant literature. The empirical (first order) and theoretical (second-order) concepts were collated and then grouped according to defined categories in preparation for their integration into a conceptual framework in an attempt to increase the existing insights into both the concepts as well as the theory of entrepreneurship. The first-order concepts which were incorporated with the second-order concepts represented the basis for the mental models of the eight participants.

Before discussing these concepts and their incorporation into a model I shall first outline three types of conceptual frameworks, namely, typologies, models and theories (Mouton & Marais, 1996, p. 137).

\textsuperscript{214} The eight participating entrepreneurs

\textsuperscript{215} Chapter 5

\textsuperscript{216} Chapter 6

\textsuperscript{217} As concepts may have different meanings for different people every first-order concept was defined when it was discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. Each definition may be found by consulting the information presented in Table 7.2 to Table 7.8 in, section 7.3.
7.2.2 Conceptual frameworks

Mouton and Marais (1996, p. 136) state that “scientific knowledge consists of scientific statements”. Researchers aim to generate valid scientific statements. These statements are not completely independent and may be integrated into conceptual frameworks.

7.2.2.1 Typologies

A typology is a system or conceptual framework which may be used for classifying or categorising phenomena or concepts in terms of their common characteristics (Mouton & Marais, 1996; Esterberg, 2002). This is one of the basic functions of a conceptual framework and presents “a static image or a cross section” of the phenomenon in question (Mouton & Marais, 1996, p. 140). Mouton & Marais (1996, p. 137) further state:

[...]n a description of the typical characteristics of a phenomenon, the common or outstanding is emphasized and the trivial or incidental is eliminated. The identification of the typical, therefore, clearly involves a process of abstraction. Starting with the concrete level of experience we move to a higher level of abstraction in which the common is emphasized at the expense of the specific.

Mouton and Marais (1996) warn that the relationship between the concept and phenomenon in the typology is an approximation. Hence, no type (the basic unit of a typology) is ever an exact reproduction of all the characteristics of a phenomenon. Good classification or typology requires that the different types should be mutually exclusive and that every type should include all the possible characteristics associated with that type.

7.2.2.2 Models

In the research context a model may be regarded as an attempt to represent the dynamic aspects of a particular phenomenon by indicating the relationships between important elements (concepts) of the phenomenon in a simplified form. Mouton and Marais (1996, p. 141) maintain that models identify central questions or problems; “limit, isolate, simplify, and systematize the domain that is investigated” and generate new definitions of scientific concepts as well as
explanatory sketches or diagrams which may be used to make predictions. In addition to classification, the measure of a good model lies in its heuristic potential rather than its accuracy (Mouton & Marais, 1996). A model is always a simplified or partial representation of reality but it is also a valuable tool which may assist the understanding of a phenomenon. It may also be used to propose new areas of research.

Although a model is sometimes erroneously equated to theory, one of the primary differences between a model and theory is that a model has a heuristic function while theory has an explanatory function.

7.2.2.3 Theories

*The Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (Le Mesurier & McIntosh, 1965) states that theory is “a conception of the relation and especially the causal connections between facts, a system of the laws or principles of an art or science or department or action or knowledge”. According to Creswell (2008, p. 51), “theory is an interrelated set of concepts (or variables) formed into propositions, or hypotheses, that specify the relationship among variables (typically in terms of magnitude and direction)”. It may also be understood as a collection of ideas undergoing the redefinition of stable and rigid testable formalisations (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 41).

Creswell (2008, p. 61–62) identifies two uses for theory in qualitative research. Firstly, it may be used to provide a broad explanation of attitudes and behaviour using variables, concepts and hypotheses. Secondly, it serves as a theoretical lens, orientating the research and shaping the processes of data collection and data analysis. In addition to the functions of classification (typologies) and heuristics (models), a theory also explains and interprets phenomena.

Theories postulate and explain actual relationships between real phenomena and they have a predictive function. In the case of qualitative studies, such theories may be in the form of an explanation for a given phenomenon in terms of a unique context for a small number of cases. Theories are concerned with a higher level of abstraction as compared to either models or typologies. Accordingly, the relationship between a theory and the phenomenon is far more specific than the
relationship between a model and the phenomenon (Mouton & Marais, 1996; De Vos & Strydom, 2011).

Gergen (1992) introduced a postmodern perspective into the debate, arguing that theory is not important because of its correspondence to phenomena but because of the activities it enables. According to Gergen (1992, p. 217), “the function of theories is not derived from their truth value, but from their pragmatic implications”. Pühl, Klyver, and Damgaard (2007, p. 368) support Steyaert’s (1997 argument that knowledge may be created through contextualised stories and they emphasise the importance of the “context of application” of the theory. Hence, there is a motivation for theory to include pragmatic implications.

In this chapter I use the concepts which were identified in the study to develop a model. This model may also serve as an instrument that may be employed to profile the mental models of entrepreneurs. These mental model profiles may then be used to mentor entrepreneurs, assisting them to develop the mental models that support successful entrepreneurial activity and that they may be lacking.

The next section presents the development of the model of the mental models of entrepreneurs.

7.3 CONCEPTUALISING THE MENTAL MODELS OF ENTREPRENEURS

I discussed mental models in detail in section 5.2. This section focuses on the construction of a conceptual framework based on the mental models of the eight participants. A list of the concepts representing all the mental models identified as supporting successful entrepreneurial activity forms the basis of this theoretical structure.

218 Emphasis in the original
219 The context of application of the theory may range from a practical context to its role in future research (Pühl, Klyver, & Damgaard, 2007).
220 The application may range from “direct practical steps to follow” to a new understanding of the phenomena (Pühl et al., 2007, p. 268).
221 A complete list of the concepts that emerged from the accounts of the participants is presented in alphabetical order in Appendix A.
It was not possible to explore all the concepts listed in Appendix A in depth without adding substantial bulk to the thesis\textsuperscript{222}. However, it would be both unacceptable and not in line with the requirement of exhaustiveness\textsuperscript{223} if the concepts that I was not able to discuss in detail in chapters 5 or 6 were ignored as they all contribute to a more complete picture of the mental models of entrepreneurs than may otherwise have been the case. I conducted an extensive review of relevant literature in order to verify whether these concepts were, indeed, relevant to entrepreneurship. This proved, in fact, to be the case for the mental models that supported successful entrepreneurial endeavours.

Once I had identified the first-order concepts I started to look for commonalities between them. After much reflection and deliberation, I divided the concepts into the following broad categories: physical, interpersonal, personal, emotional, communication, cognitive and spiritual. This decision was based on my knowledge of physics and, specifically, on my knowledge of the visible section of the electromagnetic spectrum\textsuperscript{224} and accorded with my knowledge of the ancient Chakra system.\textsuperscript{225}

The electromagnetic spectrum carries energy and it is the major source of information about the source if radiates from (Capra, 1992). The visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum ranges from violet (purple), with the highest frequency and energy, to red with the lowest frequency and energy. The wave-particle duality of light indicates that light with a high frequency displays a predominantly wave character while that with a low frequency demonstrates a more particle nature (Eisberg & Resnick, 1985). Hence, low frequency light (red) possesses a more particle or physical character than high frequency (purple) light. Accordingly, I related the physical concepts related to the mental models to red light and, as the concepts become less physical, I moved them up the colour spectrum with awareness (the most abstract of the concepts) falling in the purple part of the spectrum.

\textsuperscript{222} In section 8.9 I describe how I “reduced” the concepts for analysis purposes. Also see Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{223} Exhaustiveness indicates that the process of finding concepts was repeated until no new concepts emerged.

\textsuperscript{224} Also known as the rainbow

\textsuperscript{225} Also known as the 7 centres of consciousness (Rama, Ballentine, & Weinstock, 1979)
In allocating colours to each of the concepts I referred to the colours of the ancient Chakra system and which correspond with those of the rainbow. A summary of the process is presented in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Concept categories, colours of the spectrum and the ancient Chakra system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept category</th>
<th>Spectrum colour</th>
<th>Chakra</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Purple highest energy</td>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>to know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>Brow</td>
<td>to see/think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Throat</td>
<td>to speak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>to love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Solar plexus</td>
<td>to act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Sacral</td>
<td>to feel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Red – lowest energy</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>to have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will now discuss each of these categories individually.

**7.3.1 Mental models in the spiritual category**

The concepts presented in Table 7.2 form the basis of the mental models in the spiritual category (to know). These mental models were classified as spiritual because they represent the mental models of the entrepreneurs related to concepts that require a high level of self-awareness. The spiritual concepts are represented by the colour purple because it has the highest frequency of visible light and hence the highest energy per quantum or photon of all visible light.

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226 Please see section 8.10 for more detail on the rationale behind these categories.
227 From Judith (2002).
228 Energy = Planck’s constant x frequency of the light (E = hf)
Table 7.2: The mental model concepts in the spiritual category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide for individual profiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Alertness              | A person’s “ability to notice without search opportunities that have hitherto been overlooked” (Kirzner, 1979, p. 48) or “knowing” intuitively without search what is right and what is wrong in the business. | High ability (√)  
Average ability (^)  
Low ability (x)                                                                                   |
| Honest with self       | The ability to be honest with yourself and acknowledge the mistakes you make.                                                                                                                               | Mostly (√)  
Sometimes (^)  
Seldom (x)                                                                                         |
| Pattern recognition    | The mind matches the information in the current situation to that saved in the mental models of the individual (Gaglio & Katz, 2001).                                                                           | High: quick & accurate (√)  
Emerging (^)  
Low: lacking accuracy (x)                                                                       |
| Intuitive decision-making | “A process by which information normally outside of the range of conscious awareness is immediately sensed and perceived by the body’s psycho-physiological systems” (Bradley, 2006, p. 1) | High: quick & effective (√)  
Average: Sometimes right;  
somtimes wrong (^)  
Low accuracy(x)                                                                                   |
| Self-awareness         | “An awareness of your innermost thoughts and feelings” (Karren, et al., 2006, p. 129).                                                                                                                    | High level (√)  
Average level (^)  
Low level (x)                                                                                     |

7.3.2 Mental models in the cognitive category

The concepts presented in Table 7.3 were classified as cognitive because they involve the active engagement of the pre-frontal cortex. These concepts influence the individual’s thinking about thinking. In some of the concepts, for example, decision-making, the role of the pre-frontal cortex is more obvious than in others. For example, it is only when we are aware of and think analytically about our biases that we are able to manage them. Our thoughts about these concepts determine our reactions to them and, hence, I have included them in this category.

I also included mindset in this category because, in this context, mindset refers to whether an entrepreneur possesses either a growth or fixed mindset as this plays an important role in his/her willingness to learn and learning is a cognitive process (Dweck, 2006). Adaptability, as well as challenge and change management, is also included because of the importance of these themes for entrepreneurial

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229 This guide is used to construct the mental model profiles of a particular entrepreneur and will be explained in section 7.5.

The ability to adapt to changing environments, to proactively address challenges and to drive change are more than merely concepts in the context of this study. They are, in fact, at the heart of all the concepts. The way in which we react to challenges and change depend on almost all of the other concepts in each of the categories. These concepts are either the resources the entrepreneur has to use and/or obstacles he or she has to surmount successfully if he or she wants a thriving business.

Whether entrepreneurs use their intuition, analytical thinking or both and whether they are proactive, reactive or passive when they deal with these challenges and changes will play an important role in their success (Gaglio, 2004). Entrepreneurs draw on their mental models to address the obstacles they encounter. Working toward success is a very complicated process which involves several interconnected mental models.

![Figure 7.1: Diagrammatic representation of decision-making](image)

I concluded from the information presented in Table 5.2 in section 5.4 that it is beneficial for the entrepreneur to engage in both intuitive and rational decision-making. Thoughts vacillate between the intuitive and rational modes. This is illustrated in Figure 7.1 in which the box labelled PE represents the extent of the individual’s personal experience while the blue loops and red loops indicate the
intuitive and analytical decision-making loops respectively. Part of the rational loop venturing beyond personal experience and personal perspective indicates learning from others or from the outside world.

Pattern recognition forms the basis of intuition as defined for the purposes of this study (Simon, 1987). However, it may also refer to the entrepreneur’s ability to recognise – often subtle – patterns in his/her business and in the market place at large.

We learned in section 6.2.8 that dealing with challenges and change in a proactive way is more beneficial than being reactive and that this is better than being passive (Amanjee, Crous, & Crafford, 2006; Koppl & Minniti, 2010). Despite the special position of these two concepts – challenges and change – I decided to include them in the cognitive category because of the important role played by proactive thinking for entrepreneurs.

The concepts in the cognitive category were allocated the colour indigo, which has the second highest energy of all visible light. It has a very strong wave nature symbolic of brainwaves and also represents “to think”.

**Table 7.3:** The mental model concepts in the cognitive category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Analytical) Rational decision-making</td>
<td>Mediated by conscious appraisal, justified with logic and evidence. Is relatively slower as compared to intuition (Lehrer, 2009).</td>
<td>Accurate and effective (✓) Sometimes accurate (^) Seldom accurate or effective (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>The reaction speed of the individual on</td>
<td>Proactive (✓) Reactive (^) Passive (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias management</td>
<td>The control the individual has over his/her biases</td>
<td>High (✓) Average (^) Low (x) effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge management</td>
<td>The ability of the individual to react to and manage he/she challenges encounters</td>
<td>Proactive (✓) Reactive (^) Passive (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change management adaptability</td>
<td>The reaction of the individual to changes taking place and his/her ability to drive change. The ability and willingness of the individual to adapt</td>
<td>Agent for change (✓) Proactive/adaptable (✓) Reactive/slow to adapt(^) Passive/resistant to change (x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity tolerance</td>
<td>The capacity of the individual to cope in complex circumstances</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfactual thinking</td>
<td>“Thinking in a way that is contrary to existing facts”. “It is very useful for guiding educated guesses” (Gaglio, 2004, p. 539)</td>
<td>What-if thinking (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seldom used (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If-only thinking (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed gratification</td>
<td>The ability of the individual to delay gratification</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial learning/learning</td>
<td>The ability and willingness of the entrepreneur to learn</td>
<td>High (eager and able) (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through experience and mistakes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (willing and able) (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (not willing or able) (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal focused</td>
<td>Indication of how focused and goal driven an entrepreneur is</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset</td>
<td>Displaying either a growth or fixed mindset</td>
<td>Growth (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fixed (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective sense-making</td>
<td>“The interplay between action and interpretation” (Weick &amp; Sutcliffe, 2005, p. 409)</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty and tolerance of</td>
<td>Reflects the capacity of the individual to cope in uncertain circumstances</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambiguity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7.3.3 Mental models in the communication category

The frequency of blue light is high enough to represent a fairly strong wave behaviour, but less so than that of indigo. The colour blue is historically allocated to the throat chakra and it is the communication centre (Rama, Ballentine & Weinstock, 1979). Communication takes place via waves, whether audio (sound waves) or visual (light waves). All the empirical concepts related to any form of communication were grouped together in this category.

The concepts in this category includes more than merely verbal communication or body language. When I considered the concepts in this category, I reflected on whether the mental model behind the concept became visible through the words or actions of the individual. I regard behaviour as a form of communication.

Although I positioned change and challenge management in the cognitive domain because both require cognitive skills, I felt it was necessary to mention them again in this category. Here we are interested in whether the individual's mental models
encourage the physical processes involved in reacting to change and challenges. The participants who were less successful in their entrepreneurial endeavours were often aware that they were facing a challenge. Although they sometimes even knew what they should do to confront the situation, they either took action to address the situation too late or else they took no action at all. Hence, their unwillingness to act contributed to the failure of their endeavours.

The entrepreneur’s self-perception, or how professional the individual considers him or herself to be, is evident in his/her language, body language and behaviour. I consider the commitment displayed by the individual to making a success of his/her business and the level of responsibility and reliability manifested by the entrepreneur to constitute an important component of his/her communication with clients, customers, staff, suppliers and networks. Hence, these are all positioned in this category and are included in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: The mental model concepts in entrepreneurial communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Refers to the level of commitment the individual displays in a situation</td>
<td>Committed (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Escalation of commitment (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not committed (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and listening skills</td>
<td>The ability and willingness of the entrepreneur to listen to and communicate with people</td>
<td>Good (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bad (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiator</td>
<td>The ability and willingness to negotiate with people</td>
<td>Good (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bad (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal communication of self-perception</td>
<td>The way in which the entrepreneur projects him/ herself professionally</td>
<td>Positive and professional (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-professional (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unprofessional/amatuerish (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>The trustworthiness of the entrepreneur as regards delivering on promises</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>The willingness of the individual to take responsibility for past or future actions</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>The ability to see further than the current situation and communicate it to the people one works with.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.4 Mental models in the emotional category
Passion, enthusiasm, and excitement for the business are emotional reactions to the business and thus are placed in the emotional category. However, the business personality fit was not such an obvious decision, although I reasoned that it would be very difficult to experience passion, enthusiasm, or excitement for a business if it did not resonate well with the personality of the entrepreneur. By a process of elimination, I decided that the emotional domain was the most suitable domain for the business-personality fit, as well as the mental models of the entrepreneur relating to creativity and innovativeness.

These all appear in Table 7.5 and the colour green was allocated to the emotional category. The reason for this is that the frequency of green light places it is midway between wave and particles nature. The heart is symbolically our emotional centre and it is the chakra halfway between the purple crown and the red base chakras.

Table 7.5: Mental model concepts in the emotional category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect in decision-making</td>
<td>Refers to the level and role of emotion in the decision-making process</td>
<td>Effective (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not present (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Too high; clouds reason (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business fit</td>
<td>The extent to which the business suits the abilities and personality of the entrepreneur</td>
<td>Good fit (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fair fit (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low fit (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity and innovativeness</td>
<td>The ability of the entrepreneur to be creative or innovative in business</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm and excitement</td>
<td>The excitement and/or enthusiasm of the entrepreneur towards his/her business</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>The passion of the entrepreneur towards his/her business</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.5 Mental models in the personal category
This is the most densely populated of the categories. However, this was not surprising as the concepts in the personal category define the mental models of
the individual about him or herself. Hence, it lies at the core of who the entrepreneur is as a person.

The courage, confidence and self-efficacy of the individual stem from self-belief and drive action, hence, they belong in the personal domain. Entrepreneurs grasp opportunities because of their self-efficacy, confidence and courage (Simon, Houghton, & Aquino, 1999; Krueger, 2003; Baron, 2004). Thus, opportunism also belongs in the personal domain because of its link to these concepts. Risk taking is related to competitiveness and courage and requires fear management and, therefore, I also placed it in this category.

The entrepreneur’s need for autonomy, control, recognition and achievement speak to the personal needs of the individual and, hence, belong in this category. In order to meet these personal needs, the actions of the entrepreneur entails determination, persistence, drive, tenacity, and often stubbornness. It is essential that entrepreneurs are able to cope with considerable of pressure. By overcoming challenges, they become resilient. I decided to place locus of control in the personal category as it involves the willingness of the individual to take responsibility for his/her decisions and actions.

Table 7.6 presents the concepts underpinning the mental models of entrepreneurs which are related to personal leadership and it is represented by the colour yellow of the solar plexus chakra which is symbolic of personal action (Rama, Ballentine & Weinstock, 1979).

Table 7.6: Mental model concepts in the personal category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy – need for</td>
<td>The right of self government (Le Mesurier &amp; McIntosh, 1965)</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>Tendency of the individual to compete, either with other people or self</td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>An indication of the level of trust in oneself or one’s abilities</td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Confident (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insecure (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Over-confident/Arrogant (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>The level of control an individual believes he/she has in a situation</td>
<td>Control (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Illusion of control (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Illusion of no control (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>The “readiness to face and capacity to endure danger” (Le Mesurier &amp; McIntosh, 1965, p. 182). The person acts despite experiencing the situation as “dangerous”</td>
<td>Realistic (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reckless (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Too low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination and persistence</td>
<td>The ability and willingness of the entrepreneur to persist in endeavours despite obstacles</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven</td>
<td>Reflects the energy with which the individual pursue goals</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>The willingness and ability of an individual to impel staff to reach goals or targets</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear management</td>
<td>Reflects the ability of the individual to manage his/her fears</td>
<td>Effective (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ineffective (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>The degree to which individuals expects the outcome of their behaviour to be dependent (internal)or independent (external) on their own input</td>
<td>Internal (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>External (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for recognition and/or achievement</td>
<td>A indication of the level of recognition an individual expects or needs</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunism</td>
<td>An indication of the tendency of an individual to seize an opportunity</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure tolerance</td>
<td>Reflects the capacity of the individual to cope under pressure</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>An indication of the individual’s ability to return to a state of normality after a challenging experience</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk management</td>
<td>An indication of the way in which the individual addresses risk</td>
<td>Risk manager (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Risk taker (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Risk averse (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>A person’s belief in his/her ability to achieve a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997)</td>
<td>Realistic (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unrealistic (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stubbornness</td>
<td>An indication of the individual’s resistance to relinquish effort, implying some level of rigidity</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td>An indication of the individual’s consistency of effort</td>
<td>High (✓)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.6 Mental models in the interpersonal category

The two reasons for the inclusion of the concepts in Table 7.7 in this category are, firstly, that the mental models of an entrepreneur influence his/her relationships with clients, customers, staff, suppliers as well as networks and, secondly, coming from an entrepreneurial family or having a business mentor influence the mental models of the entrepreneur (Krueger, 1993).

I also included willingness on the part of the entrepreneur to delegate work and the effectiveness of this in this category. Although willingness to delegate may be linked to an individual's need for control, it also possesses a significant interpersonal component imbedded in the process. By this I am referring to the type of relationship and the level of trust between the entrepreneur and the staff members to whom he or she delegates work. All the concepts in the interpersonal category are presented in Table 7.7.

The mental models underpinning interpersonal relationships are in orange which is the colour of the sacral chakra symbolic of "to feel" – the tactile centre. The frequency of orange light is the second lowest for visible light and has a particle (material) nature. Hence, we are considering the mental model concepts influencing the tangible aspects of the entrepreneur's world; the personal relationships of the entrepreneur.

Table 7.7: Mental models concepts in the interpersonal category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>The willingness of the entrepreneur to delegate work-related responsibilities to staff members.</td>
<td>High and appropriate (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium (°)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low and/or inappropriate (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of entrepreneurial family on mental models</td>
<td>Self-explanatory</td>
<td>Yes: positive influences of family (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No or negative influences of family (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of mentor on mental models</td>
<td>Self-explanatory</td>
<td>Yes (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to network</td>
<td>The degree to which the entrepreneur forms relationships with people who then connect him/her to other people who may be of value to the entrepreneur.</td>
<td>Yes (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ability to relate to staff

**Definition:**
The willingness of the entrepreneur to form proper, engaged relationships with staff.

**Guide:**
- High and appropriate (✓)
- Medium (▲)
- Low or inappropriate (✗)

---

#### 7.3.7 Mental models in the physical category

Lastly, the concepts underlying the mental models of the entrepreneur on the management of physical resources in the business are presented in Table 7.8. It is easy to understand that the mental models of entrepreneurs related to financial management, resource management and the quality of the products or services offered belong in this category as these are all tangible in nature. However, I also decided to include the business, industry specific and management skills as well as the means the entrepreneur used to start the business as all these concepts involve physical processes. The mindset of the entrepreneur underlying his/her ability to sell a product or service and perform multiple roles in the business – especially during the early years – as well as cope with the physical discomfort and stress that usually accompanies the start-up and growth processes are also included in this category because of their physical nature.

Both time management and work ethics are processes with visible consequences and, hence, it made sense to me to include them in this domain. However, it was not easy to decide about systems thinking. I decided to include it in the physical category because systems thinking has a real affect only when it becomes visible in the implementation of physical systems.

The colour allocated to the mental model concepts about physical resources is red which has to lowest frequency and thus represent the partical nature of light. It is also the colour of the root (to have) chakra (Rama, Ballentine & Weinstock, 1979).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>The ability and willingness to act swiftly.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and industry specific expertise/management</td>
<td>The level of business and industry specific expertise of the entrepreneur.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort tolerance</td>
<td>The ability to endure a significant degree of physical discomfort.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>An indication of the level of control the entrepreneur exercises over the finances of the business.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means driven</td>
<td>Starting a business based on the means available to the entrepreneur.</td>
<td>Yes (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple roles</td>
<td>The various roles the entrepreneur has to fulfil – especially during the early stages of the business. These include managing the marketing, sales, finances, human resources, and all the other functions specific to the business.</td>
<td>Yes (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of product/service</td>
<td>Ensuring the quality of the product/service offered. This may include product development.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource management and utilisation</td>
<td>An indication of the level of control the entrepreneur exercises over the resources of the business and the extent to which these resources are utilised.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>The ability and willingness of the individual in respect of the sale of goods or services in his/her business.</td>
<td>Excited and able (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willing and able (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unable (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unwilling (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress management</td>
<td>The ability to cope in stressful circumstances.</td>
<td>High (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems thinking</td>
<td>The ability of the entrepreneur to implement systems.</td>
<td>Effective (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ineffective (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No systems (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>An indication of the ability of the individual to manage his/her time and meet deadlines.</td>
<td>Good (√)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (^)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Average (x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now that each concept informing the mental models of the eight participating entrepreneurs has been categorised and defined I will now present the Mental Model Spectrum model for successful entrepreneurship.

### 7.4 THE KILL: THE MENTAL MODEL SPECTRUM FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS (MMSES)

One of the most highly developed skills in contemporary Western civilization is dissection: the spilt-up of problems into their smallest possible components. We are good at it. So good, we often forget to put the pieces back together again.

This skill is perhaps most finely honed in science. There we not only routinely break problems into bite-sized chunks and mini-chunks, we then very often isolate each one from its environment by means of a useful trick. We say *ceteris paribus* – all other things being equal. In this way we can ignore the complex interactions between our problem and the rest of the universe.

Alvin Toffler in the foreword in *Order out of Chaos* by Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers (1990, p. xi).

After many hours of deep reflection and an extensive literature review on the mental models, or heuristics, used by entrepreneurs it is time to unite them all in the Mental model spectrum model. This model, which was constructed from the basic concepts which underpin the mental models conducive to success in entrepreneurship, emerged slowly. As the categories – physical, interpersonal, personal, emotional, communication, cognitive, and spiritual – became apparent I had the epiphany of displaying the categories in the form of the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum. Although, the metaphor for the study had changed from quantum physics to the survival of the adaptable with the African lion as example,
I kept color spectrum because of the additional layer of meaning the colors bring to the model.

**Table 7.9:** The Mental model spectrum model for success in entrepreneurship (MMSES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alertness and awareness</th>
<th>Honest with self</th>
<th>Intuitive decision-making</th>
<th>Pattern recognition</th>
<th>Self awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPIRITUAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical, rational decision-making</td>
<td>Bias management</td>
<td>Challenge management</td>
<td>Change management and adaptability</td>
<td>Complexity tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed gratification</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial learning (willing to)</td>
<td>Goal Focused growth/ fixed</td>
<td>Mindset reflection &amp; sense-making</td>
<td>Counter-factual thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COGNITIVE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical, rational decision-making</td>
<td>Bias management</td>
<td>Challenge management</td>
<td>Change management and adaptability</td>
<td>Complexity tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed gratification</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial learning (willing to)</td>
<td>Goal Focused growth/ fixed</td>
<td>Mindset reflection &amp; sense-making</td>
<td>Counter-factual thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Communication and listening skills</td>
<td>Negotiator</td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Non-verbal communication of self-perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Business fit</td>
<td>Creativity and innovativeness</td>
<td>Enthusiasm and excitement</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMOTIONAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect in decision-making</td>
<td>Business fit</td>
<td>Creativity and innovativeness</td>
<td>Enthusiasm and excitement</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy independence freedom</td>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven</td>
<td>Fear management</td>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Need for achievement or recognition</td>
<td>Determination and persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure tolerance</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Risk taking propensity</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Stubbornness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERPERSONAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegate (entrepreneurial)</td>
<td>Family mentor</td>
<td>Networker</td>
<td>Ability to relate to clients</td>
<td>Ability to relate to staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support systems in place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Business and industry specific skills</td>
<td>Discomfort/ pressure tolerance</td>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>Means driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource management</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Stress management</td>
<td>Systems thinking</td>
<td>Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work ethic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final version of the mental model spectrum as a model for success in entrepreneurship is presented in Table 7.9. With this model I have accomplished the first aim\textsuperscript{230} of my study, namely, exploring the mental models of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study.

Although the research was done in the Republic of South Africa, three of the participants (Allon, Natasha and Tessa) have strong links with Europe. The MMSES model is thus not strictly South African, but rather a generic model that can be used anywhere in the world.

7.5 USE OF THE MENTAL MODEL SPECTRUM MODEL

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, each element of the matrix of the MMSES model represents a mental model for success in entrepreneurship. The greater the number of these elements present in the mental models of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study, the more successful they were.

In the last columns of Tables 7.2 to 7.8 there are keywords which are linked to the symbols √, ^ and x.

Table 7.10 reveals the way in which we represent the matrix elements for the individual MMSES profiles of the participants.

| Table 7.10: Key to symbols and their use in the individual, mental model, colour spectra |
|---|---|
| Symbols for use in individual concept, colour spectra | |
| √ | Full colour block with black or white lettering depending on the block colour. |
| ^ | White block with the lettering in the relevant colour. |
| x | White block with the lettering in black. |

I used this key in Table 7.10 in order to construct the MMSES profiles\textsuperscript{231} of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study. With the exception of Albert and Dianne, who are no longer running their own businesses, these profiles are based on the businesses that the entrepreneurs are currently running. I used their experiences in their most recent businesses in order to construct their profiles.

\textsuperscript{230} Please see section 1.5 (photograph 1.4).
\textsuperscript{231} Please see Appendix D.
The profiles confirmed my suspicion that the entrepreneurs who had been successful in their most recent entrepreneurial endeavours possessed a diverse set of mental models and this fostered the growth of their businesses. They had cultivated mental models that were aligned to the complex environment of entrepreneurship. Such cultivation had involved a continuous shift and reframing of the content of their mental models through a process of continuous learning. These results address the second aim of this study, namely, exploring the differences in the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in successful and unsuccessful endeavours.

It is clear from the MMSES profiles of each participant which mental models had supported and which had compromised their decision-making. Accordingly, the MMSES profiles of an entrepreneur may be used to identify the mental models which need to change to increase the possibility that the individual will experience greater success than may otherwise have been the case.

Our mental models reflect our past experience (Senge et al., 2008 p. 88). Thus, to become experts we need to gain more experience and we need to change our mental models. This may be done in various ways including experiential and vicarious learning. Vicarious learning suggests the presence of a mentor or role model. The different learning strategies and the role of a mentor were discussed in sections 5.5 and 6.3.2.

In order to realise the third and final aim of this study I need to outline a process that may assist in changing the entrepreneurs’ mental models from the novice to the expert level.

7.6 MENTORSHIP FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the main it is extremely difficult for an entrepreneur to grow from novice to expert without the benefit of entrepreneurial parents or friends and with no other role model or mentor. Few entrepreneurs possess the resources required to continue on their entrepreneurial road until they learn all the lessons required to achieve success. Hence, the low success rate of start-up entrepreneurs. However, there is huge potential benefit for entrepreneurs if they engage with either a

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232 Please see Photograph 1.4 in section 1.5
mentor or mentors (Cope & Watts, 2000; Cull, 2006; Regis, Falk, Dias & Bastos, 2007).

In addition to the benefits of engaging with a mentor, it is incumbent on every entrepreneur to be a mentor to the people who work in his/her business. After experiencing the benefits of and realising the power that comes from engaging with a mentor, the entrepreneur should pay the experience forward so that his or her staff members may also experience the advantages of mentorship. In this respect Allon was a prime example.

Although I aspire to suggesting a process for changing the mental models of entrepreneurs, I feel strongly that this thesis is not a “How to” guide to choosing “the right” mentor or mentorship programme for entrepreneurs. Instead this thesis represents an attempt to discuss the mechanism underpinning a mentorship programme for novice entrepreneurs.

The critical question now arises: How do we change the mental models of entrepreneurs? Mental models are interconnected with action and their focus is beyond our range of perception. Thus, although it is not possible to observe mental models it is, nevertheless, possible to explore them by interacting with them. This highlights the need to use the qualitative research approach in this study.

In order to achieve this we first need some understanding of how mental models are created. People build their mental models by linking apparently regular outcomes to actions – either of their own or those of other people (Weick & Bougon, 2001). Their minds reflect on the experience and then construct concepts or variables that they interconnect in order to make sense of these concepts or variables. This process is a subjective process and based on the perceptions of the person concerned.

In the entrepreneurial context because mental models are linked to the sense-making of a particular entrepreneur, it is not possible for another person either to change or to adjust the connections made by the entrepreneur concerned. Thus, from the outside it is possible – at best – to mentor the entrepreneur in such a way so as to enable the entrepreneur to change his/her own mental models. However,
if this is to happen, the entrepreneur must acknowledge that there is a real need – an urgent need (Kotter & Rathgeber, 2006) – for the change to happen. This requires awareness and alertness on the part of the entrepreneur. Only then will it be possible to uncouple the original connections, thus enabling new connections to be formed.

When we consider the growth from novice to expert which took place in some of entrepreneurs who participated in the study there were cases where a participant was able to navigate through this process of changing his/her mental models – knowingly or unknowingly – on his/her own. However, it was often under the guidance of a mentor that the changes in the mental models of the participants occurred. Those participants who had not had either a mentor or entrepreneurial parents (Albert and Dianne) did not even realise that they their mental models were preventing them from making sound business decisions. It clearly makes sense for novice entrepreneurs to use a suitable mentor to assist them in changing their mental models where necessary. The steps presented in Table 7.11 constitute a mechanism to assist in the facilitation of this process.

In order to illustrate this I used examples from my own life as an entrepreneur as well as examples from the careers of some of the participants to identify the steps involved in changing a mental model. Based on the analysis of these examples I identified the steps involved in changing mental models. These steps are presented in Table 7.11. Column 1 presents the TA²URE²C process, column 2 presents the Steps to problem solving (Pretz, Naples, & Sternberg, 2003) and column 3 the Seven Capacities of the U Movement for transforming our habitual ways (Senge et al., 2008) in column 3. In column 4 I added the framework that a mentor may use to facilitate a change in mental models.

The mentor may either utilise narratives or well-thought out, open-ended questions to profile the mental models of the entrepreneur using The Mental model spectrum model.

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233 Please see Appendix E for the examples.
### Table 7.11: Steps to change mental models (TA$^2$URE$^2$C)$^{234}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trigger</td>
<td>Recognise or identify the problem</td>
<td>Profiles the entrepreneur’s mental models using The Mental model spectrum model.</td>
<td>The mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awareness and alertness to ineffective mental model</strong></td>
<td>Sensing (seeing)</td>
<td>Discusses the Mental model spectrum of the entrepreneur with the entrepreneur to create an awareness of the success-limiting mental model(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledge that existing mental model is redundant</strong></td>
<td>Define and represent the problem mentally</td>
<td>Holds conversation(s) with the entrepreneur to bring him/her to a realisation of the limiting influence of the(se) particular mental model(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unplug:</strong> Untie the concepts supporting the mental model in (3) and set it free to make fresh connections</td>
<td>Letting go</td>
<td>Assists the entrepreneur to relinquish the(se) particular mental models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reconnect:</strong> Make new connections using that same concept – hence build a new mental model that supports success</td>
<td>Develop a solution strategy</td>
<td>Elicits from the entrepreneur what the(se) mental models should look like if they are to have a positive influence on the entrepreneurial process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Envision</strong></td>
<td>Organise knowledge and allocate mental and physical resources to solving the problem</td>
<td>Encourages the entrepreneur to formulate a strategy to develop the(se) new mental model(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enact the new decision</strong></td>
<td>Monitor progress while working toward goal</td>
<td>Supports the entrepreneur in the enactment of the strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluate and consolidate the new connections.</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate the solution</td>
<td>Assists the entrepreneur to evaluate the influence of and consolidate the use of the(se) new mental model(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{234}$ Using the first letter of each of the key steps to name the process TAAUREEC (TA$^2$URE$^2$C) and relating it to Tau – *lion* in Sesotho.
7.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the relevant literature on analytical tools and, specifically, conceptual frameworks. I categorised the concepts which emerged from the accounts of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study and included these concepts in The Mental model spectrum model. It is anticipated that this model may be used to profile the mental models of entrepreneurs. The study highlighted differences in the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in successful ventures and those involved in unsuccessful ventures. Therefore, I am including the TA²URE²C steps for changing the mental models of entrepreneurs into mental models that should support successful entrepreneurship in this Chapter. Finally, I suggested a framework for mentoring novice entrepreneurs in such a way so as to promote the development of expert mental models.
It is January 2015 and it is hot. In the bushveld the lions take shelter in the shade of the indigenous – usually acacia – trees. There they rest but, who knows, maybe it is where they reminisce and reflect on their last hunt; contemplating why they were not able to bring down the buffalo the previous night or whether it would have been worth it to pursue a giraffe and risk being kicked in the process. Who knows what lions think when they stare into the distance? However, this lioness needs to know what she is thinking...

235 Photograph from the collection of Nettie and Ken Kyle.
In Johannesburg, a few kilometres south of the bushveld, the trees are lush and green after the good rains. I am sitting in my study overlooking the eastern part of our garden. This is my sanctuary where I regularly sit and reflect. As I have now reached the point at which I need to ponder on my doctoral journey and write the research story, once again, I can say, “Ke nako”. It is time; time to sit in the peace of my study where I have spent countless hours in the past four years working on my thesis. It is time to retrace my steps through the research territory and take the reader with me on this journey.

Photograph 8.2: My laptop on my desk next to the window where I work

8.1 INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of autoethnographic research, the University of Johannesburg requires four narratives, namely, the researcher’s story, the stories of the

236 Please see Chapter 3, My pride on the African plains.
participants in the study, and the literature story and the research story. This chapter contains the research story.

Why do qualitative researchers compile research stories? Arguably, the most important reasons for including such stories in qualitative work include the following:

Firstly, the research story provides researchers with the opportunity to assess the quality of their research by offering what is known as an audit trail. Schurink, Fouche, and De Vos (2011, p. 422) describe an audit trail as follows:

> An auditing trail is a systematic, maintained documentation process of the researcher’s continuous critical analysis of all decisions and actions taken during the … research process. [It] displays the interaction between us and our subject[s] in such a way that the research can be understood, not only in terms of what was discovered, but also how it was discovered. The advantage of this is that our interpretations can be better understood and validated by readers who are informed about the position we adapt to the study and by our explicit questioning of our own involvement. This means that interpreting one’s own interpretations, looking at one’s own perspectives and turning a self-critical eye on one’s own authority as interpreter and author enhances the trustworthiness of the findings and outcomes of the research.

Schwandt (2007, p. 12) writes: “The purpose of the audit is to render judgement about the dependability of procedures employed by the enquirer and the extent to which the conclusions of the study are confirmable. An audit trail is a systematically maintained documentation system.”

Secondly, researchers write a research story because such a story allows them to explain how they applied reflexivity during the research process.

Reflexivity implies

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237 Please see Chapter 4, Other prides on the African plains.
238 Please see Chapter 5, The hunting grounds, and Chapter 6, The prey.
…critical thinking about how one’s status, characteristics, values and history, as well as the numerous choices one has made during the research, affects the results. As a result of the reflections, sometimes the researcher takes action, such as asking for assistance with some parts of the research or changing some facet of the research design. Then, in order to provide readers with information that can help them judge the quality of the final manuscript, researchers include relevant parts of the reflections (Bailey, 2007, p. 6).

Thirdly, a research story contains the researchers’ experiences of the research, including their challenges and breakthroughs, and what they learnt. This entails what are known as confessional tales. Sparkes (2002, pp. 59–60) writes as follows about this writing style:

The fieldworker’s point of view is often represented in confessional tales as part of a character building conversation tale in which the researcher, who had a view of how things might happen in the start of the study, comes to see things very differently as the study progresses. As part of this process of coming to know and, by definition, getting closer to the participant’s view of the world, confessional tales often include episodes of the fieldworker’s shock and surprise. The blunders and mistakes made, the social gaffes committed, and the secrets unwittingly unearthed are also part of this coming to know.

Finally, it is not possible to divorce the qualitative research one conducts from other facets of one’s life. According to Ngunjiri, Hernandez, and Chang (2010), qualitative research is an extension of our lives. While we have been educated as researchers “to guard against subjectivity (self-driven perspectives) and to separate self from research activities, it is an impossible task. Scholarship is inextricably connected to self-personal interest, experience, and familiarity” (Ngunjiri et al., 2010, p. 2).

Schutt (2012, p. 332) highlights the importance of this natural history of the research process by stating that the “confidence in the conclusions from a field research study is also strengthened by an honest and informative account about
how the researcher interacted with subjects in the field, what problems he or she encountered, and how these problems were or were not resolved”.

Skills of reflection concern slowing down our own thinking processes so that we can become more aware of how we form our mental models and the ways they influence our actions (Senge, 1990 p. 191).

8.2 THE HUNT AS SEEN FROM MY STUDY

Sitting at my desk with my laptop open in front of me on the desk and my research journals piled to the right on my desk my mind wanders to the important events, activities and decisions I recorded in these journals during the past four years.

According to Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 409), sense-making “involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing”. Accordingly, I need to consider the thoughts behind my intentions and actions in order to make sense of my research process. In addition, by carefully putting these thoughts into words it is hoped that the reader will gain an insight into the process while also simultaneously assisting the reader to evaluate my work. By reflecting and making sense of my experiences I hope, as Cope and Watts (2000) suggest, to learn from them.

From my reading of various methodological textbooks (see Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) I realise how important it is for the researcher in qualitative research, where data is collected in a subjective way and the data analysis involves interpretation, to show how he or she came to the decisions made and the insights gained. By leaving a record of the decisions I made it is hoped that other researchers will be able to understand how I reached the point where I am.

One of the demons against which I fought at the outset of the study, when qualitative research was still very new to me, was whether my research would eventually be meaningful. I would sometimes wake up at night thinking, “What if – at the end – I cannot find anything sensible to write about?” On the occasion when I shared my fears with Prof, he reassured me, “Don’t worry. You will have something to write!” When I spoke to other qualitative researchers who were more advanced than I was, some of them acknowledged that they, too, had experienced
the same fear when they had started out on the qualitative route. I found some comfort when, soon after these conversations, I read that “[t]he number of research studies that have compared entrepreneurs who have successfully created new firms with entrepreneurship who have failed at this process, is very small” (Gartner, Carter, & Reynolds, 2010, p. 116). At times when my progress was painfully slow it was my belief that my study might assist local entrepreneurs to be successful in their entrepreneurial endeavours that sustained me.

I feel grateful as I remember how, as I was about to embark on the study, Prof urged me to keep a reflective journal of my doctoral journey. Despite the fact that I have kept journals since I was a teenager, I took time to investigate whether there was a preferred way of keeping a journal when undertaking qualitative research. Since, according to Silverman (2000), there was no such preferred way, I continued to do it the way I knew best, although with a few adjustments. At the end of each day I would record my reflections on my activities, intentions, insights, thoughts and decisions in an ordinary A4 notebook using my favourite pen. When I read my journal again I was able to revisit the difficult decisions I had had to make, the times when I had had no idea where this study would take me and my epiphanies along the way.

Today, sitting in my study, my shade tree, I am grateful that I was so diligent in my journaling. The five journals that I have filled since 2007 assisted me in making important and insightful decisions as I was able to consult them and refresh my memory. Recalling that Janesick (1999, p. 506) wrote about “refining the role of the researcher through reflection”, I look at my journals smiling; knowing that these journals will once again serve me well as I write my research story.

I pick Grbich’s (1999, p. 65) work off the shelf and read that reflexivity “involves a process of self-awareness that should clarify how one’s beliefs have been socially constructed and how these values are impacting on interactions and interpretation in research settings”. As a research instrument my skills at interviewing, observing, writing field notes and making sense of what I gathered were challenged and my perceptions shaped by my interactions with the entrepreneurs who participated in this study. My beliefs or worldview, my value system and, as Kopala and Suzuki (1999, p.64) point out, my “personality, personal experiences,
interpretations and political, social or religious agenda” all serve as a lens through which I observe the world and also how I see myself in the world. I realise that I had brought the experiences the participants had shared with me into my own reference frame. However, as cautioned in the literature, this imposes a huge responsibility on me as the researcher to state my position clearly so that the reference frame from which I operate is clear to the reader(s). Hence, as suggested by Schurink (2009a) and Schram (2003, p. 5), I had clarified my research philosophy before embarking on this study.239

Reflexivity was invaluable to me. It had improved my understanding of the participants and their behaviour in their businesses and in the interviews I had conducted with them. In addition, it had enabled me to write the narratives of the participants with some insight and also, as Sergi and Hallin (2011, p. 200) write, “to regain focus and clarity” during the research process. The insights I gained during my reflections had also added “context and layers”, as Ellis and Berger (2000, p. 162) put it, to the narratives of the participants.

I find the act of writing in my journal to be a completely different experience from typing on a computer keyboard. Writing has a hypnotic effect on me and, while writing, it is as if I tap into the layers underneath the situation on which I am reflecting and I gain deeper insights into the situation than were otherwise the case. In other words, writing often results in my own reactions to and thoughts on a situation becoming clearer to me. During my reflections I interpreted my experience of myself in the light of the person I had been prior to the research experience and how the experience had influenced me to, as Selden and Fletcher (2010, p. 55) say, contextualise “me” in my future actions. In a way, through my reflective journaling, I was documenting my “self-becoming” during the study. On the other hand, I needed to find the “balance between becoming too self-centred versus generating meaningful research” (Sergi & Hallin, 2011, p. 205). Toward the end of this chapter I shall revisit how this study provided me with a rich experience and how it has changed me.

239 Please see Chapter 2 where I discuss ontology and epistemology with Neill – section 2.3.
I rest my one hand on top of the pile of journals close to me on the desk and I realise anew how valuable these books and also my audio recordings of all the conversations I have had during this study and which I transcribed verbatim, are to me. Whenever Prof, or anyone else, asked me something about my study, I was always able to open one of my journals or listen to the recording to access the information I needed. Nevertheless, it had not always been easy to keep up with my journaling and with transcribing the audio recordings. Often late at night or midway through a transcription when I was extremely tired I would wonder whether all the recordings and transcriptions were not a waste of time. However, a little voice inside had always edged me on with the question: “What if you really need this close to the end of your study when time is tight?” As a result I continued despite the sleep deprivation. I suppose this is an integral aspect of doctoral research.

The reflections in my diaries were not usually written late at night but rather as I visited and revisited situations, issues or challenges. For example, during the week when I conducted my first interview with Tessa I had reflected on my interview with her. In the process I became aware of how her mental models either differed from or corresponded with those of the other participants as well as my own. I contemplated my relationship with her and explored what I had learnt of and from her. I also started with my preliminary analysis of her interview – noting whether the emerging concepts differed from or corresponded with the concepts
which had emerged from the interviews with the other participants and whether novel concepts were emerging.

I repeated this process after every interview with each of the participants. Hence, my journals display a level of apparent randomness – reflecting things as they happened. This lack of chronology in my journals made it difficult to use the journals to guide me during my journey through the research process. However, there is an index at the back of each journal to help me find topics when I need to. In order to ensure that I address every aspect of the research process I decided to scroll through my thesis on my laptop to guide my reflection today. Let the safari begin!

I click on the folder *Survival of the adaptable* in which my thesis is stored. Scrolling through the files chapter by chapter takes me back to various times during the study, assisting my reflection.

### 8.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE HUNT

Once my research proposal was accepted I felt like a kitten in a giant labyrinth – excited at the opportunity to explore but not quite certain about which way to go and where this would take me. Typical cat, I started to explore the territory and soon I had accumulated a considerable amount of research literature which I scanned and filed alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors. I catalogued the files in the interests of easy accessibility. I read the articles that I considered relevant to this study in more detail and, as I explained to my friends at Seattle Coffee Bar, I made notes on them. During the writing of Chapters 5 and 6, when I had to revisit sources and double check details, I was very grateful for the system I had used.

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240 The title of my thesis not only refers to survival in the wild and the survival of entrepreneurs but, to my mind, also to doctoral researchers.

241 Please see chapter 2, section 2.2.
From the onset of my journey I was convinced that the study demanded a qualitative approach. I read in Weick (2001, p. 13) that “ethnography and the use of personal experience are crucial sources of data about interpretation”. During the meeting about my proposal, Prof Veldsman had suggested that I should consider adding my own experiences and views as an entrepreneur to those of the other participants and this had made it possible for me to compare my experiences with those of the other participants. If I had not been a participant in this study or if this had been a quantitative study, this would not have been possible.

I was involved in the interviews as a researcher and participants shared their sense-making with me and in the process sense-making also took place. I was also an entrepreneur myself and also an entrepreneur mentor. Thus, I had possessed a specific knowledge of the processes about which I was interviewing the participants. The participants, who were all from different backgrounds, had had different experiences and also expressed different views as compared to mine. I needed to explore each individually. As Cassell (2005, p. 175) mentions, identity construction took place during these interviews. By the stories we shared the interviewees and I constructed identities of ourselves. As most of the participants and I were acting in our professional capacity the identities we constructed reflected our professional images. However, over the course of the research period these identities we had constructed became multifaceted as we developed trust relationships.
I had also brought my own emotions, my own biases and my own mental models to the study and this, according to Sergi and Hallin (2011), added to the complexity and increased the need for reflexivity. However, it also deepened my understanding of the concepts that emerged from the interviews with the other participants because I was able to relate my own thinking to theirs. As the *bricoleur* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), I was excited to see the quilt emerge although stitching it all together was not always easy. As the participants in the study presented me with their individual pieces of fabric for the quilt and we stitched all the pieces of the entrepreneurial mental models quilt together this required considerable reflection and writing, re-writing and even more re-writing.

Although I was very excited about this study and I had worked qualitatively from the beginning it took me a while to change from third person scientific writing to first person autoethnographic writing. As I had no prior academic experience in it I felt very insecure in this new territory. I also had to overcome my concerns about, what Bochner (2000, p. 267) puts so aptly, “how we are judged as *scientists* by other scientists” rather than “whether our work is useful, insightful, or meaningful – and to whom”. It was precisely this apparent lack of usefulness or meaningfulness of my physics thesis to anybody but a handful of physicists that had triggered my change of direction years previously. I could not allow this to prevent me from embarking on the autoethnographic journey which I sincerely hope will be useful to more people than my physics papers were.

I still remember the day when I finally ventured into autoethnographic territory. It was a Monday morning on 20 May 2013. Mary Anne had brought me three books on leadership and we had enjoyed tea together. Later, while walking to her car, I told her how I vacillated between modernism and autoethnography. Typically of Mary Anne she asked, “What are you more comfortable with?” I clearly remember how we stood on the lower steps of the stairs in front of my house – the sun warm on my face as I told her, “Autoethnography, but I feel so stupid … what is acceptable and what is not?”

Mary Anne looked at me smiling and said, “You’ve got to follow your heart. You can write anything as long as you explain the rationale behind it".
I nodded my head and voiced my next concern. “Prof is consistent in his demand that autoethnography needs to be written both evocatively and analytical. I trust that I can write analytically, but can I also write evocatively?”

By that time we had reached her car. She hugged me and said, “Just write it and let us read it. I am sure it will be just fine.”

Although her last comment was not as reassuring as the previous one she did “flick the switch in my head”. As I waved good-bye to Mary Anne I knew I was going to write autoethnographically and, before she was at the first traffic light, I was back in my study. I picked up Understanding the Entrepreneurial Mind (Carsrud & Brännback, 2009) and opened it at the chapter by Hindle, Klyver, and Jennings (2009, p. 38) where I had previously highlighted a phrase about the “importance of the individual, sentient human persona as an object worthy of treatment as an empirical unit of analysis in entrepreneurship research”. I remembered how this phrase had spoken to me when I had first read it. At that moment the phrase tipped the scales and, by the time Mary Anne was back in Pretoria, I had started to re-write my thesis … and I felt free!

Long before Mary Anne’s pivotal visit, while I was still fighting internal battles about whether or not to write an autoethnography, I had already posted pages on the criteria for autoethnography on the one wall of my study. On that day in May these pages were like torches that lighted my way before sunrise. Today they look rather tattered, but I still use them to guide my reflections. When Ellis (2000) evaluates a narrative ethnography she wants it to engage, evoke and provoke. I knew this would be a major challenge for a novice writer such as me and, thus, these three words, engage, evoke and provoke, are in large print posted on my wall.

One of the other pages contains a list I had made from Bochner (2000, pp. 270 - 271). I find the article easily and read through it:

First, I look for abundant, concrete detail; concern not only for the commonplace, even trivial routines of everyday life, but also for the flesh and blood emotions of people … not only facts but also feelings. Second, I am attracted to structurally complex narratives, stories told in a temporal
framework that rotates between past and present, reflecting the non-linear process of memory work – the curve of time. Third, I almost always make a judgement about the author’s emotional credibility, vulnerability, and honesty. I expect that author to dig at his or her actions and underneath them, displaying the self on the page, taking a measure of life’s limitations, of the cultural scripts that resist transformation, of contradictory feelings, ambivalence, and layers of subjectivity, squeezing comedy out of life’s tragedies. Fourth, I prefer narratives that express a tale of two selves; a believable journey from who I was to who I am, a life course reimagined or transformed by crisis. Fifth, I hold the author to a demanding standard of ethical self-consciousness. I want the writer to show concern for how other people ... are portrayed, for the kind of person one becomes in telling one’s story, and to provide a space for the listener’s becoming, and for the moral commitments and convictions that underlie the story. Six, and finally, I want a story that moves me, my heart and belly as well as my head.

I found the article intimidating. I had no idea whether or not I could do what Bochner had mentioned and it resulted in many hours of writing, reading and rewriting the narratives contained in Chapters 3 and 4.

The list I complied based on the work of Richardson (2000a, p. 937; 2000, p. 254) shows the following criteria for reviewing ethnographic writings: (i) substantive contribution of understanding of the social situation, (ii) aesthetic merit, (iii) reflexivity of the author that indicates that he or she is self-aware and takes responsibility for the quality of the writing, (iv) emotional and intellectual impact of the written work, and (v) expression of reality in the writing.

I gaze through my study window at the rose bushes in full bloom outside and give a huge sigh. I hope that this study reflects sufficient understanding of the mental models of entrepreneurs so that novice entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial mentors may benefit from the insights expressed in the thesis. However, does my work have aesthetic merit? I must admit I was overwhelmed by the volume of the text I had had to process and, although I had tried to make it as easy as possible for the reader, I have limited experience and was definitely in need of considerably
more practice before my writing passes as aesthetically pleasing. I sincerely hope the photographs I have included add interesting windows into the narratives and research process and that my photographs amplify my writing.

I spent so much time reflecting on and rewriting sections of my thesis. Sometimes it felt as if I was wasting time as there were often more pages in the recycle bin than in the actual folder. Nevertheless, I believe that I am very aware and I tell myself that this was all part of my growth as a researcher. The deleted work contributed to my growth and helped me to get to where I am today.

With regard to the emotional and intellectual impact of this work, I believe that a struggling entrepreneur who going through difficult times financially may potentially be emotionally touched by the experiences of the participants in this study. In addition, they may also find comfort in reading that, at the time of the study, the majority of the participants were, despite difficult financial time, involved in successful businesses. I hope that the entrepreneurial reader will dig deeply into the narratives to find something which resonates with the challenges he/she is facing and that the readers of the thesis will gain insights that help to meet his/her needs.

The narrative is never the actual experience. It “is always a story about the past” (Ellis, 1999, p. 673). It is never the complete truth as “every story is partial and situated” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 750). Nevertheless, I hope that the narratives \(^{242}\) of the participants ring true to the reader as I have tried to allow the participants to share their stories as naturally and freely as possible.

Although this work has to present evocative narratives, it also has to be an analytical autoethnography that aims to deepen the theoretical understanding of entrepreneurial mental models. According to Anderson (2006a, p. 378), analytical autoethnography requires complete member researcher status, analytical reflexivity, narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, dialogue with informants or participants beyond the self and commitment to theoretical analysis. Anderson (2006a; 2006b) and Atkinson (2005) – as does the University of Johannesburg – insist that the data collected should not merely be reproduced in the form of

\(^{242}\) Sparkes (2002) calls these the realist tales.
narratives but that it must also be analysed. My background in physics probably contributed to the fact that I was comfortable with the notion of analysis from the outset of this research study.

I stand up and take a few deep breaths before sitting down again. This process is exhausting!

The issue of self-awareness illustrates how a quantitative study which involved the administration of a questionnaire could not have provided the information that I had obtained qualitatively. All the participants in this study had initially been convinced that they were self-aware and, if asked to rate their level of self-awareness, they would all have awarded themselves a high score. However, it emerged from the in-depth interviews that I conducted that some of them were not nearly as aware or alert as they were, in fact, convinced they were. This does not mean that any of the participants had any intention of lying either to me or to themselves. It is simply easier to explore a personal dimension of oneself through a coaching conversation than it is to rate that same dimension objectively in a multiple choice questionnaire.

The novice entrepreneurs in the study had had unrealistically high self-efficacy levels and these had, ultimately, led to the failure of their endeavours. This same overestimation of their abilities may have led in unrealistic scoring in a quantitative questionnaire and this would probably have resulted in incorrect conclusions being drawn. However, the qualitative interviews had enabled me to penetrate deeply enough into the underlying thought structures supporting the concepts that had emerged from the interviews and to obtain a more comprehensive and, I think, more accurate picture than would have been possible if I had used questionnaires or yes/no questions only.

It was when I had to explore my own mindset that I was confronted with the challenge of “how I know what I know about myself” and how I know that what I know is not just wishful thinking. I wanted to go beyond my own reflective process and I decided to adapt the Johari Window that was developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (cited in Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006) in the 1950s to assist me in the process.
Table 8.1: The Johari Window (Dembkowski et al., 2006, p. 89)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Known by self</th>
<th>ASK →</th>
<th>Unknown by self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPEN AREA</strong></td>
<td>Very easy to access as we all know this about ourselves and others may easily detect it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BLIND AREA</strong></td>
<td>Access it through the people who know the person – family, friends, clients and staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIDDEN AREA</strong></td>
<td>Use deep listening and probing questions to access this information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNKNOWN AREA</strong></td>
<td>Access it through self-discovery, shared discovery and observation by others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I scroll to Part 2 of the thesis – the narratives of the participants – and my heart fills with gratitude for the seven people who were willing to share their business experiences with me – the good times and the bad times.

I had been fortunate, although I had experienced few setbacks when it came to the participants for my study. Kevin – the twenty-something year old entrepreneur about whom I had told Mary Anne during our meeting when we had discussed all the participants in my study early in 2011 – was the only person in whom I had invested considerable time but had not been able to use as a participant in the study. I had decided not to use Kevin as a participant as he did not keep appointments and he was not always dependable. He would, however, be a fascinating study one day to someone with no time constraints.

This memory of the frustration I had experienced with Kevin sends me to the kitchen for another cup of tea and to answer Sassy’s call for wet food. Minutes later I am back in my study recalling my feelings during and directly after my interviews with the participants.

Albert

I am indebted to Albert for his willingness to be vulnerable and for taking time to share with me an experience over which he had drawn a veil for more than nine years. I know he was not proud of this experience. However, I hope that this study

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243 My 17 year old calico cat
provided him with the opportunity to address some of the issues of that period and that he has learnt some valuable lessons.

My biggest challenge with Albert was to ensure that, with all his expertise in quantitative research, he did not just give me just facts but also his emotional reactions. In addition, Albert was so eager to please that I also had to ensure he did not tell me only what he thought I would like to hear. I had had to dig for meaning in between the gaps in his story. Albert and I had only spent approximately three hours in face-to-face interviews. This was the shortest time I spent with a participant in the study. However, we have known each other since 1994 and, thus, we did not have to spend time during the interviews building up rapport or a trust relationship. Furthermore, Albert’s story focused, to a large extent, on the thirteen years prior to the study only and he regarded his business experience as a short, sad and unimportant period in his life. Consequently, his story was not nearly as comprehensive as those of the other participants.

Paging through my one journal my eye is caught by a reflection on my first official interview with Albert. My mindset about entrepreneurship was very far removed from his perceptions about entrepreneurship.

I had found the process of analysing Albert’s story easier than I had expected. Despite the fact that my conclusions were a little harsh I did not experience any guilt doing my analysis in Albert’s case. The main reason for this is that Albert – although he had started a second business in a partnership – had no desire to be an entrepreneur nor did he have any illusion about being an entrepreneur. He did not even care whether the second business generated any income.

Albert did not measure himself against his entrepreneurial endeavours and, hence, my findings that his mental models did not support entrepreneurial thinking did not either surprise or upset him. He is successful in his profession which he regards as superior to entrepreneurship. Despite Albert’s insistence that he did not want to be an entrepreneur I had retained him as a participant in the study as he was a typical example of people who are convinced that starting up a business is easy and that it is a guarantee of almost instant success, only to experience failure and financial loss.
Albert had insisted on a pseudonym and I believe that I have protected his anonymity, except in the unlikely event that a close family member, who already knows his story, reads this thesis. He agreed that it was unlikely that his colleagues would find out about what he called “My flirtation with business.” These colleagues had never seen witnessed Albert and I meeting and I think it is unlikely that they, should they ever read this, would know who Albert is.

Allon

Allon is an extremely busy and successful entrepreneur and I am so grateful and honoured that he was willing to participate in the study. I have learnt a lot from observing him, in particular, the confidence and motivation required to keep on mentoring entrepreneurs.

At the start of my first interview with Allon I realised at once that he was fiercely protective of his intellectual property. I immediately thought that participant observation would not be possible in his case. However, I could read his book Lose the business plan (Raiz, 2010) which he assured me was truly autobiographical. His next book, What to do when you want to give up: help for entrepreneurs in tough times (Raiz & Waller, 2012) takes the reader through the mentoring process he uses. I have bought and studied both books and found they aided my understanding of Allon.

From the week following our first interview in 2011 I also watched his weekly television series, The Big Small Business, on Business Day TV and in which he mentors entrepreneurs; particularly those who have reached a difficult stage in their businesses. I even paid for and attended a Saturday workshop that Allon presented on shift questions in order to observe him face-to-face in action. It was all worth it and I was able to conduct more than a hundred hours of participant observation of Allon despite my initial fear that participant observation would not be possible in his case. I used all these sources as well as newspaper and magazine articles in addition to my conversations with Allon in order to create his
narrative. He was the participant who provided me with the most varied data sources of all the participants.

Allon accepted without hesitation the mistakes he made and the failure of a project inspired him to try harder and do better in the future. His vast experience and success meant that the analysis of his narratives revealed that his mental models had developed to a level that is truly inspirational. Nothing in the analysis either surprised or shocked him.

At the time of the study Allon was still the chief excitement officer (CEO) of Raizcorp. He had received the Entrepreneur of 2013 Award at the 12th Annual Oliver Transformation and Empowerment Awards and, in March 2014, he was invited as a guest lecturer at Oxford University and where he was recognised as the Oxford University Said Business School’s Entrepreneur-in-Residence.

Dianne

I will never be able to thank Dianne enough for her openness and vulnerability in a time when she was coping with difficult challenges. She played a very important role in the study, representing as she did an individual who had experienced very little success as an entrepreneur despite more than five years of trying to succeed. I have known Dianne since 2006 and, since my proposal for this study was accepted by the University of Johannesburg, I spent almost fifteen hours in one-on-one conversations with Dianne.

The fact that I had known Dianne before she became a participant in my study had both advantages and disadvantages. Our relationship had made it possible for me not only to explore her struggles in starting a business, but she had also invited me to work with her on a project that had failed. In addition, the fact that I knew her also meant that I had become emotionally involved in the interview process. Hence, there were times during my interviews with Dianne when we both cried while she talked about the difficult times. Her story reminded me of the demanding financial times Neill and I had gone through when we had used the access bond on our house to survive financially. We had been fortunate that
Purrfect Place had provided us with financial means and we had also had each other for emotional support. It must have been very difficult for Dianne to cope on her own.

Both Dianne and I regarded the qualitative interviews as natural conversations in which one person – Dianne – talked more than the other person while the other person – me – listened more and asked relevant questions from time to time.

During my interviews with Dianne it was not always easy to know when to allow a conversation to veer off the topic and when to bring it back quickly to the original line of thought. I always tried to be fully engaged in the conversation and I used my intuitive reactions to decide whether or not, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest, to go with the flow. When the conversation assumed a religious tone during my one interview with Dianne I decided to go with the flow and, in fact, Dianne’s external locus of control became very evident during the conversation.

On occasions when Dianne said something with which I did not agree I did not challenge her. The interviews were not intended to be professional mentoring sessions and I wanted to explore her mindsets. Had I challenged her perceptions at that moment I would have lost the opportunity to explore her beliefs in respect of concepts such as networking and I did not that to happen. I have been unsuccessful thus far in setting up a meeting with Dianne to work through some of the issues that emerged during the study as she has not yet responded to my invitations.

I found the analysis of Dianne’s interviews fairly challenging because I knew more about her than I could substantiate from her interviews or her narrative. Thus, it was difficult to place the full picture into focus for the reader. My perceptions and conclusions about her were undoubtedly influenced by that fact that I had known her prior to this study and it was not easy bringing this knowledge into her narrative.

During my analysis of the data I had collected from my participants I tried, to the best of my ability, to put myself in the shoes of the participants and to look for reasons for their behaviour. However, in Dianne’s case this was more difficult than it was with the other participants.
Although it is not unusual for a responsive interview to be iterative (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 16) it must nevertheless serve the purpose of revisiting an issue in order to obtain greater clarity or to double check ambiguities. Unfortunately, when Dianne became negative her conversation tended to spiral downward and I wanted to avoid her becoming too depressed during interviews. Hence, I tried to curb some of the repetitions.

The evening Dianne visited me to plan the tender document she was preparing, I told her immediately I would do it only because it provided me with an opportunity to observe her in action. I spent more than eight hours working with her on the first tender and the opportunity to conduct participant observation was my reward. As Grbich (1999) suggests, the unobtrusive, subjective data that I managed to collect during the time I spent in participant observation helped me to understand the meaning constructed in the environment in question and how the specific participant made sense of the everyday life experiences.

The tender process soon developed in an ethical struggle for me because I was aware she had no programme and I also doubted whether she had the means to recruit suitable trainers should she be awarded the tender. I often waged internal battles as to how to deal with the situation. On the one hand, I wanted to explain to her my perception of the situation but then I would tell myself that it was very arrogant of me to think that I knew what the organisation to which she was submitting the tender would decide. Nevertheless, I did ask her what she thought her chances were of being awarded the tender. Her answer of "fifty-fifty" and knowing that she also had certain doubts made me feel slightly better.

Although I was open about observing her during the tender process, there were times I was convinced that she had forgotten about it. Nevertheless, I refrained from constantly reminding her of the fact. Bollingtoft (2007, p. 419) calls this type of observation informal, overt observation and warns against the observer and participant becoming too familiar. However, Bollingtoft is taking a realist stance. As an autoethnographer I accept that the observer and observed will influence each other as they are co-creators of the scenes in which they are involved. I know that my interactions with my participants influenced me and that our interactions influenced them. However, the way in which I reacted to what was happening
around me depended on the thought processes that were guiding my choice of reaction to such influences. I was not the victim of my circumstances but played a creative role in the future by the decisions that I made in every situation. The construction of reality is an ongoing process with each relevant experience adding more detail to the picture.

Dianne had decided to tender without consulting me and she would have done so whether or not I had been involved. Thus, her training programme was her responsibility. I also expected that she would learn valuable lessons from the tender process and, in fact, she did learn an important lesson, namely, that she did not want to work for herself. She found full time employment a few months later.

I find it fascinating that Dianne never bothered to comment on anything I wrote about her. It may be that I did not push hard enough but it was never my intention to squeeze information or anything else out of a participant. My reasoning was that the way in which a participant delivered on my requests was indicative of how the person dealt with requests. In business a request from a potential client, or even someone in your network, may open a door and we never know what opportunities lie on the other side of the door.

Lily

Lily had been a Purrfect Place client until she had started her own cat hotel in 2010. However, at the time of the study she was still using Purrfect Place when she wanted to go on holiday – either I would care of her cats at her cattery or she would book them into Purrfect Place. We know each other’s cats, we respect and trust each other and we have shared both sad and happy moments together. I am sincerely grateful to her for her eagerness to share her story with me.

The decision whether or not to include Lily as a participant in this study or to remain her mentor for a few more months was fairly challenging. However, after much deliberation over several weeks I decided that I wanted Lily as a participant as I had been involved in her business from inception, I knew and understood the
business well and I had been observing her in the business from start-up. I also knew the industry well. In any case, it did not make sense for me to mentor her, as my competition, for too long. She was free to continue calling on me for advice – which she did – and I was happy to share my industry specific knowledge freely when she consulted me. It was easy to discuss pricing or facility requirements but I could not teach her who to trust and who not to trust. Neither do I believe it was my role to tell her how to treat her clients although, as my client, she had experienced the way in which I treat my clients. Those were issues she had to decide for herself. Unfortunately I did not keep track of the number of hours I had spent on the telephone with Lily about cats and her business. Since she started her cat hotel, we had spoken for at least half an hour and, sometimes, up to two hours a week.

After the telephone calls from Lily, I often felt guilty when I rushed off to make field notes of our conversations. I knew I did not have to feel guilty as Lily had signed a consent form, she understood post-graduate research as her daughter was doing a masters degree and she was aware that there was a possibility I could use parts of our conversations in my study.

Lily was often upset or concerned when she telephoned me. I know that, when one is emotional, one does not always think about anything other than that which is uppermost in one’s mind. However, I did not want to remind her that I may use whatever we talked about as I did not want to risk inhibiting the conversation. I also knew that I would be responsible in the way in which that I used these conversations and that it would be possible to learn from them without my use of them their having a negative impact on Lily’s personal or professional life. Nevertheless, I decided to give her a pseudonym despite the fact that she had not asked for one.

I have not discussed the results of the analysis of her narrative in a formal meeting with Lily. We are in contact at least once a week and, when the correct opportunity presents itself, I discuss that which is relevant to the situation in a mentoring context with her. Hence, when she telephones me about a specific issue I use the opportunity to address the mindset that may have contributed to that particular issue. I am of the opinion that this process is a gentle and effective way in which to
address any of her mental models that may not be beneficial to her business. This process requires the ongoing contact on a regular basis which I have with Lily and also with Neill.

Lily has grown markedly since 2010 and, although she still finds business challenging, her cat hotel is doing fairly well.

My relationship with Natasha was initiated for the purposes of this study. Nevertheless, the relationship is surprisingly open and warm because of our jovial personalities – hers even more so than mine. I can never thank Natasha enough for welcoming a complete stranger into her life and sharing her story with such great enthusiasm.

Natasha needs and appreciates feedback. When I complimented her on the standard in her restaurants in 2014 she admitted that things were not as good as she would have liked them to be at the time. She is hyper-aware of everything that is happening in the tashas restaurants and very proactive in pre-empting challenges. As an entrepreneur she inspired me. I have not spent as much time with Natasha as I would have liked to. She travels extensively – visiting her restaurants in South Africa – but also visiting other countries. During the time of this study she also opened a tashas in Dubai. However, Natasha was so open and unassuming that it made it easy for me to get glimpses into her world in the limited time we spent together.

When she franchised tashas she knew that she would have to relinquish some of the control that was so important to her. Accordingly, she negotiated the best possible deal to ensure that she retained control over those elements that were very important to the character and quality of the brand. Still I have, however, been disappointed on two occasions during my many visits to tashas restaurants. This is the price you often have pay for business growth as it is not possible to be present all the time and no system is a perfect.
One of the challenges I encountered with Natasha was obtaining her story as I knew I would have limited time with her. A further challenge was to hear every word she said as she tends to talks fast and she interrupts herself often. Without the aid of an audio recorder I would have lost most of what she had said. I could not risk the failure of a recorder and, thus, I used two recorders. This enabled me to relax and I could be fully engaged in our conversations. I re-listened to the interviews until I was satisfied that I had transcribed every word she had said verbatim. It took me three days to complete the transcription and editing process but it was worth the effort.

Neill

Neill and I have walked side by side – uphill and downhill – since July 1978. We have carried each other over rough terrain. There is no one on earth who knows Neill better than I do and neither is there anybody who knows me better than he does. I want to thank Neill from the bottom of my heart for being brave enough to become a willing participant in this study despite the fact that he realised that he would have to share some of the darkest periods of his life with the world. He was aware that, as a participant, everything he said and did would be under scrutiny but he did not allow that to deter him.

Business is one of our shared passions and we have held business conversations on a daily basis for more than thirty years. We went through a time of discussing the issue of franchises – Neill advocating a franchise and I resisting with all my might. Neill’s recent frustrating experiences related to starting a feedlot for sheep and collaborating with someone in a business related to loss management in fast moving consumer goods businesses contributed to his realisation towards the end of 2014 that his rental properties were probably the only way in which he would ever be able to earn a passive income. His mantra then became, “My business is property and IR”. At the time of the study his energy was focused and he was doing well.
In order to avoid boring the reader I quoted one franchise conversation only of the many that we held between 2004 and 2013 in Neill’s narrative. I read about the iterative process of conversations, reflections and sense-making in Sergi and Hallin (2011) and with Neill I definitely experienced this iterative process.

I must confess that, when I embarked on this study, I was still harbouring anger about things Neill had done between 2004 and 2010. During that period he had had to rebuild his self-esteem after his retrenchment and he made certain mistakes that impact severely not only on his life but also on my life and the lives of our children. During this study I had to work through my anger and come to an understanding of his situation from his perspective.

Analysing Neill’s story definitely presented me with a challenge during the early part of this study. During the preliminary analysis of his story I would start only to realise half an hour or so later that I was skewing my analysis completely because I was so angry with him. I would then sit quietly for a while with my eyes closed and doing breathing exercises to find my centre before starting the analysis process again in an effort to be fair to him.

Superficially it would appear that Neill and I come from similar backgrounds – middle class, proud Afrikaner families. However, my parents’ mindset was totally different from that of Neill’s parents. In my parents’ home we enjoyed freedom of speech and decision-making and we were very open with each other. I was allowed to disagree with my parents as long as I was polite. On the other hand, Neill and his brothers were not allowed to argue with their parents and they were all very private people. Neill is still not able to utter any statement that is contrary to his family’s beliefs even if he is convinced of the validity of such a statement. This has taught me that the mindset of the parents has a major influence on the mindset of their children.

Neill’s narrative was co-constructed from our shared experiences and from several tape recorded conversations over the years. He has had full access to this study at all times and we have held regular, open conversations on most aspects in it. I was in conversation with Neill on an ongoing basis throughout the analysis of his
narrative and I discussed the insights that emerged with him. He is “uncomfortably comfortable” with what I have written.

Neill has come a long way since his childhood and even since 2010. By 2014 he had regained his self-esteem and I had worked through all my anger issues with him. He recently admitted to me that he was more content and successful than ever before. He has grown his real estate portfolio and, on a day-to-day basis, he focuses on his industrial relations consultancy which was doing very well at the time of the study.

I was delighted when Tessa offered to be a participant in my study. Once she had signed the consent form and was officially one of the participants in the study I used the time we spent together in the art class to observe her more closely than before. After class I would go home and made field notes on my observations. From time to time I reminded her about my unofficial, overt, participant observation as it is termed by Bollingtoft (2007, p. 419). I may honestly state that Tessa’s behaviour and attitude before she became a participant and after she had agreed to become a participant remained the same and, when I visited her at her head office for the purpose of our interviews she treated me exactly as she always did at our art class or at her house.

The only evidence of any type of facade that I detected was when she read and edited her narrative. It appeared that Tessa was not aware of her use of slang language or how she came across to people. Her public image is very important to her and she deleted all the words that embarrassed her. Her editing clearly demonstrated the extent of her attention to detail in a project and also her sensitivity regarding her public profile.

One of my interviews with Tessa took place at a time when she admitted that her turnover was being negatively affected by the recession. I had to admire her courage as she was importing luxury items to sell. I realised that I was more
comfortable selling a service than merchandise. I have learnt much about myself through my interactions with the participants in my study.

Tessa and I discussed both her narrative and my analysis of her narrative. She admitted that was comfortable with both. Although Tessa Sonik Fabrics was doing well at the time of writing my thesis Tessa was experiencing a serious health challenge. However during our last conversation she stated “I’m getting there.”

Suzette
I feel so privileged that I have had the opportunity to conduct this research.

I had thought it would be easy to write my story but this was definitely not the case. I would write my story but, when I read it, the gaps would become glaringly to me. I would then re-write only to realise during the next reading that a person who did not know me personally would not understand some of the situations to which I was referring as I had not given enough background detail. However, at the end of the next round of writing and editing it was too long and I had to decide what to omit. An additional complication was the fact that I had also changed during this period. My personal growth during this study took place on multiple levels. I gained a deeper understanding of and considerably more empathy with human behaviour than was previously the case. As a mentor and coach I had acquired some listening skills but, during the research interviews and conversations, my listening skills developed to a new level and I have a greater awareness of what people either neglect or refuse to say. In other words, I have become very aware of the “empty” spaces between what is being said and done.

When it was time to analyse my stories I started with great enthusiasm to discuss the concepts that were visible to everybody, for example, my work ethic. I then began to extract the concepts that were known to me but which others would not be able to see immediately, such as my self-awareness and the issues on which I had reflected in my journals. At this point it became difficult and, during a reflection on how to dig deeper into my story and into that which lies beyond my story, I had the epiphany of using the Johari Window to guide me. I started asking the people
who know me – Neill, my daughters, my clients and my friends – what words would best describe how they say me. Concepts such as my competitiveness and high level of caring emerged. These were traits that I had not recognised were being prominent in me. Finally, there were those concepts that emerged only as a result of considerable soul searching and reflection and using the concepts that had emerged from the analyses of the other participants’ narratives as clues with which to explore my own life. These latter concepts include my need to control risk and my almost complete lack of counterfactual thinking.

While I was writing the section on intuitive decision-making in Chapter 5, I realised that I also tended to avoid taking risks. After much deliberation I took what I saw as the safer option of using intuition based on maps saved in the subconscious mind over time rather than the quantum physics phenomenon of non-locality that I have studied in-depth over the years but for which there still is no mathematical proof of which I am aware. It was at this point that reality hit me...

I remember the morning of 5 June 2014 clearly. I was on my way to enjoy my once a week mini breakfast at a restaurant in Cresta Shopping Centre and editing a few pages of my thesis. As I started my car a thought flashed through my brain, “What if the breakfast I always order is no longer on the menu?” I immediately brushed the thought aside. It was replaced with “How often has something flashed through my mind like that and was pushed aside only for the situation to play out exactly as in the flash?” At the restaurant I opened my folder to start editing. I gave the waitress my order only to be told that what I wanted was no longer on the menu. The irony of the situation was that my thesis was open at the section on my beliefs about intuition and where I was adamant that intuition is pattern recognition and which is based on the mind accessing memories stored in the subconscious. I had chosen to ignore non-local intuition until it hit me in the face in that moment. I realised anew that there is still much about intuition that we simply do not understand and are not able to explain. Hopefully physics theories will catch up and one day we will be able to explain intuition. I decided that, for the purposes of this study, I would focus on intuition as based on information stored in the subconscious mind although I had to acknowledge that that was just an aspect of the whole.
The other question I have had to ask myself is whether I have learnt through the mistakes I have made. The lessons I had learnt when I had closed down the ballet school far outweighed the negative emotions I had experienced when my father-in-law confronted me that day. I had learnt that, although it is important to have a passion for what you do, passion is not enough. My passion for ballet had not given me the courage to find another venue. I also learnt the value of a reliable support structure which was something I had needed but had not had at the time. More importantly, I learnt that not everybody around you is going to support you in your business but that this is not a reason to abandon either your dreams or your business. I also learnt that it is essential to make the correct decisions for both you and your business and that you must take responsibility for your failures and not blame other people. I have never regretted the business decisions I made. However, never again would I start a business if I was dependent on someone and I did not have equal status in the relationship. After that experience with the ballet school I have created solid support structures before starting a new business. The lessons I had learnt stood me in good stead when I started Purrfect Place. At the time of the study Purrfect Place was doing well. I have also learnt the importance of timing and I am excited to start growing Quantum Gain later this year (2015) once I have completed my studies.

I know that if you are determined enough in a business you will overcome many of these obstacles you encounter and I have taken time to teach my daughters not to give up too soon.

Vasbyt

Many years ago after a holiday at the coast our family was travelling through the Karoo between Kirkwood and Graaff-Reinet when the people in the car passing us gestured toward our trailer. Neill pulled off the road and, with shock, we saw that one wheel was missing. I said to our three daughters, “Let’s walk back along the road. Maybe we’ll find the wheel and then we won’t have to buy another one.” So, the four of us set off while Neill fitted the spare wheel.

244 An Afrikaans word meaning “to hang in” and literally translated it reads, “Tight bite”.

After a while Jeanne, who was approximately nine years old, said, “Maybe we must turn back. I can’t see our car anymore.” I took this opportunity to teach her a lesson, “What if we turn back and the wheel is just around the next bend?” I pointed at a spot about a hundred meters on and said, “Let’s walk to that big bush on the side of the road. Maybe it is behind that bush.”

However, when we reached the big bush the wheel was not behind it and, as Jeanne was tired, we turned back. By this time Neill fitted the spare wheel and was returning to pick us up. I asked him, “Can we drive just a little further? I always have this fear that I’ve stopped just short of success.” Neill obliged and, just a few hundred meters on, we saw the wheel wedged between another big bush and a farm fence. He made a U-turn, we collected the wheel and drove back home without further incident. Hopefully my daughters will remember this lesson about not giving up too soon.

Remembering this story makes me smile.

However, this research study is not just about lessons learnt. There are also very important ethical considerations to consider.

8.4 ETHICS OF THE HUNT

Initially I had thought that this study would not address issues that were as traumatic as many of the issues that other autoethnographies have addressed and that I had read previously. Accordingly, I had not expected to face challenging, traumatic situations. I should have known better. Neill and I had just emerged from a very difficult period financially and I knew how traumatic that had been. I should have expected that that the other participants would also have had similar experiences at least once in their businesses ventures. It was fascinating to notice that, once a business had become successful, the participant was able to talk about the really difficult times with pride rather than sadness. However, if the participant was still in the financial challenging situation, the participant often became emotional. As a result of my experiences of not being able to pay our electricity bill I was able to be an empathetic listener, especially with Dianne who really hit the lowest point possible during this study.
Although the research of the study was neither sensitive nor controversial there were still ethical issues that needed to be addressed. During the qualitative research data collection process the researcher and the participants are involved in close human interaction. This creates the potential for embarrassment, anger, violation of privacy, possible misunderstanding and conflict of opinion and values and which may be further complicated by the possible emergence of painful memories. The participants in this study all had families, friends, colleagues and competition in the market place and these people all had a right to protection. A situation may be portrayed from various perspectives and, thus, I formulated the following rule for myself: How may I say what I need to say in order to portray what took place or what was said in such a way that the essence comes through but without causing the other person to become more embarrassed or upset than he/she already was when sharing the situation.

I accepted and committed to abide by the Code of Ethics of the University of Johannesburg. However, ethics extend beyond just a code to include the intention behind my actions and the respect with which I treated the participants. In order to be a responsible researcher I had to ensure that I understood research ethics and, hence, I took time to educate myself in this regard.

I found the following criteria to be important in this study:

It is important that participant recruiting is non-deceptive and that participation is on a voluntary basis (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). As far as I am aware no pressure was exerted by people close to the potential participants to persuade them to remain in the study and I certainly did not coax anybody into becoming a participant or staying in the study.

The permission of the participants to take part in the study must be obtained (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999; Ellis, 2000). Every participant signed an informed consent form and I explained to the potential participant what his/her rights were. The participants were also provided with sufficient information regarding the research study to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their participation. They were aware that they had the right to withdraw from participation should they so wish. It was impossible to predict exactly what would emerge or how the
research process would unfold. However, during in-depth interviews the participants were allowed to determine the direction of the interview and also the depth of the exploration into sensitive issues.

The participants became co-creators of their narratives (Ellis, 2000) by supplying the information and then reading the written text to ensure that they agreed with what I had written.

Grbich (1999) raises the question as to the extent to which the researcher disturbs the setting or situation in which the participant operates. From a quantum physics perspective, and, more specifically, from Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle\(^{245}\), it is impossible to interact in any situation without causing some disturbance. Nevertheless, it was very important for me not to cause harm to a participant; on either a personal or a professional level.

I did my best to ensure that the participants in this study were treated with respect and that were not unduly distressed during the data collection and data analysis processes.

Do no harm to your participants (Ellis, 2000; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012, p. 88). However, inflicting harm could mean different things to different participants. The successful participants could have experienced any damage to their brand as harmful. On the other hand, Neill and Dianne were both vulnerable on a personal level. The only times that I witnessed personal pain was during my interviews and conversations with Dianne and Neill. In every case I asked them whether they wished to take a break. As illustrated during my interviews with Dianne I also changed the subject if I thought this could alleviate the pain. At the end of every interview Dianne thanked me for my time and it seemed as if she had found therapeutic value in our conversations as had Neill.

I did not falsifying the research results nor did I present them out of context (Grbich, 1999, p. 71).

In addition, I did not violate confidentiality (Grbich, 1999, p. 71; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and nothing that was told to me in confidence appears in this thesis.

\(^{245}\) Please see chapter 2, section 2.3 for more details on Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle.
The question arises as to whether it was possible for me to protect the identities of my participants (Grbich, 1999, p. 71; Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). Confidentiality and anonymity are possible to a limited extent only. However, as part of my effort to ensure both a blank consent form only, instead of the actual forms used, is included in the thesis. As I have indicated earlier, close friends and family may be able to recognise the participants despite the pseudonyms but these people probably already know the stories of the participants. The people against whom I wish to protect them would have to indulge in guesswork and use their intuition. Thus, although it may not be impossible to identify the participants, it is highly improbable. When Lily and Dianne had read their narratives they had indicated that they did not want to bother with pseudonyms. However, after the preliminary analyses, I was not comfortable using their real names. I did not believe that any of the information in this study was incriminating in any way but the insights from the analyses may have caused embarrassment to or hurt the feelings of some of the participants. Hence, I allocated pseudonyms to them. With the public figures, namely, Allon, Natasha and Tessa, it would have been almost impossible to keep their identities secret and, hence, it was a relief when they were adamant that they were comfortable with what I had written about them and they refused my offer of a pseudonym. It is impossible for me and Neill to remain anonymous but we are both comfortable with this.

I was definitely concerned about using the information which I had obtained by chance during casual and social chats (Grbich, 1999, p. 71), either in person or over the telephone. Accordingly, I mentioned that I would use such information in my studies to the relevant participants. It was not, however, possible to keep reminding them of this because this may have resulted in their becoming unnecessarily self-conscious and inhibited about what they were saying.

Time is precious and I remained conscious of the injunction of Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 97), namely, “Do not waste their time.” Accordingly, I was never late for an appointment. The only time I overstayed my allocated time was with Dianne. However, I had thought it necessary and I had requested her permission to do so. Neill had also often taken more time than had been allocated but this had been at his request – not mine.
I received no funding other than from my own personal income from Purrfect Place. Hence, there was no psychological pressure on me to skew the results in order to appease a funder (Grbich, 1999, p. 76).

Doloriert and Sambrook (2012, p. 88) also ask for the protection of the family, friends and colleagues of the autoethnographer who appears in a work. Autoethnography is rarely entirely one person’s story and there are always others involved (Tolich, 2010, p. 1602; Morse, 2002; Ellis, 2007). Richardson (2000, p. 932) warns us to be aware of possible consequences of what we write about others. However, I do not think that any of my family, friends and colleagues have been compromised or placed in an uncomfortable position as a result of this study. I did ask everybody whose name appears in the thesis whether they were comfortable with both the context in which they were mentioned and also how people close to them were portrayed. They all indicated that they were. Nevertheless, I must admit that I did not contact Allon’s parents to find out whether they are comfortable about their role as it was portrayed in his narrative.

Although I could not be completely open about every aspect of the research I never deliberately deceived participants despite the fact that I did sometimes feel as if I were betraying them for example, during the tender process with Dianne. This situation was very difficult for me. I did not ever withhold information from her although I did not always tell her what I was thinking. However, I was not certain at the time whether my opinion was correct and, thus, not sharing it with her felt right at the time.

Kopala and Suzuki (1999) insist that the needs of the participants take precedence over the needs of the research. This is, however, more complex than it sounds. I decided that this meant that this study should not have any negative impact on either the participant or on his/her business. I had to think deeply this during the tender process with Dianne. The question I asked myself was: “How would the tender document have looked if Dianne was not a participant in the study?” My answer was as follows: “I would not have been involved and, thus, there would have been a few books to which Dianne may not have had access”. She may have sought the assistance of somebody else. I believed that the quality of her tender document was not compromised by her participation in the study and
the only role I had played in the tender was to observe, support and provide her with a few text books and cups of coffee.

I kept all the promises I had made to the participants. In addition, I used interview skills such as creative questioning, deep, non-judgmental listening, appropriate feedback and support and basic mentoring although I did not assume roles, for example, that of a psychologist, for which I am not qualified. Nevertheless, my experience as a coach and mentor was of considerable value during the interviews.

I kept in mind Mason’s (2005) warning that it is vital that the researcher look further than the study itself and that the researcher ask what other researchers could do with what they read in the study. It is difficult to predict where this might go in future. I believe that I was responsible in the way in which I dealt with the participants and their stories. My mission was to produce ethical, quality research.

8.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE
Despite numerous attempts by qualitative researchers there is a lack of consensus regarding acceptable criteria in terms of which to assess qualitative research (Schurink, 2009a). It is, thus, surprising that Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 290) write:

One of the challenges confronting you as a qualitative researcher is how to assure the readers of your report about its scientific nature, its quality and trustworthiness. Adopting explicit evaluation criteria increases the transparency of your research and provides you with the means to highlight the strengths and limitations of your research.

The reader is in a position to judge the truthfulness of a study only if he or she is informed about and understands the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher. I declared these during a conversation with Neill\textsuperscript{246} early in my thesis.

\textsuperscript{246} See Chapter 2 section 2.3
Four distinct perspectives on the criteria of validity and reliability for assessing qualitative research reports emerged from the literature on qualitative research. Firstly, Sparkes’s (2001) citing of the replication perspective is supported by Silverman (2000). According to this perspective the same rules should apply to both qualitative and quantitative research. Secondly, the parallel perspective accepts that quantitative and qualitative research represent alternative traditions and that “criteria defined from one perspective are not appropriate for judging actions taken from another perspective” (Sparkes, 2001, p. 541). Hence, qualitative research should be evaluated using standards that have been specifically developed with trustworthiness as one of the chief standards. Thirdly, the diversification of meaning perspective declares that the standard quantitative approach to validity is irrelevant for qualitative research. This viewpoint is supported by Kvale (1995). Thus, in terms of this perspective trustworthiness is more applicable to qualitative research than it is to qualitative research. Finally, there is the option of the “letting go” of validity altogether in favour of more suitable criteria for quality assurance in qualitative research, for example, authenticity. This viewpoint is supported by Wolcott (1994).

I open the folder on my laptop in which I have gradually accumulated a substantial number of quality assurance citations and that have guided my research over the past four years.

8.5.1 Validity
Validity implies that a research study seeks verisimilitude and that the reader senses that the experience described in the study is possible, lifelike and believable (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis, 1999; Plummer, 2001). In other words, the work must be experienced as true and real and it must offer a way to improve the lives of the readers, participants and even that of the researcher. In qualitative research there are “different ways of knowing and multiple truths” (Kvale, 1995, p. 21). It is from these experiences of truthfulness and transparency that the reader assesses whether the researcher has explored what he or she set out to explore and whether the researcher has used techniques during the research that were appropriate.
I lean back in my chair to reflect on what I have just written. I believe that I was transparent throughout the research process and that I questioned my actions and intentions continuously during the process. Satisfied that I have tried to be as transparent as possible I return to my reflection on the different kinds of validity.

According to Denzin (2010, p. 271), “[o]bjective reality will never be captured. In-depth understanding, the use of multiple validities, not a single validity, a commitment to dialogue is sought in any interpretative study”. Grbich (1999, p. 65) suggests the use of face validity and Yin (2003, p. 19) both construct validity in terms of which participants check their stories and rhizomatic validity in terms of which the participants become co-authors of their narratives. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) write about communicative validity where participants have the opportunity to comment on what the researcher has written. I have incorporated all these validities – even if I called them by different names – into my study.

Sparkes (2001, p. 547) suggests that validity in qualitative research is to found in the skills and sensitivities of the researcher and adds that it is essential that the reader experiences a sense of authenticity in addition to a “heightened sensitivity” to the research topic. Hence, validity is more personal and interpersonal than it is methodological.

Wigren (2007, p. 386) tabulated a range of quality criteria for qualitative research, ranging from traditional internal and external validity and reliability to postmodern – “embedded in lived experience” and “connects with and moves the audience”. Although there has been relatively little ethnographic research into entrepreneurship Wigren (2007, p. 389) argues that trustworthiness is an important criterion in ethnographic research and that it demands an authentic, plausible and critical ethnographic study in which the researcher convinces the reader that the research findings are credible.

According to Lincoln and Guba (2002), authenticity and trustworthiness represent two sets of criteria in terms of which to judge the quality of a study. Accordingly, I open the “Authenticity and trustworthiness” file on my laptop to examine it in more detail.
8.5.2 Authenticity
I remember reading in Wigren (2007) about the importance of authenticity in ethnographic research. It is imperative that the reader is able to see that the experience of the researcher in the field was genuine. I had addressed this aspect by sharing as many as possible of my experiences during this study with the reader. I am grateful that I did not have to rely only on my memory. As I did so often during the writing up of my study, I am able to revisit the situations recorded in my journals when necessary in order to validate the role of my emotions in my actions and reactions as well as my handling of the ethics and quality assurance aspects of this study.

Lincoln and Guba (2000, p. 180) suggest the following as substitutes for the authenticity criterion during qualitative research: (i) Fairness – requires that the views, perspectives, claims, concerns and voices of all stakeholders should be visible in the text. The aim of this is not to ensure objectivity but to prevent the marginalisation of the stakeholders. (ii) Ontological authenticity and educative authenticity – raise the awareness of the researcher about the self but also about those surrounding he or she and results in the research leading to a better understanding of the process by the participants and also by those with whom they come into contact than may otherwise have been the case. (iii) Catalytic and tactical authenticity – may serve to encourage others, such as the participants or readers, to learn from the study. With regard to this study it is hoped that the study will enable the participants and/or the readers to use the mental models that emerged from the study to change their own mental models where necessary.

8.5.3 Trustworthiness
In order to create trustworthiness it is important that the researcher is as open and honest as possible with the reader (Wigren, 2007). According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 288), the four criteria for trustworthiness have equivalents in quantitative research.

8.5.3.1 Credibility
Credibility requires that the research is carried out in a responsible way and in line with what is deemed to be good practice. Credibility is equivalent to internal
validity in quantitative research. Internal validity (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 288) checks “whether there is a good match between the researchers’ observation and the theoretical ideas they develop”. During the data analysis the researcher conducts pattern matching and explanation building and addresses conflicting explanations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 288) suggest that the researcher spend a longer time in the field (longitudinal study) to enable him or her to reach a “high level of congruence between concepts and observations”. This viewpoint is supported by Hindle (2010). A combination of triangulation, peer debriefing and member checks contributes to the credibility of a study. Schurink (2009a) considers credibility the most important criterion in qualitative research while Sparkes (2001) suggests that the use of member checks or dependability audits – peer debriefing – helps to establish trustworthiness.

All the participants in this study developed insights into their narratives and the analyses of these narratives. I also presented the concepts and themes that had emerged from the data as well as the model247 presented in Chapter 7 to both my study leaders and also a few knowledgeable colleagues during a peer review meeting to enable them to consider my interpretations critically and to question me about them.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 265), it is incumbent on the researcher needs to ensure that “your argument appears thorough and credible” where thorough means “you followed up different lines of inquiry, paying attention to possible contradictions or unexpected findings, and examine alternative views” and credible means “you have presented convincing evidence for each major conclusion”.

Wigren (2007) calls for plausibility which is related to credibility. Plausibility is especially important when the researcher moves from the empirical or first order concepts to the theoretical, second order concepts. Even if ethnographic studies are “contextually bounded, it is possible to learn from them on a general level if the descriptions are thick enough and the researcher has developed second order concepts” where the “second order concepts explain the patterning of the first

247 The MMSES model.
order concepts and are used by the researcher to organise or explain” than those in the field do (Wigren, 2007, p. 394).

Once completed, this thesis will be sent to a peer reviewer who will critically assess it. After the debriefing process I shall address any shortcomings in the thesis. 248

8.5.3.2 Transferability
Transferability is equivalent to external validity and depends on the degree to which the findings may be generalised. The aim of qualitative research is not primarily generalisability but, rather, to produce data from a small group of participants that is sufficiently rich in detail and collected during a transparent process (Bryman, 2004). Transparency enables the reader to judge whether or not the results of a study have a more general application and, if so, in which specific settings.

I have tried to be completely open and honest in the writing of this thesis. This text is my final effort to improve the reader’s understanding of the research process followed in the study so that she is in a better position to judge whether the findings of this study will be applicable in other settings and situations.

8.5.3.3 Dependability
Dependability, the qualitative parallel for reliability, is determined by the “auditing” process (Bryman, 2004, p. 273). Reliability is concerned with the techniques used and consistency in thereof to ensure that similar results may be expected under similar conditions when the research is repeated (Yin, 2003). However, this is not appropriate for qualitative – and especially autoethnographic – research where reliability checks 249 are conducted by allowing the participants to comment on what the researchers have written (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 751; Ellis, 1999, p. 674; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Reliability in qualitative research requires that the researcher presents a complete, coherent and painstakingly checked study which covers all aspects of the phenomenon under investigation (Grbich, 1999;

248 Please see Appendix G for the peer reviewer’s report.
249 Reliability checks speak to validity as discussed in this section on Quality.

514
Yin, 2003). Plummer (2001) warns that the interpretation of qualitative data should be approached with caution.

I kept and used a comprehensive library of records which included field notes, compact discs of the audio recordings of all interviews and meetings, transcripts of all interviews and meetings, photocopies of newspaper and magazine articles, Allon’s books and several emails – all of which are accessible for peer audits and interactive introspection (Grbich, 1999, p. 219). My reflective journals are also available except for small sections that are private.

8.5.3.4 Confirmability
Confirmability requires that the researcher acts in good faith and does not allow personal values and convictions to have an impact on both the research and the research findings (Bryman, 2004). However, Goodson and Sikes (2001, p. 25) recommend that, rather than pretending that every aspect of one’s research is bias free, it is wiser to acknowledge when one is biased and make every attempt to point out where such bias may be present.

I addressed this issue of bias by constantly reflecting on what my mindset or biases were and how these came into play during the interviews and analysis process. Whenever I experienced a strong emotional reaction to what a participant was saying this would serve as a warning sign to me to be extra vigilant about my own beliefs and not allow my beliefs to prevent me from hearing what the other person had to say.

Lastly, I scrolled to triangulation in the quality assurance folder on my laptop.

8.5.4 Triangulation
It is vital that the researcher approached the research problem(s) from various angles using different observers or the same observer using different measuring instruments or both. Triangulation “refers to the use of a combination of methods to explore one set of research questions” (Mason, 2002, p. 190).

With the exception of Albert I used multiple sources of data in respect of all the other participants. Different observation methods took the form of conversations with employees, family members or clients while participant observation,
newspaper and magazine articles, autobiographical books, television programmes and live interviews conducted by other interviewers offered different perspectives on the same participant. “Each documented perspective enhances the multiple subjective perspectives of others in an ongoing, emerging, creative process” (Grbich, 1999, p. 68).

I spent as much time as was necessary to obtain as complete a picture as was possible of each of my participants. The concentrated and intense contact with both the participant and his/her data tends to enhance the researcher’s sensitivity towards and partially identification with the participant’s narrative (Gemignani, 2011). The extended period of time I spent with the participants – whether physically or by following the participants in the media – also helped me to judge whether their data was a true reflection of their actual personas in business.

I believe that the thoroughness with which I explained my research process plays a major role in contributing to the triangulation in this study. The reader should never have to second-guess what I did as he or she should be able to ascertain this from reading the thesis (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009, p. 127). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) warn that a researcher should not either distort or exaggerate the findings of a research study. I took great care to ensure that I was providing a true reflection of the data I had collected, especially when I had experienced an emotional reaction to a situation or concept.

I pushed my laptop away from me to make some space in front of me on the desk for my journals.

8.6 DETAIL OF THE AFRICAN PLAINS

I had encountered several challenges during the data collection phase of the study. Nevertheless, it had been an exciting time for me. Before I started interviewing the participants I was concerned as to how one knows when, as Grbich (2007) puts it, one has accessed another person’s mind. Another concern was that I might fail to hear the meaning my participants were trying to convey – especially if I allowed my own assumptions and mindsets to come in the way as Rubin and Rubin (2005) as well as Goodson and Sikes (2001) caution against.
In an attempt to address these concerns I prepared mentally, psychologically and emotionally for each interview. I read up on the participants that I did not know personally and I did breathing exercises to calm me and focus my attention before I entered their premises.

As I sat down with each participant I opened myself up to their story – knowing that every person had a story to tell and from which others could learn. In short, I believed in the process of learning from my own lived experience as well as that of other people. I certainly never expected to get everything right but at least I wanted to be sure that I had made every effort possible to achieve the best possible outcome.

According to Chaitin (2004), life story interviews require open ended questions. Accordingly, my initial aim was to talk as little as possible during the interviews. I started off by asking each participant to tell me his/her story. This worked well with Allon, Natasha, Tessa and Neill, although Neill tended to be a little long-winded in his storytelling. Allon, Natasha and Tessa, who were all successful in their businesses, talked enthusiastically about the ups and downs they had experienced. It was clear that they did not regard the truly challenging times as “failures”.

Albert tended to be very specific and rather cryptic in his answers to even the most open-ended of questions. His skill in the generation and recording of quantitative data was evident in the short and factual answers he gave. I was forced to ask follow-up questions and to dig for more information although he was always eager to fill in the details once he was asked to do so. It was as if he simply did not think that the grey areas of emotional information were as important as the black and white facts.

Lily was comfortable sharing her stories and was also focused when she answered follow-up questions. Dianne’s responses to the open-ended questions were determined by the emotional content of the specific questions. If the question touched on a topic that was emotionally loaded for her the answer would come in fits and starts with encouragement from me. On the other hand, she answered the questions on the less emotional subjects fairly readily. Her interviews had more in
common with coaching conversations than story-telling. Nevertheless, I appreciated her courage in sharing her story with me while she was struggling. I made every effort to stay fully engaged in the moment during our conversations — hoping it would help if I asked appropriate questions in order to enhance the flow of her story. I also decided to focus on her business rather than on her personal life as it was possible that her accounts may digress into challenges she was experiencing with other family members and without contributing to an understanding of her business mental models.

During my interviews with Albert and Dianne I was grateful for my years of coaching and mentoring experience. This assisted me greatly to listen carefully for what was hidden in the gaps and to judge when to allow the conversation to deviate from the main issue and when to bring it back to the issue at hand. I had to ask questions in order to draw out their stories — bit by bit — from their memories.

Whenever I realised that a participant was not being honest with him or herself I had to make a quick decision on whether to challenge his/her viewpoint, ignore it for the moment and return to it during a follow-up meeting or, if it were not important, to let it go completely. In my mentoring practice I had learnt to trust my intuition when I had to decide whether or not, or when, to challenge a mentee.

After two of my interviews with Dianne I had to reflect and work through my feeling that the interviews had not been satisfactory. I could not allow my perceptions to prevent me from assessing each story optimally and getting as much I could from out of the recorded conversations. I examined each of the stories in detail in search of their value in terms of my study. Despite the disjointedness and sometimes even randomness of our conversations some profound revelations occurred.

My last interview with Dianne reminded me of how difficult it is when a business fails. The fact that she was aware that Neill and I had also experienced difficult times helped her to open up about her feelings. When I think about my sessions with Dianne, the muscles in my neck tighten. At the time of my interviews with Dianne the memory of the difficult financial times Neill and I had experienced had
still been fresh in my mind and I was able to understand what Dianne was going through. Neill and I had been lucky. I had had Purfect Place and we had had each other. I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for Dianne to be on her own. During our last interview Dianne and I sat in her lounge. She was desperate for a regular income. We both cried. However, once I had set up an appointment for her to see Cara for a potential job interview we both felt slightly relieved.

There was no time limit to my conversations with Neill and so I allowed him to digress and I learnt from whatever presented itself. However, the interviews with the other participants were scheduled appointments and, in order to stay within the time limits, these interviews were focused and very intense.

8.6.1 Audio recordings
Gubrium and Holstein (2001) stress the important of ensuring the quality of the audiotapes. This was also important to me and, thus, I needed a reliable audio recorder so that I would be able to hear what was being said clearly – including the tone of voice. Accordingly, I bought a top of the range digital audio recorder. I often used two recorders simultaneously – especially when the interview was in an outside space or where there was background noise. Once I had obtained permission to record an interview or meeting I tried to place the recorder in such a way that it would attract as little attention as possible so as to avoid distraction or self-consciousness on the part of the interviewee.

At home I copied all the audio files onto my computer and burned compact discs (CDs) to ensure that I had back-up copies of every interview in case something should happen to my audio recorder and computer simultaneously. The CDs are stored in a safe in my study. I used the copy on my laptop to make verbatim transcriptions of the interviews. These recordings and the transcriptions made repeated scrutiny of data possible (Hammersley, 2010).

Please see Dianne’s narrative where I “introduced” Dianne to Cara, the owner of a tutor centre.
During my reflections I questioned myself as to how switching on a tape recorder may have influenced the interviews with the participants. Not one of them had manifested visible signs of self-consciousness as a result of the presence of the recorder. This may have been because most of them used audio recorders in their jobs. Albert even held the recorder in his hands and deliberately talked into the microphone. He was eager, rather than self-conscious, to tell his story. There were, however, two situations on which he was not willing to elaborate. One involved a sensitive situation where there had been a third party involved while the other had involved the new business venture that he was starting up with partners and he did not want people to know about it at the time. I respected his choice not to discuss either of these situations in detail.

I sincerely believe that the presence of the audio recorder had not impacted on the conversations that had taken place. I had always informed the participants prior to my switching the audio recorder that if there was anything they did not want on record they should warn me and I would switch the recorder off for that part of the conversation.

Neill revealed an awareness of the presence of the recorder. However, in the main his concern was whether I would be able to hear him as the audio recorder he usually used was not as sensitive as mine. However, I knew Neill well and, if he was not relaxed, it was not because of the presence of the audio recorder.
Recording the conversations meant I had hard copies of every word that was said and also how it was said. I was, therefore, able to relax and engage with the participants without having to take comprehensive notes. In addition, I also had time in which to note other things such as the body language and facial expressions of the speaker. I could never have hoped to capture an interview as accurately as I did without a voice recording of the interview.

I did not use a video recorder as this often becomes too complicated. I also did not want to be distracted from my engagement with the participants while operating a camera and I definitely did not want a third person to operate the camera during the interviews. In addition, a video camera would have made it impossible for the participants to remain anonymous.

As soon as I arrived home after an interview I would go to my study immediately to compile my field notes from both memory and the notes I had made before and during the interview. The descriptive notes I made addressed the emerging themes as well as discrepancies and ambiguities in the responses of the participants while the reflective notes recorded my personal reflections on the interview. Throughout the process of data collection and the writing up of the field notes I tried to remain aware of my personal mindset and biases.

8.6.2 Transcriptions
The next decision I had to make was how to do the transcriptions and who should, in fact, do them. An accurate verbatim transcription is important as it is easier to repeatedly review written material than it is to do with audio taped material (Boyatzis, 1998). Although I had Dragon Naturally Speak software I decided not to use it. It made more sense to use the time I had with the participants to explore their thinking rather than train the software to recognise their speech.

Plummer (2001, p 149-501) suggests that the first major task for most researchers after a interview is to transcribe and edit the interview. This is also suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005) who add that transcription should be done while the researcher still remembers important physical gestures observed during the interview. Thus, I was able to match the note on the body language that I had
made with the particular section of the discussion to which it applied. I transcribed every conversation verbatim, edited the transcription and, in the case of interviews in Afrikaans, translated them into English. This was an intensive and very time consuming process. It took me more than twelve hours to transcribe a one-hour interview using the field notes. “Transcribing the interviews yourself forces you to pay attention to what interviewees said and helps you prepare for the next interview” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 204). I found this to be very true. There were sections that I had re-listened to six times to ensure that I had transcribed them correctly. This required focused concentration and was fairly tiring. I would take a short break every hour – making a cup of tea, stretching or spending time with a cat to help my mind to stay alert.

While doing the first transcription I realised that the transcription process was assisting my understanding of the entrepreneurs as I was, to some extent, re-living the interview. Being in my own study meant I was more relaxed and, as a result, I was able to hear what was being said in more detail. Thus, listening to the recordings and editing the transcriptions provided me with insights into the participants’ thinking. These insights I noted in brackets in the text. I also indicated changes in body language that I had either remarked and noted down or which I had made a mental note of during the interview as well as tonal and volume (energy) changes in the voices that became very apparent when I listened to the recordings at home.

I did not note down habitual sounds like starting every sentence with “Hmm...” and neither did I try to provide an indication of the exact duration of any silences. As I still have all the recordings it is easy for me to re-listen to any one of them should I want to check the length of pauses or other idiosyncrasies.

When I edited the transcriptions I would read the transcriptions and listen to the audio recordings simultaneously to ensure I had not left anything out. During these sessions – which sometimes took up to three hours – I often had flashes of insight. I am so grateful that I transcribed the interviews myself as, otherwise, I would have forfeited a valuable learning opportunity.

251 Although there is a smart phone app that can now do that it was not available at the time.
252 Please see Chapter 4, Tessa’s narrative.
Within forty-eight to sixty hours after the interview I would send the transcription of the interview to the relevant participant to read it and approve of it. I tried to keep this interval as short as possible so that the interview would still be fresh in the mind of the participant. This procedure gave the participant the opportunity to change whatever he or she was not happy with. Once I had received the edited version, I would print two hard copies. I pasted one in a book where I could do the analysis and the other one went into the file of the relevant participant. These participant files are kept in a locked cupboard in my study. I also kept two other copies of the final transcripts on two different memory sticks – one of which is in my jewellery safe and the other in my office.

8.7 CONSTRUCTING THE HUNTING STORIES

...stories have a unique power to move people’s hearts, minds, feet, and wallets in the story teller’s intended direction (Guber, 2011, p. 6).

As a novice writer I had read articles on autoethnographic writing prior to writing the narratives for guidance. Sitting here in front of my laptop I look up at the array of notes stuck up on my study wall. There is the slightly faded “Engage, Evoke & Provide – readable & understandable” based on the work of Ellis (2000) which was written with a fibre tip pen on a piece of paper and the neatly typed list of Bochner (2000) that I have mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Sergi and Hallin (p. 198, 2011) state that “researchers should open themselves to their emotional world in order to refine their reflexivity.” While I think I have provided enough detail about the participants it is difficult for me to know whether I have reflected their emotional highs and lows – including my own – adequately. Prof often complained that I tended not to reflect my emotions sufficiently in my writing. Grbich (1999, p. 65) states that one “should clarify how one’s beliefs have been socially constructed and how these values are impacting on interaction and interpretation in research settings”. I took time to think about the reasons for that.

My conclusion was that – like the animals on the African plains – I have learnt not to display my emotions for all to see. It is part of the bush survival strategy not to show vulnerability. For example, an animal that limps is easy prey on the African plains. With a father who had half of his stomach surgically removed and suffered
twelve heart attacks between 1968 and 1974 and a mother who demanded that her children cope while she either visited my father in hospital in Port Elizabeth or was at work to earn a living, I have learnt to get up, look up and push through. Hence, it is difficult for me to write about my own emotions. This does not, however, mean that I am not vulnerable but only that I have learnt not to show my vulnerability. People who know me will tell you that I am an open and honest person but does it shine through in this thesis? I sincerely hope so.

Allon, Natasha and Tessa were comfortable with who they were as entrepreneurs because years of success had given them the confidence to know that they were not defined by their failures or their challenges. They spoke openly about both their failures and their challenges. They knew who they were because of the learning and becoming they had undergone as a result of their experiences.

My supervisors had warned me that writing about my husband could prove to be a challenge to our relationship. However, I believe that the emotional and financial support that I had given to Neill from 2004 to December 2009 when he had experienced incredible lows had deepened the trust between us to a level where he was able to be extremely vulnerable for the purposes of this study. Although it was not easy to write about his and our experiences this was because of me rather than him. I had had to work through my anger in order to be able to see his actions for what they were rather than for how it affected me. At this point I know that our relationship is stronger because of those financially difficult years. Furthermore, his participation in this study and my writing about his and our experiences gave me the opportunity to work through the anger I had harboured towards him because of some of the decisions he had made during those six dark years. However, I had had to work through it in order to be fair to Neill in this study.

Nevertheless, writing about Neill was certainly easier than writing about Albert, Dianne and Lily. I spent hours contemplating how to convey their business mindsets and how they had operated in their businesses, but without causing them embarrassment. It was, however, essential that I convey a realistic picture of their worlds but, at the same time, it was important to me that I portrayed my
participants empathetically. I most definitely did not want people to be hurt by what I had written about them.

As so many times during the study I have to remind myself that a lack of success in business is not indicative of the characters of people. We have all done things that could be regarded as embarrassing in certain circumstances. However, it is our reactions to these situations that determine whether the situation was an embarrassing incident or an opportunity for growth. Making bad business decisions does not make anybody a lesser person as compared to those people who are successful entrepreneurs.

After every interview I realised that there were moments that I wish I had handled differently but that is the virtue of hindsight. However, I had done what I thought was best under the circumstances. I did not allow myself to become too emotional about these “mistakes” but, instead, I tried to learn from them and strategised on how to improve on them should a similar situation arise again.

In writing the narratives of the participants I condensed parts of the interviews for the sake of brevity. I left out meaning making and clarifying statements such as “Do I understand correctly …?” and “What you are actually saying …?” and “Can you please tell me a little more …?”

Although I felt like an insider for most of the time, I did not fully understand every experience of the participants although I did have some insight into certain of the situations the participants shared with me.

I have rewritten the narratives of the participants several times, especially the less flattering scenarios. I had started out writing the narratives as I saw them playing out but then I would read what I had written and look for reasons why the person had acted in which the way he or she had done and I would bring that into play. I hope that taking into account the rationale behind the thoughts and actions that had sabotaged the success of some of the participants has enabled me to portray these participants sympathetically. Their actions were often the result of a lack of self-honesty as well as a lack of understanding of the situation. The participants had usually tried to make the best decisions in the circumstances but their “best” had often depended on the quality of their mental maps of the scenario in question.
and they had sometimes lacked the necessary insight to enable them to make informed decisions.

Did I write about everything I saw or heard? No, I did not. In the interests of brevity, to avoid boring the reader and to save the participants from any humiliation I did not write about every incident when I believed that describing one incident would suffice to confirm my insight during the analysis of the transcribed interviews and other textual data. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured to tell the truth as I saw it (Johnson, 2002; Caulley, 2008) and I have tried to reflect my experiences and those of my participants as truthfully as possible. I definitely did not fabricate any of the data in the accounts of the narratives. However, it must be borne in mind that “all human knowledge and experience as expressed through verbal accounts is in essence biased” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 25). Despite the fact that I feel that my account of each narrative was based on what my participants had revealed to me, it is inevitable that my perceptions of their accounts were coloured by my own mental models and biases.

With Neill’s narratives and my own narratives it was even more difficult for me to differentiate between the actual truth and my perception of it. Thus, when constructing our narratives I often used a technique I had learnt during hypnotherapy training. I would close my eyes, take a slow breath and take my mind back to the earlier incident that I wanted to remember in more detail. For example, when I wanted to remember the day my father-in-law had told me to close my ballet school, I visualised my father-in-law and I standing in the passage in front of the class on the exact spot where we had been standing when he spoke to me. As I recalled the smell inside the ballet classroom and I felt my feet in pumps on the wooden floor the details of the event on that day would start flowing back into my conscious mind together with all the emotions attached to the memories. I would write it all down immediately. I also used my reflective journals of the times prior to this study to check dates and other specific details of Neill and my lives.

I spent a minimum of two years with my participants and I used the interviews, participant observation and, in the case of Allon, Natasha and Tessa, also unsolicited documents in the form of magazine and newspaper articles,
biographical books and television programs. I asked each participant to check his/her own narrative. I also sent copies of the narratives to my supervisors, Jane, Cindy and Gerhardt – my peer review panel\textsuperscript{253}.

\section*{8.8 THE METAPHOR CHANGE}

With the help of my wonderful friends in Seattle Coffee Bar I had decided to use the metaphor of quantum physics in my study. For as long as I am able to remember I have been interested in quantum physics. Not even Merzbacher\textsuperscript{254} had killed this passion and quantum physics has become an essential tool in my day-to-day, sense-making process. As a growth facilitator\textsuperscript{255} I use quantum physics concepts in my work. This had led me to the notion that I was looking for the secret quantum of energy that lifts the entrepreneurial mindset to the next level.

One of the more challenging weeks during this study was when I made an appointment to see my supervisors to discuss what are now Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis. Something they had said on the telephone made me realised that the metaphor I was using for this thesis was not working. I realised that my supervisors had no prior knowledge of quantum physics and that the quantum physics background that I prepared as an appendix was too cumbersome to be read by anyone not actually interested in the subject. Hence, much of the symbolism would be lost to the readers.

Initially I was deeply concerned. I had no idea how I was going resolve the problem but Neill’s refrain that “Suzette will not rest until she has sorted the problem out” and that was always at the back of my mind inspired me. I sincerely wanted this work to be accessible to anybody who was interested in reading it. The role of a metaphor is to facilitate, not hinder, understanding. As I have already stated, my aim was to make my thesis accessible to as many people as possible. Accordingly, I spent an entire weekend trying to find a way to make the metaphor work. Finally, I realised that, even if I added a booklet or video explaining the basic

\textsuperscript{253} A small group of knowledgeable people whom I invited to challenge me on the analysis I had conducted.
\textsuperscript{254} The author of the quantum physics text book prescribed for my physics honours year.
\textsuperscript{255} A term I use for mentor
concepts of quantum physics, I would still be asking too much of readers who were not well versed in quantum physics.

Then, on the morning of 1 August 2014, I had a major epiphany. I love nature and I have a reasonable amount of knowledge of the African bush and wild animals. The fact that an entrepreneur had to be adaptable had become obvious during the course of the study. The analogy of the survival of the adaptable had been planted in my subconscious months earlier when I had watched a video of a group of lions in the Okavango Delta in Botswana and who, despite their dislike of water, had started hunting in the wetlands because of the presence of roan antelope there. I sat down and transformed the thesis from “The Secret Quantum” to “Survival of the Adaptable” using the phenomenon of the African lion surviving in the African bush, savannah and wetlands as my metaphor.

Before my supervisors could voice their concerns with Chapters 3 and 4 during our meeting that afternoon, I opened the little green journal that I always used for our meetings and in which I had outlined the new metaphor. I explained to them how each chapter would change. As I was describing the changes I saw how Prof relaxed. When I had finished my supervisors were able to detect the various layers of meaning. We celebrated with tea.
I then changed the metaphor and reworked the first three chapters into four. I was ready for the challenges that the data analysis and literature review would bring.

## 8.9 DATA ANALYSIS REVEALED

Analysing the data was an exhausting, iterative process. The preliminary data analysis had started while I was recording field notes early on in the research. Once I had received the reactions of the participant to his or her transcribed
interview I started analysing the interview more formally. I printed and stuck the final version of each interview transcript in my data analysis journal for analysis. Each page and each line of the book was numbered to enable me to keep track of the data. I left the opposite page blank for the data analysis so that everything would be grouped together.

Photograph 8.8: One of the data analysis journals open at a page of Natasha’s data with a close-up photograph on the right where I did preliminary analysis

I highlighted the words and phrases that either corresponded with the concepts included in the list I had compiled from the literature review or that appeared to be relevant to the mental models of the participant concerned. When working through the interviews I often discovered “new” concepts to add to the existing list. When I found these “new” concepts I would return to the interviews I had already analysed to ascertain whether I had missed these particular concepts or themes in the previous data. I also checked whether there were similar themes relating to a concept that I may have missed because such similar themes had appeared in a different guise. I compared all the words and phrases which represented a theme
and I reflected on how they either supported or contradicted the same concept. In order to do this, I had to define each concept in order to obtain a clear understanding of the meaning of each concept. I gradually built up a conceptual framework that would form the basis of the final analysis.

When Prof saw my data analysis system he complimented me, remarking that students often “drown” in their data. I was glad that, for once, my obsession with being organised had served me well.

I spent months sifting through textbooks and files of articles, reading up on each concept before integrating the relevant literature with my analysis and interpretations of the concepts that emerged from the participants’ accounts. This was a laborious and time consuming process. In view of the fact that theory and fact are interdependent, “facts are facts only within some theoretically framework” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107), it became necessary for me to study relevant construct and theoretical frameworks.

The decision on what to include in the literature review and what to leave out, constituted a major challenge for me because the scholarly literature on entrepreneurship is both interdisciplinary and vast (Campbell & Mitchell, 2012). The large number of concepts that emerged from the literature contributed to the volume of the literature I had to work through before I could write the final draft of Chapter 5. Eventually it became clear that Chapter 5 was too long and, thus, I divided it into two chapters, namely, Chapters 5 and 6.

As I read articles I wrote notes on what I deemed to be important. I filed these notes under specific headings in a folder I named Topics on my laptop. For example, Risk is a file in this folder and everything I read related to risk – with full citations – was captured in this file. In order to facilitate access during the final writing up phase I filed every scholarly article in alphabetical order using the authors’ surnames.

At the conclusion of the final interviews with the entrepreneurs I had compiled an alphabetical list of the concepts which had emerged and I examined which of these could be regarded as mental models. At the same time, I tried to get a sense of how important each concept was in the language of each participant by
investigating the number of times the concept had appeared in the specific participant's interviews.

By the time I met my peer review panel on 23 November 2013 I had pinned a list of the concepts\textsuperscript{256} up on my dining room wall for discussion purposes.

\textbf{Photograph 8.9:} Presenting the concepts to my peer review panel – 23 November 2013

The data analysis was extremely time-consuming. I extracted more than seventy concepts from the narratives and that appeared to have the decision-making process of the participants. I took care not to force a theme into existence in a narrative just because I had expected it to be present. In addition to extracting themes I also had to establish possible relationships between different themes or how combinations of themes worked together or against one another.

The concepts that emerged provided an insight into the reasons why some of the participants had been so much more successful than others. In order not to discard any of the concepts I had to decide how to organise the concepts in a sensible way to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the data. There were times when I felt as if I was in the middle of a cobweb of themes and concepts and the more I moved them about the more entangled I became! Whenever this

\textsuperscript{256} Please see Appendix B for the Concept identification table
happened I went to Olivia’s where I zoom-out of the detail and get a wider perspective.

Sitting at my favourite table, I would work through the concepts that I had derived from the data in order to decide how I could combine and organise them. I was forced to reduce the number of concepts because there were too many for me to discuss in detail in the thesis. By the time I eventually left Olivia’s I had reduced the total number of concepts to 46 concepts or clusters of concepts, although I had no idea how I was going to organise them so as to ensure that they made sense to the reader.

Photograph 8.10: My favourite table and meal at Olivia’s Bakery

Thus, the challenge was to order the concepts in such a way so as to demonstrate some sort of flow in my reasoning. I made many attempts to this but every time I thought I had arranged the constructs in a way that made sense of the complexity of interconnected concepts I confronted a new complication. I found that I dealt with these complications best when I went about finding a solution in an organic, evolutionary way. Instead of trying to solve all the problems beforehand I would

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257 A bakery close to our home
258 See Appendix C: Reducing the concepts
259 For example, opportunism
260 For example, tolerance for complexity and uncertainty and which included both the tolerance for complexity and the tolerance for uncertainty
261 Photograph used with the permission of the management of Olivia’s Bakery.
enter the field and deal with the challenges as and when they arose. Eventually, after weeks of reshuffling constructs, it appeared that they had all fallen into place. This meant that I was at a point at which I could discuss the key research findings in relation to the relevant existing theory.

In line with the qualitative approach I did not try to quantify observations but I merely positioned the participants on a continuum so as to provide an indication of the extent to which each participant had used a particular mental model.

In accordance with poststructuralism, a subset of postmodernism and which emphasises language in stories, I studied the words the participants had used and the contexts in which they had used these words. I recognised that the constructs (mental models) were multidimensional, complex and layered representations and, therefore, that language was the key to understanding mental models. In other words, it is possible to investigate and represent study mental models linguistically through co-constructed interviews.

I also took into consideration the participants’ tones of voice and other displays of emotion in combination with their body language. According to Riessman (2002, p. 706), narrative analysis is not for studying “large numbers of nameless, faceless subjects” and the “process is slow and painstaking”, thus requiring researcher sensitivity to the nuances of speech and the body language of the participants, and the relationship between the researcher and participant. I soon learnt that the analysis entailed a repetitive cycle of data collection, data analysis and literature exploration in order to establish where the “new” concept fitted into the existing academic literature.

The search for patterns of meaning in the data presented me with numerous challenges. Throughout the process I had to be aware that people “tend to assimilate only those facts that confirm what they already believe” (Lehrer, 2009, p. 198). Lehrer (2009 p. 197) points out that “Self-delusion feels good” And I did not want to fall into that trap

262 In poststructuralism, rather than being a stable phenomenon with clear meanings, language may be seen as a system of signs and codes that we are able to access through scientific reason (Grbich, 2007, p. 13).
Since I was not able to find any analytical method that was deemed to be generally accepted in reputable text books, I developed my own strategy during the interview and transcription process. As the process became more intense I added the guidelines suggested by Chang (2008) to my protocol. However, I found it difficult to defend this approach at my peer review panel when Cindy wanted to know how I had approached the data analysis in the study.

I look up to the note posted directly in front of me on the wall. It was based on Chang (2008, p. 132 – 134), and I read through it again:

- Look for entrepreneurial themes, recurring topics, and patterns of themes.
- Identify exceptional occurrences.
- Explore inclusions and omissions.
- Connect the past with the present.
- Analyse my relationship with the participant.
- Compare participants with one another and look for similarities and differences.
- Contextualise concepts broadly.
- Compare findings with the academic literature available on the concepts.
- Find a way to represent the findings that has theoretical and practical value.

The protocol I used was not simple and linear but, rather, it complex with numerous feedback loops. The biggest challenge was analysing my own narrative and I left this for last. However, in retrospect it may have been quicker had I started analysing my experiences and views as I clearly knew myself better than I knew the other participants. Certain concepts may have emerged earlier and this may have saved me from going back and forth between my narrative and the narratives of the other entrepreneurs.

It took me a long time to complete writing Chapters 5 and 6. Every time I proofread a version, I would find that I had gained new insights from reviewing the relevant literature. The fourth time this happened I started to worry. I felt as if the process would never end and that there would be forever be more layers to peel off. It also concerned me that there were probably other scholarly articles “hiding on the
internet” and that I may never reach to a point where I knew enough. I discussed this with my supervisors and, while their answer that it is not possible to read every article in the world was reassuring, it did not take long before I started digging up more articles once again...

From 19 to 23 November 2014, I went to Leeupoort\textsuperscript{263} to rewrite these two chapters before sending them to my supervisors.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{leeupoort_cottage}
\caption{Our Leeupoort cottage before the first rains with one of the regular visitors}
\end{figure}

Although nature has regular cycles, the cycles in qualitative research are more unpredictable than those in nature and they also sometimes come when least expected. It was during one of my previous visits to Leeupoort that I had received the inspiration for Chapter 7.

\section*{8.10 FROM FINDINGS TO TYPOLOGY; FROM TYPOLOGY TO MODEL}

I get up from my seat, stretch to ease the pain in my shoulders from hours sitting in front of the laptop and walk to the metal table which is groaning under the load of files and books. I easily locate Mouton and Marais (1996) and flip it open at the fancy pink paper clip keeping pages 136 to 147 together. Seeing my little notes again takes me back to the time when I had to make a decision as to whether this study offered a typology, model or theory. Experienced researchers such as Prof

\textsuperscript{263} A game farm north of Johannesburg where we have a cottage
are able to make this decision in a heartbeat but it had taken me time as I had had to read up and reflect on my work.

It is only when we arrange the data which has been collected in some form of theoretical framework for the purposes of analysis and interpretation that it deserves to be called research (Grbich, 1999 Silverman, 2000). According to Silverman (2000, p. 78), theory provides a framework for the critical understanding of phenomena and a basis for considering how that which is unknown may be organised. According to the constructivist-interpretive framework the goal of theory building is to describe, interpret and co-construct meanings. In terms of this study, the goal of the theory building was to make sense of, understand and interpret the form and function of the mental models of entrepreneurs.

However, as I have mentioned, the inspiration for Chapter 7 had happened long before I actually wrote Chapter 7. After the crazy holiday season in January 2014, I went to Leeupoort to work on tidying up the concepts. On Friday morning, after many hours behind the computer, I was stretching to relieve the tension in my shoulders when I saw a monitor lizard in the veld, hunting scorpions and other creepy crawlies. I settled onto the couch and it was while watching the hunt that I had the epiphany of using the line emission spectrum\textsuperscript{264}. The line emission spectrum falls in the realm of quantum physics which, at the time, represented the metaphor for my thesis.

Although the metaphor for this study changed I retained the line emission spectrum concept as the line emission spectrum of all the chemical species combined is commonly known as the \textit{rainbow} and the rainbow is a welcome sight in the skies above the African plains.

For weeks prior to this insight of the spectrum I had been thinking of how to organise the constructs in a way that would make sense. The semi-meditative state in which I was watching the monitor lizard relaxed me sufficiently to allow for thoughts from my subconscious to break through into my conscious mind. This was such an inspiring experience that, on returning to my laptop, my writing flowed easily for the rest of the weekend.

\textsuperscript{264} A spectrum based on the visible part of the electromagnetic spectrum and commonly called a \textit{rainbow}. 
Shortly after my return to Johannesburg I invited Cindy and Jane to discuss the colours of the concepts as they appear in the Concept Colour Spectrum\(^{265}\). Mary Anne also joined the meeting.

The meeting started with Cindy saying, “I can’t wait to hear what criteria you used to match the concepts with the specific colours.” I related how I had arrived at the idea of the line emission spectrum and also why and how I wanted to use it.\(^{266}\) Once I had answered all their questions we started working through the alphabetical list of concepts that we had in front of us. The meeting also provided me with an unexpected opportunity to experience the concepts from the perspectives of three other professional people. It was an enriching morning and I treasured everybody’s input into and enthusiasm for my study.

\[\text{Photograph 8.12: Mary Anne, Jane and Cindy during our final discussion on the concept colour spectrum}\]

8.11 MY HUNTING JOURNAL

Ellis (2000) suggests that one should anticipate the weaknesses in one’s work. My research study is certainly not perfect but I did endeavour to make the best possible decisions under the circumstances. However, in hindsight and with the benefit of the experience I have gained over the research period, there are a few

\[\text{Photograph 8.11: MY HUNTING JOURNAL}\]

\(^{265}\) Please see The Kill:MMSES model in section 7.4.

\(^{266}\) Red has the lowest energy and, according to the wave-particle duality principle, it represents the physical character while violet (purple) has the highest energy and represents the wave character of light.
things I would have done differently. I would have used my time more efficiently, especially when I was making notes on scholarly articles. I often had to read the same article more than once as I reviewed it in the light of the themes which emerged from the participants’ accounts. Despite the fact that I had built up a well-organised collection of academic articles there were several citations I did not use because it would have taken me too long to trace them. In addition, the realisation that there are academic writings available that I did not read remains a concern. My only solace is that my supervisors had told me that it is not physically possible to read every peer-reviewed article related to one’s research topic.

With regard to Dianne, I would like to have talked to the management of the organisation to which she submitted the tender to ascertain their assessment of the quality of her tender and why it was not successful. I would also like to have spoken to the people who attended her training courses. However, at the time, I decided not to do so and now it is too late as the management of the organisation would, in all likelihood, no longer have the information, particularly in view of the huge challenges they are currently facing with energy supply while the people who attended her training courses would now – a few years later - probably not remember enough to comment on it.

Looking at the quality criteria for the study, it would appear that I took all the requirements for presenting good quality research into consideration although I cannot help wondering whether it will pass as good research. I am very aware of the challenges of scholarly writing and of compiling “together a coherent, logical, clear and persuasive argument” (Mouton, 2001, p. 112). Similarly, qualitative and autoethnographical writing require special skills and, as I am not a professional writer, it is possible that I do possess the requisite writing skills.

An important question that concerns me is whether I have indulged in what Sergi and Hallin (2011, p. 204) call “confessional narcissism and self-centeredness”. I set out to do conduct research and I have tried my best to maintain a good balance between being self-centred and generating meaningful research.

When I consider my own biases and mental models I know that these must have influenced the research process. I have revisited the data collected, data analysis
and data interpretations multiple times and, each time, I gained a greater awareness of and better perspective on the research process. I presented my data analysis to both my promoters and a panel of peers and I believe that the influence of any presuppositions did not have a detrimental effect on the quality of your research study. In addition, once I have completed my thesis it will also be peer reviewed by a senior academic at the department of Industrial Psychology and People Management at the University of Johannesburg.

I honestly feel that I have done my utmost to present an accurate portrayal of the social worlds and the mental models of the entrepreneurs who participated in my study.

8.12 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

I set out on the wide open plains of Africa to explore the mental models of eight entrepreneurs\(^{267}\). During the course of this study my understanding of the mental models of entrepreneurs has, undoubtedly, improved. The findings of the study suggest that there is a complex network of mental models that must support the decision-making of the entrepreneur in order for he or she to be successful. However, success and failure should not be regarded as two specific “values” but rather as a series of positions along a continuum of growth.

In any given context there are entrepreneurial profile attributes and intermediate entrepreneurial behaviours that have a higher probability to lead to entrepreneurial success. In this study certain profile attributes that emerged as important for entrepreneurial success and the behaviours that are forthcoming from this thinking were absent in some of the participants. On the other hand, there are individuals who – as their expertise grew – experienced greater success despite of the circumstances.

\(^{267}\) Aims of the study: (i) What are the critical elements of the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in successful entrepreneurial activity? (ii) How do the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in successful entrepreneurial activity differ from those who are involved in unsuccessful entrepreneurial activity? (iii) Suggest interventions that would be appropriate to shift the mental models of entrepreneurs involved in unsuccessful activity to resemble the mental models of those involved in successful entrepreneurial activity.
8.12.1 Theoretical contributions of the study

Entrepreneurial success or failure is not the result of a singular contributory factor but is, rather, the result of a combination of factors. Theoretically it is hoped that the study will make a contribution to the understanding of the complex interrelated concepts that play an important role in the process of becoming a successful entrepreneur. A set of mental models was identified that had contributed to the success, or otherwise, of the eight entrepreneurs who participated in the study. Distinct differences were found between the mental models of the successful entrepreneurs and those who had been involved in unsuccessful businesses. The position of each entrepreneur on the mental model continuums provided an insight into the role of that specific mental model in the success or lack thereof of the entrepreneurs.

The MMSES model was constructed by integrating the mental models derived from the experiences of the entrepreneurs and from relevant literature. I am of the opinion that the differences between the mental models of the entrepreneurs involved in successful and those involved in unsuccessful entrepreneurial endeavours and who participated in the study are clearly evident in their individual MMSES profiles.

Not all the entrepreneurs who participated in the study had developed the relevant expert mental models. The participants who had not had entrepreneurial parents, close family members or friends nor a mentor, despite a university education, had not experienced long term success as an entrepreneur. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is impossible for an entrepreneur to be successful unless he/she has either entrepreneurial parents or a mentor. Nevertheless, it does imply that it is more difficult to be successful without either entrepreneurial parents or a mentor. It would appear that a mentor shortens the learning curve for novice entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurial families. In view of the fact that few start-up entrepreneurs have at their disposal the resources required to run for long enough to provide them with the time to learn the necessary lessons, mentors may play an important role in the lives of entrepreneurs who are trying either to establish or to grow a business. It is, thus, recommended that novice entrepreneurs without entrepreneurial family or friends consider using the services
of an experienced mentor to provide the necessary support during the start-up or
growth phase of a business. The MMSES model may be used to profile the mental
models of entrepreneurs and, thus, to facilitate the development of the mindsets
that support successful entrepreneurship.

A critical examination of the concepts that emerged from the narratives of the
entrepreneurs who participated in the study indicated that the majority of these
concepts are valid, not merely for entrepreneurs, but in terms of achieving success
in the majority of other fields.

8.12.2 Methodological contribution of the study
Postmodernism allowed me as the researcher and participant to use my
experience as an entrepreneur and entrepreneur mentor during interviews. It was
during the data collection phase that I felt I was breaking new ground. Interviewing
the entrepreneurs involved in successful entrepreneurial activity the open-ended
questions I used resulted in a coherent flow of data. However, with the participants
who did not enjoy long term success the interviews turned into complex
conversations incorporating coaching techniques. I felt this was necessary to
facilitate opportunities for the participant to make sense of his/her experiences.

After the first of these difficult interviews I searched the scholarly literature for
indications of how other researchers dealt with interviews with entrepreneurs who
had not come to terms with their lack of entrepreneurial success. I wanted to know
how much mentoring or coaching was allowed, but I did not find answers in the
scholarly literature. Guided by my intuition and engaging in critical reflection after
each interview I started to trust this interview process.

8.12.3 Practical contributions of the study
On a practical level, the MMSES model may be used to assist both entrepreneur
mentors and entrepreneurs to identify mental models that do not foster the growth
of an entrepreneurial endeavour. In addition, the model may serve as a reference
for the conscious development of the relevant expert mental models of novice
entrepreneurs.
As a result of watching a video clip\textsuperscript{268} that demonstrated how difficult it may be to change learnt behaviour I developed a process to address changing habitual mental models that do not foster successful entrepreneurship. The TA\textsuperscript{URE}\textsuperscript{2}C steps for changing a mental model were constructed by focusing on the learning experiences of the participants and incorporating steps for problem solving (Pretz, Naples & Sternberg, 2003, p. 3) and also the seven capacities of the U movement (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2008, p. 219). This may serve as a mechanism with which to change the habitual mental models of entrepreneurs that do not foster business success. The mentoring framework may be used to facilitate transforming the limiting mental models of entrepreneurs into mental models that foster the growth of their businesses.

Reaching this point in my writing is a relief. However, the next critical question I have to address is the shortcomings and weaknesses of the study. It is, however, difficult to criticise your own “baby”.

\subsection{Shortcomings and Weaknesses of the Study}

The cardinal criticism levelled against ethnographic research is the subjectivity of the researcher.

I would be interested in testing the findings of the study using a more objective tool would provide a deeper insight into the level of subjectivity of this work. At the time of writing the study had not been tested by other people in the field.

In addition, extracting the individual mental models of an entrepreneur may challenge the user of the MMSES model as it would require a search for all the elements in the story – life history – of the entrepreneur. This may be a long and time consuming process. If a facilitator worked with a few entrepreneurs simultaneously, the facilitator could, instead of the life histories of the entrepreneurs, use a set of carefully thought out questions in order to probe the mental models of the mentees and use these answers to construct the individual profiles of the clients. It would, therefore, make sense to develop a set of questions designed to address this challenge.

\textsuperscript{268} http://viewpure.com/MFzDaBzBIL?ref=bkmk (Destin from Smarter Everyday riding a modified bicycle).
Despite my daily habit of critical reflection, I am aware that my personal mental models have influenced my perceptions. Accordingly, there may be mental models that I did not notice or others that I over-emphasised because of my own experiences and mindsets.

Although the MMSES model provides mentors with a guideline to use in assisting entrepreneurs to develop the mental models that support success, it cannot give the complete picture. Despite the small sample size I used, I believe that the fact that this study confirmed the concepts found in the academic literature lent greater significance to these concepts. However, it would be of value if the MMSES profiles of a significantly larger group of entrepreneurs confirmed the relevance of the concepts in the model, thus lending it more credibility and expanding it.

8.14 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Inevitably I reflect on whether there is more to explore in the entrepreneurship field – especially with regard to the role that the mental models of entrepreneurs play in the success or lack thereof in their endeavours. The findings of this study could be augmented by an exploration of whether direct relationships exist between the various mental models identified in this study and the success or lack thereof of entrepreneurs, thus leading to a better understanding of the successes or failures of entrepreneurs than is currently the case. This may lead to the more effective facilitation of entrepreneurial success.

In addition, it would make sense to develop a less time-consuming mechanism, for example a specific interview programme or questionnaire, to determine the MMSES profiles of entrepreneurs.

Two of entrepreneurs who participated in this study and who had experienced little or no success in their businesses had decided that they were, after all, not entrepreneurs. I believe that the phenomenon of people starting out as entrepreneurs with great enthusiasm only to realise a while later that they are not suited to entrepreneurship merits further investigation. What is it that makes people want to run their own business or business empire and why do they fail and then turn their backs on this dream? I believe that the field of entrepreneurship may benefit from a greater understanding of this widespread
phenomenon and one which has a considerable negative financial impact on thousands of people every year. I certainly would like to explore it in future.

8.15 DID THE CUB TURN INTO A LIONESS?

What have I learnt and how have I changed during this study? Am I still a cub or may I now call myself a lioness?

This study was a reality check for me. My experience as a novice qualitative researcher gave me a sense of what novice entrepreneurs must feel when they are confronted with the need to make decisions. I have been an entrepreneur for a long time and when one has done something for years one does not always appreciate the amount of knowledge that supports one’s decision-making.

8.15.1 As a researcher

Although I have used qualitative methods in my teaching, training and mentoring processes, the field of (auto)ethnography was completely new to me as was the qualitative landscape I had to explore and make my own. As I mentioned, I had initially been concerned that I may not be able to gather sufficient data for a thesis from studying the stories of the participants but, by the end, I was pleasantly surprised.

The interviews which I conducted with the participants made me realise the value of an individual relating and critically reflecting on his or her own story. These self-reflections paved the way for constructive conversations about the challenges which an entrepreneur confronts in business. I learnt to dig more deeply than I ever had before and to hear considerably more than I had ever heard ever before – the facts, the emotions, the body language and the gaps in between. This experience has helped me to ask more effective questions as a mentor, coach or even in normal conversations than I did before. This opens up learning experiences for both the narrator or participant and the ethnographer. I intend to use this technique more often with my mentees and I believe that, with more experience, my expertise will grow.

Gubrium and Holstein (2002) question from where the participant obtains the story that she/he tells and whether or not there is just one story which a particular
participant may relate. In this study it was clear that the participants’ stories were dependent on the situation or context from within which the participants related their stories. The two extreme cases in this study were Allon, who had chosen one story to which he has stuck in all the media over the years, and Dianne, whose first and last stories were completely different stories because of the sense-making and learning that she experienced in the time between telling those two stories.

Rephrasing Gubrium and Holstein’s (2002) question, I ask myself whether a researcher may tell the same story in more than one way and my answer is: “Yes!” For example, I personally experienced how my story about Neill changed as I worked through my anger issues with him during the course of this study. Telling his story made me start to question my perspectives on it and, during a series of sense-making reflections, I worked through my anger and was then able to re-tell Neill’s story while seeing him as he actually was rather than looking at him through the thick undergrowth of anger and resentment and which had obscured much of who he was.

The fact that it is possible for a researcher to tell different stories based on the same data is a warning sign. The researcher accepts a major responsibility when venturing into the qualitative landscape and should do so with considerable self-awareness and also ongoing reflection and sense-making.

8.15.2 As an entrepreneur
Wigren (2007, p. 401) states that “[b]ridging the gap between researchers and practitioners enriches the scientific world as well as the world of the entrepreneur.” As an entrepreneur I am now much more informed than I was prior to this study. I would almost certainly not have read as much and as deeply about the topic of entrepreneurship as I have had to do during this study. This acquisition of knowledge and an increased understanding of both entrepreneurship and the mental models of entrepreneurs constitute important components of the iceberg which represents the change in me. However, it was when these changes became

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269 Please see Iceberg model in Chapter 1, section 1.6.3
evident in my own behaviour that I realised the extent to which my mental models had changed.

Long before embarking upon this study I had regarded myself as risk averse and I had been aware that I preferred to be in control of my situation. However, during my doctoral journey I realised that I am not risk averse but that I am a strict risk manager and that this has influenced my success. My need to be in control may have saved me many frustrations but it also limited the growth of my businesses. My observations of Natasha and Allon – whose businesses are huge compared to mine – made me realise that I need to be more selective about what factors I control.

I have started to follow Allon’s example of leaving my business in the hands of the people who work for me and whom I trust for short periods of time. On my return we address what needs to be adjusted to ensure that the business runs effectively in my absence.

8.15.3 As an entrepreneur mentor

This study revealed the importance of entrepreneurial learning and the role of a mentor – especially in the absence of entrepreneurial parents – in fostering the necessary learning. I now know that there is considerable value in being an entrepreneur mentor.

As an entrepreneur mentor I now have a way of assessing what needs to be addressed first when I mentor entrepreneurs. One of reasons I embarked on this study was to explore the reasons why some entrepreneurs – often despite more challenging circumstances – are more successful than others. This study definitely improved my understanding of the mental maps that foster success in entrepreneurship while the MMSES model is a practical instrument with which to guide my mentorship programme.

Each experience cuts another facet on the surface of the rough diamond, allowing more light to enter and, hence, giving the diamond the ability to shine more brightly than it did before. The same is true of our minds. Over time our experiences render us multifaceted and, like well-cut diamonds, we start to reflect
light in all directions while bringing a sparkle to our businesses. This is how I
experienced the many personal changes – physically, emotionally and spiritually –
which I underwent during my studies. The knowledge I acquired and the growth in
my understanding of the field of entrepreneurship had made me feel more
professional and brought out a sparkle that is precious to me and which I hope to
share it with both my existing clients and my potential clients.

8.15.4 As a person
I have learnt more than I probably realise at this point. However, I have definitely
learnt about how to manage large amounts of information and how to deal with
time pressure without experiencing a panic attack. It was good to realise that
many of my characteristics, mental models and habits that some people consider
to be pedantic, for example, stubbornness and putting controlling systems in
place, may be assets in the field of entrepreneurship. However, I also discovered
that I have mental models that have limited my business growth.

I recall a conversation I had with Albert when he asked me why I was doing this
study and I answered that I felt I needed the qualification to validate me as an
entrepreneur mentor. He enquired whether I would not be overqualified. I
responded as follows:

“Over-prepare? It is the story of my life. So many people have told me that I tend
to over-prepare. I, on the other hand, cannot believe how other people can fly by
the seat of their pants. You know how I over-prepared for my quantum physics
exam”.

Albert threw back his head and laughed, “I think you’re the only person ever to
obtain hundred percent for Merzbacher”.

This is who I am – someone who always plays it safe. I have always been
successful but usually on a small scale. This study has taught me to push the
boundaries and be a little more adventurous – take scarier risks. I am very excited
at the prospect that, as soon I have the time to start building up Quantum Gain, I
shall be able to use the learning I gained in this study to my advantage. I am
inspired by people like Louise Hay who started Hay House Publishing at an age
when most people retire. As someone once said, “If your dreams don’t scare you, they’re not big enough”. I think I am ready to be more adventurous.

This study – like entrepreneurship – was not easy. It was more like a safari through the African bushveld. There were learning opportunities, uplifting moments of grandeur and there were also several rivers inhabited with man-eating crocodiles to cross.

8.16 RIVERS TO CROSS

When one enters unchartered territory the progress is often slower than expected. I underestimated the time it would take to complete this study with my lack of experience in qualitative research definitely contributing to this erroneous calculation.

Another reason why writing up this thesis took longer than I had anticipated is that I am a compulsive reader and this study provided me with the opportunity access to vast amounts of interesting reading matter. It was difficult for me to know whether the reading matter I had in front of me would be relevant to the study at some future date. In addition, it took more discipline than I could muster to ignore some of the books and articles which I stumbled upon on the internet. Hence, I read far more widely than was necessary for the purposes of this study.

Life at Purrfect Place has also been extremely busy. I am grateful for this as Purrfect Place is my primary source of income at the moment. During 2013 Bonisiwe took maternity leave and Nui, who came to work in her place during that time, had to be trained. Nui is a very thorough worker but she is slower than Bonisiwe and, thus, I had to become responsible for some of the Purrfect Place chores while she substituted for Bonisiwe. In addition, every December Bonisiwe goes on holiday to her extended family in KwaZulu-Natal and, hence, I have to run peak summer holiday season with a skeleton staff. This left me for little time for my studies during that period.
The most traumatic by far of all the challenges I faced during the time of my doctoral journey was saying my final goodbye to my mother.

8.17 AS THE SUN SETS OVER THE AFRICAN PLANES

During September and October I was so busy with an exciting new project\textsuperscript{270} that I did not think about my results, but by the end of November I was getting more concerned as it was taking very long indeed. It was early December when I finally received the evaluation reports from my examiners back.

\textsuperscript{270} Digital Ambassador Programme
REFERENCES


Hammersley, M. (2010). Reproducing or constructing? Some questions about transcriptions in social research. *Qualitative Research, 10*, 553–569.


## Appendix A: Complete list of themes and concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept or theme</th>
<th>Concept or theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Learning - vicariously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Locus of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alertness</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Mindset – growth &amp; fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability and accessibility bias</td>
<td>Multiple roles to fill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias/Heuristics management</td>
<td>Need for achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business fit</td>
<td>Negotiating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business knowledge &amp; skills</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business perception</td>
<td>Opportunistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causation &amp; effectuation (roles of)</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge management</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change management</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients/customers</td>
<td>Personal perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Planning fallacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Pressure tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Product knowledge &amp; skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (need for)</td>
<td>Product quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfactual thinking</td>
<td>Reflective sensemaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity &amp; innovativeness</td>
<td>Representativeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making – intuitive</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making – rational</td>
<td>Resource utilisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Risk taking propensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort/pain tolerance</td>
<td>Sales (Attitude and ability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Staff management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escalation of commitment</td>
<td>Stress management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family impact – entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Stubbornness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear (of failure)</td>
<td>Support system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management &amp; Pricing</td>
<td>Systems thinker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Thinking style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Time management/planning fallacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratification – instant &amp; delayed</td>
<td>Uncertainty/ambiguity tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illusion of control</td>
<td>Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning – experiential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B: Construct identification table

Note: His words appear verbatim without brackets (My words appear in brackets)
Words in CAPITAL LETTERS represent another construct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>PhD in Physics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>I have learned that you need to react very quickly when things go wrong otherwise it may be too late (He realised this 9 years after his first business closed.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>(He did not see problems in time to solve them.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alertness</td>
<td>(He is comfortable with the increase in the number of partners in current business. He did not express a need for autonomy.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business perception &amp; growth</td>
<td>It was not for me (He was suited for both businesses - teaching and physics – but he did not enjoy being in that business.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business personality fit</td>
<td>... blind conservatism and material greed of so-called successful business owners. Their only focus is the number of zeros of their bank balance. I find that so narrow-minded and short-sighted, but it seems to be the norm in the world of business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business entrepreneurs – how he sees them</td>
<td>... few kids couldn’t pay ... taught them for free; middle income group suburb ... I could only ask so much; (Albert felt too sorry for people to increase the price of his services) (Emotionally, he felt he had too much to handle – He felt overwhelmed and isolated.) grew up a loner,...Introvert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>(He ignored non-payment of clients; did not address difficult financial times; stressed, but passive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change reaction to management</td>
<td>(He did not change his strategies. He wanted others or the situation to change – appropriate partner to arrive to help in 1st business or other businesses to see the value his new business has to offer.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>I did not engage with (staff) ... kept communication professional ... not become too friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>(From observing him it was clear that Albert was able to handle complexity.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>I am good (with teaching physics) I have always thought of myself as very smart – if I can do high level physics I can do anything (SELF-EFFICACY) ... gave me the guts (RISK TAKING) ... I was blasé; I was ARROGANT ... will not be again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>(He did not mention the need to control anything during our conversations.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfactual thinking</td>
<td>(Albert did engage in a little during our one interview, but not to my knowledge on his own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>(He showed a fair amount of courage buying a business without business experience.)</td>
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<td>Construct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative innovative thinking</td>
<td>(Albert had a pragmatic approach. He did not display creative or innovative solutions to challenges or in the business as such.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crises management</td>
<td>(When he realised that his 1st business was in financial trouble he looked – unsuccessfully – for a partner) ... hoped someone would walk through the door to save the business (unrealistic expectations) Tutors were not nearly at the right level ... (to partner with, but afterwards one of them started her own centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>... your decision must be in favour of the business – not the person in the wrong. I couldn’t do it. I felt too sorry for the people and looked after them at a cost to the business... (He made mostly emotional decisions even though he was in a typical analytical thinking type profession.) I thought if ninety percent of the pupils paid their bills we’d pull through at the end of the month ... (He did not see the bigger picture.) Maybe I didn’t explore all my options at the time ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegator</td>
<td>(He seemed comfortable handing work schedules out.) I did not mentor employees ... (and thus he limited the growth of his staff and could not delegate non-teaching tasks.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination/persistence</td>
<td>(He tried hard – if ineffectively – to make the business work.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort (pain) tolerance</td>
<td>(Albert absorbed a good amount of discomfort as a single dad while running his first business, but not more than most single parents in full time employment do.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver (R) Driven (N)</td>
<td>(Neither)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectuation</td>
<td>(He had the knowledge and skills necessary for both his 1st and 2nd business.) (Yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur type</td>
<td>I desperately needed additional income ... I couldn’t resist (the offer to buy the centre) (He was in financial distress) (NECESSITY entrepreneur) (Finally) I am not an entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>... lack of experience ... no experience running a business ... (In the new business he had realised the importance of expertise.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure (of entrepreneurial activity)</td>
<td>... failure had no emotional impact on me ... it was a waste of time and money. ... I experienced some guilt ... people lost their incomes; (Reason) we grew too rapidly ... this experience did not put me off business...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness sense of</td>
<td>I treated ... staff fairly (Financially it seemed true, but he underestimated them intellectually.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>... come from a family of academics in the natural sciences; serious and conservative; introverts; not entrepreneurial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>(He did not mention fear.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Verification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>Financially, I took good care of the tutors ... ... spent an exorbitant amount on advertisements ... wasted that money ... business was doing well ... rent doubled within two years ... I couldn’t double my fees overnight ... parents (of pupils) were struggling financially ... I’d lose my business ... (which happened because he did not raise the fees) ... ... I was no good at addressing non-payment ... parents got away with it (not paying) ... poured all my saving into the business ... ... (I am) conservative with money NEW BUSINESS: It will be nice if there is a monetary benefit ... I am not dependent on that. I’ll continue with this process even if there is no financial gain in it for me ... it is going to take time to get off the ground. I am building a cathedral ... the organisations (which do not want to do business with them) are greedy and focused on the number of zeros of their bank balance ... (He saw this as the norm of the business world. It was obvious from his passionate attack on successful businesses that he still did not understand how a business works financially.) Even if I don’t make any money from it, I’ll still feel good about it. (All the partners have permanent employment and do not need the money.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>(He was focused on delivering quality tuition. There is more to the success of a business than a quality product.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Worked long hours...went home to take care of the children... (He made no mention of having fun in any of our conversations.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>(Effectuation rather than causal – he never mentioned setting goals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratification</td>
<td>Delayed gratification (He did not care to work a long time without making money.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty with self</td>
<td>(He tended to blame what goes wrong on external factors and was not completely honest with himself. Even with the new business he does not question his methods, but judge the market.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>(Not visible, yet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>(Albert did not have an intuitive feeling for running a business. His expectations and what actually transpired were far apart. He thought that the clients who paid would more than make up for those who did not – bad judgement on his side.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>I’m good with people on...a professional level. I treated my staff well ... i was never rude ... took good financial care of my tutors ... everybody had their schedule and got their payment for the job on time (the provider – not one of them) I did not want to be involved in their lives at all ... mechanical in my management ... not a mentor for them ... I should have kept a closer eye on them ... One tutor almost ruined me ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>The people that I felt sorry for would have been better off in the long run if I had built a sustainable business ... I’ve learned a lot ... in next business I’ll do proper homework ...business is more than just income statements... (But he did not take proper care of the incomes statements) ...people who work for you are not just numbers ... I have to invest time and energy in their development ... (He learned about people management through his mistakes – experiential learning) (He also learned) there will always be the unexpected (In his next business) ... next time ... more organic growth...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Failure was ... not of my own doing ... I blame it (my decisions) on my Christian education ... I was taught to have empathy with others and put their needs before my own... (INFLUENCE OF PARENTS &amp; SOCIETY) I would have appreciated a colleague walking in and sharing the burden with me (Unrealistic expectation; Blamed external circumstances) EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck/gratitude</td>
<td>(He did not contribute anything to luck and did not express gratitude.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manipulator</td>
<td>(It did not emerge from the data.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>I was not a mentor for my staff (During interview he said) ...having the right mentor might have saved the centre ... only if it was the right person ... The person would have had to impress me on an academic level ... I would only have listened to someone who had been successful running something similar ... I had no sounding board ... I was lonely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset</td>
<td>(Although he is highly intelligent he was not open to learning from other when – in his eyes – they were &quot;not so clever&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>1st business: (On invitation to buy the business) I don't have the money. (Advertising money) I wasted that money. (Paying tutors) Here is your money. what a waste of time and money that was (his 1st business) I have always been conservative with money. (He was very emotional about money related decisions (tutors) were in financial difficulties ... 2nd business: We want to offer a service to large corporates that can save them a respectable amount of money plus... Even if I don't make any money from it, ... (I asked: ... you are not in this business to make money?) No, I am not an entrepreneur. ... it does not matter if the business never makes any money ... people are greedy (when they do not want to buy his product) It will be nice if there is a monetary benefit coming from our business, but I am not dependent on that. (He had empathy for parents with financial stress; but not with business owners with that.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>... important for the environment and that motivates me ... a personal calling ... ... moral obligation ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need of achievement/recognition</td>
<td>(He needs) positive feedback; (He needs to feel that he is) doing the right thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiator</td>
<td>(There was no significant evidence of his role as a negotiator.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networker</td>
<td>... no staff socials ... (Looking for a business partner, but does not find one); New business: ... realised the value of a trusted network; use partners from a trusted network, (From a young age) I surrounded myself with a small group of friends that I trust. (Small groups; not large network)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>1st business: (He did not look for the opportunity; it came to him and insisted on being seen – not opportunistically quick) 2nd business: ... now ... opportunity to start bigger things ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>(He seems embarrassed by first business. There was no passion.) (He is more passionate about 2nd business, but it is not a business yet.)</td>
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</table>
Construct | Verification
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Pattern recognition | (I did not see evidence that there is any pattern recognition that supports business building.)
People belief | People are creatures of habit ... they believe second hand stories that are not true ... Narrow-minded and short-sighted...
Positive bias | POSITIVE BIAS: It would be easy ... (in both cases he believed that the business would be successful) (During the 2012 interview he sounded less positive about the ease of business success, but by stating that making money was not important he, in effect, acknowledged that the business was not successful as a business yet.)
Pressure tolerance | (He dealt with a good amount of pressure) It never crossed my mind (to negotiate a deal with the tutors to save the business) Maybe I didn’t explore all my options at the time.
Proactive versus reactive | (Reactive; Procrastinator – only dealt with issues when they became pressing.)
Product quality | Fast initial growth due to good product ... excellent service delivery ... and position across the road from a school 2nd business: it is difficult to create a real market for our service ...
Realistic/unrealistic attitude | (Mostly unrealistic due to lack of understanding of the entrepreneurial world) ...hoped someone would in and help him save the business ... ...that the people who paid would make up for those who did not ...
Reflective & sensemaking | It is the first time in nine years that I am reflecting on that business again ... left this situation unexplored for nine years ... reflect while out jogging ... I don’t write it down ... remember the important stuff.... (There is a difference between thinking and critical reflection.) I now understand the situation leading up to closing that business and I feel so much lighter... (During interviews, he often rationalises mistakes ... blaming external sources rather than making sense) Sense-making in the new business: From December 2012 South Africa no longer qualifies for carbon emission credits anymore. We are waiting for the impact of the carbon emission tax. Then the financial impact will be more concrete... (Waiting for legislation to help him with his sales)
Reliable | Medium to high (He did what he had promised to do although it might take a good amount of prompting.)
Resilience & tenacity | Medium (He put effort in trying to save his 1st business.)
Resources | (He did not always recognise the full potential of his resources. He underestimated the contributions other tutors were capable of and thus does not get the full value out of them.
Responsible | Medium to low (He did not always take responsibility for the reason things went wrong.)
Risk taker | ... divorce emotionally uprooted me ... more reckless than usual...so I was willing to take a risk at the time 2nd Business: (Lowers risk) The more people I have on board the smaller the chances of one person overturning the applecart. (He saw starting a business as a risk. He did not understand that the real risk was not managing the business finances properly. People have different perspectives as to what risk is.)
Sales | (1st Business: Word of mouth, good reputation and physical position across road from school sold the service.) 2nd business: (Not selling at all)
| **Self-awareness** | (Albert did not seem to realise when he was rationalising his behaviour of the past. Although he thought his self-awareness level was high – he was not honest with himself. An example: He did not realise when he was confident and when overconfidence.) |
| **Self-efficacy** | I was going to turn this business into a roaring success ... I was correct ... turnover increased by three hundred percent over the first two years |
| **Stress** | 1<sup>st</sup> business: Emotionally I had too much going on to handle all the stress at the centre ... 2<sup>nd</sup> Business: No stress ... we all receive salaries from permanent employers. |
| **Stubborn** | (He admitted that he can be) |
| **Success failure** | four-and-a-half years ... I threw the towel in ... business was draining me financially |
| **Success his beliefs** | ... to be successful you need to be tough and exploit people ... |
| **Support** | ... no support; completely isolated ... |
| **Systems thinker** | (The only evidence was his consistence with the administration of the tutors.) |
| **Tangible process management** | Tangible (schedules – good) |
| **Intangible (abstract) processes** | Tangible (money – not so good) MONEY Abstract – judging ability of other people – not good |
| **Thinking detail thinker ↔ strategic thinker** | (Detail thinker in his first business – he took care of the detail) |
| **Time management** | very busy – often running late |
| **Uncertainty tolerance** | 1<sup>st</sup> Business: (Financial uncertainty) drained him emotionally 2<sup>nd</sup> Business: (No financial uncertainty linked to business as he was employed elsewhere. He did not seem concerned about the uncertainty of the future of the business) |
| **Vision** | 2<sup>nd</sup> Business: (He had vision, but his vision was still just a vision.) |
| **Work ethic** | Good. (Working hard) |
Note: His words appear verbatim without brackets (My words appear in brackets)
Words in CAPITAL LETTERS represent another construct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verification</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
<td>... late bloomer ... underachiever ... (PhD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agility</strong></td>
<td>(He learned about) quick reaction time in the umbrella factory when a machine broke down. ... you can react on what needs to be attended to, quickly ... Decisions in our business, while made quickly, are not made without discussion, analysis and debate. (In Raizcorp) (He noted that it was) important to react quickly to the feedback from the market place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alertness</strong></td>
<td>High (He stressed the) importance of “reading” feedback from clients and ... (Please see AGILITY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy - independence</strong></td>
<td>Wake-up call: ... being introduced as Mr Raiz’s son, Allon ... I was independent...it felt wonderful. (He did not want Negative Ned to tell him what would or would not work.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business perception</strong></td>
<td>(He never considered taking on a “regular job.”) (Growth entrepreneur – looking and working for growth.) ... acting and thinking professionally are keys to growing a business ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business personality fit</strong></td>
<td>(NYSF – ok); Bandit – ... I hated it, I was selling fear (bad fit); Raizcorp: I am paying forward the privilege of having a mentor (excellent fit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges emotional reaction to</strong></td>
<td>(Focused him) NYSF: ... introduce (more options) ... breakfast and dinner trade ... Bandit: learnt the inner workings of the business Raizcorp: For five years and two months, we have not made one single cent profit (but he continued looking for a way to make it work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges – management</strong></td>
<td>(He welcomed barriers to entry) The excitement of setting myself a challenge ... I am in the midst of another – much greater – challenge with ... There was my challenge...and I did it. (The challenge to get into B Com) (girl friend) challenged everything – and so I started to challenge all ... ... there will be challenges. Challenges are like breathing. It's part of the journey ... I fail all the time and I get challenged every day. ... change your perspective on the challenges in your business. It is not the ability to overcome challenges, but their belief in the ability that makes the difference. Solving problems makes me feel good ... (after designing an irrigation system in the drought – as a child) I was comfortable challenging people more than twice my age. I felt no-one was more or less important than I was. I was not intimidated by the competition. (Inability to find a solution to a problem made him miserable.) ... My despair was now complete, but I continued to pursue leads. (Allon believed that there was always a way to overcome these challenges) My mindset is that – if I can’t solve it – I’ll reach out and find someone who can.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Change adaptability</td>
<td>I have to change how I think about the world and myself to overcome the fear within me. It is an opportunity that can change everything for us. This is terrifying ... I have also seen how a conversation with one person can change your perspective on the challenges in your business. Reacting to indicators - making the necessary changes quickly It is about being aware so that you can react on what needs to be attended to, quickly (He stressed the importance of making quick changes to adapt to the signals in the market.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clever honesty, but with humility – laughing at himself every time. Through clever he explained his battle with his initial ego, but also his insecurity when confronted with clever accountants</td>
<td>(When solving irrigation problem) I was very, very clever. (University) I was actually clever. I always had a perception that I understood things differently...that the world did not get me. I was convinced I was clever. (About accountants – Negative Ned) the feedback from a clever person who knew about accounts ... I'm clever... I've got degrees... Life is amazing... Could you second your clever accountant to come and help us fix up ... (Clever accountants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>(He saw in pictures. Skilled communicator. Told his staff to bring him back to the essence when he went out on a tangent.) (I found him a good communicator during our contact times.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>(Willing to lose financial security, beach front flat and luxury car for AUTONOMY and own RECOGNITION)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>See CLEVER My confidence at the time bordered on arrogance. (mentor gave him lots of confidence....He became over-confident) I was glory boy 😌 (Went to mentor with arrogant attitude when Bandit was cash strapped – Mentor challenged Allon. ARROGANCE - REALITY CHECK.) Overconfidence turned to confidence when he learnt humility. I believe in myself. (He prepared well for meetings – e.g. with the deck of cards. Preparation built confidence. The arrogance and overconfidence were replaced by confidence built though knowing that he was well prepared.) This was the confidence booster I desperately needed at the time – giving me the credibility to approach other banks for work. Over time, I grew from arrogant to deterrent and resilient. Now: (Healthy confidence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Construct | Verification
---|---
Control | ... entrepreneurs are control freaks ... Look at control freak as a pseudonym for internal locus of control. There is a danger that people think control freak means I do everything. It doesn’t mean that, but you have to control everything. You’re responsible for control. And the moment you let go of control it might mean – in my experience – that you’ll lose the business. You’re responsible for control. It’s about knowing what is going on in your business at every level ... I drive the people insane asking, What are the numbers? Put SYSTEMS in place ... it is not about doing everything yourself ... When I want to grow my business to the next level, I put people in place to take over from me and mentor them. I ensure that all the systems are in place and when I think they are ready to take my place I go away for two weeks – preferably where they cannot reach me. When I return I take stock of what did and didn’t work and we remedy what needs to be fixed. (He explained what happened in failing businesses) ... they didn’t control. They let go ... (Now during business decision-making) my ego and need to control take second place ... I am in control of my success ... important lesson ... in my personal development.

Counterfactual thinking rationalisations | Maybe it was a coping mechanism ... or maybe it was real ... I understood things differently ... that the world did not get me. (He uses it during reflection to make sense of situations and in scenario planning). I am completely self-aware when I am making excuses ... When I lose a deal I have a view scenarios I play with ... (different scenarios) ... the fantasy of they’ll come back to me. I play that game and I know it’s a game.

Courage | Shoes: ... It was a very, very brave thing to do ... He (went to his mentor after the failure of The New York Sausage Factory – took responsibility for the failure and asked for further assistance) I had the courage to fail and go back ... facing Negative Ned I have courage, I believe in myself ... (Made a success of Raizcorp by himself.) I plucked up the courage to ask my father’s friend to lend me money ... (Creative problem solver – many examples) (He created a motivational deck of cards – using his expert knowledge) (He wrote two books.) When things were tough, I became very creative. (public speaking) (Shoes: Allon acknowledged that it was not a new idea – he saw a similar trick somewhere else, but he was ALERT & AGILE enough to make it work in his situation – innovation.)

Creative/innovative thinking | (In umbrella factory – used off-cuts to create interesting “toys” to play with. (Saw his parents) they had to be very creative with these frames or face insolvency.

Crisis management | ... the ability to see opportunities – often in crises situations (Drought: He became creative) (WORK ETHIC extremely high – kept working even when sick NYSF)
Construct Verification

Decision making (Zoomed in – zoomed out)
(Shoes) ... a pivotal decision ... creative
Decision-making is crucial and a small business cannot absorb a bad decision.
Decisions in our business, while made quickly, are not made without discussion, analysis and debate. (Decision-making strategy in Raizcorp)
(Mentor told him) Go away ... get distance between you and the situation and then (zoomed in) ... I needed time to think
Crucial ... a small business cannot absorb a bad decision.
Making the best decision for your business is about using both sides of your brain and not your ego for the process. This does not mean that I have no ego – just that – my ego and need to control take second place ...
(He had systems regulated decision-making process at Raizcorp.)

Delegator
(Yes, but did it according to a system – See CONTROL)

Detail thinker ↔ strategic thinker
(Strategic thinker - learnt to look at the details.)
I took a detailed look at ...
I see pictures, I use my hands, and I'm spatial and right-brained

Determination persistence
my persistence resulted in another ... (He did not easily take no for an answer.)
(The previous day he almost lost a deal and now ... I need to go after it with absolute determination ... my persistence resulted in another meeting with ...)

Disciplined
(He had systems that) ... keeps me focused and disciplined through the month ...
I have put systems and disciplines in place to support my dreams

Discomfort (pain) tolerance
(Allon thought it was important to) ... have a high tolerance for pain
I undertake a journey of growth and pain ... (on the plaque in Raizcorp reception)
(He had a high pain tolerance.)

Drive driven
(Definitely)
We can fix the business, but if the entrepreneur does not have drive or PASSION, we cannot help and ...
I was afraid, should I reconcile (with parents), that I would lose my drive.
I drive the people insane asking, What are the numbers?

Effectuation
Raizcorp is a paid forward...paying forward the privilege of having a mentor, I find people, I believe in them, and I partner with them to make them profitable
First means; then goal driven ...not one without the other (He said to me during the Saturday workshop.)

Ego
(He went from arrogant to humility.) My ego is under control.
(Also see DECISION-MAKING)

Energy
(Someone who is not an entrepreneur) does not quite understand the energy that goes into securing a deal ...

Entrepreneur Serial, opportunity entrepreneur

Entrepreneurial family
(Yes – He grew up in his parents’ umbrella factory which – by the time he went to university – was very successful)
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>I gave no credence to the level of experience I really had growing up in a factory ... (He has experience - Entrepreneurship &amp; business incubation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge &amp; skill</td>
<td>... high school and university holidays I worked at the factory ... half the month I worked and the other half ... holiday ... but I did not really understand anything about position ... (Pre-shoes - still inexperienced - novice)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Market research for NYSF was also flawed) (NYSF – all new skills &amp; knowledge) (Bandit: inexperienced in a bigger operation – needed new skills) (Raizcorp – based on his experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>I am completely responsible for my own failure ... I know how much I have learned during failures I had massive pressure having had a string of failures before in other ideas. (Shoes) (NYSF) The business was an absolute failure. Instead of giving up, I worked seven days a week I fail all the time and I get challenged every day. It is just part of this journey. Raizcorp even has a boardroom PROCEDURE to follow when he loses a deal – answering “What did we do wrong? What did we learn?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Previously I sold fear (He did not enjoy selling fear.) (There was fear when he did not want to reconcile with his parent - fearing that it would take away his motivation to succeed.) (He did not fear authority many of his peers did. Willing to challenge people regardless of his age – due to the relationship he had with his mentor.) (He had to) overcome the fear within me. The two biggest enemies of entrepreneurial success are fear and an inflated ego.</td>
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<td>Construct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td>(His financial management improved immensely over the years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(money; cash; debt)</td>
<td>I am thirty-four years old and I have absolutely no money. In desperation ...</td>
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<td>comes up so much I need</td>
<td>(Negative Ned said) “You won’t make money out of this.” I did not enjoy this. I had money, I had a mentor and I had opportunity. What</td>
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<tr>
<td>to include it in model</td>
<td>could stop me from being successful ... but no matter what I did I could not make money. The business was not making money so there was no</td>
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<td></td>
<td>money to see a doctor. money ... (But the business still did not work) It must be me ... Bandit: cash strapped – financial resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>depleted – Month-end with not enough money to pay salaries ... (mentor rapped him over the knuckles ... learn) I learnt ... The way that</td>
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<td>money is collected, the way the credit process works. (Financial systems – as NB as sales.) ... no money ... to pay the hospital bill ...</td>
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<td>ask my father’s friend to lend me money to pay the hospital bill ... (he would not) I should not be without money. I should not be living</td>
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<td>this lie. ... but will they trust me if they find out that I am not making any money? ... there is no money for food. The fridge is</td>
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<td>completely ... There is no money coming into the household. I have learned how to borrow money from friends, but there is no way that I</td>
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<td>can go to my in-laws and, with our history, I will not go to my parents. (When the bank paid for the deck of cards Allon) ... money covered</td>
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<td>our debt and the staff salaries. We guarantee businesses ... write off any money they might owe us In an effort to bring money in I did</td>
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<td></td>
<td>public speaking ... Despite the temptation to pocket the money myself, every cent I made went to building my business To make money, I</td>
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<td>had to let go of my ego. another month-end with not enough money to pay salaries Stone broke (Early days of Raizcorp) I have been able</td>
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<td>to pay back every cent I borrowed from my friends.</td>
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<td>Focus</td>
<td>... put systems in place to keep my mind focused and disciplined. I close my eyes and take a few deep breaths to calm and focus my mind. I</td>
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<td>slowly go through each of my goals in my mind ... I focus on my current goals ... Raizcorp focuses on established businesses (His target</td>
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<td>market is focused) ... focussing on all the clients and, more importantly, potential clients with whom I had had unsuccessful meetings ...</td>
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<td>(He used visualisation – something I also believe in. – incorporating gratitude and the actual visualisation of the emotions involved while</td>
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<td>enjoying his virtual success) (Very focused)</td>
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<td>Fun</td>
<td>(He had fun with the shoe thing) it was fun. It was different and I was glowing. ... dig deep to keep the fun alive ... The passion and fun</td>
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<td>element carry you through the long hours. I did not enjoy this (Negative Ned telling him it won’t work) Enjoying the journey ... (Allon can</td>
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<td>make fun of himself and laugh at himself.) (His enjoyment is obviously in his television programmes.).</td>
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<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>(Daily shower routine and monthly goal setting with systems and routines in place to support the process.) ... each month I sit at my</td>
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<td>desk and write my goals for the month in my trusted old filofax ... I slowly go through each of my goals in my mind – seeing not only how I</td>
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<td>achieve them ... I focus on my current goals</td>
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<td>Construct</td>
<td>Verification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gratification</td>
<td>(Delayed – friends on holiday, but he had to work half the month before joining them)</td>
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<td>Honesty (with self)</td>
<td>It is important to be very honest with yourself ...(about what you are passionate about)</td>
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<td>Humility</td>
<td>It is all about relationships and humility... for networking and NETWORKING is key to success. I had to suck it up and take it ... (from Negative Need after NYSF) (Willing to go back to the clients he had lost and asked them why he lost the deal) (He showed humility during our conversations.)</td>
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<td>Intuition synchronicity</td>
<td>... this could not possibly be happening. The synchronicity seemed too far-fetched ... (He listened to his intuition even when it did not make sense at the time – but this was after many years of experience.) (Experience helped him see the synchronicity)</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
<td>(He used mentorship as leadership in Raizcorp.)</td>
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<td>Learning</td>
<td>(Allon believed that entrepreneurs must be willing to learn the skills necessary for success. They need to have a growth mindset) have the ability to learn the necessary skills ... (Lesson learned with The New York Sausage Factory) I am in control of my success. You don’t learn from your successes ... I know how much I have learned during failures I have learned that there is often opportunity hiding in disappointment I couldn’t apply what I had learned, but I tried a whole bunch of things and most failed miserably Bandit: ... learnt the internals of a business being as important as the externals. The way that money is collected, the way the credit process works. These processes can sink a business as much as not having sales can. It was a massive learning from a business point of view. Spent 3 years learning about business systems ... I have learnt how to borrow money from friends ... (Always eager to learn and when they lost a deal he asked) What did we do wrong? What did we learn?</td>
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<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>If I remotely had an external locus of control, it shifted completely toward internal locus of control at that point. (During Bandit) I am completely responsible for my own failure and I am in control of my success. Look at CONTROL freak as a pseudonym for internal locus of control. (Mr Cohen’s promise sounded like magic and he did not take it seriously. He did not expect help from outside – total surprise.) (Despite mostly internal locus of control he resisted reconciliation with his parents – FEARing that his motivation to be successful in his own right would disappear should they reconcile.) I kept on asking myself what I was doing wrong. (He did not blame anybody else for the lack of success.)</td>
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| Mentors    | ... shared my realisations with my mentor (Sounding board)  
(He had excellent mentor(s))  
I phoned my mentor and I said to him ... ( was arrogant and mentor) ... taught me humility  
(Raizcorp – Mentor offered to assist – Allon refused) ... my mentor offered to back me but ... (want to) make Raizcorp the success I believe it can be without the help of either my parents or my mentor. I want to show my mentor that I have learnt my lessons ...  
... just because somebody else took the time to believe in me – both the red hair girlfriend and my mentor (changed his life completely) ... Someone else believing in your ability to be successful has a powerful positive impact. (He is now the mentor of many.)  
(When things were very tough and he could not figure out what he had to do to make things better, he got professional help – saw his mentor.)  
What my mentor is to me I want to be for others, because I felt the power of that. See EFFECTUATION  
... mentor ... uttered the two words ... my saving grace (At Raizcorp)  
I have also seen how a conversation with one person can change your perspective on the challenges in your business ...  
I am paying forward the privilege of having a mentor – someone who believes in you.  
(Succession planning) I put people in place to take over from me and mentor them.  
I spent the first half of the session with my mentor telling him how well everything is going in the business and he asked me whether I had any intention of making the session valuable in any way, or if I was just there to talk about how great I was. He taught me humility  
Mentors have played an invaluable role in my journey ... |
| Mindset    | My mindset is that – if I can’t solve it – I’ll reach out and find someone who can.  
(Positive; Growth. Embracing failure – learning from it and he laughing at his failures and his excuses)  
I know that what I have written down for this month will be a bit of a stretch, ... but realistically attainable ... ( His expertise gave him the ability to judge which goals were within reach.) |
| Need to/to be/for ... | (He had a) need to succeed (In Raizcorp he wanted to prove himself without utilising wealth of family or mentor.)  
I need you to sort it out (Demanding of his mentor)  
I need to prove to myself ... prove to mentor ... learnt lessons  
I needed to create distance between myself and the business I needed time to think (To solve problems)  
All I could see was the things I didn’t have and the things I felt I needed (early on in business life)  
... a confidence booster I desperately needed at the time ...  
I need to go after it with absolute determination  
I need to attend to one of the pleasures of life. (Deal signed)  
(He did not want to be Allon, Mr Raiz’s son for the rest of his life. He needed to be his own man. He needed recognition)  
(Turning small businesses around gave him the recognition he craved.)  
(Needs recognition – pat on the back – from his mentor pre Raizcorp)  
(HIGH NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT) |
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| Negotiator    | I went to negotiate with the dean (to get into the course of his choice – made a bargain.)  
|               | (Even during an examination) You take fifty thousand and I'll keep fifty thousand and no-one should know ...  
|               | (Against the good advice of an experienced accountant Allon convinced his mentor that NYSF will be successful. Negotiated mentor support for business)  
|               | (High)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Networker     | ... and being sincerely interested in other people aids networking  
|               | ... met with a colleague with the knowhow who would be able to help me...  
|               | My random decision, to offer a stranger a lift, unlocked my path to success seventeen years later. (He kept his networks active over time.)  
|               | Networking is the key to success in business ... It is about relationships and humility.  
|               | I still have a relationship with him (First mentor)  
|               | ... willingness of our friends to assist me ...  
|               | (High)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Opportunistic | (Allon rated the ability to recognise opportunities high.)  
|               | It is an opportunity that can change everything for us (Raizcorp – bearded phase)  
|               | (Entrepreneurs) must have the ability to see opportunities  
|               | ... opportunity hiding in disappointment. (Asking for creative thinking – novel umbrellas)  
|               | (Enacted opportunity with the shoe-thing – it was not a novel idea, but it was radical.)  
|               | I had opportunity (NYSF)  
|               | I had ... every privilege and opportunity you could ever need to succeed ...  
|               | (Every deal was an opportunity to change the business – big deals could be terrifying opportunities.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Overconfidence bias | See CONFIDENCE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Passion       | ... you’ve got to be passionate about something if you want to make a business of it. I had to find my passion. What am I passionate about?  
|               | (Getting his passion wrong – fast food)  
|               | ... hated vehicle security business – “selling fear” (but still worked to make a success of it)  
|               | (He became addicted to turning failing business around.)  
|               | ... we don't take people without passion on board ... if the entrepreneur does not have drive or passion, we cannot help ...  
|               | The passion and fun element carry you through the long hours.  
|               | (Both Allon and I – who work with entrepreneurs - found that people are not honest with themselves.) Many struggling entrepreneurs adjust their stories so that it appears that they are passionate about what they do...  
|               | (High)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Pattern       | (He saw patterns) ... decision to offer a stranger a lift ... (led to big break)  
| recognition   | (He looked for patterns in the mentees he took on) ... backing the jockey not the horse – the entrepreneur; not the business ...                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| dealing with  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| complexity    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| order         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Positive bias | NYSF: (Unrealistically high); Bandit: (Got a reality check); Raizcorp: (Realistically positive)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
**Construct** | **Verification**
--- | ---
Pressure tolerance | (Creative under pressure – e.g. shoes)
(Under pressure he became a workaholic – NYSF)
(Imminent failure) Instead of giving up, I worked seven days a week and innovates to capitalise on different trades – breakfast & dinner ...
Raizcorp: This deal is worth thirty-six times our annual turnover. It is an opportunity that can change everything for us. This is terrifying and I subsequently start to question my abilities. I committed - two months - I have worked out exactly how we are going to deliver on this deal ... This deal took Raizcorp to the next level
Proactive reactive passive | (Pro-active) ... you can react on what needs to be attended to, quickly ...
Vision without action is delusion.
Product | (NYSF: No indication of the quality of the product; it was fast food. Bandit: They were the front runners in the industry, but others caught on. Raizcorp: Once again, front runners in the industry – quality service)
Professional | ... acting and thinking professionally are keys to growing a business ...
(If you do not see yourself as professional your behaviour reflects it and your clients may not take you seriously.)
Quality | (Talking to him and watching him it was clear that quality was important to him.)
Realistic/ unrealistic expectations | I also know that it is realistically attainable if I put my mind to it.
Reflection & sensemaking | What the hell am I doing? (while struggling to start-up Raizcorp)
I have to change how I think about the world and myself to overcome the fear within me.
I needed time to think (Raizcorp struggle)
(After NYSF – sulked and reflected) ... cannot find any other reason for failure other than me. (Took RESPONSIBILITY)
(Although his success went to his head in the beginning there was a VOICE AT THE BACK OF HIS HEAD warning him that he was fooling himself.)
(Serious – in-depth – reflection on resources – Going over deals in his mind trying to find out why he lost deals) Reflect on failures
In 2005, Raizcorp was in serious trouble and I did not know how to fix it. I kept on asking myself what I was doing wrong.
Can you hear how much I listen to and I analyse how I think about things.
See BACKSTORY
(Allon makes sense of what goes wrong and that which makes him uncomfortable.)
(Reflection and sensemaking on a continuous basis)
Reliable | (He did not say that, but it was visible in his actions.)
Resilience/ tenacity | (He demonstrated both when he worked almost round the clock in an effort to make the NYSF work and when he hung in for years to make Raizcorp successful.).
Responsible | I am completely responsible for my own failure ...
You’re responsible for control ...
I always feel responsible and I can’t let anyone down...so I work ... work ... work. (NYSF)
(Accepted responsibility to make Raizcorp work)
(Learned responsibility working for his parents in the factory)
(At Bandit: Mentor taught him to take responsibility)
Construct | Verification
--- | ---
Resources | (At Raizcorp he learnt to make the most of his resources) Listed 242 resources ... I took a detailed look at my resources – my car, my wife, the office ... the advertising agencies ... partner businesses ... my knowledge of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs ...
(Allon went to the company he turned around – using them to do printing for him knowing he could negotiate a better deadline for payment for their services. He used resources well.)
(He was good at recognising and utilising his resources) writing down every single person and thing that I could think of as a resource.
Must believe in their ability to muster resources.
Risk taker | (Allon thinks it is important to) have a high tolerance for risk if you want to become an entrepreneur.
(Taking the shoe risk when he became desperate for success.) Willing to be radical & “very, very brave”
Sales | ... not having sales can (sink a business)
... sale of the cards (big relief)
(Experienced and enthusiastic; Will hunt deals down.)
Self awareness | Older men (40+; About as old as Allon was during the interviews 😊) who are accountants are intimidating – they know stuff and (make Allon feel inadequate)
(Allon was aware of his back stories and how they influenced him.)
Self-awareness | I am completely self-aware when I am making excuses ...
(Despite his arrogance there was a little voice telling him he was not as amazing as he thought he was. Allon acknowledged every time he rationalised his behaviour.)
It is about being aware so that you can react on what needs to be attended to, quickly. See AGILITY
(Now high).
Self-serving bias | (No. He looked at himself first when the business was in difficulty)
Self-efficacy | ... must believe in their ability to muster resources. (I found that every participant who started a new business believed in their ability to make a success, but that did not guarantee success.)
My mindset is that, if I can't solve it, I'll reach out and find someone who can.
I was going to make a difference at the shop ...
I was so ENTHUSIASTIC and I honestly believed I would (make a success of the NYSF)
I’m clever ... I’ve got degrees ... Life is amazing ... I’m going to do this.
I have courage, I believe in myself, and I believe that is what it takes to be successful.
(High)
Returning from the holiday cottage I was still miserable and believed I was unable to fix the business. (Self-efficacy was over-shadowed by reality BUT he acted on the intuition and phoned Hunter Thyne. Despite the despair Allon continued to look for leads).
(He believed that there would be a way to overcome the challenges on the way. RESOURCEFUL)
Self-perception | (NYSF: Allon went from unspoilt to arrogant)
(Bandit: He learnt humility as he learnt about the inside of the business.)
(Raizcorp: Professional and successful, but with humility)
Staff | (Not staff, but colleagues)
Construct | Verification
--- | ---
Stress | When things were very tough, I became very creative. (Stress focussed him)
Stubborn | (He often went back to a client – having lost a deal – and tried again – sometimes successfully ... even if he only learnt why he lost it.) (He tried to win deal back) ... I get deals back ... (PERSISTENT)
Success failure | Shoes: tried creative solutions to low sales – some success, lots of failure and eventually massive success) (NYSF: market research flawed → failure; Instead of giving up) ... I worked seven days a week ... still failed. (Started over – 2nd time: NYSF – more successful) The two biggest enemies of entrepreneurial success are fear and an inflated ego.
Support | (Even though he felt lonely at times he had a good support structure.) Mentor: (Initially he did not expect support and was absolutely taken by surprise.) (Negative Ned and team at NYSF) I had a support structure around me. (The lack of support he had from his parents at the time served as motivation for him to succeed – he did not want to reconcile fearing that he would lose his edge once they were united again.) I had money, I had a mentor and I had opportunity ... I felt so lonely ... (especially in the start-up phase) (He was often lonely as a child – tending his garden or playing with off-cuts in factory)
Lonely but supported | ... learnt the value of process and smoothly operating systems as a child on the factory floor. (Learnt systems thinking in vehicle security company necessary to save the cash flow of the business) I have put systems and disciplines in place to support my dreams and it is paying off. (He now has systems for goal setting, motivation, succession planning, decision making)
Systems thinker | Tenacity | (High. Worked extremely long hours – even when his body was warning him that he was overdoing it – NYSF) (Hung in for more than 5 years before Raizcorp made real money.)
Time – management | (He had a system in place to help him stay on time in meetings.)
Uncertainty tolerance | (5 years is a long time to struggle to get a business off the ground. He handled the uncertainty even though it was tough.) (When no ideas came to him he became negative, but he persevered.) (High)
Vision | (Good. Used power of visualisation) Vision without action is delusion.
Work ethic | (working in the umbrella factory) ... great grounding ... work ethic I worked seven days a week ... until late at night ( NYSF failed) So I work...work...work. I had the work ethic ... that afternoon (after he passed out in the parking lot) I went straight back to work. ... there is a work ethic that is inherent in successful entrepreneurs ... Work ethic extremely high
DIANNE

Note: Her words appear verbatim without brackets (My words appear in brackets)
Words in CAPITAL LETTERS represent another construct.

Construct | Verification
--- | ---
Adaptability | (She did not address the lack of product, bad market research or other things that needed attention.)
(Sent out 3000 emails – got no response and then sent out 3000 more – got 2 responses. Did not try other ways of marketing, but) ... feels trapped ... started to question herself not her methods
(Slow to adapt)
Alertness | (She did not see all the attachments to my email – alertness lacking under stress)
Autonomy | I also like the freedom to choose how I schedule ... (She wanted to have autonomy initially and did not realise at the time that autonomy included the responsibility to find paying customers for your service or product.)
(Not strong enough to prevent her from finding full time employment)
Awareness | (Fair.)
(Self-awareness) | (She had the awareness that she made mistakes, but she did not necessarily correct them.)
... (big company) cancelled a course previously. (She thought they cancelled because of BEE
department.)
Business | ...is dead ...
... business is a failure.
... pro bona coaching ... friends who were struggling financially...who else?
(The question shows that she knows cash-strapped friends are not the right answer.)
Challenges | ...there were many ...
... it was very challenging to get going again ...
I feel trapped ... I started to question whether I was doing the right thing.
You question where you are in life. You question everything about yourself ...
... it was incredibly difficult for me ... terribly ...
... it is very difficult to focus on one thing only ...
Terribly difficult ... I became depressed (3x)
(Fear also came up as a challenge.)
(She hated challenges.)
(She sent 6000 emails out and got 2 responses....and only when I asked her in the interview did she look at why there was such a low return rate on email/spam marketing.)
Change | We’ll have to change our strategy with this round of tendering ...
(Not the opportunity to change anything that bothers her and add to it if she feels like it. She did not change anything.)
I’ve presented a change management programme before, but it didn’t work well...
We’ll have to change our strategy with this round of tendering. This time we’ll have to pull a rabbit out of the hat.
She has changed over the more than two years of the study. She learned about her preferences.
Communication | (She did not check whether I was willing to run with her project – she simply assumed it.)
We didn’t get it (She she did not inform the people who helped her with the tender.)

271 BEE – Black Economic Empowerment
Construct       Verification
Compromise herself ... I self-sabotage
Confidence      ... there is no trust relationship (email marketing to a bought list)
                 I don’t trust myself.
                 I did not believe in my product.
                 (Apparent overconfident. She ran a workshop without doing a dry run first.
                 Overconfident: She tendered for training projects for which she did not have
                 the resources at all and there was no way she was going to obtain the
                 relevant resources.)
                 Then I’ll have to go with what I can find on the web. (She has the confidence
                 to put a tender out based on information found using websites – on a topic
                 she has no in-depth experience on.)
Contradictions/
realistic
unrealistic     Initially she thought that having her own business is the only way to go and
                 a year later she is willing to work for any business owner as long as the
                 business is successful. (p. 21)
                 (She could not believe that Tom, who did work for her during the first tender,
                 wanted payment for the work he had done. She did not get the tender so
                 she could not pay him and that was that in her mind.)
Control         (What if they can’t do it?) “I’ll sort it out if we get the tender, (She did not feel
                 the need to have real control, but sometimes it looked as if she thought she
                 was in control – Illusion of control.)
Counterfactual
thinking        ... when you are going through emotionally difficult times where you are
                 questioning yourself ... am I doing the right thing? Was I on the right road for
                 me? Why am I being blocked? Maybe this is not what I am supposed to do.
                 You question where you are in life. You question everything about yourself.
                 ‘What do I radiate? What am I sending out into the universe that makes me
                 attract blockages?
                 I want a business if it is successful. (Wishful thinking.)
                 ... I am considering putting my name up for temp. Maybe they can use me
                 for something. If I had a teaching diploma I’d be teaching. I must be stupid,
                 but I cannot think of anything to do.
Creative        It is difficult to think creatively when your anxiety level is this high.
Decision making (She did not do proper marketing - lack of a decision is also a decision.)
                 This was terrible, but I settle ond to run the course. (She did not address the
                 challenges, but pretended there was not a real problem and carried on
                 regardless.)
                 ... I almost decided not to continue with this one, but then my brother ...
                 (Who did you choose? “I enquire ... to find out who she coached) Friends
                 who were struggling financially...
                 I also like the freedom to choose how I schedule ... (my day).
                 (Unrealistic expectations lead to wrong decisions in her endeavours.)
Delegator       (Yes. She was willing to delegate to people who were not able to deliver and
                 who were not even interested in delivering.)
                 (She asked me to do brain profiles ...)
                 I’ll outsource (the different aspects of the training) ... if I win the tender.
                 You can do it and the emotional intelligence. (She did not interview me. She
                 made a decision based on what she thought she knew about me. I think it
                 was risky.)
                 Like Lily and Albert she did not seem to understand exactly where charity
                 fitted in with business.)
Detail thinker ↔
strategic thinker (She did not take care of the detail, but did not understand the field she
                 entered enough for her strategic thinking to be effective.)
Construct  | Verification
--- | ---
Driven | ... it is a schlep to get people to attend these courses. The last couple of days I have mainly watched television and slept – trying to escape this process. (Not driven.) I almost decided not to continue with this one, but then my brother told me I have done most of the work with the previous tender. (She needed motivation – e.g. her brother during the tender.) I went through the whole schlep and then the waiting started. (In hindsight she saw the hard work as “schlep” – not as a learning experience.)

Effectuation | (Causal – She sees a training programme and then tenders for it. Adjusting her means to suit the goal. She did not start from her means/abilities.)

Emotional reactions | I am so depressed. I have completed quite a few coaching and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) courses, but my business is dead. (Dianne is starting to look depressed so I decide to give the conversation a more positive slant.) The first thing I do is I go into a total depression. I am inclined to become depressed. So, I go into a total depression. (She sounds depressed, but agrees to see me the next day at noon at her house.) I think I should go back on anti-depressants, I have found someone with whom I have done courses that helped me out of that slump. It was incredible difficult for me...terribly. ...made me feel trapped (when she got no reaction on marketing emails.)

Entrepreneur | (Necessity) ... I started coaching, because I felt I had no other options. I had no other options ... There was no alternative then. I had to do something....I needed an income. (Initially she wanted to work for herself) ... one of the nicest things to do ....can work when it suits you – schedule your time to accommodate child ... your time is your own ... (This is not always true. Entrepreneurs often work harder for less money – especially in the beginning) I don’t have to become involved in company politics. Own boss .... (She realised over the span of about a year she was not an entrepreneur.) NOW: ... looking for a job. (She started working at a recruitment agency in 2013.) I’ll be eager (to have a business) if the business is successful. (She admits she’ll work in any business as long as it is successful.)

Entrepreneurial family | No

Fear | (She thought that she procrastinated because of fear and that fear triggered her depression. ...fear ... about whether or not I am on the right track. What am I to do? (She feared UNCERTAINTY and yet she introduced uncertainty by the way she tendered to training.) FEAR OF SUCCESS ... (She feels she self-sabotages her projects.) (Friend) push me through the FEAR of cold calling. I am NOT scared to ask people ...

Financial management | (She has pushed her access bond to its limit, not for making money, but for survival.)
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<td>Focus</td>
<td>(She was desperately looking for work and was no longer doing training and coaching. Her focused changed continuously throughout the time of the study not sticking to any one project for long enough to be successful.)&lt;br&gt;(She is a procrastinator.)&lt;br&gt;I enjoy more than one thing...now...the world tries to force me (EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL) in one direction...it is very difficult to focus on one thing only.&lt;br&gt;I’ll go nuts if that is what I do all day. (Referring to coaching)&lt;br&gt;I just keep going...keeping the faith.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>I also like the freedom to choose how I schedule ... (Initially she thought having your own business gives you freedom. She has no idea what you have to do to get to that point of “freedom”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>(It did not look as if she was having fun in her business.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>I am actually supposed to work in a company. So, I’m also looking for a job ... it does not have to be my own business. It can be anybody’s business. (Need for independence was low. She was willing to work anywhere as long as she was paid.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>It is difficult to think creatively when your anxiety level is this high.&lt;br&gt;(no real innovation shown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition/</td>
<td>(She used her intuition, but it is based on incorrect assumptions (novice map) and she was often not right - this led to her not trusting her own judgement.) I don’t trust myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heuristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp;</td>
<td>(Her business knowledge and skills did not grow as she did not seem to learn from her mistakes. When she lost a tender and did not reflect on her role in it, but blamed it ...) I don’t think they know what they want. (This is the premier energy supplier in SA. Neill and another client of mine have done training for them and said that that company are discerning when choosing their suppliers.)&lt;br&gt;... I want to use my brain – too ... (Her reaction when I questioned her why she does not want to do more coaching. I found this difficult to understand as I used all my wisdom when I was coaching.)&lt;br&gt;(She did not stay in one particular area of business for long enough to build up expert knowledge and skills.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skill</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>I know it is one of my strengths – to lead people (Tender period: She enjoyed taking the lead, but in this specific case she was not very effective.)&lt;br&gt;(Her leadership was about delegating work, but she did not deal well with conflict. When someone did not want to do what she asked she just accepted it.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Learning        | (“So you have learned about yourself during this time.”) So much...so much.<br>(She learnt that she was not an entrepreneur and that she needed people around her.)<br>(Every time I pointed learning opportunities out to her it was as if she saw them for the first time.)<br>(She realised that) ... I don’t have a product ... (But she did not do anything about it.)<br>... I also need the other stimulation ... (than coaching)
Construct | Verification
--- | ---
Locus of control | (External.)
| The world tries to force you in one direction...
| ... I did not attract people ...
| Why am I being blocked? ...attract blockages...?
| ... does not know what they want ... (when the tender failed).
| (She acknowledged that she used religion as a crutch....a coping mechanism.)

Lonely | (She felt alone.) Humans were not meant to be alone...Up to a point, I thought I enjoy being alone.
| (She felt that she had) ... no real support. ... You know, I don’t have a family that support me. I think that is emotionally draining. I cannot really expect my son to support me.

Mentors | (She never contracted or "paid" a professional mentor. A friend coached her.) (“Did you have a coach or mentor ...?”) I used a friend of mine who is also a coach, but she was not in it to help me. I don’t think she had relevant experience. She contributed, but not what I needed...and it was very random...Whenever we saw each other ...
| (More than a year later she once again used a friend.) I am lucky to have a friend who was a sales manager for many years and she coached me ... to do cold calling.
| She also coached me on the process of meeting potential clients.
| Now she thinks it would have helped a lot if she had a coach or mentor.
| (She did go for Emotional Freedom Technique therapy.)
| (She had one workshop with me in 2006, but did not come for follow-up sessions.)
| I have completed quite a few coaching and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) courses. ("Here you are a coach with the primary role of a coach helping people to identify their goals...where they want to go and building a map of the route to this goal, but you do not do it for yourself. Why would that be?") I think I don’t trust myself.
| (She admitted.) ... proper coach can be very valuable ...

Mindset | (She found any negative experience or feedback demotivating and became depressed as a result thereof. She had a fixed mindset when it came to business.)

Money | (She was hardly earning any money.) You cannot hope to make money as a coach in South Africa ... you will never make decent money from it.
| (Marketing her courses was) ... lot of work for little return ... (So she did not do it.)
| (Money is something she needed and the lack thereof caused her immense stress, ]
| ("Do you have any sources of income however small to carry you over?") My access bond\textsuperscript{272} . It is nerve wrecking. It is just getting tighter and tighter.” (By using her access bond to get by she got deeper and deeper in debt. This stressed her out completely. “I understand the stress she is going through as we have also been there between 2005 and 2010.”)
| (Then she said something contradictory – or so it seemed.) ... if I knew there was always money I would never switch on. (She was in business to survive – not to prosper.)

Tom, who did the ISO, now wants money from me ... but I can only pay him once I have earned money. I did not get the tender or earned money from it. (She did not understand that people deliver a service and expected to get paid for that.)

\textsuperscript{272} In South Africa you can borrow money against your home loan in relation to the amount you have paid off.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature &amp; nurture</td>
<td>(... did not support her entrepreneurial endeavours.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negativity</td>
<td>You cannot hope to make money as a coach in South Africa....(but there are many who do so successfully.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional</td>
<td>...is a schlep to get people to attend these courses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>reactions</td>
<td>Whole schlep (was how she often referred to processes she had to manage.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiator</td>
<td>(She had a very smooth way of getting people to do things for her, but she did not negotiate an actual deal. She did not pay other contributors who gave of their time and skills. Later it caused challenging situations.) (When I told her I cannot help her again she immediate accepted it and said) ...ok.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networker</td>
<td>I did not attract people. I don't have a website. There are no networking opportunities for bigger companies. The only networking opportunities I know of are for small businesses...and small businesses do not need training. If something comes up I'll grab it. I am not scared to ask people ... (She did not organise any networking during the time of my study.) (I have seen her at one networking session other than the one I invited her to at my house in 2007. At the networking session in 2011 she did not get up from her chair to talk to anybody. Between those dates she did not keep in contact with me at all.) People don't know you and there is no trust relationship. (She said about sending emails to a bought contact list.) I know them (people she wanted to use for the tender) from different places ... (So she did have her network but I found out that she had not spoken to the people yet. It was a network on paper only. She had only spoken to two of us at that point in time.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>(Although she knew about some opportunities she did not utilise these opportunities effectively. Her first workshop was she had to goodwill of Women in mining South Africa, but nothing else came from that connection again.). (Tender processes were unsuccessful.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain tolerance</td>
<td>(She must have developed some level of tolerance as she went through an extended period of financial difficulty.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>I enjoy more than one thing ... (She did not understand the difference between one’s passion and flavour-of-the-month infatuation.) I really enjoy coaching people ... but I cannot sit and coach for a whole day. I cannot tell you what my true passion is. I like....to work with groups of people...project management ....enjoy coaching....I love coaching but wants to do it only once a week as it exhausts me It is easy for me to read people. ... I know I am a people person....I can work with people...I can motivate people.... Actually, I should never work on my own...I was not designed for working on my own.” (This is an important realisation. Although an entrepreneur must be able to work with people and network the road can be very lonely – especially during the start-up phase.) I must not work on my own. It’s not for me. I am going crazy ... I am an E in Meyers-Briggs...According to Meyers-Briggs I am actually suppose to work in a company. So, I’m also looking for a job. I enjoy working with people” I used to think I enjoy being alone ... (An important realisation that by trying to start her own business she puts herself on a road that is too lonely for her to handle.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Construct | Verification
--- | ---
Pattern recognition | (I did not see her recognising patterns during the time of the study.)
Positive bias | (She did not prepare properly for her first workshop. She thought it would go well.)
 | (During the tender I could tell she was in way over her capacity. She depended on me for information. I could not help her she used the internet.)
 | It's easy for me to read people ...I know I am a people person....I can work with people...I can motivate people...
 | (Initially she was very positive and as the challenges arose she became very negative.)
Pressure | The last couple of days I have mainly watched television and slept – trying to escape this process. Can we please brainstorm this process? (Under pressure she escaped – sleeping and watching television for days instead of addressing that which causes the stress or pressure.)
Proactive; reactive; passive | (Passive – Please see PROCRASTINATOR)
Procrastinator | The last couple of days I have mainly watched television and slept – trying to escape this process. (Before the second tender.)
 | (After her first workshop) ... it was over the Christmas holidays so I was able to procrastinate...
 | (When things are difficult she becomes depressed and watches television and sleep – procrastinating dealing with the challenge → fear.)
 | (She also procrastinated regarding the reading and commenting on her narrative and the analysis of her narrative.)
Product | I don’t really have a product. (A year later she still had not done anything about it.)
 | The courses I have written are great...
 | I did not believe in my product. (Contradicting the previous line.)
 | ... if you do not have a good product ... (it's not worth doing serious marketing, but she did not improve her product.)
 | My first workshop was great.
 | ...my first workshop was not great ... (Contradicting herself – as if she had realised during our conversation that – looking at it again – the workshop was not as great as she had thought it was.)
 | I’ll go nuts if that (coaching) is what I do all day.
 | (She wanted to do) ... project managing further development on websites ...
 | (She reiterated.) I love coaching....so satisfying...need other stimulation.
 | I’ve presented a change management programme before, but it didn’t work well.
 | (Once again – with the tender document – she grabbed the opportunity, but here I could see that she had no product. She had outlines and vague guidelines, but there was no real substance – NO PRODUCT.)
 | Solution: Then I’ll have to go with what I can find on the web ... (as a product)
 | (For second tender) This time we’ll have to pull a rabbit out of the hat.
 | ... got my website up ... It’s actually my brother’s company. I am responsible for the leadership...
 | I have taken some of the modules that were in the tender and I have developed these and they are also on my website.
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| Realistic/unrealistic  | I’m going to tender for their next training programme. We’ll have to change our strategy with this round of tendering. This time we’ll have to pull a rabbit out of the hat. (No real critical reflection or research to be more effective.)  
I can only pay him (Tom) once I have earned money. I did not get the tender or earned money from it. (This was unrealistic. She utilised people's time and knowhow and if she did not get the tender she expected the people whose contributions she had used to forfeit payment. She did not make any arrangements in this regard with them prior to the process)  
I’ll be eager (to have my own business) if the business is successful. (She did not understand that a business IS not successful. It becomes successful if certain conditions are met.)  
It does not really matter whose business I work in – as long as it is successful.  
If a business is successful and I have people around me it will be amazing. |
| Recognition/need for achievement in ... | (I did not notice this in Dianne.)                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Reflection/sensemaking | She admitted to doing “hours and hours and hours “ of free coaching and not gaining a single client from it, but she did not stop after a few hours and asked herself, “What am I missing that I do not sign up any paying clients?”  
NOT ALERT or ADAPTABLE.                                                                                                                                 |
| Reliable responsibility| (She did not deliver on my request for a journal – which she promised to do.) I’ll do it as soon as this tender is off my back.  
(Maybe I did not push hard enough, but it was never my intension to squeeze it out of a participant. My reasoning was that the way a participant delivered on my requests was indicative of how the person dealt with requests. In business a request from a potential client or even someone in your network opens a door and we never know what opportunities lay on the other side of that door.) |
| Resources               | I don’t really have a product.  
I don’t have a website...  
I have a relatively good data base  
(She used her resources, but the resources were not always suitable for the job.)  
(She assumed her “network” will be on board but she did not check with them first ) I’ll sort it out if we get the tender ...  
I source resources as I go along.                                                                                                                           |
| Risk taker             | High risk – high reward (During the tender.)  
She seemed to be oblivious of the risks she took and stressed out of her mind when the results of the risk materialised.  
Nothing is ever certain.                                                                                                                                   |
| Self-efficacy          | She believed that delivering on the tender would not pose any problems even though she did not have a tried and tested training programme.  
(Her self-efficacy overpowered her fear for uncertainty.)                                                                                                 |
| Sensemaking            | She rationalises rather than made sense.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Stressful situations   | Stress causes the blockage...so I am unable to think straight ...  
(She tried to escape – sleeping days on end and watching television.)  
I can no longer handle the stress. It is getting too much.                                                                                               |
| Stubborn               | (No indication of that.)                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Success and failure    | ... the business is a failure.  
I’ve made all the mistakes in the book.                                                                                                                |
(She felt she had no real support.) I don’t have a family that support me.
(She yearned for emotional support. In hindsight she realised that a proper coach would have been valuable.)
(She did not want financial support as she felt it would make her lazy and complacent.) ... if I knew there was always money I would never switch on.
(She started using religion as support.)
(No indication of the use of systems other than – during the last few months – phoning potential clients every day.)
(... like a employee.)
(There was a discrepancy. She feared uncertainty; but she also created uncertainty.)
(She became depressed especially due to financial uncertainty.) ... It’s very difficult. I cope with great difficulty. It gets to me...about once every hour....I pray...
I don’t know where to go (when stressed about business.)
(She also created uncertainty.) I’ll sort it out if we get the tender ...
(Winning the tender was very uncertain. However there was major uncertainty about securing the people she would need should she win the tender. This did not bother her.)
Nothing is ever certain. (Tender)
Not having a regular income...not knowing when or where the next opportunity will be (was very stressful for her).
(Her vision changed continuously – short term – survival.)
(She thinks wealth will make her lazy.)
It is a lot of work for little return.
LILY

Note: Her words appear verbatim without brackets (My words appear in brackets)
Words in CAPITAL LETTERS represent another construct.

Construct | Verification
--- | ---
Adaptability | (She did not always realise where she needed to adjust.)
Alertness | (... regarding cats – good; but not initially so with the business side.)
Autonomy | ... I prefer to create my own structure. (She had quite a need for autonomy.)
Awareness | (She started to develop a sense of awareness in business.)
(Self-awareness)
Business | She did not fully understand the difference between a business and a charity. Three years later she still fell into the charity trap.
 | I've taken the twelve Japanese cats in... (She went from business to charity often.)
 | ... a business and not a charity ...
 | (I mentioned it to her several times prior to January 2014 when she recited the line back to me just before I could do so ...)
Challenges | (She panicked fairly quickly and phoned me often. If there was a real crisis she would phone a few times a day until she felt comfortable with the situation.)
 | (One of the challenges she has to overcome is her self-doubt...)
 | (Lily took them in instead of referring them to the relevant charities – despite warning – she took on 14 feral cats.) Fourteen feral adults would present a much bigger challenge ...
 | (Manual labour.
 | She thought I was trying to dissuade her and did not listen to my warning that it would entail hard manual labour.) ...a lot of hard, manual labour ... I am so tired. I know you told me that this is hard work, but I had no idea how hard it will be ...
 | ... I got very tired towards the end ...(preparing for the opening of her cat hotel.)
 | I don’t know. I was crazy to spread the word that I specialise in old cats ...
 | READING PEOPLE: I don’t trust some of these people ... (There are several cases – throughout the study that shows that Lily has very poor judgement regarding the honesty of people. She often thought that clients were not trustworthy when they were very reliable clients.)
 | (During the building when there were serious challenges Lily could not handle it and her husband took over and did it for her.) ... the council ... (She had endless problems getting council approval.)
Confidence | (Lily was insecure and needed constant reassurance.)
HR Business: I was very good at it, but it was never my first love.
 | (Insecure about business; very confident with cats.)
Control | (She liked to feel in control of the kitties and their well-being. One of her frustrations was that she could not control the way people took care of their cats.)
Counterfactual thinking | (She engaged in some “can I make a success of this” self-talk – questioning her ability to make a success of the business.)
Creative | (She did not come up with innovative ideas or plans.)
Construct | Verification
--- | ---
**Decision making** | (When it came to the health of the cats she took decisions quickly and she had a medicine cupboard at her disposal – even though she was not a veterinarian.)
(When it came to business decisions she usually first discussed it with me and some of the other cat hotel owners.)

**Delegator** | (Fair, but she packed that the cat hotel cottages in preparation of an arrival – which I delegate. She felt she could not trust the workers to do it. I told the workers that I know they can do as well as I can and I do the odd spot check.)
(She did use me to run her business during two holidays, but it was not financially viable for her so she stopped doing it and now she closes the cat hotel when she goes away and books her own cats into Purrfect Place.)

**Detail thinker ↔ strategic thinker** | She is more a detail thinker than a strategic – big picture - thinker.)

**Driven** | (She is a perfectionist and driven.)

**Effectuation** | (Her cat hotel business is means driven – based on her knowledge and love for cats.)

**Energy** | I am so tired. I know you told me that this is hard work, but I had no idea how hard it will be when the cat hotel is full. (Lily sometimes runs out of energy – which is not surprising as she is 60+ years of age and a cat hotel is labour intensive.)

**Entrepreneur** | Despite being a perfectionist and organised I actually dislike imposed structure. I prefer to create my own structure. I found working with the Y generation too much of a conflict in values and playing the political game necessary for survival in the corporate environment went against my grain. So I walked out.
I had to retire earlier than I had intended ...
(She is not a true entrepreneur, but a small business owner. Her business can succeed because of the real need for good cat accommodation and the other cat hotels referring overflow to her.)

**Entrepreneurial parents** | No

**Experience** | (Initially lack of experience caused her stress – especially when her cat hotel was not fully booked as soon as the established ones were prior to a long weekend or when she had very low occupancy.)

**Fear** | (She feared competition My answer when she became anxious about another cat hotel opening in the area: “There will always be competition, Lily. You’ll have to learn to live with it.”)
Many times when we were still building I would stop and think...maybe I’m building a great white elephant ... (Her fear of failure often turned into anxiety.)
When the fear hits me, it probably stays for a day...or two and then something would change and it would shift. (This fear was visible in her eyes as she talked about it.)
(When she started the HR business was) ... a time of intense fear because I’m an insecure person.
(She was very suspicious of long term clients and people moving house as she had cats “dumped” at her place.)
When I wasn’t in fear, I...enjoyed it. (The cat hotel)
(After four years in the business she sometimes got completely overwhelmed by fear and even despair.)
**Construct** | **Verification**
---|---
Financial management and money | ... took my one third tax free capital out and invested that in building my cattery. The next obstacle was the cost. We soon realized that everything was going to cost more than double what we expected. (The line between her business and charity/feral cats was very blurred and she often complained about cash flow problems.) So I am able to generate income doing something ... (She loved). I worry about money ... I hope you get your money. (She said to me when I took on a client she did not trust enough to take on.) (Lily’s place cost twice original estimate – putting pressure on her finance.) (The charity cats Lily took on was a financial drain on her business - taking up valuable space in the cat hotel – over peak time - and medical costs. Dec 2013 – another family takes up space) (In 2012 Lily’s financial situation improved, but beginning 2014 she was going through a very difficult time again. However there is the potential to earn a good income.)
Focus | (When occupancy took off she focussed on the money spent and the need to recoup on her investment. It was difficult for her to see the bigger picture.) ... emails about animals in desperate need of a good home ... Japanese cats ... (Her focus often shifted from her business to the cats in need - charity.) (With the Japanese cats she seems to lack business focus - resulting in loss of income)
Freedom | (Some need for freedom. Walked out – took early retirement.)
Fun | She tended to be very serious and never phoned me with a fun story – always with concerns.)
Independence | (Medium. She was very dependent on me – and maybe other people – for moral support and advice.)
Intuition | ...think...maybe I’m building a great white elephant... (In 2011 – no accurate business intuition related to the cat hotel visible, yet.) (Lily’s intuition about the trustworthiness of people was often completely incorrect.)
Knowledge & skill | (She had good knowledge and skill regarding the cats, but not in terms of business.)
Leadership | (Servant leadership.)
Learning | The sewing process was also a learning curve ... (She learnt a lot about cat care.) (Her learning was slower regarding relationships with clients, how to handle charity cases and when a client was high risk.)
Locus of control | (External – when trade was slow she looked for external reasons. Sometimes she wondered whether it might be something she had done, but then brushed it off immediately.)
Lonely | (She was comfortable with the lonely part of starting a business as she had a good support structure.)
Market research/ feasibility | ...I spoke to you...(there is) a real need ... (Lily actually did market research – more than most of the other participants in the study indicated. She was very insecure and wanted to be certain she was not making a mistake.)
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>(Lily needed two years of regular mentoring. Her veterinarian and I mentored her unofficially. I would not contract for money as there was a conflict of interest as she was direct competition. But I helped her on a weekly basis from before she opened her cat hotel with basic skills and knowledge and even beyond that.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset</td>
<td>My daughter told her that in order to succeed in business you have to rip people off. I thought, <em>G</em>_, am I going to fail at this now, because I can’t rip people off? It’s against my values. I’m not going to charge a person if they’ve cancelled and they’ve given me adequate warning. My daughter said people don’t become successful by being honest. (She bought into this belief and I challenged the belief: “I know that honesty and integrity do not exclude success. On the contrary I think it can contribute to long term success.”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature nurture</td>
<td>(She loved cats and was very well suited to this endeavour. Physical labour was tough on her during busy times. Starting a cat hotel when one is sixty plus years old can be tricky as one may need assistance with the hard manual labour, but one may not have the financial resources to afford labour at the time.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networker</td>
<td>(She was a fair networker. Although she phoned many she did not build strong relationships with most of the people she phoned.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>(She was a client of mine, saw my place and realised it was possible to have a cat hotel business.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>(Yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain/discomfort tolerance</td>
<td>(She has a fair tolerance for discomfort otherwise she would not have survived this long.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>... true cat lovers ... (With cats her emotions often overrule her logic.) (She started HR Consulting, but) ... without too much passion. Cattery: I am able to generate income doing something for which I have a complete and utter passion ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern recognition</td>
<td>(There was no pattern recognition related to cat hotel occupancy or people’s trustworthiness, but there was pattern recognition in cat behaviour.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive/ negative bias</td>
<td>(She did not have a positive bias and had a slightly negative bias.) (Self doubt) ... the cattery a white elephant? ... did I underestimate it! (Very hard manual labour 365 days a year.) (In almost every telephone conversation she complained about her human clients. She was convinced that people did not take proper care of their cats.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>(Under pressure she stresses.) I could not handle the stress anymore and my husband handled ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proactive; reactive; passive</td>
<td>(Reactive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>(Good product.) We had to cut a little on the size of the units to fit it into the space we had available and unfortunately the building has to face south, but I wanted a solid building like yours. (She used Purrfect Place as reference when building her cat hotel.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable responsible</td>
<td>(She is reliable.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Verification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>(She used the resources she had fairly well, but her most important resource – accommodation space – was not always fully utilised for the business; resulting in loss of income.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taker</td>
<td>(To lower the risk she decided to continue with HR while starting the cat hotel. She could not keep it up for long.) (She was risk averse when it came to taking – what she considered to be – suspect clients. They were often not risky clients at all.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>(She did not doubt her ability to take care of cats, but there were times that she feared that the business might not be viable. )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense-making</td>
<td>(Lily smiled when she admitted) I remember thinking, I know it will be hard work, but I can do this. Maybe Suzette is just trying to discourage me. But boy, did I underestimate it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful</td>
<td>1. Did you hear another cattery has opened in the area? How are we going to make a living if catteries pop up like this? (This happened in Nov 2010. She did not contemplate what I felt like when she opened her cattery.) (Anxiety was audible in her voice when she phoned me when she was not fully booked but she found out of the other cat hotels were) ... in the end I could not handle the stress anymore and my husband handled the council for me. (Lily stressed about many of the cats that came to her - being too fat or too thin. She had difficult conversations with some of her clients because she felt they did not take good care of their cats. She changed what she felt needed to be changed – often running up vet bills.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful</td>
<td>situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stubborn</td>
<td>(Not noticeably)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>(Initially she had a fair amount of support in her vet, family and me. Over time this support seemed to have diminished.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems thinker</td>
<td>(Yes, she had systems in place in the management of the cat hotel.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td>(She must have a fair amount of tenacity, because she is still in business.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks</td>
<td>(Emotions played an important part in her thinking/decision-making regarding animals. She tended to zoom-in – focus – on the detail.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time –</td>
<td>(It seemed good.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>(Low tolerance for uncertainty.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tolerance</td>
<td>I worry about money. (She questioned potential clients.) Why are you going away for so long? What are you going to do there? (Lily phoned me and warned me about the client’’s saying) I don’t trust some of these people and I have a funny feeling about her. (I took the client and made the money and experienced no problems.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>(She totally underestimated the amount of work this business – and probably most businesses – asks, but she put in the work to make a success of the business.) ... spending many hours from July to October in preparation for the opening of my cat hotel. I got very tired towards the end and became creative...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

273 It is difficult to give the detail and protect the client in this case so I am only giving a loose description
NATASHA

Note: Her words appear verbatim without brackets (My words appear in brackets)
Words in CAPITAL LETTERS represent another construct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>I had to learn and adapt and change very much ... Quick to react and adapt to triggers in the market. (She used her experience to pre-empt problems.) I think growing and recognising that you have to learn different things is part of the process. You can’t stagnate. The ability to adapt and to be able to look at problems as they happen and be able to change – the willingness to change and the ability to change and not stick to doing one thing - reinvent classic ways of doing things. When you are presented with a PROBLEM you don’t always have to use the same solution. You have to be able to adapt. You have to be able to think on your feet. To realise I've got this problem. What can I do about it? I don’t have to do it that way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>(She addressed issues like the torn uniform immediately.) If we don’t pre-empt what could become a problem ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alertness</td>
<td>(Nothing escaped her eyes – my 2 recorders; the needs of clients; tear in a uniform; waiters talking too loud; ...) (Super alert.) Hands on in the stores (so that things can be changed immediately as and when necessary.) Please drop that umbrella. They want to sit in the sun ... (She immediately wants to know whether my client enjoyed his tashas experience.) ATTENTION TO DETAIL: Anyone can open a restaurant. Anyone can have a brand. Anyone can have a franchise. But it is the level of detail that starts becoming important as a differentiator. (Obsessive attention to detail, right down to checking that all the salt cellars face the same way.) (It was impossible for her to see something sub-standard happening and ignoring it. Melpo confirmed my observation, “She’s got an eye for detail. She can sit here and she knows exactly what’s going on at each table. That’s actually like superwoman.”) (Someone who worked for her said) She’s very aware. She’ll know what’s wrong immediately – before anyone else notice it. She’s very obsessive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>EVEREST - I got out of my partnership. We had a fall out. (It was important for her and she negotiated 49% share when she sold to Famous Brands which is unheard of for Famous Brands who usually relinquish only 15 – 20%. The negotiations took eight months.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>(Nothing escaped her eyes – she watched me, waiters and clients with a hawk’s eye, noticed everything and addressed it immediately.) ... with a hug. “How’re you? I haven’t seen you for ages. What’s happening? Are you alright? (She finds out why the client has not been around – market research while building relationship.) (Natasha had one eye on the business at all times.) (She was very aware and knew what she wanted and what energised her.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigger picture</td>
<td>(... looked at bigger picture when evaluating effectiveness of systems ...)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges

It’s not easy
Every day is a battle.
(Not easy)
Nothing comes easy.
(... tashas was very successful at the time, but Natasha was not
complacent. She was pushing for ways to pre-empt problems before they
arrived...checking whether there were loopholes in the system – whether
franchisees were cutting corners – standards – to make more money short
term.)
(Problem solving - find practical / workable solutions to the challenges – e.g.
how to standardise cake display.)
(Not easy)
(No easy)
(She feels that the franchisees did not understand the importance of the
tashas look and feel. She tried newsletters and reward programmes.)

Change

I had to learn and adapt and change very much
Change that (Telling staff to change what needed to be changed - changing
things in the stores as and when necessary – quickly)
(Not easy)
(The ability to adapt and to be able to look at problems as they happen and
be able to change – the willingness to change and the ability to change and
not stick to doing one thing a certain way)
(Not easy)
(With tashas she wanted a product that would never be static; but constantly
evolving.)

Commitment to consistent excellent service

See QUALITY

Complexity

mp4: The food industry has many variables – great complexity – must be
hands on to make it work.
p.11: “here I was running the whole ship. I was doing the stock control, back
of house, front of house, ordering, receiving.” MULTITAKSING

Compromise

Sacrifice having a life outside the business...
... huge personal sacrifices...
(Not easy)
(Not easy)
(Not easy)

Confidence

(Healthy confidence)
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>She admitted to being a control freak, but put systems and procedures in place to control that which she could not control due to the fact that there are now 8 tashas stores in South Africa. ... in every entrepreneur’s life comes a time where you realise that you have to relinquish control, but that does not mean that you’re relinquishing control of your standards. I am a control freak. I want to control every aspect of the business and I think a big part of it is making sure you put systems in place that allow you to control it. ... realise you cannot be everywhere at all times. (Control was important.) ... my partners all say to me I don’t relinquish enough control, because I control from the interiors to the ingredients to the food to what the uniforms are going to be or what the branding is going to be, etc., etc., etc. So, have I relinquish control? No. But am I running the stores on a day to day basis? Also: No. That’s the balance, you know. (Talking about the tear in waitress’s uniform) ... those kinds of things upset me, because I can’t control them. ... implementing enough controls and procedures that are measurable so that you can see where the guys are going wrong - Standard of Excellence (SOE) - franchise manager going into the stores and checking. We have put SYSTEMS in place – effective – not hundred percent effective - you’ve got to look at the bigger picture. (The word “control” comes up often in our conversations.) ... the balance” between controlling everything and running a big company. ... tashas deal - eight months to do the deal - I really wanted to...retain control over the things that are very important to me. I am a perfectionist and find it hard to let go. I kept control over all the creative decisions – decor and menu...all the furniture is custom made for tashas. (Alex): she’s obsessive...very controlling...and she always sees the glass half-full.” OPTIMISTIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfactual</td>
<td>(I did not hear it from her.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>(When you enter a tashas store the creativity is very evident. She controls the decor.) (Creative problem solving - start thinking of other creative ways to fix things.) You’ve got to be creative – calling on the creativity of the franchisees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>(She zoomed in (focus) and out (seeing the bigger picture) all the time.) (Dealing with the issue immediately frees the mind up/)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegator</td>
<td>(She delegated because it was necessary for growth, but it was difficult for her.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail thinker ↔</td>
<td>(She has amazing attention to detail, but she also has wonderful vision and strategic thinking – sees the smallest tear on a uniform or a sugar bowl that is out of place, but she has every clear bigger picture of the business – it’s position in the market and what the market is like.) ... you’ve got to look at the bigger picture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategic thinker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven</td>
<td>... must have the drive and the PASSION to succeed. ... having the drive and passion ... ... love the adrenalin... go... go... go... push.... push... push.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectuation</td>
<td>(She had restaurant experience having grown up in her father’s restaurant – start one that answers to her taste.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>(HUMILITY is clearly evident in how she communicates with staff, customers and interviewees.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(She is a powerhouse of energy – always – every time I was in her presence.
Talks like a machine gun on rapid fire.
Hugging everybody.)
You’ve got to have stamina - You’ve also got to know when to take a break.

I want something of my own.
(Serial opportunity entrepreneur.)
... do corporate only - Never, never, never! It would kill me.
... (busy restaurant) This is what feeds my soul; I’m a restaurateur. I am an entrepreneur.
I’m a restauranteur....an entrepreneur. (She knows exactly who she is and what works for her.)

(Yes; Father was also a restaurateur.)

restaurant business

... not being scared - if you are hesitant and afraid it will be a hindrance - gutsy - if I want something I go for it.
... Fear ... losing control & standards may drop ...
No fear visible

I have learnt that understanding finance and having a good understanding of numbers are absolutely crucial.
I learnt all the good stuff in terms of corporate stuff – the income statement, the balance sheet, budget presentations, the business plans."

She is very focused

Although she works very hard she is enjoying it.
Hugging customers
“You’ve got to know when to take a break “

(Delayed) and I took no salary for about two years ... (When she started a business this happened.)

Going to work in the franchises and stay in touch –

(She always apologised when late or we were interrupted sounded very sincere.)

(She wanted to supply quality meals and an amazing experience.)
(Business grew) ... you cannot be everywhere, but that does not mean that you’re relinquishing control of your standards.
... striving for excellence.
(Quality was not negotiable for her.)
Maintaining consistency and quality is key ... if you’re going to do something, do it well.
Even if you don’t have a clear idea of what the outcome is going to be. The outcome might evolve. So I made sure the branding was spot on. I made sure the logo was right; I made sure the menu was right. And all of that was correct, because I’ve put my name up there (she said pointing to the tashas branding in front of the store.)
(Tashas franchise maintained standards.)

(Very. The tashas concept was innovative and the restaurants are extremely creative.)
Intuition

(Her intuition was great in her field of expertise.)

... having entrepreneurial intuition is part of how I handle challenges – having to think one step ahead... understanding of your business - knowing what the next hurdles are going to be... I try to ANTICIPATE THE CHALLENGES ahead...

... foresight to understand what can go wrong and to address it in time - pre-empt what could be the possible problem.

Knowledge & skill

(She has great expertise in her field. This is very important to her and they)

... skill the employees up... (well.)

Leadership

I was head girl at school and I’ve always been a leader, it was quite an easy thing for me to do – to come and tell the waiters... (what to do).

(Sh)ea led by example and by taking CONTROL. She inspired and motivated.

She lived the brand. She was steel in a velvet glove.

Learning

I had to learn and adapt and change very much... I learned. Whatever I know today – I’ve learned as I’ve gone along.

I think growing and recognising that you have to learn different things is part of the process. You can’t stagnate.

I’ve learned a lot about business. One of the most important lessons is, without your staff you are nothing.

I have learned that understanding finance and having a good understanding of numbers are absolutely crucial.

... I learned all the good stuff in terms of corporate stuff – the income statement, the balance sheet, budget presentations, the business plans...

(Sh)ea was eager to learn. After our first interview she questioned me. She wanted to learn how to improve through this study.

Everest: I HATED it – missing the interaction with clients... (Learning about herself... an excellent learning experience.)

Locus of control

(Internal. Every time we talked about how to address what was not working in the business, she started with herself and how she should change to aid the transformation.)

... people will mirror your behaviour... (She accepts that her example will influence all the other people in the company.)

There is a theory I have that people will mirror your behaviour. So if you look at the stores that mirror my behaviour – these are the stores where I have actually run with staff that have been with me forever...

Lonely

(Sh)ea did not mind the “lonely” times and surrounded herself with close family and friends in the business.

Manipulator

Being manipulative is one of the traits of an entrepreneur.

Market research

(Sh)ea did extensive market research for both Everest and tashas.

So I went with my little video camera – looked at everything I ordered all the spreads and sauces – put in containers... analysed.

Mentors

(Sh)ea’s father and the restaurant managements where she had been in involved earlier.

(Sh)ea’s landlady... in 2007) ... two years after this store opened... said, “I want you to change the Ninos in Bedfordview to a tashas.” Today that landlady and I are very, very good friends.

Kevin Hedderwick of Famous Brands...

Mindset

(Growth. Sh)ea did not mind making mistakes as long as learnt from them.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
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</table>
| **Money**        | (She had to borrow money every time she started a new business. She even used loan sharks and paid back with the exorbitant interest they charge. Money is a way to a means.)  
... it is not only about money. I think that is another thing that an entrepreneur must know. If it is ONLY about the money, you're not going to succeed. If money is your sole driver you won’t succeed.  
EVEREST: I opened one, but I had no money. So I went to two guys – investors – told them, ‘This is the concept I want to do and this is how much money I need. Will you invest with me? We can go a third: a third: a third.  
NINO'S BEDFORDVIEW: ...I do not have the money. (She went to money lenders.) ... I scrambled to find the money. I was under-financed here. I did not have the money in the beginning to do this. I had to get money from another person ...  
... paid them (money lenders) back huge amounts of money every month. I worked without a salary for two years ... (DELAYED GRATIFICATION)  
... really important to hone your financial skills when you decided to open your own business.  
... pricing (menu properly was) important ...  
I have learnt that understanding finance and having a good understanding of numbers are absolutely crucial.  
(Lack of wealth did not stop her from starting up a business.) |
| **Motivation**   | (Customer interaction is what really drives me.  
... making sure that staff is motivated and happy is vital. Staff is a major thing.  
(C)She was well-suited for this business with her warm personality and many years working in restaurants; stamina; workaholic; adrenaline junkie.) |
| **Nature nurture** | Need to...  
If I start something I have to finish it.  
... need the interaction with the customer ... (NOT fast food joint.).  
(If you can negotiate the deal she did with Famous Brands you can negotiate.) |
| **Networker**    | (Watching her I could see that she was networking continuously. Very good at it.)  
Kevin Hedderwick from Famous Brands was a customer at Ninos and I had become very close to him and we’ve established a good relationship ... the relationship works.  
(Natasha interacted with customers and staff ... in a very natural way.)  
Relationships – staff, customers and other – are “key” to success.  
(A regular customer walks past our table and Natasha excuses herself. She gets up and greets him with a hug.) How’re you? I haven’t seen you for ages. What’s happening? Are you alright?  
... love your customers (RELATEDNESS)  
... the franchisees and the types of relationships I’ve got with them.  
You may see some of the other staff members who’ve built up relationship with the customers also hugging and kissing customers ‘hallo’ and ‘good bye’. (Staff followed her example.) |
| **Opportunity**  | I wanted something of my own ... (She looked for opportunities.)  
... the opportunity presented itself to buy the Ninos ...  
I have seen that there was this gap in the market between coffee shops and coffee shop franchises ... (She saw gaps. tashas is the evidence thereof. Each tashas store is evidence of that.)  
I’d like to company own them. |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain tolerance</td>
<td>(High. Opening up restaurants takes a good amount of discomfort and with Everest the situation was not what she had hoped for, but she made it work.) I would go straight to the shop with a change of clothes and work right through the night – go home...sleep... I work sixteen to eighteen hours a day. But I think for anybody who wants to own their own business this is inevitable...especially if you want to be a success. I worked even harder than I did at Ninos. I certainly did not expect it to be so hard ... I worked four to five months – no day off. I ended up in hospital with a virus that attacked my heart...from having fatigue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>... having the drive and passion You must love what you do ... I loved the adrenaline ... You’ve got to have some love for what you do. I love my shops ... like to be hands on. I’ll spend two days in each store ... live the example ... reminding them, refreshing, working with them, serving tables with them...going into the kitchen. I am spreading the passion by example...I love what I do I’m exhausted, but I love what I do. Immediately I was hooked. I fell in love with the (Everest) concept ... when Everest opened ... I hated it. If money is your sole driver you won’t succeed. You’ve got to have some love for what you do.” You’ve got to love your customers. You know you can’t do this business and not love people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>She is polite, but fast and can sound impatient.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern recognition</td>
<td>(Effective. Due to experience she was able to pre-empt possible issues before they arrived. This gave her foresight.) ... see if we can find a pattern of the things that are incorrect and then find solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive bias</td>
<td>(Not unrealistically positive.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>(Under pressure she becomes a workaholic as was visible with Everest and during the opening of new stores.) ... loved the adrenaline ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive; reactive; passive</td>
<td>(Pro-active) Pre-empts ... Hands on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Construct | Verification
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Product quality | (Fishmonger, Nino’s, Everest, tashas – all restaurants)
You must love what you do...and your business must have something that sets it apart from the competition.
EVEREST: ... a quick, fast food gourmet baguette; gourmet salads, gourmet sandwiches ...
(Ninos as an operations manager and I worked for head office for about two years.)
I want to buy this store (Nino’s Bedfordview) ...huge SUCCESS. We double the turnover ...
(People started to recognise me ... good reputation)
(Previous owner of Nino’s) ... buying inferior products to make the food up.
I really took that business and turned it around ... doubled the turnover
(Quality products were very important to her.)
... have a meal in a really cool environment ...
tashas ... was packed from day one ... I’ve put my name up there (she said pointing to the name of the store) I want to make sure it is perfect.
I am a perfectionist and find it hard to let go.
(Kevin said) People want your brand.
(tashas becomes a franchise in the Famous Brands group)
Quality control in franchise is stressful – she copes by going into the stores & having a store of her own so that she is always in touch with what is going on in the stores.
If you are going to do something; do it well.
How do I make sure that every contact – every customer – has the tashas experience? (She pursued this relentlessly.)
(She was very proud of her restaurants. She wanted the tashas brand to be perfect before she opened up. Although she did not admit to wanting the recognition she had engineered it to be there. I recognised this as I do the same.)
Nino’s Bedfordview ... People started to recognise me.
Reliable/ responsible | (Both are high
I’m going around to all the stores and I am having meetings with the waiters, having meetings with the kitchen staff ... I’ll spend two days in each store ...
We paid them back huge amounts of money every month. I worked without a salary for two years ... to be successful ... you’re going to make personal sacrifices ...
It’s a mistake a lot of young people make today (instant gratification) ... they don’t want to make any of the sacrifices. When the going gets tough ... they’re like, ‘OK, I can’t do this. It’s too hard.’ The whole point is that nothing comes easy ...
You’ve got to work.
... checking that everything is running smoothly. (During our interview)
(She paid off every loan she made.)
Resources | (She used her resources well.)
Without your staff you are nothing ... Keep them motivated and happy.
Showing them, guys come on this is what tashas is about – reminding them, refreshing, working with them, serving tables with them...going into the kitchen. Staff is a major thing.
(She took care to ensure the tashas brand was) perfect.
(She visits the stores regularly to ensure the franchises keep the brand name high.)
Risk taker | (Yes. She used loan sharks to finance a new business. That is risky.)
(She took risks starting tashas without enough money.)
(When she converted Ninos to tashas breaking the franchise agreement and borrowing money were risky.)
I’m always quite gutsy and if I want something I try and go for it.
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| Self-efficacy       | ... Nothing comes easy – you must have the will to succeed ...  
(She believed in her ability to pull off what she set out to do and she was correct. With Everest it did not live up to her expectations, she learnt from it and sold it to do that which she enjoyed most – running a restaurant.) |
| Sense-making        | (She learnt from her mistakes which implied some level of sense-making. With problems such as the issue with cake displays she relentlessly pursued ways of solving the problem. She looked at ways to get the franchisees to see the sense in following the “rules”.) |
| Stressful situations| Handle stress by being hands-on – keep in touch – “see what is happening with the brand” - involved;  
(Everest – worked  
... it’s always been the adrenaline... Go... go... go... push.... push... push.  
... the financial stresses ... I converted the Bedfordview Ninos into a tashas  
... the worst time of my life. I think financial stress is probably the worst stress in the world. (But she did it every time she started a new place so she tolerated the stress.)  
It's hard. It's very stressful.  
(She worked through her stress to such an extent that she landed in hospital from exhaustion once.) |
| Stubborn            | (She was stubborn, but she had the emotional intelligence to cause minimum upset.)                                                                                                                                                           |
| Support             | (She had support: father (when he was still alive); mother; brother – who was a partner in her business; friends and tashas franchisees and staff.)                                                                                                      |
| Systems thinker     | (Definitely )  
... implementing enough controls and procedures that are measurable so that you can see where the guys are going wrong. So, we have a thing called the Standard of Excellence (SOE) and we have a franchise manager going into the stores and checking ...  
... a big part of it is making sure you put systems in place that allow you to control it.  
We have put systems in place. They are effective, but they are not a hundred percent effective. |
| Tenacity/resilience | You need tenacity and a will to succeed.  
(She definitely had tenacity – working long hours for long periods of time and paying off big loans.)                                                                                                                                 |
| Thinking            | (She was good with detail, but had mentors to help her see further.)                                                                                                                                               |
| Time                | It took 8 months to do the deal with Famous Brands.  
Within six months we knew we had a winner – tashas  
... get the timing one hundred percent when it comes to letting go.                                                                                                                                 |
| Uncertainty tolerance| (High; but she admitted that financial uncertainty was very stressful for her.)                                                                                                                                                             |
| Vision              | Must have vision ...  
I had no idea that it would land up to be what it is today – ever.  
(Yes: Each tashas store has its own signature – that which makes it different from the others in the franchise – e.g. The signature for Morningside is healthy living and the decor include huge glass jars filled with fruit; Melrose is in a very affluent area and its signature is smoked salmon and champagne whereas the Brooklyn store in the heart of the Afrikaans community has designer “boerewors" rolls.) |

274 A typical South Africa sausage
Construct  
Work ethic

Verification

... 16 – 18 hours a day ...
(After class at Wits) ... straight to the shop with a change of clothes and work right through the night ...
EVEREST ... I used to work twenty-one hour shifts. So, I used to sleep at the back of the shop. I was exhausted. It was a nightmare – hated not having interaction with clients ...
You’ve got to work ... I have no problem with working. I’ve reached a stage in my life where I am thirty-five years old. Am I tired? Yes, I’m exhausted, but I love what I do. (Passion carried you through the long hours)
When I open a new store ... for five weeks ... From six in the morning ... I’d open the store and close the store (at night).
NINO’S BEDFORDVIEW: worked hard...for three to four months we did not take a single day off and I took no salary for about two years.... worked and worked and worked....
tashas: I worked even harder than I did at the Ninos ... did not expect it to be so hard ... worked four to five months – no day off. I ended up in hospital with a virus that attacked my heart...from having fatigue. I was finished.
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| **Adaptability** | (The fashion market is forever changing. To be at the forefront demanded adaptability for her to stay ahead of the fashion wave.)  
(During tight financial times she also opened retail space.)  
... if things aren’t working, you have to change. Even if you’re not making money ... It’s not about making money. It’s about changing the way you do things. In this business change is a very important constant. |
| **Alertness** | I brought this in, because some of my older stuff was moving too slowly ...  
**PROACTIVE**  
You can’t just keep going ... if things aren’t working, you have to change.  
(She was alert to her clients’ reactions and worked with it.) |
| **Autonomy** | (High) (Her partnership did not work. Tessa moved on.)  
No longer am I dictated to by any supplier.  
... it was always my choice and whether I can afford to do that – you understand? ... no boss  
No pressure. I take it in my own time as to where, what and how I want it ...  
I had a fight with my partner, who was much too greedy for me...  
I took on a partner who was going to run it for me ... (Another partnership that did not work.) Partnerships don’t happen ... not a good thing. |
| **Awareness** | (High.)  
(self-awareness) |
| **Business** | (She did not enjoy the hassles when things do not run smoothly.) ... The only time I hate this business is when I have customer hassles...  
(Baby clothes) It was too small for me ... I grew out of it. (She thinks big.)  
It was like a hobby ... not a business.  
I’m a medium business ...  
She called the business her hobby, but she it had a turnover of millions of rand with different branches in different cities.) |
| **Challenges** | I have always had a passion for this puzzle ...making spaces nicer ...  
(She enjoyed challenges ... solving the puzzle)  
... very exciting ... the psychology behind the office layout ...  
We have problems with the economy ... (She changed her products to address this.)  
I was faced with a serious crisis. Friends turned on me and became my direct competition ... (She addressed it and her business became the pioneer in the field.)  
(She also experienced health challenges and it did not stop her from succeeding.) |
| **Change** | She thrived on change.)  
So I had to do something that would really change things ... otherwise I must get out of this business.  
... if things aren’t working, you have to change ...  
(She changed her set-up and re-invented her products.)  
It’s not about making money. It’s about changing the way you do things. It’s easy for me. It’s like I can do it with my eyes closed - if your business runs like that – just naturally – it can become very boring...mundane. So you look for things that can add value to your business and that excite you. |
Compromise

(She did not comprise if it was not life threatening.)
(In the art class, if she did not like the music or the topic of conversation she would ask for it to be changed.)
(Started her own art class because the new venue did not suit her.)

Confidence

I had the confidence to fail ...
(Sayed) ... I'll support you...whatever. (Family support gave her confidence.)
... I think that is a huge, huge thing. That sense of confidence. It's a psyche thing ... It gave me confidence.
There was no way I was going to work for someone who talked to me like that and I resigned on the spot. (She had the confidence from a very young age – 17 years.)
(She is very confident, but not overconfident.)

Control

(She needed to feel in control.)
I had never been stressed about where the market wants me to be. I've made the market where I want it to be.
(Although she was spending time with me she noticed when the staff took liberties and addressed it in a strict way.)

Counterfactual thinking

(I did not see her use it.)

Courage

(Even as a teenager she had the courage to walk out of a situation if she was treated badly. However her protected upbringing made it easier for her as she was not desperate for the money – i.e. a young person who may the bread winner of a family might have to bear with bad treatment to prevent loss of income.)
I have never been scared to take a chance ...

Creative

Tessa was extremely creative. That was the essence of her business. Look at her launches and the competition to utilise the fabrics that she could not use in her business any more.)
Office ... turned into a beautiful space ...
So it's a creative project and in the end we're going to auction the piece. I like things that people can become creative with.

Crisis

Early on in the business I was faced with a serious crisis. Friends turned on me and became my direct competition – cutting me off from my main suppliers. I had to decide whether to cut my losses and go the housewife way or to transcend the challenge. I decided on the latter and today I have a thriving business ...
That was the turning point in my career ... if (the competition withdrew) colours in the range. I couldn’t care, because I only have one colour of it. If they want to withdraw it, I'll withdraw it, because it is not going to affect my whole collection. It's not going to take me out of business.

Decision-making

(When I showed her the picture of the ethnic fabric painters it took less than a second for her to say it is not what she wants. It did not fit with what was a clear picture in her mind. Quick decision-making.)
And I decided that would be my first range.
That was a decision I made at that point when that first supplier dropped me.
I decided to do collections of fabrics and I started going to the international fairs... something like an editeur ... I decided to do that ...
... if I decide to do one range a year or two ranges a year – it was always my choice ...
I decided to bring out a new range for my Contract market which is completely different form the top-end market ...
(Tessa saw the bigger picture in situations and was fair and strategic in her decisions. She could see both the detail and bigger picture.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verification</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delegator</td>
<td>She was a very good delegator. While in her office and in the art class I saw how efficiently she did that. (She would even ask someone – who was also busy – to tell her when it was a specific time should she want to leave the art class earlier. In this way she freed up space in her pre-frontal cortex to focus on what was important to her.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail thinker ↔ strategic thinker</td>
<td>(She can switch effectively between these two styles.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven</td>
<td>Sometimes I get a bit anxious if I hadn’t done something ... I have always paced myself to my heartbeat as opposed to being the market’s heartbeat. My success is also about not being anxious. We are trying hard (to break into a specific market.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectuation</td>
<td>(She used stills and knowledge learnt from her father’s business to start her business.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>(She is always excited when she talks about her business.) … I made hundreds of cards … I hook into universal energy … a month later I see that it is all over the place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>(Serial opportunity entrepreneur)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial family</td>
<td>Father and sister had connections (machines to knit the fabric for her fashion range). (She grew up in an entrepreneurial house in the textile industry.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>(Fairness is important to her.) (In the art class I had often saw her being fair to someone who did not particularly care for.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>I have never been scared to take a chance (No indication of fear of failure in any of my interactions with Tessa.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial (management)</td>
<td>I had no overheads...I paid no rent...I think my father gave me R5000 to start up...I used his driver...I used his infrastructure...I used his secretary...All I had was my own little office. It cost me nothing. (FINANCIAL SUPPORT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>(She was very focused on the task at hand. This was also visible in the art class and when she talked about a project in class. She got irritated when someone else was hanging around unproductively.) (She was very clear about who she was, who her market was, what her product was. She did not want to be everything for everybody.) I would rather have thirty amazing customers than five hundred bad customers. I don’t want the whole market. (In the art class – if she was working on a portrait she would ask someone else in the art class to do things for her – even to remind her of the time.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>That freedom was the whole thing behind the excitement and easiness of starting up a business ... that state of mind ... that easiness. (She enjoyed freedom.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>I was having fun ... It was exciting ... If I don’t have fun I’ll stop doing it. I was having fun ... it was a hobby. It was fun. (Some of the new products she imported were her fun-stuff. A few years ago she also had pumps (shoes) and filofax covers made for fun. While she shows these to me her face was beaming.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratification</td>
<td>... people want immediate gratification ... (She tapped into people’s habits. She could delay gratification.)</td>
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<td>Construct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hates mediocrity/</td>
<td>I am not a mediocre person on any level. I don’t live my life with mediocrity...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality</td>
<td>(She was humbled by the experience of losing her main supplier and 90% of her business.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>(Strongly independent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Without knowing about the existence of something like an editeur I decided to do that. OPPORTUNITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>See CREATIVITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>I just have a natural understanding of the fabric market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; skill</td>
<td>Fashion series at age 18: I could not make that my career. I was not a designer. I did not know anything about fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>(As a textile representative she learnt about selling – it came easy to her – natural sales person. She understood textiles and the high-end interior decorating industry.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I could not believe how easy it was to sell things</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(She had good intuition regarding trends and she used it all the time. PATTERN RECOGNITION)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning through her mistakes. The first and one of the most important ones was not to buy all her fabric from one supplier – spread risk. After her crisis with the single supplier she used as many as forty to fifty suppliers at a time. If anyone withdrew his/her line from Tessa it would not cause her business damage.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(She had an epiphany – realising the difference between the commercial and high-end market) ... like I hooked into something ... I realised that every time I touched something that was just mediocre, nothing happened to it ... But if I touched something that was like new and exciting it was amazing. My success is also about not being anxious to be something ... I can’t have regrets. If something goes wrong, I feel sad ... I think it, feel it and then I have to move it on. Then I say, ‘That was one of the lessons I had to learn.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Internal locus of control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>Sayed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindset</td>
<td>It was easy to sell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>It is so easy to make money. (she said this often.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All my life I had brought in a great salary.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It’s not about making money. (For Tessa is it not about making money. She lives a life of absolute luxury and has an incredibly wealthy life partner.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>So the market is dead and we’re not doing as well as I would like to be doing, but the world is in a recession ... We are selling luxury goods – not necessities. (But unlike Dianne, Tessa is pro-active and brings exciting “smaller” items in to tap into her market.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When people don’t have money, they are not going to cover their couch and they are not going to redecorate their office or their hotel. So, instead of doing it every three to five years, they are now doing it from five to seven years ... So, if you’re lucky enough to get one or two of those hotel contracts, it’s your bread and butter ... and give you credibility ... last year we did Sun City ... and now the Cabanas ... at Sun City. (Contracts like these carry her through the slower times.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This new stuff is not big money, but it’s fun money. I’m not doing it for the money. I travel so much. I can bring back the best in the world ... even if it’s expensive. I’m aiming only for that top end of the market. (She knows exactly who her market is.)</td>
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<td>Construct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature nurture</td>
<td>I have a natural understanding of the fabric market. (This was where nature – her sense of colour and shape and space – met nurture – growing up in a fabric related entrepreneurial household.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs recognition/ to be at the forefront</td>
<td>I created a whole design centre ... I had started it ... It feels like I sowed the seed to lift them to this better level ... I have started this new-age thinking. I felt so important, you know. I was this young woman ... New chick on the block ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiator</td>
<td>(Good negotiator)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networker</td>
<td>(She was very well-connected and used her connections) ... I’ve grown up in fashion so my parents had connections. (Despite being sick on the night of the <em>iKat</em> – Cowboys and Indians - launch she networked the whole evening. She was very professional.) Ray launch: (As with every launch and during contact with clients or potential clients, she networked all the time.) (She built up trust relationships with commercial interior designers.) (The man who cleaned the soiled fabric ... Tessa thanked him adding) You know, I’ll be using you all the time. I see you also clean Persian rugs. Give me your card. People need you all the time in this industry. Did you see my rugs in the front? Thanks for coming so promptly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>(She was very alert regarding opportunities.) Teenage fashion range; Baby fashion range; Start on my own (doing fabrics) (She saw the potential in the faux suede fabric) ... nobody else in the industry wanted it. I was the only one who took it. So I had the vision at that stage. (She enacted an opportunity when she became an editeur.) (She saw opportunities by looking at where the world was going ... e.g. buy salvaged goods.) Nobody even buys it and they’re good products. They’ve got a slight fault. If you paint it up you would not even notice it. It’s sold as a defective product in a new way. So it’s an exciting process for me. The people who sell chairs and desks don’t necessarily have colour sense ... they have to offer a service, because they have to cover the chairs. I am making it easy for them. Another turning point in my business was when I started doubling my turnover. I decided to bring out a new range – for my Contract market. Completely different form the top-end market... (Corporate fabric – another opportunity) (Designing your own fabric ... very exciting thing I had brought into the corporate market ... which nobody had thought of. Contract collection ... I went local for the first time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/ resources</td>
<td>Partnerships did not work out for Tessa.) ... they bought me out because I had a fight with this chick ... my partner, who was much too greedy for me ... (Her partner who was supposed to run the Contract market ran off with her idea) ... partnerships don’t happen ... not a good thing ... my partner left me and she took away my whole concept to customise your fabric.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Passion        | (She was very passionate about her business.) ... always wanted to do interiors ... interiors ... I really loved (hated graphics) It’s my passion ... I have always loved to redesign rooms and...I love space I’ve always had a passion for this puzzle – making people’s spaces nicer ... BUSINESS SIDE: where you had to deal with contractors and suppliers ... it was hectic. If the curtains were not hung properly you did not get paid ... that real crappy stuff ... I actually could not be bothered by it. (Fabric ranges) ... it was what I loved. Fabrics are my first love ... always ...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>My father's always taught me that in life you always have to be patient. You can sow the seeds. You can plant the information, but you've got to wait for them to grow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pattern recognition</td>
<td>(Great)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... then I started to see trends ... I did not even realise that I was ahead of the world. Everybody out there knows Tessa Sonik as the contemporary designer in the industry ... Whenever I put a trend out the market has just followed me – locally. A lot of the time I'd go to the fairs and say, 'But I've already done that.' And I'm talking international fairs ... She picked up on people's need for immediate gratification and honed in on it – retail space visible from the staircase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive bias. optimism</td>
<td>... doors close; others open ... (She reiterated her OPTIMISM (4x) ... I am a very optimistic person. I live my life with optimism. In a bad situation I always look for the lemonade; not the lemons. I try and say, 'What's the positive side of the bad situation?' And that's what I did (when 90% of her business was taken away from her). (She expected it to be easy and it was.) (Luxury goods) I want to put these on the market when winter is approaching. (She was very positive that the rugs and luxury bedding will sell well. The rugs later went onto a half-price sale.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>No pressure ... I take it in my own time as to where, what and how I want it. (She handled being very sick during her iKat launch as if she was in perfect health – using technology to help her out as she also had laryngitis.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td>(She did not procrastinate.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product quality</td>
<td>(She grew up in fabrics – her father's business - and worked with fabrics as a teenager.) (At college (18 – 19 years old) she designed a clothing range with leggings and T shirts – easy &amp; exciting.) ... my business is coordinating fabrics ... After Zara was born ... started freelancing ... decorating ... and got into children’s clothing ... it was a hobby .... I grew out of it ... not where I wanted to be. ... was offered a job – textile representative – made EASY MONEY After Ryan's birth ... I am going to start up on my own. ... “faux-suede ... amazing product ... like it was pre-sold ... sell it before it had even arrived in the country ... it was so easy to make money. I didn't have to put in any effort. It just happened. (She could distinguish between what will become big and what not.) (She lived her brand) Everything I do is about fashion and design. (Another turning point for Tessa ... she brought the contract range out ... doubling turnover. (She imported only small numbers of any product to keep it exclusive.) (When sourcing a product/textile) ... I go into the depth of it. I go through many fabrics to find the right piece for my collection. Attention to detail to get the product perfect for her market. (Her competitive edge) ... look for things that can add value to your business and that excite you. (She had a good name and credibility in the market.) (She did not entertain mediocrity.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition/need for achievement in ...</td>
<td>(She enjoyed recognition and a sense of achievement; to be the pioneer in fashion,) (She was proud to say) ... I have started ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Construct | Verification
---|---
**Reliable/responsibility** | (She shows responsibility by giving back to the world ... charities ... ecology) 
... we have an obligation to be responsible people running businesses ... to every aspect that we can ‘cause that’s the future for me ...  
(I found Tessa reliable; always delivering on her promises.)

**Resources** | (She used her resources well.)  
My father had connections. My sister had connections. So it was easy – I found a knitter ...  
I went to my dad where his partner worked with fabrics and I said, ‘Let me see what you’ve got. And maybe I’ll go out and sell some of your ranges ...  
(Shе tapped into others’ creativity as can be seen from her launches.)  
(Her first offices were) ... in a warehouse...upstairs in a derelict building where nobody saw me ... I had no overheads ...  
(Now she had) ... a sophisticated showroom ...  
(She sourced products during her overseas trips.)

**Risk taker** | Fair  
... started with only a few colours ... not the whole range ...  
I could take little bit of a risk ... no longer ...breadwinner ...  
... no overheads ... no rent ... I had room to fail ...  
I have never been scared to take a chance because I knew that if my business crashed I was not going to lose my livelihood.

**Self-awareness** | (She knew herself – what she liked and disliked and she did not compromise herself.)  
(Shе was self-aware in conflict and could be fair to someone even though she did not always agree with that person – arguments in art class.)

**Self-efficacy** | (Shе took on huge projects without doubting her ability to deliver and shе was always willing to put in the necessary effort to make it a success.)

**Sense-making** | (Tessa uses sensemaking in her business when she puts her ranges together. Each range had a story behind it and it fitted into the bigger picture – ecology, recession, upliftment project or some relevant context.  
Shе tried to make sense of the recession and the fact that she was selling luxury – top end – products.)

**Stressful situations** | There was no stress ... (except when) ... friends turned on me and became my direct competition ... (but she transcended that crisis.)  
The only time I hate this business is when I have customer hassles ... when we have problems with one of the fabrics not arriving – which I had the whole of last week ... or when we have a problem with the fabric not wearing properly – which does not happen very often. ... fabric arriving late ...  
Nobody is going to die because the fabric is late.  
I had never been stressed about where the market wants me to be. I’ve made the market where I want it to be ...

**Stubborn** | (She was, but in a passive resistance way.)

**Support** | (Shе had great support) father, sister, father’s partner (Sayed, “I’ll support you...whatever.”)  
... they helped me set up ...  
(Her first husband was very supportive.)

**Systems thinker** | (She was not naturally a systems thinker.)

**Tenacity** | (I have seen it when she worked on a painting – reworking an area until it was exactly as she wanted it. Shе took on huge projects and she was always willing to put in the necessary effort – even if it took a long time to complete – to make it a success.)
Trendsetter = courage + intuition

... I was ahead of the world ...

(She wondered what gave her the genius to see trends before they were visible elsewhere.) Whenever I put a trend out, the market has just followed me.

And actually it worked against me in the sense that sometimes I’d do things three years too early. Three years later the world has caught up – especially the commercial market. There are different markets – the very top-end sophisticated market and there’s the middle market and there’s the very low-end market who doesn’t really care. The middle market takes up to two to three years to catch up with a colour trend or fibre.

... we create market interest. I’m not a fabric house ... I am actually selling concepts...I’m a designer...I’m the trend.

These colours are very hot now...they are form (my collection of) three years ago.

I am the trend.

we follow the trend of what’s happening in the world – not in fabric, but as to where the world is going.

Thinks

(...in pictures; professionally; creatively)

Time – management

I have always paced myself to my heartbeat. (She lives to her own rhythm, but her time management was always spot-on.)

Uncertainty tolerance

(She seemed relaxed about uncertainty.)

Vision

See “Trendsetter”

(She followed global trends – holistic, not in fabric – and created fashion trends from it.)

Wealth

(She could take risks because she had enough financial support.)

Zoom in – zoom out

(Sh
NEILL - General

Note: His words appear verbatim without brackets (My words appear in brackets)
Words in CAPITAL LETTERS represent another construct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>(Neill readily adapted to change.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alertness</td>
<td>(Neill's alertness was visible in his attention to detail when he was focused on a specific task. It helped him in the many processes, but complicated his time management.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearances – professional look</td>
<td>... (recruitment agency) looked like a building site ... It did not look as professional as I was hoping for, but the office equipment was new and looked good. (It was important for Neill that he and his work looked as professional as he behaved.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>(Neill had a high need for autonomy.), I contemplated opening up my own recruitment agency at home. Now I was on my own. Although it was not my own business I could become a partner soon. I still have a dream of an own business ... ... my dream of owning a business providing me with passive income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>... increased awareness ... (after cutting his thumb with the saw.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(self-awareness)</td>
<td>I was very closely TUNED to the sprouting seeds and could easily see whether the quality was right or not. (However, his awareness was not high in general.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>... grew through referrals but TIME was my enemy ... (AFC)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... recruitment business did not take off ...</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I could feel a yearning developing for returning to the corporate market, but I always have this desire for an own business. ... owning a business providing me with passive income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Each of these projects bringing its own challenges. (AFC projects. Neill delivered successfully. He enjoyed the challenge to make objects he had never made before, but it was time consuming and it was difficult to make even the smallest of profits on them.) ... complicating the installation process ... (Walls not built perfectly straight.) I didn’t bring all the power tools I needed to adjust the back of the unit. ... find it easy to solve the problems ... (at AFC). Sprightly Sprouts: ... quality control ... learnt as I went along ... (Neill dealt with these practical challenges as each appeared. The summer heat and rain presented different challenges to winter conditions for the production.) ... transported to market either late at night or before sunrise – after or before a day at the office ... going from shop to shop was too time consuming as I had a full time management job. The delivery and individual administration would have been too time consuming. (Recruitment) ... challenges ... as almost all of the employees did not have all the necessary skills or corporate background necessary for making good placements. (He did not enjoy this kind of challenge – especially not when he felt he had no real power.) (Neill enjoyed physical challenges, but not those that were less tangible.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>(Neill liked change.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>(When Neill is stressed or hiding something he stops talking – becomes secretive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>RB ... the human resources processes were long, complex and there were lots of company politics that I did not care for. AFC creations – complexity of some tasks – wasted time and money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Construct | Verification
--- | ---
Compromise | Does not like to compromise
Confidence | (RB) ... my confidence level was not always high enough ...
(Situation at RB) ... tough on my ego and confidence ...
My confidence level dropped to zero ... (with the retrenchment).
(AFC) ... liaising with clients is building my confidence
(AFC) ... I have more confidence in AFC Creations than in the HR where I have so much more experience.
(Estate agent) I was regaining my confidence and I enjoyed being part of a bigger organisation again. (He especially enjoyed the social contact in the office – being part of a team.)
Control | (Rcorp) The next twenty months were out of control ...
(Yard) ... not waste energy worrying about something I have no control over ...
(After retrenchment) ... I want to do something that is more visible, more within my control, where I work with shorter, concrete projects...where I can see and quantify the results of my efforts. (Need for control after feeling lack of control so long.)
(RB) ... I had NO CONTROL over the things I was supposed to control. I need to work with tangible things where I feel in control again.
Counterfactual thinking | It is impossible not to wonder what would have happened if I did not take the RB job and continued with JNleRoux Consulting.
(He liked to look at different scenarios – some of which were very unrealistic.)
... if had bought more stands at Leeupoort in the nineties it would have made it possible for me to pay The Yard off quicker ...
Courage | ... the experience ... Sprightly Sprouts gave me the courage to start AFC Creations ...
Creative | I prefer making something from scratch rather than fixing things. (He did not like routine work either.)
I enjoy the creative nature of the work ... (AFC).
(Neill is also a dreamer.)
Decision making | ... when Rcorp went under I decided to become a human resources consultant ... (He made this decision quickly.)
I need to decide what to do with the rest of my life. (He agonised a lot, spoke to many people – going backward and forward on decisions.) After a long discussion and soul searching I decided to do woodwork and renovate kitchens for a living.
... business was very close to my heart ... too much for me to manage ... I decided to close Sprightly Sprouts.
I love property ... I decided to become an estate agent.
Delegator | (He was fairly good at delegating work and often worked with an assistant.)
Detail thinker ↔ strategic thinker | (Neill naturally gravitated toward detailed work. He often spent too much time on a project because he gets “sucked in” by the detail.)
My attention to detail is crucial - For once my obsession with straight lines is appreciated ... (AFC)
(With his property Neill thought strategically.)
Driven | (Medium)
Effectuation | (It took him many years to start using his primary stills to build a business.)
(AFC) ... I do not have the financial means or financial backing to lift my business to the next level.
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<th><strong>Construct</strong></th>
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| Employment/staff                  | (RB) ... went in too high and wasn’t coping - I got completely snowed under by the workload ...  
(Sprightly sprouts – 2 workers); (AFC – a few casuals); (Property – managing agents)                                                                 |
| Entrepreneur                      | (AFC – Necessity); (IR consultant – Necessity initially); (Rental property – Opportunity) (Serial entrepreneur)                                                                                              |
| Entrepreneurial family            | No                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Experience                        | I used the experience gained during Sprightly Sprouts in a board based business game used for corporate training.  
... my experience ... (The Yard) ... stories of estate agents ... success in the business I decided to become an estate agent.  
(Recruitment) ... someone with more experience (Neill) to run the business ... I had many years corporate experience ...  
(AFC) ... Of the three, one has very limited related experience and the other two have no experience at all ... |
| Fear                              | (Neill did not admit to being fearful other than the “little scared” in business.)  
(AFC) I am very excited, but also a little scared.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Financial management              | (AFC) It did not make financial sense as I took four days to manufacture ...  
(Unique items at AFC) ... not nearly enough to cover my living expenses for the month – let alone for expanding the business, saving and becoming financially secure. ... I do not have the financial means or financial backing to lift my business to the next level.  
... hourly rate for the job had dropped to the bare minimum. With month-end a few days away, I desperately need the money, but despite all my efforts there will be a shortfall. My credit card I’m getting deeper into debt.  
I do not have the financial means or financial backing to lift my business to the next level.  
(Financial challenges at Sprightly Sprouts: Prices of the sprouts fluctuated and sometimes he lost the majority of a batch due to changing weather conditions.)  
Cash flow was not ideal ... market only paid once a month, but I had running costs.  
(Estate agent) I was on commission only and my financial situation became precarious.  
(Recruitment) – administrative work ... relied heavily on me ... no additional remuneration ...  
I was steadily getting deeper into debt as my income did not cover my basic financial commitments.  
(I did not want to take him in as a partner at Purrfect Place, because I knew that when his finances improved Neill would want more freedom ...  
... sell my one townhouse to carry us through a very tight financial spot, but my student accommodation is doing well. |
| Focus                             | (When Neill grabbed a project that he was really passionate about he could be extremely focused – Sprouts – for a while, but he liked change.)  
(I used techniques to maintain his focus between spurts of income. He is a dreamer.)  
(Neill had) ... attention to detail.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
Construct | Verification
--- | ---
**Freedom** | High need for freedom, but he always dependent on support – this frustrates him. After the freedom of movement ... (AFC and estate agent) ... I found it restricting ... (recruitment business). I detested having to ask ... permission if I wanted to be out of the office. I wanted to work on my own with only one administrative person to assist ... (He did not want to answer to other people.) (When Neill wanted to join Purfect Place I said: "You are going to want to go off on exciting trips during the December holidays again...what then?") It irritates me that she knows me so well.

**Fun/excited** | Adrenalin ... excited ... a little scared ... stomach turns (During some of the AFC projects) ... I remember how good it felt ... when I built cupboards in our old house. ...fully engaged and happy ... enjoy the creative nature ... and ... concrete evidence of my energy input. (Sprightly Sprouts) ... It felt great when the whole operation ran smoothly and the market price was good ... interesting and rewarding ... I enjoyed the concreteness of the product ... (Neill has a high need for having fun.) (He was enjoying himself and had a sense of pride and accomplishment every time he completed a project.) (Estate agent) I enjoyed being part of a bigger organisation (Estate agent) When I became too excited about a possible deal ... (Neill often became overly excited and optimistic too soon only to be disappointed soon afterwards.) (Recruitment) ... treated me like an inferior ... I did not enjoy that ... (Rental property) ... enjoy the responsibilities of being a landlord.

**Gratification** | (Neill was impatient. When he wanted something he wanted it immediately.)

**Independence** | (It was not that important to him in IR/HR work although, in the past, he had contemplated going on his own.)

**Intuition** | (Neill was gullible and did not listen to his intuition.) (Rcorp where he was the loyal employee who did their difficult work.) ... lost lots of money ... I was convinced that they would pay me as I was doing so much for them. They never did ... (He believed) ... stories (of big money told by)... estate agents who have had success in the business ... (Nigerian tanzanite scam – Neill did not tap into his intuition.) (AFC) ... good gut feeling for my ability to master a job even if I have never done it before ... (but his time estimation was very bad.) When buying property Neill’s intuition stood him in good stead.) I wanted to hang onto the property business to see if it would not pick up. (Neill did not have good judgement as to when to let go – usually hanging in for too long - RCorp, AFC, Estate agent.)

**Knowledge & skill** | In AFC my HR and management knowledge and skills were largely irrelevant. (Knowledge and skills in Sprightly Sprouts and AFC developed fast.)

**Leadership** | ... my leadership was not strong enough in corporate company ... Peter wanted me to manage his business, but his sons did not want me there. ... I had no real power as he (Peter) made the rules, ignored it when the rules were broken and paid the salaries. ... One day Peter’s wife announced that she would manage the business from now. There was no way that I would work under her leadership.
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| Learning           | (AFC) ... steep learning curve ahead ... Ask questions ... absorb info ... learn as I went along ... making mistakes and re-making the same item ... learning as much as I can while in the presence of an expert (Heynz).  
(Sprightly Sprouts bought two books on sprouts and read about halfway ... looked at the pictures and read here and there ... visited potential suppliers of raw seeds for sprouting and to learn about the business from them ... (He was eager to learn.)  
(Recruitment) ... initially (they) had to assist me in learning it (the software program). I learned that working in a small start-up family business is difficult because blood is thicker than water.  

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Locus of control</th>
<th>(Extrinsically motivated.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>When things did not go well in Neill’s life he became “depressed” and secretive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mentors            | (After his retrenchment Neill no longer professional mentor/coach, I became his sounding board.)  
(AFC) I ask questions and absorb new knowledge and learn new skills almost non-stop. ... Suppliers mentor me ... also have good mentors in Heinz and Stewart ... Henk Behnken ... and the sales staff of suppliers.  
(Estate agent) ... she (Suzette) understood the business well enough for me to discuss all my deals and negotiations with her ... meeting spontaneously over breakfast ... for more than an hour ... I could get rid of frustration and clarify my mind regarding negotiations. When I became too excited about a possible deal she would bring me back to earth ... (Neill allowed his excitement to run away with him long before a deal was concluded. When the deal slipped away he went into a deep depression.)  

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<tr>
<th>Mindset</th>
<th>(Growth – always willing to learn.)</th>
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</table>
| Money              | (AFC) Trolley – 4 days work ... increase the price just to cover the cost ... (Mabilingwe) ... hourly rate ... dropped to the bare minimum ... month-end ... I desperately need the money, but despite all my efforts there will be a shortfall. My credit card ... deeper into debt ... ... completed a twenty four thousand rand job that took a month ... nett profit ... eight thousand rand ... not nearly enough to cover my living expenses for the month ... I do not have the financial means or financial backing to lift my business to the next level.  
(Sprightly Sprouts) Cash flow was not ideal ...  
(JNlieRoux Consulting) ... first time in my working life that I did not get a salary ... (Recruitment) ... offered me a small basic salary plus commission ... opportunity to earn big money ... willing to give me shares in the business ... I was steadily getting deeper into debt ... income did not cover my basic financial commitments.  

| Multi tasking      | (AFC) (Neill was very aware of the complexity – always talking about how difficult it was to find the right merchandise.)                                                                                     |
| complexity         |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Nature nurture     |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Need to...         |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Negotiator         | (Neill was trained in negotiations – many years experience in wage negotiations with trade unions.)                                                                                                       |
| Networker          | ... good at liaising with clients ... He had a small, but effective network.                                                                                                                                    |
Construct | Verification
---|---
Opportunities | (ACF) Everywhere I go I market myself – looking for job opportunities.
Neill tried to create opportunity either sharing my office space to start his own recruitment business, expanding one of my businesses (Quantum Gain) or Purrfect Place. I was ok with Quantum Gain as it used his core skills but the timing was all wrong for me.)
(He had a) ... recurring urge to buy a food franchise ... (IR Consulting) ... good human resource business...
I am currently on the lookout for a commercial property – maybe with flats on top of shops ... (Neill bought in November 2013.)

Pain tolerance | ... the electric saw ... pulling my hand down onto the saw plate ... blade ... caught my right thumb ... see a doctor three days later ... wound ... seven-millimetre gap ... the next six weeks I worked with my extremely sensitive right thumb ...
(He had a high tolerance for pain.)

Passion | ... fascination for wood ... I love the smell of wood ...
... passionate about properties ...

Patience | (Impatient. Neill can be very impatient. He did not enjoy long processes. AFC workers had to learn as they went along.)
(Neill lost interest in most endeavours quickly. Property was an exception.)

Pattern recognition | He tended to be too gullible and made emotional decision. His pattern recognition of when to trust people was not well developed.)
(In property and industrial relations processes for which he had expert mental maps his pattern recognition was more successful.)

Positive bias | I went in too high (at RB).
... try and remain positive and not waste energy worrying about something I have no control over.
(AFC) ... it cannot be that difficult. The guy who sold it to me knows how to operate it and he was not an engineer. How tricky can it be?
... Heinz will help and refer clients to me ...
... I will be able to make anything I set my mind on.
... I am good with my hands ...
... me with the measurements and specifications for the wall unit. How difficult can that be?
My wife nagged me for three months to cut my losses and move on, but I was convinced that they would pay me as I was doing so much for them.
(Rcorp)
(Business Today) ... believing that opportunity would come from this ...
(Up to the point that he can be gullible. Neill believed that it would be easy to make loads of money as an estate agent. He also got excited about a deal happening before it actually happens. Wasting lots of energy in the process.)
I was convinced that I would make more money this way (recruitment) than in the declining property market.
(Neill also lost twenty thousand rand of his retrenchment money in a scam, but it could have been his bakkie or even his life.)

Pressure | ... the pressure to complete the wall unit was on ... worked until the early hours of the morning ... (He worked well under pressure. In the absence of pressure his drive and focus decreased.)

Proactive reactive passive | (Reactive.)
(Neill deals with problems when they become a problem.)
I had to find an alternative source of income urgently.
I didn't bring all the power tools I needed to adjust the back of the unit ...
I only learned that I had to seal the wood before applying the colour or protective layers months later.
AFC Creations: do woodwork and renovate kitchens ... something that is more visible, more within my control, where I work with shorter, concrete projects ...where I can see and quantify the results of my efforts. August 2005, after ten months of doing woodwork, I closed down AFC Creations.

Real estate agency
Sprightly Sprouts: ... deliver attractive, properly packaged, bean sprouts of consistently excellent quality twice a week.
JNleRoux Consulting: a sub-contractor for other companies – Business Today (Eskom); Performance Unlimited (Anglo Platinum), (South African Defence Force).
Rental property: a townhouse (2002); a block of eight flats – The Yard (2004); 3 shop fronts in Pretoria (Dec 2013).
Recruitment business operated from Peter’s house. (Neill tried to pursue OPPORTUNITIES with me and then there was the recurring urge to buy a food franchise.)

Most of my clients treat me with respect ... (Clients who saw him as a manual labourer only, were hard on his already bruised ego.) (Neill had a need for achieving physical feats such as swimming the Midmar mile.)
(Reliable.) (Not always responsible.) (E.g. the Malilingwe wall unit. He delivered on every commitment he made to clients, but he pushed boundaries to very dangerous levels.)
(Neill utilised his resources well – this included his garage cum workshop, pick-up truck, time, and tools.) ... three assistants ... very limited related experience ... (But he used them and they learnt on the job.) ... my equipment – such as the compressor for the spray gun – is not suitable for the jobs I take on. I’ll have to upgrade. (He pushed his tools and vehicle to their limits.)
(The Yard) ... (If the building was completed) ... end of this year ... occupants in by early 2005 ... have to carry the bond for one or two months ... if the accommodation (available late 2005) ... may battle to get occupants (and will have carry the bond for a year) ... remain positive and not waste energy worrying ... (He bought equipment at random – some too light and others that he never used.)
(AFC) ... I looked at the loaded bakkie and trailer thinking: “How am I going to get this cupboard safely to Mabilingwe?”
(Sprightly Sprouts) City deep ... I carried the risk, but less hassles ... one stop ... agent fees ... Spar and Impala ... they carried the risk ... better margin ... but was not practical ... deliver to too many different retailers to match the volumes I was delivering to the market ...
(Sprightly Sprouts) I did not discuss this any further with my friend ...
(Neill became secretive when he was in any kind of trouble.)
(AFC) ... thinking that I will be able to make anything I set my mind on.
Construct  | Verification
--- | ---
**Sense making**  | Zette and I have had long hours of discussions the last two weeks. (Neill used conversations with Jeanne and me for sensemaking.) When these schemes pop up in my head I usually chat to our youngest daughter, Jeanne, about it first. Only if she thinks my scheme makes sense do I approach Zette about it.

... sitting at my desk reflecting on the past six months at AFC Creations ...

**Stressful situations**  | ... always very tense when I stain or varnish ...

Things became stressful at the recruitment business ... I contemplated opening my own recruitment agency ...

(When our financial situation became extremely bad Neill wanted to sell our house with my business and retire. It did not make sense to me.)

(Neill often became very quiet when times were very stressful – secretive.)

(,)Escapist

**Stubborn**  | (Neill is stubborn.) After a long discussion and soul searching (and against good common sense) I decided to do woodwork ...

**Support**  | (Sprightly Sprouts) ... family supported me, but Zette was not happy when I used the daughters after bedtime ... daughters helper initially ... reliable staff.

(Property) ... she (Suzette) understood the business (to serve as sounding board)

(Recruitment) ... big challenges ... no supporting staff ...

**Systems thinker**  | (Sprightly Sprouts: Neill worked far from home and he had to place systems in place to ensure the packing of the sprouts was without hiccups.) The intense nature of the business forced me to be disciplined and organised ...

(Recruitment) They did not appreciate my effort to put systems for running the business in place ... worked in an organised systematic way ...

(Neill understood the value of systems, but he did not always adhere to his own – or other – systems.)

**Tangible process; intangible (abstract) processes**  | (After retrenchment) ...wants to ... work with shorter, concrete projects ... where I can see and quantify the results of my...

(At RB) ... I did not always buy into the processes, especially when they seemed too intangible and without a real end in sight.

... how great it felt every time I completed a job ... good with my hands ... do things where I can quantify the results of my efforts ...

... at the end of the day I can look at the concrete evidence of my energy input.

I found the Business Today processes ... tough as there were many variables to keep track of during the course of the training ...

(Recruitment) ... worked longer hours ... no placement ... no commission. The PERSON-BUSINESS FIT becomes apparent here – Neill does not mind uncertainty and hard work when it is a tangible in his control, but he is very uncomfortable with uncertainty and gets frustrated with the same if it is not tangible.

(AFC) ... I find it easy to solve the problems my potential clients experience (Practical problem solving).

(Liked practical but disliked theoretical problem solving.)

**Tenacity/resilience**  | (He almost severed his thumb and after we had stopped the blood and dressed the wound with gauze and Elastoplasts strips he returned to the job) ...for the next six weeks, I worked with my extremely sensitive right thumb sticking up in the air.

After about two hours of sleep ... travel to Mabilingwe, spray and install the wall unit and return home the same evening.
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<tr>
<td>Time – management Timing</td>
<td>(AFC) Projects often took three times longer than expected ... time is my biggest enemy ... I cannot charge for all the time I spend on a project as I am competing with businesses that are fully automated and can do the job in a fraction of the time. (Sprightly Sprouts) ... time consuming driving from store to store and my time was very limited ... pricing issues and more administration ... Timing the harvesting right is very important. (Planning was very important.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncertainty tolerance</td>
<td>... with recruitment I never got a sole mandate or had any idea who else was trying to fill the same posts ... (He did not enjoy this uncertainty.) (As money came into our system Neill started to relax. His focus disappeared and he reverted back to dream mode until he ran out of money again. Although he did not enjoy uncertainty his behaviour brought it into his life continuously.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>(With property he had vision.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>(AFC: He worked six to seven days a week most of the time.) ... worked until the early hours of the morning (Mabilingwe cupboard) ... (AFC) I am busy all the time due to referrals. (Sprightly Sprouts) ... I continued packing on my own until the early hours of the morning and at four the next morning I delivered my first sixty packets to City Deep ... tired, but very proud of my first crop. ... recruitment very labour intensive ... no SUPPORT staff (Neill had good work ethic.)</td>
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**UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG**
Note: Words in CAPITAL LETTERS represent another construct.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Adaptability</strong></td>
<td>I was very adaptable when it came to business – especially to my clients’ needs. (Bridging school) ... saw the need and acted upon it ... did a workshop with Dr Lanette Hattingh, an educational psychologist, so I could use her assessment material for career guidance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alertness</strong></td>
<td>I knew from the start that these young people needed more than just academic content. ... skills ... to prepare for an interview, apply for bursaries and learn study methods ... ... learnt to spot diseases, parasites and other problems in cats – abscesses, kidneys, diabetes, snuffles, etc. in cats and ACT on it. I learnt to react quickly to signs of disease in cats – the sooner it was caught the cheaper the vet bill. I kept a close eye on the occupation of the cat hotel and questioned myself and other people if there seemed to be a drop in occupancy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>Autonomy is so important to me that I offer it to other people too. I hate it when people try to convince me to buy something. I grew up with the luxury of autonomy from a young age. I am fiercely independent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
<td>Self-awareness is something I have developed because it is essential when one mentors other people. ... my self-awareness level had to be high ... so I was aware of my agendas when I worked with Neill. I use meditation and my reflective journal to sharpen my awareness and for SENSEMAKING. I take time out every day to stay in touch with who I am and why I do what I do. I have awareness exercises: E.g. centre myself. So I take a few deep breaths ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belief/efficacy</strong></td>
<td>(Bridging school) I believed in these young people who dropped out of the system and now wanted to get back into the system. Similarly I believe in the ability of entrepreneurs to be successful provided they have the relevant attitude, mental models, skills and knowledge and hence behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
<td>I focus not to confuse business with charity – even though it may sometimes be difficult. See SYSTEMS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges</strong></td>
<td>I thrive on challenges – solving complex problems, business and intellectual challenges and turn-around systems. Other challenges I enjoyed: Teaching 2 year’s work in 10 months to people who could not do it in 2 years. ... mind is searching for alternatives .... (to our financial situation in 2007). When I am involved with processes that I do not like or that seems very challenging I look for a way to make it easier or more pleasant – e.g. cold calling. March 2011 ... three new catteries in the area ... drop in occupation at PP ... wake-up call. My research ... some clients explore other catteries ... special prices and closer to their homes. Most of these clients returned ... I love the fact that this business has its challenges. This is one of the reasons why not everybody who loves cats has a cat hotel. I welcome barriers to entry in business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>I am comfortable with change as long as it makes sense to me. I understand change for the sake of change in the world of fashion, but I cannot build a business based on it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>(Direct selling) ... committed to make every target set by direct marketing company &amp; attended all meetings and training. [NEILL: lost interest in the direct selling – although he initiated it – within the first month.] Neill thinks I am very competitive. I think competition keeps me sharp and creative and forces me to stay aware of the needs of my clients. Competition sharpens me. I enjoy having competition and I have good relationships with the competition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>I like to deal with challenges head on and talk about it. When people try to escape dealing with issues I become confrontational.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>I can compromise and about things that are not important to me, but often it will be accompanied by negotiation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I cannot compromise when it comes to quality service. I can be a difficult customer, but I communicate my expectations clearly and politely.</td>
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<td>The tougher our situation is, the more important my good name becomes to me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>The first December has taught me there is a need for my service (cat hotel) and it gave me the confidence to hang in during the tougher times. To deal with my tendency to be insecure I prepare well for everything I do that is important to me.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I do my best ... a good job ... I think the main reason is because it makes me feel good about myself. I believe that everything you do is a reflection of who you are – whether you believe it or know it does not matter as your subconscious mind cannot reason. I am not this job or this business, but both tell me – and the world - about myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Although I enjoyed teaching young adults I hated not having any control over my income – in the public sector income is not linked to level of output. I need to control the important things in my life and businesses. I put systems in place to assist me.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I do not like being controlled and I do not like to control people. I prefer co-operation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I hate it when people do not have the courage to speak their minds – e.g. the ballet school situation – as I believe true communication happens when people feel equal to one another. This is a serious problem with some labourers in South Africa as they have learnt to keep quiet to avoid confrontation.</td>
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<td>... controlling the payment of fees ... of the bridging programme for UJ ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counterfactual</td>
<td>(When we went through financial difficult times it was a pity that I no longer had the bridging school, but I could start teaching science. Practical follow-up on the thinking. “I shall make a plan.” A week later I started teaching at a tutor centre – part time while PP runs smoothly on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>I must have some level of creativity as I paint and enjoy creative writing, but I am very pragmatic. There is no airy fairy living in me.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Even when teaching I teach the students to zoom out and look at the bigger picture and then zoom in to study the detail and to repeat the process from time to time to keep perspective. I zoom in and out a few times during any decision-making process. When I zoom in I think of all the detail and I am analytical. When I zoom out I look at the bigger picture and listen to my intuition - how does going one way make me feel versus how does going the other way make me feel. ... I had to see the bigger picture ... (During Neill and my time of financial insecurity I tried to make decisions that would benefit our situation.) ... my own mentor in the cat hotel business, Lyn, also saved cats ... between 20 – 30 on her smallholding. When I started Purrfect Place I made a CONSCIOUS DECISION not to accumulate more than the seven cats I already have. Did that make me selfish...hard of heart....or just responsible?</td>
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</table>

| Delegator          | Delegation was something I had to work on – one of my personal CHALLENGES. Whether it was washing cat dishes or managing the cat hotel in my absence I trained the person. I have SYSTEMS in place to handle this and the person doing the job must understand and adhere to these systems. |

| Detail thinker ↔ strategic thinker | I usually can see where things are heading. I prefer pig picture strategic thinking, but as a physicist I learnt to look at the finest detail in solving problems. Painting and physics taught me to switch between these two modes continuously. During the tough times I had to see the bigger picture to help me cope with the UNCERTAINTY. |

| Drive              | I am extremely driven and a driver. I pushed my students hard. At the end of the year many students commented that they could not believe what they had achieved in that year. ... marking almost through the night ... I often work through the night and seldom sleep more than 4 hours per night. |

| Effectuation       | My physics skills – used when I need extra income I use my skills and build a business round it |

| Energy             | endless energy |

| Entrepreneur       | I am a serial opportunity entrepreneur. Not as big as I would like to be, yet, but ready to build Quantum Gain. |

| Entrepreneurial family | I have learnt from her example about work ethic and quality service. |

| Experience          | Experience – 14 years as cat hotel owner; Education: since 1980; Mentoring and coaching: since 1992. Experience gives me understanding and perspective in the relevant industries. |

| Fairness            | Did not feel fairly treated as a teaching in a regular school which triggered me to start my own business. Even when I was hurt and or cross with Neill I had to be as fair as humanly possible to him – it asked for great self-awareness...and looking at the bigger picture to see how I also benefit from it. |

<p>| Family              | Ballet school: Family (father-in-law) caused complications. Not wanting to upset my father-in-law contributed towards the failure of that business. Other businesses: Direct family support. I come from a home where we had freedom of speech and decision-making whereas in Neill’s family giving my opinion when it differed from theirs caused tension. The mindsets of parents have a lasting influence on the mindsets of their children. When I started extra lessons I did not tell my in-laws about my business. |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fear            | Fear of upsetting Neill’s parents when I was newly married.  
Fear of stopping too soon with anything. |
| Financial       | Financial independence is very important to me and Neill would not want it any other way.  
Starting-up costs of Purrfect Place was four times my guestimate.  
Bridging school carried me through the tough financial times of Purrfect Place ... as did teaching at Florida.  
Purrfect Place carried us through tough financial times of Neill.  
Halfway through 2003 I have repaid my Purrfect Place loan.  
2005 – 2009 was a time of great financial discipline ... and some luck – a client compensating me generously (more than my regular fee) for work. |
| management      |                                                                                                                                              |
| Focus           | I am extremely focused – goal and process. When I set my mind on something nothing will stop me.  
When I could not afford the cat hotel in the nineties I could shift my focus on what I had – the academic contracts – without deleting the cat hotel. Later when I had the resources I could shift my focus back to the cat hotel – TIMING  
2004 – only Purrfect Place – now I could focus – and it showed on the books. |
| Freedom         | When my father-in-law stopped my ballet at school, I was furious, frustrated and felt trapped, but within hours I had another business planned and I did not tell my in-laws about it.  
I did not want full time employment at UJ but enjoyed the freedom of filling my hours without being tied up with all the administrative red tape of a fulltime post. The head of the Physics Department at UJ enjoyed having someone he could trust and who did not demand a full time post with all the benefits. It was a good fit.  
I enjoy freedom – to make quick changes and doing out of the ordinary things. As a teacher I often felt trapped - being trapped in a classroom for hours day after day drives me to creative escapes. I can take on extra work. The cat hotel gives a certain freedom – although it is a 24/7 365 days a year business during the day I have gaps in which to do other things – this study, mentorships, or coffee with a friend. FLEXIBILITY  
I engineer freedom for myself. This FLEXIBILITY is very precious to me.  
2005: I appointed a cleaner at Purrfect Place to give me more freedom. |
| (need for)       |                                                                                                                                              |
| Freedom         |                                                                                                                                           |
| Fun             | Ballet school was a fun business.  
I was very excited to move the bridging school to my house ... |
| Goal focused    | Every Sunday I plan my week; before every month I plan the month and at the end of the year I set my goals for the next year.  
For every project I set goals and a timeline to make it happen for me. |
| Gratification    | ... (family went for a) long summer holiday at the coast while I stayed at home to study and write examinations ... (Delayed gratification)  
I sold all the stock to get peace of mind. Not driven by the money  
I had to wait until I was 21 to start ballet ... worked hard to catch up ... did all the exams and qualified ...  
Initial dream of a cat hotel was not financially possible ... enjoyed my part-time academic contract at the university ... when financially stronger I built Purrfect Place. |
<p>| Gratitude       | I am very grateful for every blessing and the ability to live the life I am living ...the fun of having my own businesses ... |
| Independence    | I am fiercely independent. |
|                 |                                                                                                                                              |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovative thinking</td>
<td>The utilisation of the location is ninety percent luck and ten percent innovation – making the best of what you have. Being aware of the competition makes me think of small, but important ways to keep my clients coming back … personalised, branded calendar with a photograph of their cat(s) … to put it up on the fridge. ... business asks for innovative solutions all the time – sometimes it is life changing and other times it simply makes life a little easier …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>... a gut feeling … IB would withdraw … ... know Neill well after more than 30+ years of marriage … intuitively knows when he is hiding something from me … ... people must go with their gut reaction provided that it is an informed gut reaction. ... intuitive moment at the restaurant while editing section on intuition ... I listen to my intuition, but ensure that it is pattern recognition and not wishful thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; skill</td>
<td>My knowledge and skill in both the cat hotel and people development are fairly comprehensive after many years in both businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>I use mentorship as leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Direct selling: I learnt that I do not enjoy convincing people to buy things they don’t need or want. Ballet school: The lessons learnt far outweighed the negative emotions. Extra lessons: Were my preparation into the world of coaching and mentoring. Purrfect Place: Learnt through experience – 2nd year was easier … still learning more about business and clients. Coaching: I invested lots of time and energy in learning and practicing coaching skills as there were no specific training at the time (1994) Estate agent: I did not enjoy or like the industry, but used the opportunity to learn about the industry so I could support Neill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Direct selling: I was motivated to sell all the bottles of cleaning liquid to get out of the situation and have my “freedom” back – not motivated by the money, oversees trips, etc. I am motivated to deliver excellent service because it makes me feel proud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>Not really. I work with people and at the end of the day I enjoy being outside with the cats. It is therapeutic. I like solitude, but also interaction with people. I need to balance that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>North facing orientation of Purrfect Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative</td>
<td>I needed to be self-aware so that I knew when I was coaching and when I was manipulating Neill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>I was the mentor in mentorship programmes for students and for start-up business owners. Lyn was my mentor for cat hotel and had a major impact in the early stages of my business. In the last seven years I have also mentored three other cat hotel owners – two of which opened a cat hotel within a four kilometre radius of Purrfect Place. I fully appreciate the value of a mentor now that I have mentored other people and will once again use a mentor for Quantum Gain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset</td>
<td>I am a lifelong learner. I believe that I have a growth mindset – willing to learn from my experiences – both positive and negative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Construct</strong></th>
<th><strong>Verification</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Money</strong></td>
<td>I am not motivated by money or material goods – found during direct selling. Financial independence is important to me. I use my established business to fund my start-up business – reducing the risk. It took 18 months to repay my loan for Purrfect Place. I was saving money in the tight times to keep my financial commitment of paying Jeanne’s university fees. For me business is about delivering on a promise in exchange for money, but thinking about the money does not make the money. Delivering on the promise in a way that impresses the client at a price that is sustainable has a better chance of bringing the money in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multi tasking</strong></td>
<td>B Sc (physics) honours (part-time) while writing the programme and taking care of our three daughters. Teaching at Florida, running the cat hotel and the bridging school and getting three daughters to all their extramural activities asked for detailed planning and multitasking – and from time to time it came at a price – car alarm …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negotiator</strong></td>
<td>Life is about negotiation – whether you raise children or sell products you are playing with other people’s minds. If this is done in a responsible way – keeping the other person’s best interest at heart – I feel I am building relationships that will have long term beneficial results – clients will return. I was surprised at how much I took to the process of negotiate bulk prices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Networker</strong></td>
<td>I called on my network of science teachers and parents to spread the word – Science and Maths extra lessons 1985 UJ is still part of my network. I treasure interaction with people – building relationships but I also treasure my solitude. Tutor centre and Liza were life lines me during difficult times. The veterinarian practices that know me – and I ensure that they do know me - as well as those of my clients … Word of mouth of my clients … Catteries … We are continually referring clients to one another. I have learnt that networking is not just about meeting the right kind of people. It is about keeping contact and building relationships – Harvey Mclean: Build your well before you’re thirsty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunity</strong></td>
<td>In 1992 I planted to seeds for an opportunity when I spoke to the Physics Department at UJ about a partnership - a similar service to school leavers who do not have the benefit of a bursary. 1993 UJ gave me the opportunity that I initiated in 1992. In 2001 the opportunity to take the school. … these young people (bridging school) needed more than just academic content. The mentorship programme … Enact an opportunity to start Purrfect Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pain tolerance</strong></td>
<td>Starting ballet at 21 and doing all the exams before 25 involved pain and TENACITY. Running a cat hotel without any staff and at the same time as a bridging school involved hard manual labour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Direct selling: Cleaning products did not excite me.
I am passionate about:
- ballet, but passion is not enough
- people/business reaching their true potential
- animals
I am a very intense passionate person. I don’t walk slowly, I don’t talk slowly and I don’t live slowly.
I hated the fact that I had no CONTROL over the size of my income as a teacher and that my income was not linked to performance. FAIRNESS.

I hated the fact that I had no CONTROL over the size of my income as a teacher and that my income was not linked to performance. FAIRNESS.

Patient when teaching, training or mentoring ...
Impatient when people are not adhering to the system and then compromise the business ...
I am impatient with bad service delivery and inferior products.

With experience I have developed the ability to recognise patterns in my businesses.

I am convinced that it will succeed as a business in the long run. My positive bias was realistic.

When we moved to Johannesburg I needed stimulation ... advertised extra lessons in mathematics and physical science at the high schools in the vicinity of our house.
Cat hotel design ...

When under pressure at work ... take every day one-day-at-a-time focused and in the evening zoom out to get perspective; SYSTEMATIC.
Under pressure stress I become pragmatic and proactive.

Pro-active – when I see situations coming I manipulate them to minimise loss. – e.g. losing property or with direct selling products = to get rid of the products – not lose money or face.
(When Neill could not bring in enough money to meet his commitments: A week later I started teaching freelance at a small private school close by. I also lined up some students for extra lessons to improve their marks in Physics.

Ballet school: 1984 - 1985
Mathematics and physical science extra lessons – initially planned to fit in with daughters’ programmes: August 1985 – 2013
Part time contracts for UJ: 1990 – 2000
Mentor (Eskom & Transnet – UJ) engineering bursary holders from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and the trigger to my mentoring and coaching business: 1992
Bridging school - expansion on my idea of the previous year: 1994 - 2003
Purrfect Place - boutique hotel of cats: 2001 -
My part in AFC Creations (2004 – 2005) was supporting Neill.
... started building on the coaching process that I had developed between 1995 and 2006 through reading and practicing on Neill, our daughters and my students.
Quantum Gain – mentoring: 2006 -

I provide excellent service ... the business will grow.
the tougher the financial situation ... the more important my good name became to me.
My facility and service must always live up the to Purrfect Place standard of excellence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition/need for</td>
<td>I have never been able to keep a low profile ... I have a deep need for achievement ... a need to be proud of my businesses. As a child ... learnt ... (value of) recognition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable/responsible</td>
<td>Took responsibility for the UJ programme ... Neill said I had an over-developed sense of responsibility ... I am extremely responsible. My reliability have clients coming back and referring friends and family to me ... businesses built on referrals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>I believe in the building of resilience through perseverance ... only one road to success: through the challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>... lack of resources contributed towards the failure of ballet school. I learnt to build resources prior to starting-up a new business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taker</td>
<td>I am a risk manager and do not take uncalculated risks. 2002 - 2003: used teaching to carry me financially until the cat hotel was profitable enough. Purrfect Place: Low incidence of non-payment ... working with a network ... market in “safe” places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Ballet: I was probably the only person in the world that thought I could qualify – and I did. I never look at the odds against my making it. I “calculate” whether I think it can be done. I do not ask other people what they think when I want to do something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perception</td>
<td>Bridging school: I saw myself as the bridge between students and their dream career. Purrfect Place: I see myself as the provider of a luxury service. Quantum Gain: I believe that I have the quantum of energy to assist others bridge the gap between where they are and where they would like to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense making</td>
<td>Extra lessons versus ballet school Neill always says, “Suzette will only rest about something when she understands it.” I can accept and work with anything when I understand it. I bought a painting to remind me not to do something for a living that I really do not enjoy. I use story-telling to help the students make sense of the “difficult” work. ... meditated daily and kept a reflective journal to make sense ... I made sense of how to manipulate Neill in times when our lives where tough. I saw a flaw in my strategy ... while in cat hotel about the business ... (Making sense in the cat hotel.) Why do I always feel I have to do the ‘purrfect’ job? Yes, because I love cats and I want them to get the best deal possible, but I also want the parents have complete peace of mind – knowing that their kitties are well cared for. However, I think the main reason is because it makes me feel good about myself. I’ll think less of myself if I know I am not doing my best. I am building maps of who I am as a business and as a person by the way I live. I am not this job or this business, but both tell me about myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Honest, reliable staff with a positive attitude is very important. The business owner cannot be in all places at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy – zoom in</td>
<td>Thinking of ways to engage the students ... have a strategy in place as we were working under tight time constraints ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy – zoom out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I become pro-active ...

Ballet school: ... stressful for me ... no scratches on the floor ... I clean up every time, stressed when I saw him ... anticipating complains, but it did not stop me running my business.

Moved from Port Elizabeth to Johannesburg and had to find a house. I knew only one other person ... no network or income. PROACTIVE ... found a house and started extra lessons when my second daughter was a few month old.

Use physical labour to distress after a difficult time ... cleaning out my study ...

Building the cat hotel ... Neill's ... big arguments with the builder

Insulin injections ...

Financial stress was extremely difficult to handle.

Purrfect Place and teaching ... lowered stress during day time ... night time ... stress catches up with me. ... used knowledge and skill from my Yoga to relax my body in an effort to get some sleep. When this proves too difficult to accomplish on my own I go to my office and lie on the couch listening to professional recordings to guide me through the relaxation process. This always works for me.

... nerve wrecking ... things were not in my hands but touched my life directly and were not going well ... Neill's activities from time to time between 2004 - 2010.

... almost constant noise of the electrical machinery of AFC Creations ... effects on Purrfect Place and could cause problems with our neighbours ...

Stressed that I may lose property with Purrfect Place on ... I manipulated situation ... wanted to ensure it did not happen. Pro-active.

We are all different – stress over different things. I very rarely stress over my business. I do everything within my ability to deliver the best service and be alert to clients’ needs and reactions and then I relax about it.

Nothing I see or hear changes the images I have in my head. I think things through until it all makes sense to me and then I do it.

According to Neill I am very stubborn.

Father-in-law offered provisional support – school hall ... no real support ... he cancelled it when I needed it most ... when my other income fell away ... lack of support structure contributed towards the failure of ballet school.

Neill took the daughters on a summer holiday so I could write exams.

With Purrfect Place I have had a great support structure in place.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
</table>
| Systems thinker             | System ran smoothly ... bridging school  
I have had systems to run every part of every business and even my household runs on systems – it saves prefrontal cortex space.  
Being very organised helped me to keep my stress level lower during busy times.  
I survived physically during 2002 – 2003 by being disciplined, organised and systematic  
... developed systems to ensure the safest, cost effective way to ...  
(Estate agent) I put a system in place for doing cold calling that incorporated community involvement.  
Over time I have developed systems to smooth the operation of every aspect of Purrfect Place.  
Sunday afternoon ... planning the week ahead ... logistics table of cat movements for the week and cat food orders and even plan the meals for the family.  
Combination of system and experienced worker ensures smooth flow. When I have relief staff in December I need to communicate with more words.  
Workers understand the system and the need for it ... frees up pre-frontal cortex space to solve “problems”... less time and energy wasted worrying.  
... typed out lists of cat hotel processes and stock stuck on the cupboards ... make it possible for me to go away from time to time as there are three people who know the processes.  
I have procedures in place and if I am a little concerned about a client I have a plan of how I to deal with the client ... It is your heart – not your head – that needs to be soft. |
| Tenacity/resilience         | If you are determined you will overcome the obstacles  
You can achieve your dreams if you are willing to do what is necessary.  
... the thrill of increasing the business turnover and profit margins. I needed the adrenaline. It was time to start a business on the side. |
| Thrill/fun/adrenaline       | ... had to be good to get through everything I wanted to do.  
Spent a lot of time listening to Neill ... often putting myself under pressure ... getting to my responsibilities later than usual.  
Had to learn to get timing right though. Timing of Purrfect Place was great.  
... working by appointment rather than keeping regular hours I can use the rest of the time to my best advantage ....  
Do not mind time pressure. |
| Time – management Timing    | The possibility of losing Purrfect Place stressed me during our tough financial period.  
Neill used our access bond to its limit. Debt increased ... additional stress. I manipulated Neill to keep hid focus and to lower financial uncertainty ...  
Financial uncertainty is the only uncertainty that stresses me out, but I managed to get through a long period of uncertainty (June 2004 – Dec 2009).  
UJ: I was comfortable getting last minute contracts and never demanded fulltime employment. Uncertainty in that aspect did not cause any stress at all.  
Purrfect Place: I can never tell what bookings would look like, but I build relationships with my clients, deliver quality service and market the cat hotel in new ways - spending very little time worrying whether the bookings will come. |
<p>| Uncertainty tolerance       |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>I believe in the power of visualisation and it is important to have a clear vision of where you want to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visualisation/</td>
<td>I tend to have smaller visions than the big entrepreneurs because I am not a big risk taker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visual stimulus</td>
<td>As a mentor I have to do the reality checks. I am not intimidated by people with grand visions as long as they can come up with a way of making it reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Painting – a visual reminder that I never want to earn a living doing something I really did not enjoy at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>I tend to over-commit (teaching at school + bridging school + PP) ... often down to four hours sleep a night ... I am a workaholic and can squeeze activities into small pockets of time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Reducing the concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Constructs</th>
<th>Final constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Multi-task</td>
<td>See Pressure tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability and willingness to Learn</td>
<td>Growth versus fixed mindset and the ability and willingness to learn through failure and mistakes. Reflective sensemaking ability and self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to delegate</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence and Interpersonal relationships – not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Focus</td>
<td>Ability to focus and Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to take on multiple roles</td>
<td>See Pressure tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active – proactive/reactive</td>
<td>See Agility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Agility of opportunity enactment including pro-activeness versus reactiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alertness</td>
<td>Alertness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to clients/customers</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence and Interpersonal relationships – not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to competitors</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence and Interpersonal relationships – not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Autonomy, independence and need for control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability and accessibility bias</td>
<td>Availability and accessibility bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business fit</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business perception</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causation &amp; effectuation</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence and Interpersonal relationships – not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Insecurity, confidence, overconfidence &amp; arrogance; personal perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfactual thinking</td>
<td>Counterfactual thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Courage, fear of failure and risk taking propensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity &amp; innovativeness</td>
<td>Creativity &amp; innovativeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making – intuitive or rational</td>
<td>Rational versus intuitive decision-making and pattern recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Determination, persistence, resilience &amp; stubbornness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver/driven</td>
<td>Driver/driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Enthusiasm, fun and passion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escalation of commitment</td>
<td>Escalation of commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Constructs</td>
<td>Final constructs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family impact – entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Impact of family and mentors on the mental maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear (of failure)</td>
<td>See Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial management &amp; pricing</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>See Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratification – instant &amp; delayed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illusion of control</td>
<td>Illusion of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>See Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Locus of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>See Family impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindset – growth &amp; fixed</td>
<td>See Ability and willingness to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for achievement</td>
<td>Need for achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for control</td>
<td>See Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating skills</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence and Interpersonal relationships – not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking skills</td>
<td>Emotional intelligence and Interpersonal relationships – not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunistic</td>
<td>Opportunism and the utilisation of resources and support systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Optimistic and negativity biases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>See Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>See Determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal perception</td>
<td>See Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning fallacy</td>
<td>Planning fallacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure tolerance</td>
<td>Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, discomfort/pain and pressure are stress management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product knowledge &amp; skills</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product quality</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional knowledge &amp; Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to challenges</td>
<td>Reactions to challenges and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to change</td>
<td>See Reaction to challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective sensemaking ability</td>
<td>See Ability and willingness to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Reliability and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representativeness</td>
<td>Representativeness or law of small numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>See Determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource utilisations</td>
<td>See Opportunistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>See Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk taking propensity</td>
<td>See Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales skills</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
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<td>Original Constructs</td>
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### Appendix D: The individual MMSES profiles

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Please see Table 7.10 in section 7.4 for the key to these profiles.
### ALLON

#### SPIRITUAL
- Alertness and awareness
- Honest with self
- Intuitive decision-making
- Pattern recognition
- Self awareness

#### COGNITIVE
- Analytical, rational decision-making
- Bias management
- Challenge management
- Change management and adaptability
- Complexity tolerance
- Counter-factual thinking
- Delayed gratification
- Entrepreneurial learning (willing to)
- Goal focused
- Mindset growth/fixed
- Reflection & sense-making
- Uncertainty & ambiguity tolerance

#### COMMUNICATION
- Commitment
- Communication and listening skills
- Negotiator
- Non-verbal communication of self-perception
- Reliability
- Responsibility
- Vision

#### EMOTIONAL
- Affect in decision-making
- Business fit
- Creativity and innovativeness
- Enthusiasm and excitement
- Passion

#### PERSONAL
- Autonomy independence freedom
- Driver
- Fear management
- Locus of control
- Need for achievement or recognition
- Determination and persistence
- Driven
- Resilience
- Risk taking propensity
- Self-efficacy
- Stubbornness
- Tenacity

#### INTERPERSONAL
- Delegate
- Family (entrepreneurial)
- Mentor
- Networker
- Ability to relate to clients
- Ability to relate to staff
- Support systems in place

#### PHYSICAL
- Agility
- Business and industry specific skills
- Discomfort/pressure tolerance
- Financial management
- Means driven
- Multiple roles
- Quality of product/service
- Resource management
- Sales
- Stress management
- Systems thinking
- Time management
- Work ethic
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Appendix E: TA$^2$URE$^2$C Examples

There are many examples of Allon, Natasha, Neill, Tessa and Suzette changing from a mental model that was not supportive of their success to another more supportive one. Additional to the example in Chapter 7 here are two more to support the construction of the TA$^2$URE$^2$C steps for changing mental models.

Example 1: Suzette – control issues

Until 2011, I believed that I had to have physical control over everything that happens in my business. It even upset me when Bonny, the cleaner at Purrfect Place, changed the positions of the cat food containers as I would have to look where a particular drum of food is in the arrangement of drums. Until the day Natasha said to me that she had to relinquish some control in order to grow her restaurant chain. I needed that trigger to realise that I was limiting my growth by spending time and energy controlling physical situations that did not influence the quality of my service or the turnover of my business. The drums are labelled, we can all read and the additional time spent in the food room was under five minutes a week. It only tied my down to low impact physical details in the business. I realised that my need for physical control was probably initiated by the example of my super-neat and rather controlling$^{277}$ mother. My mental model changed from “I have to control everything.” to “Know what it is that I have to control and control that.” I started to trust that the logistics would run fairly smoothly on the systems that were in place; and it did almost all the time. I still have a certain need for control but now I focus it on the control of finances and marketing that have a greater impact on the bottom line of the business.

Example 2: Neill – passive income

Neill had a deep-rooted belief that he could earn passive income by buying a food franchise. During one of our mentoring conversations I challenged him to explain to me how a food franchisee can earn passive income. However, Neill held on to this belief looking for possible ways of doing so. During a follow-up conversation months later he confessed that he realised that a food franchise – even if he

$^{277}$ My dear mother’s way of coping with the complexity of being the breadwinner and raising teenagers
appointed a manager – would not be passive income. So he started looking for other forms of “passive” income and in November 2013 he decided that the closest he would come to that was using managing agents for his rental properties. He wasted a good amount of time and energy obsessively looking for sources of passive income, but now he is working towards expanding his commercial property and enjoying it.

Example 3: Natasha – control

Natasha is a self-confessed control freak and this was confirmed by people who work with her. When Kevin, from Famous Brands, challenged her she realised that to franchise tashas on her own could potentially be too much of a challenge. After much deliberation she sold fifty-one per cent of tashas to Famous Brands thereby losing a fair amount of control over tashas. However, she ensured that she retained control over those aspects that directly influenced the tashas brand – amongst others menus and the decor of the restaurants.

Table: Additional examples of changing mental models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suzette - Control</th>
<th>Neill – Passive income</th>
<th>Natasha – Control</th>
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<tr>
<td>Natasha’s words of how she had to change her mental model about control.</td>
<td>Challenged by mentor</td>
<td>Challenge by Kevin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I realised I was pedantic</td>
<td>He thought about options, but eventually realised that he was unrealistic</td>
<td>She realised that she could not cope with all the responsibilities of a restaurant chain on her own</td>
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<tr>
<td>I confessed that I wasted time and energy on actions that made no difference to the bottom line.</td>
<td>He acknowledged it during a mentoring conversation</td>
<td>She went back to Kevin to discuss a possible deal</td>
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<tr>
<td>I stopped sweating the small stuff.</td>
<td>He let go of the food franchise idea</td>
<td>She signed a deal with Famous brands – relinquishing 51% control of tashas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found more important aspects of the business to control. Envision/see where the new thinking can take me.</td>
<td>He started looking for other ways of earning passive income. He realised that his rental properties might provide some level of passive income</td>
<td>She franchised tashas – nationally and then internationally</td>
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<td>She conceptualised ways of maintaining the image and quality of the tashas brand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suzette - Control</td>
<td>Neill – Passive income</td>
<td>Natasha – Control</td>
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<td>Put more energy into networking with veterinarians.</td>
<td>He as managing agents for his student accommodation, but decided to manage the commercial property personally</td>
<td>She instituted the tashas’ Standards of Excellence and Project Kung Fu(^\text{278}) to control the quality of the brand</td>
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<tr>
<td>New way of thinking works well and becomes habitual.</td>
<td>He has systems in place to help manage his rentals and is planning to buy more property as soon as he is able to.</td>
<td>The tashas’ Standards of Excellence and Project Kung Fu were activated and in use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{278}\) Please see Natasha’s narrative in Chapter 4
## Appendix F: Forms

### Appendix F1: Field note writing protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name &amp; Surname of Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date &amp; time of meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr of this meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Meeting venue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reason for choosing this venue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tone of voice** – reflect when listening to the voice recording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In general</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What caused the voice of the participant to become excited in a positive/negative way?

What caused the voice of the participant to become tense?

Are there any other tonal changes present? Discuss.

What deductions can be made from this change in tone of voice?
## Body Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In general</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What changes in body language happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was discussed that may have influenced the body language in this way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What deductions can be made from this change in body language?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General impression of the mood/behaviour of the participant.**

---

**Nuisance factors during this meeting & how they influenced the quality of the interview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Were there any biases on my side during the course of this interview?</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If yes: Did I manage it correctly during the interview?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How am I going to deal with these so that they do not influence my interpretation of the data?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did this interview stir any negative emotions in me?</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it did: How did I ensure that it did not influence the balance of the interview?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How am I going to ensure that it does not influence my interpretations of the interview?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflecting on the meeting</strong> – covering detail other than those already addressed. What interpretations can I attach to these?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Personal notes: What are my feelings about this meeting? |
Aspects I would like to discuss during our next meeting
Appendix F2: First meeting with a participant

1. Introduce myself as an entrepreneur and entrepreneur mentor and Doctoral student at the University of Johannesburg – Department of Industrial Psychology [more specifically in PiPL]
2. Thank the person for this opportunity to meet.
3. Present the person with the Letter of Introduction from the University of Johannesburg. Give them the opportunity to read through it.
4. Ask the person to tell me a little bit of his/her self – general background and make the odd note of names, dates, etc.
5. Explain that the focus of my research is the sense-making of entrepreneurs in their businesses with the aim to develop an intervention process for mentoring entrepreneurs to greater success in their endeavours. Introduce the person to the process of qualitative research – that it is NOT about a tick list or questionnaire,
6. It is about listening to entrepreneurs’ experiences and viewpoints and stories and to appreciate their decisions. What this specific process will involve
   a. Number of expected interview sessions – minimum three meetings of an hour each plus emails and phone calls. This process will ask some time and effort from them, but also provides one with the opportunity to learn about yourself and the entrepreneurial processes as one tries to explain it to an understanding, interested and sympathetic listener.
   b. The qualitative approach requires an understanding/appreciation of entrepreneurs’ businesses – it is first and foremost not interested in facts or information, but in their experiences and thoughts of how they started and coped with business challenges, what inspired them and what kept them going when the going was tough. Naturally this asks for revisiting experiences – some very persona – which may not always be pleasant. I need to ensure them that I will appreciate them sharing these with me and will at all times keep it confidential.
   c. Explain to the person taking part in the study requires that they need to allow me to conduct follow-up interviews/email letters in order to clear up things I don’t understand, etc.
   d. How will they provide me with their “stories” – orally or written format?
e. Do they have journals, photographs or other potential sources of data that they would be willing to share with me? Establish whether the person is comfortable with my using an audio/voice recorder? If the person is, discuss how I shall manage it – i.e. switching it off when the participant requests me to do so. Explain how I shall manage the data, the safety of the data and the anonymity of the participant.

f. Explain that the participant is free to opt out of the process at any time that he/she feels compelled to do so.

7. Discuss possible benefits for them in the process. Let the person identify specific benefits and list these as it could increase his/her buy in into the process.

8. If the person is interested to participate in this study
   a. Go through the Consent Form together and fill it out in duplicate – participant and researcher each keep an original.
   b. After we have signed the informed consent form, discuss exit options
   c. Fill out the form – basic biographical information – below.
   d. Decide on the method of data collection (orally or written or combination) – knowing that this may have to be adjusted somewhere along the way.
   e. Decide on the date, time and venue for our next meeting
   f. Ask the participant to prepare the story of “their business” for our next meeting. If we decided on oral data – they will bring along that which will jog their memory and if we decided on written data they will bring me a written document. In the case of a written document I shall ask them whether it is possible to email it to me the day prior to our meeting so that I can read through it before we meet.

OR

9. If the person does not want to continue with the process thank him/her for his/her time and wish them everything of the best
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Original information</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name &amp; Surname</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date &amp; time of meeting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting venue</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Contact details</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cell</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landline</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>email address</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personal details of Participant</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest qualification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical wellness</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Business details</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Business</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business Address</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of business</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starting date of business</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If business no longer exists, when did it close down?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If business no longer exists, why did it close down?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F3: Informed consent agreement

This agreement serves to confirm that the research participant mentioned below gave her/his consent to participate in a qualitative study regarding the mental processes and sensemaking of entrepreneurs in business. The research participant agreed to share with the researcher his/her experiences and views to the best of his/her ability.

The undersigned participant understands the purpose and nature of this study and understands that her/his participation is voluntary and that s/he may withdraw from the study at any time. The participant further grants permission for the data collected to be used in fulfilment of the requirements for the doctoral degree: D. Phil (PiPL), including an article, and any further publication(s).

The data collected will be used for research purposes only. The researcher undertakes neither to disclose the identity of any of the participants, nor the origin of any of the statements made by any of the participants without their permission. However, the undersigned participant understands that in terms of the ideals of the study’s methodology that the researcher is obliged to make use of verbatim statements from the transcribed taped interviews and/or excerpts from solicited essays and/or any other visual (e.g. photographs) in order to illustrate the world of the research participants and their perspectives in the research report.

The participant undertakes to give a true representation of her/his perspectives and/or experiences.

I..............................................................the undersigned participant, agrees to meet at mutually agreeable times and duration(s) or other means of communication, e.g. by email, as reasonably necessary to enable the researcher, Suzette J le Roux to complete the study. I further acknowledge that I received a
cosy of the agreement and that I may contact any one of the under-mentioned if I have any subsequent queries.

Signature of research participant: ______________

Researchers: ______________

Title, initials and surname of participant: _______________________________________

Date: ____________________________________

Tel: _____________________________________

Email: __________________________________

Place: __________________________________

Promoter: Prof. Willem Schurink
Cell: 082 779 2294
E-mail: wjs@webafrica.org.za

Co-promotor: Dr. Mary Anne Harrop-Allin
Cell: 082 785 8936
E-mail: Maryanne@harropallin.co.za

Prof WJ Schurink

Dr Mary Anne Harrop-Allin