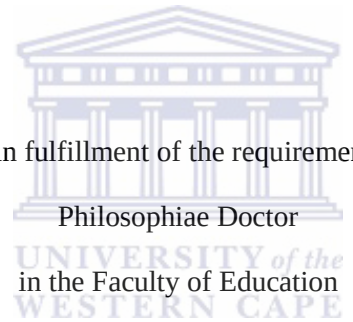
RE-IMAGINING 'NONTRADITIONAL' STUDENT CONSTRUCTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF ONE SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

Colette Ann February



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KEY WORDS

1. Studenthood
2. Nontraditional Students
3. Traditional Students
4. Higher Education
5. Widening Participation
6. Lifelong Learning
7. Discourses
8. Institutional Culture
9. Student Nomenclature
10. Foucauldian Genealogy

ABSTRACT

What does it mean to 'traditionalise' and 'nontraditionalise' students in higher education today, and why would it be important to re-imagine 'nontraditional' students, you may ask; how would re-imagined 'nontraditional' students make a difference in higher education presently? And, indeed, what would happen if this kind of re-imagining does not take place?

Worldwide, a greater and more diverse student population participates in higher education now more than ever before as the literature suggests an increase in 'nontraditional' students commonly regarded as *adult students, part-time students, working college students, widening participation students, new wave students, millenial students and undocumented students*, as examples. Policy imperatives, such as widening participation and flexible provision, have influenced new kinds of student identities beyond the familiar and fixed student categories, of 'traditional' and 'nontraditional', conventionally in use. Problems of 'nontraditional' student identity are compounded when the language and nomenclature in higher education perpetuate only certain kinds of 'nontraditional' student constructs, denoting mainly an increased numerical presence for certain student groups while underarticulating blended student identities and corresponding educational needs for what is arguably a new and growing segment of 'nontraditional' students in higher education today. While 'nontraditional' students are widely reported in the literature as having both an increasing and prevailing presence in higher education internationally, scholarly interest in students constructed in this way appear to be relatively recent and disproportionate when compared with the literature pertaining to higher education students regarded as 'traditional'.

But who are these 'nontraditional' students in higher education currently, and are their identities by definition distinct from each other? What is currently denoted by this 'nontraditionalising' nomenclature when the literature progressively regards 'nontraditional' students as the 'new majority', the 'new traditionals' and the 'new normals' in higher education presently? And how different are they from students who may still be conventionally categorised as 'traditional'?

This study's central research question led to the beginnings and continuities of 'nontraditional' students at one South African university, and probed the reasons for what comes into view as varied and uneven

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institutional portrayals of students historically constructed as adult learners, lifelong learners, recognition of prior learning (RPL), after-hours and part-time students.

A Foucauldian-inspired genealogy guided this documentary analysis of institutional understandings of 'nontraditional' student constructs at the University of the Western Cape and influenced the shaping of five important considerations regarding the University's 'nontraditonal' student mosaic.

(i) There are different ways of knowing, and therefore naming, 'nontraditional' students at the University of the Western Cape, and the value in doing so facilitates new ways of thinking about transitioning categories of 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' students institutionally and beyond.

(ii) Certain 'nontraditional' student constructs are more visibly associated with particular periods of institutional history than at other times. While some 'nontraditional' student constructs are endorsed institutionally, others are insufficiently institutionally articulated and still others are yet to be recognised.

(iii) Shifts in institutional understandings of UWC's 'nontraditional' students have resulted in varied institutional responses in teaching and learning provision for students perceived as such. However, where successes of 'nontraditonal' students have come to light, institutional interest in its replication for other students has been less evident, and may be now the first step in traversing the 'traditonal'-'nontraditional' student binary.

(iv) There is value institutionally not to regard 'nontraditional' students as part of a 'traditional' vs 'nontraditional' student binary and rather to understand students as part of a continuum of higher education student identities, which invite traversing from all students during the student journey with their academic flourishing as the goal, and learning from the successes of 'nontraditional' students, where these have been institutionally reported.

(v) Re-imagining the ethos of lifelong learning would usefully uncover what remains institutionally emblematic in terms of the University's legacy, and what may be aspirationally inscribed into the new student mosaic connecting formerly 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' students for the first time as UWC's lifelong learning students, as opposed to lifelong learners.

Serving all students as part of a continuum beyond student binaries of 'traditional' vs 'non-traditional' and 'fulltime' vs 'part-time', for example, may be a key affordance of re-imagined student nomenclature.

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Recommendations from this study, therefore, encourage awareness and possibly a review of the use of all student nomenclature at the University towards better understanding the 'traditional-nontraditional' range of student.

For higher education ecologies worldwide, this study suggests that generalisations about 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' higher education students provide a window only on two main 'types' of student participating in higher education. However, new and transitioning student constructs must also be reflected in the language of higher education presently. When this is not done, the educational identities of *all* students in higher education are only partially understood and their educational experiences may be compromised.

Re-imagining nontraditional student constructs is recommended alongside discourses that make possible teaching and learning arrangements for all higher education students, who find themselves shaping their studenthood along an increasingly blended 'traditional'-'nontraditional' continuum in higher education presently.

Finally, this study puts forward that perpetuation of jaded nomenclature and misnomers for 'nontraditional' students in higher education may be an indication that the more fundamental and necessary re-imagining of the higher education curriculum for current times is not yet underway.

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs in higher education: a case study of one South African university* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete reference.

Colette February

December 2016 Signature:……

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....1-22

> "South Africa's universities are a miner's canary for wider issues in higher education. Income inequality and widening participation, while extreme in South Africa, are issues for many countries. … And the rise of xenophobia and unjust discrimination against refugees is a problem that South African universities share with every university in Europe," **(Hall 2016).**

INTRODUCTION

Who are higher education's students in the world today, and do the conventional 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student categories include all students currently participating in higher education, thereby denoting the full extent of student identity currently?

It is likely there may no longer be typically 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' students in higher education presently, and yet certain constructs of 'nontraditional' students persist as fixtures in higher education nomenclature as the literature confirms an increase in participation of 'nontraditional' students. What are the reasons for this? What purpose does it serve when categorisations of 'nontraditional' students predominate in the language of higher education even though nontraditional students are, at the very least, enigmatically regarded as the 'new normal' in higher education today?

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> *"…What does a non-traditional student look like? I must admit when I started this blog, I thought a non-traditional student was someone who looked like me. Middle-aged woman, with kids, with little money. But I read this article on Huffington Post* (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/patricia-mcguire/low-income-students_b_2421259.html), *and I realized I was stereotyping. …"* **(Tiffany. 2013, January 9. *The Blog for the Returning Student.*)**

> *"… By the numbers the Non Traditional students are in the majority, which would seem to make them the new Traditional. … My hope is that higher education will not categorize students into traditional or nontraditional, but work alongside them as people who seek knowledge and skills that will help make them more productive and creative so we can continue to seek answers and solutions to new problems of today and tomorrow,"* (Paul Marquardt mamakatephd • 2 years ago. **(Jenkins, R. 2012, October 15. *The 'New Traditional' Student.*)**

In the first blog, as a returning student Tiffany's relatively recent acceptance that not all ''nontrads" need to look like her allows her to accommodate a view that much younger and even more financially resourceful higher education students could also be regarded as nontraditional students in higher education today. Reacting to a recent article written by a Professor Jenkins for the Chronicle of Higher Education, the reflections in the second blog are from a teacher working at a small private Christian liberal arts university that reportedly separates students into traditional and nontraditional categories. In this blog he also mentions that majors are offered to one group that the other cannot take. Paul is essentially seeking better ways of recognising all higher education students and making knowledge meaningful and inclusive for all enrolled in higher education.

The suggestion from one of the bloggers that not all nontraditional students may be recognisable even to others categorised as such is indeed a very interesting notion, and makes me wonder whether all 'traditional' students may have similar observations amongst themselves. That is to say, are there qualities, responsibilities and concerns that may be common to all students currently, which, for example, has led to depictions of contemporary students as: "…*new wave students* blending work and studies..." **(Francis, 2006, p.49).**

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It may be a relatively recent phenomenon that certain kinds of 'nontraditional' students may have more in common with certain kinds of 'traditional' students presently than with their counterparts conventionally considered to be part of the 'nontraditional' student pool. These 'traversing qualities' may be an outcome of blended learning and flexible provision of teaching and learning arrangements relatively recently available to most higher education students. And why do these considerations matter?

This study contends that names currently ascribed to 'nontraditional' students for the most part denote partial student identity and do not clarify why 'nontraditional' students are constructed as such in today's higher education landscapes. Since strands of the literature construct them as the 'new traditionals', it is possible that both ambivalence in higher education's lexicon may delay appropriate teaching and learning arrangements necessary to ensure educational flourishing for an appreciably growing segment of the student population currently described in these terms. Re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs, therefore, would be an important consideration towards re-affirming transitioning identity of greater numbers and more diverse students, and with their academic flourishing as an uppermost educational goal.

The argument in **Chapter One** is made in terms of the following considerations:

(i) Who is the 'nontraditional' student in higher education today? They are usually stereotypically portrayed as employed students, preferring after-hours study, of a mature age, do not reside on campus and take responsibility for running a household in some form or another.

(ii) However, the literature pertaining to 'nontraditional' students is relatively recent by comparison to research on 'traditional' students in higher education.

(iii) Educational identities and needs of the majority of higher students may have gone beyond what the categories of 'traditional student' and 'nontraditional student' might suggest in higher education today, and yet the 'traditional'-'nontraditional' student binary does not appear to be the subject of much? scholarly research.

(iv) In addition, there does not seem to be scholarly inquiry into why certain constructs of 'nontraditional' students are perpetuated in the language of higher education when 'nontraditional' students are reportedly an increasing majority in higher education.

(v) Within the contexts of widening participation and flexible provision in higher education, the literature does not shed light on why special institutional provision needs to be made for 'nontraditional' students, as if they were still a small group of students, when the definition of 'nontraditional' student in higher education ought to have expanded, denoting that they may be a very large, predominant student group currently, and what this means currently in terms of educational provision.

(vi) As the case of the University of the Western Cape shows, 'nontraditional' students have been institutionally constructed in different ways and at different times with different institutional ends in view.

(vii) There is value in understanding UWC's 'nontraditional' student constructs historically, and attempts at re-imagining students described as such may bring into view important understandings of who UWC's 'typical' nontraditional students really are, and the extent to which constructs currently perceived as 'nontraditional' may well extend to a much broader layer of students within the University's charge.

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1. SECTION 1: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

In contextualising this study, the anchoring observation drawn from the scholarship is that higher education contexts and ecologies continue to change, and universities worldwide find various ways to serve students from all walks of life seeking a university education.

The literature confirms unprecedentedly large student numbers participating in higher education since the 1970s and also points to appreciable changes in "the 'blurring, cracking and crossing' of traditional discipline boundaries … accompanying the expansion of higher education into professional training" **(Couchman, 2008, p. 82).** *Who am I now?* is the question Couchman poses to higher education stakeholders within the context of rapid transitions taking place in higher education landscapes, and one which I pose in terms of my own study: who are the 'nontraditional' students in higher education now, and where do they learn?

The literature says something interesting about learning markets - have they changed since antiquity? Are they less 'traditional' now? Interestingly, in ancient times teachers travelled to their students, and "… in the 18th century there were circulating schools" **(Jarvis, 1999, p. 254).** In contemporary contexts a new version of the learning market is evident "as universities reach out … and offer their courses in other countries - by distance, or by going and teaching in another country, by having outposts, or through franchising arrangements" **(Jarvis, 1999, p. 254).**

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Presently, there are more than twenty-six thousand universities (http://www.webometrics.info/en/node/54) across the world varying in size, history and function. By way of example, "… the Indira Ghandi [National] Open University has approximately 3 million students; the University Center in Svalbard … has about 300" **(Graham, 2013, p. 5).** From one of the university's electronic newsletters, the IGNOU started as a university in 1987 with approximately 4000 students and currently "serves the educational aspirations of about 3 million students in India and in 42 other countries!" **(Aslam, 2014, p:2)**. The IGNOU electronic newsletter of January 2014 also clearly articulates the role of its students. The University perceives them as *distance learners* and an *adult learners* with the following undertakings towards the University: "an active seeker of information, an active reader, a good manager, being punctual, keeping in regular touch with my study centre, making the maximum use of multimedia resources, keeping a record of all communications with the University" **(Aslam, 2014, p:4)**.

Noting a view from the scholarship that the university should be the embodiment of a certain kind of openness **(Soudien, 2014, p. 906),** a contextual question pertinent to this study is how IGNOU's 3 million students are constructed within the language of higher education presently. Noting that they are portrayed as distance learners and adult learners, they would be conventionally regarded as 'nontraditional' students in higher education, and would the educational experience of millions be legitimized as such; as 'nontraditional'?

It would seem that higher education may be catapulted towards new forms of imagining and is also cautioned against a "poverty of imagination" **(Barnett , 2013, p.7)** that could stand in the way of serving all higher education students in the best way possible. This study attempts an exploration of some of the "feasible utopias" and "better ideas" **(Barnett , 2013, p.8)** in re-imagining 'nontraditional' students in higher education presently.

What are the starting points in this re-imagining of a new kind of studenthood in higher education, and what is the role of nontraditional student constructs within this? Two main contextual points inform this study: diversity in nontraditional studenthood within the context of widening participation in higher education, and the experience of a South African university with almost a fifty-year history of embracing 'nontraditional' students as part of its institutional life.

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1.1 My understanding of 'construct'

At this point it is important to put forward my understanding of the concept: 'construct', which is understood throughout this study to mean a concept which may have a variety of subjectively constituted elements.

1.1.1 Diversity in 'nontraditional' studenthood and widening participation in higher education

It is a given that studenthood is always subject to continuous change and transformation **(Snow, 1989)** , and the interest of this study is linked to the literature that points to ways in which 'nontraditional' students in various forms (*adult learners, part-time students, working college students, widening participation students, as examples)* may be shaping a new kind of studenthood for all students in rapidly changing higher education contexts **(Slotnick, Pelton, Fuller, & Tabor, 1993; Schuller, Raffe, Morgan-Klein, & Clark, 1999; Perna, 2010; Riddell, Edward, Boeren, & Weedon, 2013).**

1.1.2 The case of a South African university

Expansion has been one of the main features of higher education in the past fifty years and, drawing on Trow (1972), Altbach makes an important observation that modern-day universities take on a multiplicity of strategic priorities: "In country after country, higher education, once the preserve of the elite, has now been transformed into a mass, and now almost universal, phenomenon. … Most academic systems now contain institutions with a variety of missions" **(Altbach , 2007, pp. 160-161)**.

This study specifically turns its attention to ways in which 'nontraditional' students have been and continue to be depicted at the University of the Western Cape, and takes into account how local and global influences may have assisted in shaping its institutional portrayals of 'nontraditional' students in certain ways over five decades.

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) is a South African university with a unique history shared among formerly disadvantaged higher education institutions under apartheid, and also has a widely-acknowledged and long-standing reputation for part-time provision, adult learning and lifelong learning. As such, these are perceived to be a distinct 'nontraditional' student constructs at the university. However, I argue in this study that a re-imagining of these constructs may be applicable beyond 'nontraditional' students at the University.

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1.2 Motivation

I am motivated at a personal level to explore this research question. I did not obtain a matriculation exemption when I matriculated from high school in 1981. My principal at the time discouraged me from waiting for an age exemption, of 23, before I could study at university and suggested that I rewrite my matriculation examinations to improve my marks in certain subjects. I waited for an age exemption because I couldn't face the pressure of rewriting my matric exams. At 23 years, a very long part-time student journey began with university studies and one which has not yet ended. In terms of the conventional constructs, as *a mature-age nontraditional student*, I obtained my undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications through part-time study.

My reflections are the following: Was I successful because I was sufficiently adaptable as *all* students are expected to be in terms of university regulations; was I able to conform to areas of University life that other 'nontraditional' students might have experienced as inflexible in relation to their needs? And does

it make a difference if my formal qualifications have been obtained as a 'normal' 'traditional' student or as a 'nontraditional' student; has something been delegitimised along the way, if it is the latter?

1.3 Importance

A potentially important contribution is made to understandings of 'nontraditional' student constructs in higher education in three main ways:

1.3.1 Developing Knowledge of the Institution

Knowledge of the ways in which nontraditional students may currently be perceived at the University potentially helps to say something original about ways in which their educational and/or learning identities are currently understood in a particular higher education setting, and which in turn may influence educational provision based on these understandings.

1.3.2 Developing Knowledge of Nontraditional Students Currently

Any knowledge of the ways in which nontraditional students themselves may be contributing to institutional discourse on nontraditional student constructs would provide valuable perspectives on how they may be influencing their own academic advancement at the University.

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1.3.3. Developing Knowledge for Personal Growth

As a mature-age student, this study also makes apparent which nontraditional student constructs fundamentally orient me as a new researcher, and offers an opportunity for engagement for my learnings and unlearnings in relation to the study's findings. I have worked and continue to study at the University of the Western Cape as the specific research site. My particular experiences I have as a researcher of part-time studies and as a mature-age nontraditional student at this university place me in a good position to revisit many assumptions I hold about nontraditional student constructs.

1.4 Summary

This section outlined the main contextual factors framing this study, and introduced UWC as a formerly historically disadvantaged South African university as the case.

The main contextual reasons as background to this study were identified as follows:

- The rapidly changing nature of universities and the way in which most continue to reposition themselves across the higher education landscape is a core contextual component of this study. There are also universities currently who openly orient themselves as being 'nontraditional', and some are used as examples here.
- Understanding transitioning concepts of nontraditional studenthood such as lifelong learner, adult learner, and part-time student within the context of an ever-changing higher education environment has been highlighted.
- The perception that the language and nomenclature of higher education may be in a state of transition with regard to 'nontraditional' student constructs has also been raised.

My own reflections and co-constructions as a 'nontraditional' student within higher education are motivators for this study, and my own experiences as a 'nontraditional' student in particular higher education contexts have influenced the directions of this study in certain respects. My reflections in this regard have contributed to evolving insights that have assisted in shaping the conceptual framework of this study, as indicated in the next section.

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2. SECTION 2: DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Insights that have evolved

2.1.1 'Mature' vs 'Nontraditional' Students

Initially the construct of a *mature student* in higher education was the overarching construct, and relatively recently this was replaced by the construct of a *nontraditional* student. The insight that age is not the iconic marker of 'nontraditional' student constructs in my study paved the way for the term 'nontraditional' student, which allows many more facets of the construct into the discussion.

This study has mainly drawn from the literature pertaining to widening participation and lifelong learning, as well as from an appreciable and growing number of scholarly studies addressing teaching and learning provision for an increasing, and continually diversifying, 'nontraditional' student segment of the higher education population.

2.1.2 Perpetuated constructs of nontraditional students as part of the language higher education

Binary assumptions pertaining to 'academic' and 'non-academic' **(Conway, 2013)** in higher education were at first regarded as tangentially analogous to my study but they are now regarded as highly relevant for the analogy as they offer an understanding of a critical context in which 'nontraditional' student constructions continue to play themselves out and evolve in higher education today alongside a growing category of university professionals categorised as 'non-academics'.

Interesting and relevant to my study, an appreciable segment of 'non-academics' are regarded as 'new professionals' in higher education today and as Gornall explains, they have a 'direct stake in the educational process, but do not yet see themselves as a group, as a new group or as a professional grouping… It is not clear … which workplace union they might be in - or which professional journal they might read!" **(Gornall, 1999, p.45)**.

As raised in the literature, these insights are explored further during the course of this study: do the terms 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' as student categories promote the best possible educational currency for higher education students today and for the future, and is it possible that students currently categorised as 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' might have a better educational experience without this distinction within a new student paradigm - the '*new normal*'? What are the improved possibilities in higher education nomenclature?

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2.1.3 Student constructs beyond the concept of "nontraditionality": the new traditionals

The concept of 'post-blackness' **(Toure', 2012, p.31)**, believed to have originated in the art world, plays a role in shaping thinking beyond racial categories and stereotypes in the world today. A similar type of thinking may need to take root, in the form of 'post-nontraditionality', a notion to work from in order to begin ascribing the most appropriate student identity and educational service to the majority of higher education students worldwide.

2.2 Present Focus

In this overview I show my own representation of the main strands of scholarship selected as relevant to my study, and I also show how I've located my own argument in relation to these strands. There are three

areas in the scholarship which this study addresses in more detail (✓) and another area which is even closer to the focus of this present study (✓✓).

Table 1
Locating this study in relation to selected debates about "Nontraditional" Students in Higher Education

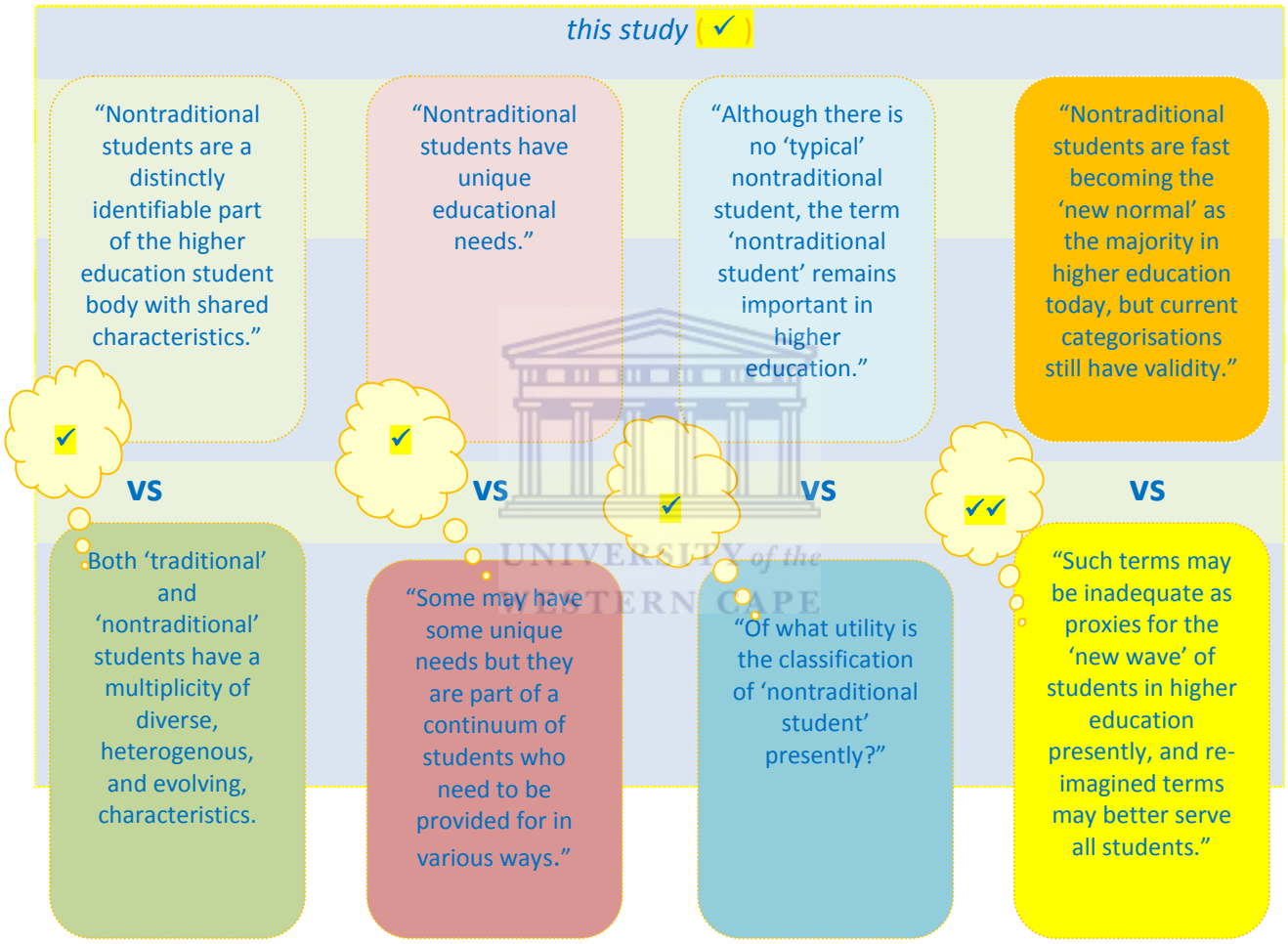

Table 1 reflects my interpretation of some of the debates in the literature concerning 'nontraditional' students. For example, I align myself to scholarly insights suggesting that 'nontraditional' students are complex and multilayered (Kasworm, 2010, p149) and strands of the scholarship which question the utility of the term 'part-time' and 'nontraditional' student for higher education students within the context of massification of and widening participation in higher education (Waller, 2006).

As a useful 'longitudinal reference' to my study, I have drawn on the works of **Schuetze & Slowey (2000 and 2012)** as their interesting comparisons in ten countries over a ten-year period raise important insights about constructs of both traditional and nontraditional students and universities.

I also agree that conceptions are changing both in relation to lifelong learning and nontraditional students in higher education **(Schuetze & Slowey, 2000, p.12)**. And I would like to think that my study contributes in some way in putting forward my view on what I perceive nontraditional students to be within the context of one South African university and where possible future constructs may be heading. Accordingly, I find the assembled picture of *nontraditional student constructs* helpful, even though they may be so primarily for developed countries.

Table 2
"Nontraditional" students and lifelong learners: constructs over time

2000 Schuetze & Slowey	**2012** Slowey & Schuetze
Massive changes in higher education in the developed countries in the last decade of the twentieth century. Two main themes dominate the academic, policy and popular debates on higher education: *massification of higher education* and *lifelong learning.* Ten country case studies in relation to *lifelong learning* and *nontraditional students* in higher education.	While the concept of lifelong learning featured prominently in national and international education policy discourse, the implications of this concept for *higher education* remained underdeveloped. Despite competing interpretations, and the inherent complexity of translating the concept into practice, we thus find that the interrelationship of lifelong learning and higher education has in fact grown in prominence in international education policy discourse since our 2000 analysis. **Slowey & Schuetze (2012:8)**

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As the insights from Table 2 suggest, while it is noted that over a decade the inter-relationship between lifelong learning and higher education has grown in prominence, it remains nevertheless a complex backdrop against which 'nontraditional' students in higher education are engaged with in this study.

2.3 Summary

The conceptual framing of this study is encapsulated in the following summary of terms:

2.3.1 Widening Participation

There are different widening participation agendas , and as Patsarika (2014) points out, "…examination of various widening participation schemes in the UK points to the marginalization of a great many young people from high-quality education and progression to higher education, particularly in the face of the University fees increase (The Sutton Trust, 2010)" **(Patsarika, 2014, p.9).**

2.3.2 Conceptual and attrition models of nontraditional students in higher education

As part of the refinement of my ideas, I have re-included a strand of the scholarship where conceptual and retention models specifically began to address concerns pertaining to nontraditional students attending traditionally-oriented universities.

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2.3.3 The 'new student' in higher education today

My thinking has also been refined and extended by scholars who write about the 'new student' in higher education today, and I began to wonder whether all of the names ascribed to nontraditional students in higher education may at times be serving as proxies as the scholarship grapples to fully know, and appropriately name, the 'new student' in higher education today.

2.3.4 'Nontraditional' staff and students in higher education

A refinement of my ideas also led me to include a strand in the scholarship researching longstanding challenges associated with inappropriately articulated roles and identities of a growing segment of higher education staff, who are named 'third-space professionals' because their work roles and functions seem to regarded as institutionally important and yet not part of the mainstream of university work. These 'nontraditional' staff may be analogous in interesting ways in relation to my present study because they are likely to be serving segments of a student population who may also be regarded as institutionally important and yet not part of the mainstream of university work.

2.3.5 "Post-nontraditionality": student constructs now and in the future

While the preliminary review of the literature created the opportunity to survey various understandings of the nontraditional student constructs in higher education, an ensuing refinement took the form of a closer examination from an interest only in present constructs of nontraditional students in higher education to an equally important interest in what the future possibilities may be in terms of constructs possibly for all students.

Therefore, a refinement of ideas in the ways outlined has significantly augmented the scope of this study to include considerations of nontraditional constructs beyond the present, and interestingly also consider constructs in relation to some members of university staff whose roles and identities may be perceived as peripheralised and not clearly articulated within the context of the massification of higher education.

2.3.6 Unresolved matters

Interestingly, and both in terms of a preliminary reading and more focused reading of the literature, the following considerations still stand out as unresolved, and this will be borne in mind as part of the study:

- **Academic literature vs educational policy literature:** some scholars seem to suggest that many of the 'nontraditional' constructs evident in the literature have their origins within the ambit of educational policy, rather than academic literature. This is a very interesting view because it suggests that some student constructs may have an origin outside of higher education institutional environment, which both higher educational professionals and students alike are in the end held accountable to. This view is flagged for further engagement as part of this study.

- **Administrative vs pedagogic constructs of higher education students:** the literature does not seem to provide clarity on the extent to which constructions of nontraditional students in higher education function predominantly in administrative or pedagogical domains within University settings. Establishing clarity in this regard is also included as a feature of this study.

3. SECTION 3: RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Articulation of Research Problem

Higher education's constructions of 'nontraditional' students fragment student identity instead of presenting a clear and unambiguous portrayal of this growing segment of the student population. It is

institutionally important to understand what each 'nontraditional' moniker may denote so that this reportedly larger mosaic of 'nontraditional' students could receive the most appropriate, and best possible, educational experience higher education can give.

At the same time, higher education settings differ worldwide, and the 'nontraditional' student experience at one South African university as the case study offers insights which may be institutionally valuable beyond the University of the Western Cape, and in similarly constituted higher education contexts across the world.

My research question, therefore, is the following:
How has the category of the 'nontraditional student' been constructed at UWC over time, and what might the implications be for new approaches to conceptualising students?

And the important related question is:
Is there a different way of knowing, and naming, the nontraditional student experience at the University of the Western Cape?

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3.2 Aims and Goals

This study works towards knowing whether there may be new ways of thinking about nontraditional students in higher education, and how a new conceptualisation may contribute towards current institutional understandings regarding the ongoing academic advancement of *all* students at the University.

This study, therefore, potentially makes a contribution both to ongoing institutional awareness and institutional policies insofar as it may be relevant to the academic advancement of nontraditional students, broadly defined, and newly defined.

3.3 Specific Research Objectives

In working towards answering how nontraditional students are currently thought about and named at the University of the Western Cape, this study also considers how current University discourses could possibly lead to new or different ways of seeing and naming nontraditional students the view to providing

the best possible educational provision for students considered to be part, and possibly even beyond, these student categorisations.

4. SECTION 4: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Research Methodology: A Qualitative Approach

Creswell's (2007) insights pertaining to the need for a complex and detailed understanding of a particular issue provides reassurance that I have made the correct choice when I selected a qualitative research paradigm for this study.

> "We also conduct qualitative research because we need a *complex*, detailed understanding of the issue. … We conduct qualitative research because we want to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue. We cannot separate what people say from the context in which they say it – whether this context is their home, family or work" **(Creswell, 2007, p.40).**

The decision to locate this study within the field of qualitative research has been informed by the work of Denzin and Lincoln (2008), in which the qualitative researcher has the choice of being one of many kinds of *bricoleur*: interpretive, narrative, theoretical, political, and methodological, and as such qualitative research is '*inherently multimethod in focus'* **(Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.7).** The image of a fiddler or tinker invoked by Denzin and Lincoln was appropriate methodologically in guiding the document analysis processes in this study:

> "The product of the interpretive *bricoleur's* labour is a complex, quilt-like bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage - a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. This interpretive structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole" **(Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.9).**

Discussion in Chapters Five and Six attest to the suitability of adopting a qualitative paradigm for answering my research question, and why orientations associated with postmodernism, poststructuralism and deconstructionism - "what Lather (2007) called postcritical theories" **(Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p 14)** are good facilitators of a discussion around my research findings. Particularly in relation to

the multiplicity of notions for 'nontraditional' students, I believe the chosen orientations allow for an open engagement and differing perspectives in this study.

4.2 Research Method: A Case Study

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context) **(Creswell, 2007, p. 73)**. At the same time, case study research is not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied, (i.e., a case within a bounded system), others present it as a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy, according to **Stake (2005).**

Selecting the University of the Western Cape (UWC) as the case study has highlighted distinct institutional understandings of 'nontraditional' students in higher education. And this would be with reference to the ways in 'traditionality' and 'nontraditionality' are interpreted in higher education presently. Positioning my case study in this way also serves to address a methodological concern in case study research identified by **Hyett *et al* (2014, p.6)**, who support earlier observations made by Thomas (2011) that numerous case study descriptions "were often not adequate to ascertain why the case was selected, or whether it was a particular exemplar or outlier."

The main reason for selecting UWC as the case study is that UWC's own experiences of non-traditionality - as an historically marginalised higher institution clearing its own path to academic excellence - is in itself a significant factor in influencing types of student constructs on its campus. That is to say, in this particular period of South Africa's history, it would seem that students at the University actively and uniquely constructed much of their own student identities and roles in relation to their studies and university governance; therefore, in the early period of the University's history, students might be regarded as discoursing subjects in creating a particular kind of nontraditionality. Research findings have also pointed to the University's exceptional institutional legacy of part-time provision and lifelong learning.

From the overview of the types of case study indicated in Table 3, this study is best characterised as an intrinsic case study.

Table 3
Types of Case Study

Instrumental Case Study	Collective Case Study	Intrinsic Case Study
The researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue.	In a collective case study (or multiple case study), the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue.	In an intrinsic case study the focus is on the case itself (eg. Evaluating a programme, or a student having difficulty…) because the case presents an unusual or unique situation.
Adapted from **(Creswell, 2007:74)**		

This research has taken the form of an intrinsic case study, which focuses on the case itself, (Creswell 2007). The case of the University of the Western Cape presents the institutional environment for this study, and the researcher has attempted to identify and understand institutional portrayals of 'nontraditional' students at the University. Because the research focused on how these discourses had been developed at the University, the fullest possible spectrum of institutional depiction of 'nontraditional' students could be accommodated within this research method.

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4.3 Strategies of Inquiry: Foucault and Smith

As strategies of inquiry, this study has drawn upon on two research approaches, as inspired largely by Michel Foucault and also Dorothy E Smith, respectively, in exploring the research question in the fullest possible way. Derived approaches from the work of Foucault (History of the Present) and Smith (Institutional Ethnography), respectively, have been successfully combined by scholars of a recent study, and their insights are noted accordingly:

> "Useful and challenging as this mode of inquiry is, the use of archaeology and genealogy limits one to the exploration of the construction and relations between discourses and discursive practices. If the researcher wishes to bring into the picture the view of situated agents … in a particular social setting in time and place, it requires alternative methodological tools such as those developed by Smith and her followers" **(Satka & Skehill, 2011:4).**

With reference to Foucault's method, firstly, and drawing on methodological reflections offered by **Fejes (2006**) of the advantages of a Foucauldian-inspired genealogical approach for his own research, this study has adopted a similar approach and argues that it would be an appropriate form of research inquiry to understand institutional constructions of nontraditional students at the University of the Western Cape in this way:

> "What I have done is to analyse a history containing ruptures and irregularities, not progress. … The discourse of lifelong learning, where everyone should learn all the time, might seem to be the only way to reason about the adult learner today. However, I would argue that there are always several discourses present with some becoming the dominating ones and others are being marginalized" **(Fejes, 2006:81).**

Similarly, this study uses an adaptation of Foucault's genealogical method to facilitate a flexible, open and iterative probing that places the emergence of any possible contingencies and unintended consequences at the core of an unfolding institutional story of ways in which nontraditional students are currently being constructed at the University of the Western Cape.

The second strategy of inquiry is with reference to D E Smith's institutional ethnography, and this study has been enriched by this approach that values the experiences of people as important data sources, as noted from **Deveau (2008).**

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Within this case study, I drew on selected concepts from Foucault's works, and most notably, a 'history of the present' approach is used as well as the tools of 'archaeology' and 'genealogy' as an appropriate and effective way of understanding the constructions of nontraditional students at the University of the Western Cape.

In her own research on the history of social work in the Republic of Ireland, Skehill (2007) contends that Foucault's methods offer "the possibility that history can be done in a way where the past is not constructed in simplistic terms of progress or decline" **(Skehill, 2007, p.450)** and it is meaningful "to use history as a means of critique of taken-for-granted 'truth' in the construction of practices and discourses" **(Skehill, 2007, p.451).**

Similarly, **May (2005, p.66)** suggests that we return to Foucault's writings "… not to discover, for instance, whether the penal regime of torture ever overlapped with that of rehabilitation, but to recall the contingencies of our own history … . We return to his writings because he speaks to us, from out of our past - … - of who we have been and who we are, and he does so in ways that allow us to imagine who we might become. …Our task, the task that remains to us, is to live those possibilities."

The selected concepts and methods derived from Foucault's works has provided interesting and imaginative ways towards understanding current constructions of nontraditional students at the University of the Western Cape, and exploring what the future possibilities may be.

4.4 Guiding questions: Bacchi

Within the case study, the following kinds of documents comprised the largest part of the documentary analysis: the official records, policies and annual reports of the University, as well its news bulletins and other media intended for the campus community and beyond. Similarly, the official records, policies and reports of selected Departments within the University.

To guide my reading of these documents, the questions for policy analysis, as presented by **Bacchi (2009, p. xii),** served as important reference points :

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- What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
- How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
- What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
- What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
- How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended?
- How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

4.5 Summary

As a case study, a Foucauldian-inspired genealogy and elements of an institutional ethnography as inspired by D E Smith come together as an approach towards optimal engagement with patterns in institutional data. The researcher's own positionality, over the years as a part-time and full-time

nontraditional higher education student and also a university worker, has also been taken into account as part of this study.

5. SECTION 5: OUTLINE OF THESIS

5.1 Chapter Two: Literature Review

The scope of this literature review has been informed mainly by ways in which nontraditional students in higher education are seen and problematised by the scholarship. The selected area of scholarship includes studies about higher education students within contexts of lifelong learning, widening participation and the massification of higher education. The literature reviewed also focuses on certain contestations and debates in landmark studies and conceptual models focusing on 'nontraditional' students and the considerations here are whether nontraditional student constructs might have already transitioned beyond particular conceptual and attrition models. South African higher education, and the kind of nontraditional students at a particular South African university, is also part of the scope of this study. The scholarship has been consulted from distinct vantage points in trying to understand the thinking behind 'nontraditional' student constructs in higher education. The argument presented in this chapter informs the way in which the documentary analysis discussion takes place in Chapters Five and Six.

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5.2 Chapter Three: Methodology

In terms of a *research methodology*, reasons for choosing a qualitative research paradigm are elaborated upon, aspects of post-structuralist perspectives relevant to Foucault's archaeology and genealogy are presented, and key research concepts relevant to the methodological aspects of this study are explained.

Concerning *research methods*, motivations for choosing a case-study approach are presented. Within this selected case study approach, motivations are presented for being guided by Foucault's "history of the present approach" and Smith's "institutional ethnography", as appropriate *modes of inquiry* in relation to the research question.

As part of this *case study*, I explain the value of documentary analysis as *the practical form of inquiry*.

5.3 Chapter Four: Case Study

The case description of the University of the Western Cape presents UWC as a relatively young, growing, medium-sized South African higher education institution, where the norm of behaviour of its student body appears to be 'nontraditionalised' and 'hybridised' institutionally. UWC student identities appear to arise from particular experiences of studenthood both in apartheid and post-apartheid contexts.

5.4 Chapter Five: Presentation and Discussion of Findings - Part 1

Research data presented in this chapter suggests that the University's constructs of 'non-traditionality' and 'non-traditional' students come across in distinctly different ways in different kinds of institutional texts. Should there be evidence of 'nontraditional' student discourses in their own right? Should 'non-traditional' students be constructed as 'speaking subjects'? How and when do they speak? Which nontraditional students at UWC may be seen to be at the heart of their own student discourse, as 'discoursing subjects'? These considerations are addressed in this chapter.

5.5 Chapter Six: Presentation and Discussion of Findings - Part 2

The analysis in this chapter is conducted by studying selected institutional documentation for closer scrutiny. Particular UWC's texts may have constructed 'nontraditional' students differently over different periods, and as informed by particular knowledge communities and institutional practices, as part of UWC's history.

It emerges that some nontraditional student constructs at UWC may be subsets of larger ones. And this would be part of the reflection. For example, does lifelong learning as a construct continue to inform ways in which the University has thought about its adult students and its RPL students on its campus, or has a planned adult student presence and RPL student presence at the University opened up new ways in which the institution might think about its espoused lifelong learning mission and practices?

5.6 Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The aim of this study was to re-imagine ways of thinking about higher education's nontraditional students, who are increasingly regarded in the literature as the 'new majority' in higher education today.

Conventional ways of seeing higher education students as ‘traditional’ and ‘nontraditional’ constructs no longer hold, and transformations in higher education have brought about perhaps both an amalgam as well as an amalgamation of a student set which might be called the ‘new nontraditionals’ in higher education currently.

For the foreseeable future, re-imagining only a name, or host of names, for nontraditional students is neither useful, nor likely, if there are no conversations towards new discourses that make possible innovative teaching and learning arrangements for higher education’s ‘new nontraditional’ students.

This study’s findings contribute towards the groundwork of such a discourse, and do so by providing evidence and traces of ways in which nontraditional students at one South African university can be thought about differently, and with the educational provision of ‘new’ nontraditional students in mind.

New discourses about ‘nontraditional’ students may already be underway; taking into account their preferred study modes and self-ascribed student statuses, and possibly also the flexibility required in teaching and learning arrangement towards their academic flourishing.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW..... 23-82

INTRODUCTION

> "…in reality, there are a multiplicity of factors that may lead to a student feeling 'nontraditional' in a particular institutional context … even if on the surface they appear to meet the 'traditional' characteristics; and likewise, a student who may appear to be 'non-traditional' for one or more reasons may not consider themselves to be so and may identify more strongly with those characteristics they have in common with 'traditional' students" **(Trowler, 2015, p.299).**

Student constructions in higher education worldwide range from 'typical' to 'atypical', and are mainly outcomes of policy agendas promoting largely untested belief about their currency across various higher education ecologies. That is to say, higher education nomenclature may depict certain kinds of students favourably or unfavourably, and in doing so may either legitimise or compromise the educational identity of these students. Accordingly, the widening disconnect between contemporary 'nontraditional' student identity and its ascribed jaded monikers may compromise operationalising of appropriate teaching and learning provision for most, if not all, higher education students currently.

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It is noteworthy that higher education research has until the 1970s been characterised as "a very fragmented and parochial area of research which hardly deserved the umbrella term 'higher education research' " **(Teichler, 2014, p.396)** and "even the most widely used terms such as 'universities', 'students' and 'professors' have different meanings from country to country" **(Teichler, 2014, p.397).** Accordingly, while new modes of participation proliferated in increasingly diverse higher education contexts for the past 30 years, "…the flood, as was apparent from several of the 2000 country studies (Schuetze & Slowey, 2000), has not lifted all the boats, and equity of access is still a problem and a challenge at present" **(Schuetze, 2014, p.47).**

Increasing enrolment patterns in adult higher education have also presented challenges for decades, and have led to scholarly observation that the "international community of adult higher education will continue to have difficulty in comparative discussions and collaborations, until a common set of terms and definitions is created" **(Kasworm, 1993).** More recently with reference to South African higher

education policy documents, it would seem that flexible learning terms, such as distance learning and blended learning, also have "no commonly accepted meaning globally; rather flexibility is a wide range of responses to different situations, to different needs, underpinned by different discourses" **(Jones & Walters, 2015, p.65).**

These unmistakable cracks in the language of higher education present an opportunity for the light to shine through on attempts at re-imagining student constructs for what seems to be a growing continuum of 'nontraditional' students in higher education today, and increasingly so for the undocumented student, who may also be ascribed a 'nontraditional' status, as a proxy, while an appropriate higher education identity is under construction. Understanding how certain 'nontraditional' student terms may have arisen in particular higher education contexts, therefore, is one way of beginning to know the amalgam of student identities currently inhabited possibly by all students, and may also clarify the kind of provision they may need to flourish in contemporary higher education contexts.

SECTION 1: DEMARCATING THE SCHOLARSHIP

> "Rethinking the notion of "nontraditional" from the historical perspective of state normal schools is an important reminder not only of atypical students' rich history in higher education, but also of what higher education institutions and society stand to lose in turning away from the mission - whether official or unofficial- of serving these students" **(Ogren, 2003, p. 658).**

The 'atypical' students whom Ogren describes may not only have contributed to a rich history but presumably also influenced the content and provision of higher education in important ways. Of the various representations of 'nontraditional' student constructions evident from the literature, this study aligns itself with scholarly interest pertaining mainly to the range of 'nontraditional' students depicted as lifelong learners, part-time students, full-time students, adult students, adult learners, mature students, international students and undocumented students in higher education. The research I encountered seemed most prevalent from countries where there is a lineage of centuries-old universities, and it also seemed that research contributions were becoming more prevalent in parts of the world socio-economically similar to South Africa, where relatively new universities exist alongside more established ones. At this point it may also be pertinent to describe the students currently participating in South African higher education landscapes, as characterised in recent task team reports by the Council on Higher Education (CHE):

> "As we move from an elite system to one of wider participation, more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds enter higher education. It should be noted that such shifts take particular forms in different institutional types. Historically disadvantaged institutions continue to admit predominantly economically deprived students and historically advantaged institutions continue to admit mainly middle-class students" **(CHE, 2016, p.147).**

Scholarly matters addressed in landmark studies and conceptual models focusing on 'nontraditional' students led to further questions in my own study about current nomenclature for 'nontraditional' students, especially when the identities and needs of a growing pool of 'nontraditional' students worldwide may have already transitioned beyond the monikers to which they are commonly and unproblematically ascribed.

Already three decades ago, a strand of the scholarship brought out the complexity carried within the 'nontraditional' student construct by describing such students as "*appropriately cumbersome*" **(Bean & Metzner, 1985, p. 489).** It is an apt depiction of the 'nontraditional' student as an unsettled construct, paradoxical in many ways and underscores the reason for my own study. Depicting 'nontraditional' students in this way raises awareness that higher education nomenclature seems slow in producing appropriate terms for what is arguably a growing and very different population of 'nontraditional' higher education students in current times.

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The scope of the literature review has therefore included as relevant all scholarly engagement that encouraged my looking in new ways at the 'nontraditional' student mosaic, as well as my attempts at new kinds of thinking about nontraditional students constructs in portraying variously constituted 'nontraditional' higher education students today.

Also included in the scope of this review is scholarly engagement concerning patterns of portrayals of 'nontraditional' students at similarly constituted universities to the South African university as the case in this study. In this regard, the scholarly inquiry into the following concerns was considered relevant to my study.

1.1 Key Concepts and Conceptual Challenges

Problematising nontraditional student constructs is at the heart of this study and are therefore addressed in every chapter, and as identified throughout the case study.

Nevertheless, it is important to state which strands of the scholarship have been drawn on for their relevance in amplifying attempts at re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs, and scholarly engagement pertaining to the lifelong learning and the adult student has been particularly relevant in terms of this study.

1.1.1 Constructing Students within Higher Education's 'Traditions' and 'Nontraditions'

It is a decided conceptual challenge that students are constructed as 'traditional' or 'nontraditional' in accordance with higher education norms that are considered universalised for all higher education students. The literature was therefore consulted to understand how the construct of 'traditional' student has come to be regarded as the legitimised, stable construct for students named as such and also to be the standard against which the academic success of 'nontraditional' students is measured.

Higher education's traditions are plotted variously along a scholarly timeline as there is evidence of contestation regarding which historical markers are most appropriate in representing continuity of tradition and depicting the watershed moments in higher education. It is noted from **Bundy (2006)** that some scholars trace institutional longevity and durability to the 66 out of 80 universities that had flourished since 1520 and had survived into modernity. However, Bundy himself contends that World War II should really be such a marker since more than half the universities across the world were founded during this time. He also argues that a scholarly acceptance of this starting point makes it possible to accommodate that dramatic changes, especially since the 1980s, have affected all universities during this time:

> "All universities, ancient and modern, have been subject to powerful forces of change in the past quarter century. … They also involve new ways in which universities manage themselves and carry out their core activities; the construction of new professional identities; the accommodation of existing values and norms to new circumstances … - major shifts in how universities have sought to define, govern, fund and shape their own field of social activity" **(Bundy, 2006, p.2).**

New possibilities for institution-specific constructions of higher education students may therefore be possible and, especially for modern higher education institutions, revisiting student constructions are also possible both in relation to and beyond binaried categories for traditional' or 'nontraditional' higher education students.

There is also, on the other hand, an important strand of the scholarship that brings into view the participation of 'nontraditional' students in higher education more than a hundred years ago. Since the mid 1800s and throughout the early 1900s, American state normal schools served a student body that was to become distinctly associated with the "masses and not the classes" as **Ogren (2005)** explains in detail, and whose students had many of the characteristics attributed to 'nontraditional' students in higher education about a hundred years later:

> "Indeed, normalites during this period were far from society's elite or favored classes: the majority were women, and among both the female and male students, many were from minority ethnic and racial groups and families that were struggling financially. Furthermore, many normalites were also mature in age, had work experience, and lacked sophistication or worldliness. In other words, normal students as a group fit the profile of students who would still be considered "nontraditional" a century later. The state normal schools opened a form of higher education to those types of students who would struggle for full access to mainstream higher-education institutions for decades to come. … At a time when women were an unwelcome minority on college and university campuses, they were a visible majority at state normal schools" **(Ogren, 2005, p.65).**

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Instruction was commonly held on a Saturday, and Ogren's account of the history of the 'first wave' of nontraditional students in American higher education is an important revelation in the literature about the contribution of nontraditional students to higher education. Students and their teachers attending American state normal schools seem to have had most of their histories erased rather than reconstructed at the time, as two of Ogren's accounts confirm:

> "For example, a 1940s in-house history of the New York State College for Teachers at St Albany (as it was then called) reported that, in 1908, "the last two-year class was graduated. Rid at last of this final incubus of its normal school days, the institution in all its departments reached full collegiate stature."

> "Other teachers colleges sandblasted buildings to remove the ignominious word "Normal," and saw to it that their town's Normal Avenue became College Avenue, and then University Avenue" **(Ogren , 2005, p.3).**

More recently in higher education, greater numbers of higher education students generally may be in search of flexible employment and educational arrangements more so than previously. The scholarship points to marked changes in the nature and number of students participating in higher education, and new constructs may be required depicting the new traditions and nontraditions borne out of changing student identity and preferred learning modes:

> "By 1993, slightly more than 40% of all undergraduates were 25 years of age or older, and nearly 27% were 30 or more years old. In 1996, nearly 43% of all undergraduates were attending college on a part-time basis. Moreover, according to a recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics (1996), a substantial number of students *attending college full-time also have jobs.* In 1993, *46% of all full-time, college students ages 18 to 24 were employed, and more than half of these worked at least 20 hours per week*" **(Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998, p. 153).**

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Although age may no longer be the primary defining characteristic of 'nontraditional' students in higher education, it is significant that greater numbers of students are participating in higher education for the first time as relatively older students than previously considered the norm. The question in this regard would be whether or not greater numbers of students have now acquired 'nontraditionalised' traits because of what may be reported in the scholarship as a relatively new participation trend. Nearly two decades ago **Pascarella & Terenzini** emphasised that students no longer behave predictably within historically ascribed 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student categories, and by inference certain new understandings in higher education may be necessary to discover contemporary student identity across all higher education ecologies.

Worldwide, constructs of 'nontraditional' students may seem to be visible and legitimized as part of higher education landscapes in certain periods only and not in others, and the implications of these continuities and discontinuities are relevant to this present study in the sense that notions of 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' are better seen as fluid constructs, and the qualities formerly associated with each of

the binaried categories may at times inform contemporary student identities for all higher education students.

1.1.2 Lifelong Learning in Higher Education

The rhetoric of lifelong learning predominates in various forms at most, if not all, higher education institutions worldwide. The literature also confirms that it is a complex and difficult task to construct a lifelong learning university and the students within its charge despite scholarly evidence that lifelong learning qualities may be of benefit to every higher education student currently. What it means to be a lifelong learner or a lifelong learning student in higher education today, therefore, is a complex construction currently and has been appreciably so even in recent decades. In this study, these are key considerations towards re-imagining today's 'nontraditional' higher education students.

Nearly two decades ago, delegate authors of the **Cape Town Statement (2001)** recognised the challenges in offering generic lifelong learning elements intended to frame markedly different higher education contexts. However, six characteristic high-level elements were proposed as essential in supporting a lifelong learning higher education institution: overarching frameworks; strategic partnerships and linkages; research, teaching and learning processes; administration policies and mechanisms; and student support systems and services **(UNESCO Institute for Education & University of the Western Cape, 2001, p.6).**

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Ten years later, **Smidt & Sursock (2011)** confirm via a June 2011 report that 29 universities from 18 European countries had officially committed themselves in various ways to inclusive policies promoting University lifelong learning, and also advance the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies. However, and with reference to the institutional presentations in this report, it would be pertinent to ask why only one university (the University of Twente in the Netherlands) in this group made the markedly separate, and bold, declaration that "… in our view all our students are lifelong learners" **(Smidt & Sursock , 2011, p91).**

Among several noteworthy critiques of contemporary discourses of lifelong learning in higher education, the work of **Eliott (2001)** is also relevant to my own study as he lays the basis for revisiting the kinds of lifelong learning that higher education institutions may be endorsing, and examines the reasons for their doing so. He takes the view, already nearly twenty years ago, that educationalists and policy makers

"have hijacked the term 'lifelong learning' claiming to have located a radical *noumenon* [a thing as it is in itself] but in practice only seeking to lay a bridge to their own conservative agenda" **(Eliott, 2001, p.25).** With particular relevance to reimagining 'nontraditional' student constructs in my own study, Eliot elaborates that within the context of the Dearing, Fryer and Kennedy reports, several unstated and unquestioned distinctions are made about the contemporary university experience for certain categories of student:

> "Included in their number are distinctions that are made between adult learners and students, pedagogy and andragogy, continuing education and degrees study, lifelong learning and vocational education, full time and part time, degree and sub-degree. These categories are shown … to be artificial and misleading, a convenient shorthand which has served only to promote exclusive educational policies and practices, and to narrow rather than inform educational thought and action" **(Eliott , 2001, p. 25).**

For higher education students, then, what does it mean in practice when universities declare an orientation towards lifelong learning? And is there anything emblematic about lifelong learners or lifelong learning students across university contexts worldwide? These matters are addressed via the case study in ensuing chapters and the relevant aspects of the scholarship are highlighted in this section to understand how lifelong learning as a framing concept may complexly influence the construction and re-imagining of 'nontraditional' students in higher education today.

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1.1.3 Adult 'Students' and Adult 'Learners' in Higher Education

As observed by Bourgeois et al nearly two decades ago, present scholarship pertaining to adult students and adult learners in higher education has not been able to clarify these terms definitively, and confusion and ambiguity therefore persists for researchers taking into account that there are several different ways of naming adult students in higher education. Furthermore, these constructs have been perpetuated in the scholarship in ways that have not led to appreciable clarification of terms, and this study finds relevance in probing the impasse in reaching scholarly clarity in this regard.

> "Any reader of adult education literature has met the following terms at least once in their lifetime: recurrent education, university adult education, continuing higher education, further education, non-traditional higher education, extra-mural education, distance higher education, open university, extension university education, lifelong learning, in the English-speaking world;

> … The same confusion arises from the diversity of terms used to designate the adult studying in HE: older student, second-chance student, adult student, returner student, re-entry student, extension student, part-time student, open university student, mature student, continuing education student, and school-leaver are some of the terms used widely in the specialised literature. … This conceptual diversity has implications for comparative studies, as it creates more ambiguity than clarity" **(Bourgeois, Duke, Luc-Guyot, & Merrill, 1999, p. 65).**

However, it is also acknowledged that ongoing scholarship has led to certain proposals in the form of key categorisations of adult students that may assist understandings of 'nontraditonal' students in certain higher education settings. **Schuetze & Slowey (2002)**, for example, propose that an 'adult' student in higher education could be understood in four main ways:

> "But even if 'non-traditional' is defined as meaning 'adult' there are still difficulties in defining what is meant by adult students. The 1987 report distinguished four categories of "adults" – later used by other studies, such as *Kasworm (1993)* and *Davies (1995)*. These categories are:
>
> - adult students who enter or re-enter higher education with a prior major break in the formal involvement in learning;
> - students enrolled in academic studies who represent specific chronological age categories (for example, those over 25 years),
> - adult students who enter higher education on the basis of mature life experience (gained through work, family and/or community involvement),
> - adult students who have completed a higher education program or degree of studies at an earlier age and now re-enter for professional updating or to pursue a second academic area of expertise" **(Schuetze & Slowey, 2002, p. 314).**

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It is important to state that while these categories may be most helpful administratively in certain institution-specific higher education contexts, it is also likely that adult students could participate in higher education through additional routes and additional categories may therefore be added. Furthermore, within the context of widening participation, it is plausible that the first category could increasingly apply to 'non-adult' students in current times particularly within the contexts of higher education landscapes in South Africa, for example.

With reference to 'nontraditional' students at certain universities in South Africa in this regard, **Buchler *et al* (2007, p. 127)** assert that adult learners in South Africa may carry added roles and responsibilities as higher education students, noting for example their contexts "where there may be child-headed households through loss of parents due to AIDS, where many black school students are older at entry, or where poverty has mean 'stopping out' of school for a time."

Their observations could plausibly describe not only certain historically disadvantaged universities in South Africa, but may also be applicable to certain learning contexts in similarly constituted universities worldwide. For example, it is noted from the literature that Robert Peers was the first professor of adult education in the world when the University of Nottingham's Department of Adult Education was founded **(Jarvis, 2014, p. 47).** That it was the first such university department in the world is remarkable considering that the first adult school was said to have started in Nottingham, centuries earlier, in 1798 (http://infed.org/mobi/adult-schools-and-the-making-of-adult-education/). In this regard Tight's observation is relevant in that there are "…of course, much longer traditions of university involvement in adult education and of part-time higher education provision, particularly outside the (old) university sector" **(Tight , 2012, p. 218).**

Returning to the adult learner experience in South African higher education, it is noted from **Buchler et al (2007)** that this is a history that remains for the most part undocumented even though there is evidence of adult and continuing education departments at several South African universities especially after World War 2, when "returning soldiers attended universities, like Wits, [The University of the Witwatersrand]" **Buchler et al (2007, p. 124).** Initially, South African universities had adopted varying strategic stances towards adult learners and for most the "brief of the universities has *not* been to focus on adult learners within the academy" **Buchler et al (2007, p. 124).** but since the early 1990s there is evidence of university provision via designated departments to accommodate adult learning, and increasingly so through continuing education course offerings but which were still designed "outside the mainstream degree provision" **Buchler et al (2007, p. 124).**

It remains an open question what it means, and what is might take, to have the appropriate discursive space in exploring new possibilities in terms of South African educational identities. **Silbert (2009)** offers the view that the term 'learner' might provide the basis for objectifying and idealizing the subject:

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> "The objectification of the subject disengages the child/young adult from his/her cultural identity, discounting any consideration of the difference and individual history that each child brings to the education process" **(Silbert, 2009, p. 391)**

Further discussion regarding the use of the term 'adult learner' and 'adult' student is taken up further as part of the case study in Chapters Five and Six. Certain strands in the literature also point to shifts in thinking about 'students' and 'learners' within the discourses of lifelong learning. Having considered myself both an adult student and an adult learner in certain higher education settings, the following observations portray aspects of my experiences as a 'nontraditional' student as well as a 'nontraditional' learner:

> "Students have a clear location, role and identity; they belong within an institution. The sense of belonging is important in establishing boundaries and a sense of identity. By contrast, learners can be argued to be deterritorialized, individualized and flexible consumers of learning opportunities; …" **(Edwards, 2002, p 359).**

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All of the conceptual challenges raised in this section are pertinent to re-imagining constructions of 'nontraditional' in my study. That is to say, it is relevant to know when student constructs such as adult learner and adult student may be dichotomous categories and when they might interchangeably denote the same student population. In university settings where distinctions might still be necessary between 'adult students' and 'adult learners' the following considerations are also relevant to this study: would their student identities be constructed differently, and would they choose different learning and study options at university? If 'adult learners' are primarily or exclusively linked to 'worker education' or 'trade union education courses' offered by universities, would this construction need to be made distinct from other adult students who may be studying different courses presently at universities? These observations are pertinent because of the history of adult education at certain universities and how adult learners and adult students may need to be constructed in contemporary times.

1.1.4 Scholarly Discourse of Adult Undergraduate Students

Although the literature points to a multiplicity of ways in which nontraditional students are named in higher education settings, there are very few mainstream student retention models and student development theories that are dedicated to the academic advancement of nontraditional students, however defined. Indeed, the literature confirms that mature, or nontraditional, students are rarely represented in

and of themselves in most student retention models, which appear to have been designed for what could be perceived as a predominantly 'traditionally-aged student set'. Endorsing this view, and referring to students in Canadian higher education systems at the time, **Andres and Carpenter (1997)** observe the following:

> "Despite these demographic shifts, for the most part, we continue to employ models that were designed to explain retention, admission, transfer, and attrition patterns of a very traditional student body. The constructs in these models have contributed greatly to our understanding of students' experiences within higher education. However, research to date tells us very little about these constructs - including social and academic integration, expectations for success, institutional commitment, goal commitment, peer-group and faculty interactions, the expectations and experiences of student populations - in relation to students who no longer conform to the "traditional" norm" **(Andres and Carpenter , 1997, p.45).**

The classification schedule of scholarly discourse of adult undergraduate students devised by **Donaldson & Townsend (2007)** is based on seven refereed higher education journals published between 1990 and 2003. The two main purposes of the study were "… to determine the frequency with which adult students appeared in selected journals of higher education as a topic of research, and to examine how the scholarly discourse in the journals portrayed these adult students" **(Donaldson & Townsend, 2007, p.28).** These seven peer-reviewed journals of higher education selected, pertain to nontraditional students at community colleges and universities in the United States: *Journal of College Student Development*; *NASPA* [National Association of Student Personnel Administrators] *Journal*; *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*; *Community College Review*; *The Journal of Higher Education*; and *Research in Higher Education* and *The Review of Higher Education*.

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While the journals identified collectively published approximately 3200 articles during the 1990-2003 period, it is very interesting to note that Donaldson & Townsend's selection of words and phrases *(adult(s), mature, older, mixed-age or nontraditional age, or nontraditional)* further reduced the initially identified 53 articles to 41 that could finally be analysed. And because they were interested "in ascertaining what those who study in higher education and those who work on college campuses could learn about adult students by reading higher education journals not targeted to people who work with or study adult students" **(Donaldson & Townsend, 2007, p.30)** journals specifically dedicated to adult education were *not* selected for their study.

The resultant classification scheme of scholarly discourse about adult undergraduate students is reproduced in a shortened form, as follows **(Donaldson & Townsend, 2007, p.38)**:

Table 4

Scholarly Discourse About Adult Undergraduate Students

Scholarly Discourse about Adult Undergraduate Students (AUS)	
i. Invisible	they do not appear in the literature; experiences of traditional age students are treated as universal
ii. Acknowledged but Devalued	the omission of AUS is sometimes documented in the literature; behaviour of traditional age students is the implicit norm and the basis for models of retention, academic success and the collegiate experience; adults are viewed as needing to adapt to institutional practices which are oriented toward traditional-age students, or the institution needs to create programs to fit adult students' problematic needs
iii. Accepted	age is the primary, sometimes the only, demarcation between traditional and AUS; traditional age and adult students are two equal but separate groups; adult students may be studied by themselves or in comparison to traditional students; adult students are valued because they increase enrollments; limitation of existing theories and models of practice when applied to adult students is sometimes noted; no new models or approaches are suggested.
iv. Embraced	adult students are valued for what they bring to an institution; intragroup differences (experiential, demographic, and other) are acknowledged; no new theories/ models of practice are developed due to "lack of fit" between adult experiences and conventional models/ theories
(Donaldson & Townsend, 2007)	

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"This classification scheme is suggested to provide a heuristic not only for categorizing extant literature and raising awareness about how adult students are frequently portrayed

(even unintentionally), but for also guiding future research and practice, " (Donaldson, 2007:37).

As part of my own case study, a relevant question would be whether new models are needed to accommodate different kinds of thinking about graduations in 'nontraditional' student identity, with may fall outside of the perpetuated 'traditional'-'nontraditional' binaried student category, and to show that an increasingly diverse student set, in addition to growing numbers of students participating in higher education, has resulted in new student identities that need to be appropriately acknowledge so that the most appropriate teaching and learning arrangements could facilitate their success.

Nevertheless, this classification scheme is a foundational reference for my case study, as there is evidence that particular campus and knowledge communities at the University of the Western Cape have constructed 'nontraditional' students in various ways , and as informed by distinct scholarly discourses and reference points in different parts of the University and, because of this, each of the categories in Donaldson and Townsend's heuristic may apply in certain situations. This discussion is taken forward in subsequent chapters.

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1.3 Summary

Several key concepts predominate worldwide denoting 'nontraditional' student constructs, and it would seem that conceptual variation presents challenges for understanding and comparing 'nontraditional' students across higher education contexts which may be local or global. In a fundamental sense this could mean that the standard or reference point for 'nontraditional' students is currently transitioning, and this might be fortuitous if experiences from every higher education context are able to inform a new standard.

SECTION 2: WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 'New Students' vs 'Nontraditional' Students in Higher Education?

Can 'widening participation' students in higher education currently be drawn from both 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student categories? Widening participation policies have assisted in constructing several of the 'nontraditional' student identities currently in use in higher education, and 'new norms' are being called upon to bring about the most appropriate way of engaging with changed, and new, student compositions and identities. However, it would also seem that most scholarly construction connotes 'new'

students as being 'disadvantaged and therefore underprepared', and my own study asks by inference whether 'familiar' students by comparison carry the connotation of being 'advantaged and therefore prepared' in current higher education contexts.

Writing for The Independent (Sunday 15 October 2000), **John Izbicki** writes about a London-based conference by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), where Baroness Blackstone, the then Minister of Higher Education confirmed that nearly all part-time students and nearly half of fulltime students are presently categorized as 'mature students' despite coming from diverse backgrounds: "Some are single; some have children; some are in their twenties; some have grandchildren - and higher education needs to be flexible enough to respond to their diverse needs," (http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/no-typical-mature-students-634023.html).

Focusing on the 'new students' in South African higher education, **Cross & Carpentier (2009)** indicate that South African universities experience similar enrollment expansion as with the rest of the world. In their view, since 1994 the new category of student was allowed increasing access to higher education and is "well known as 'non-traditional students or students from disadvantaged milieus" **(Cross & Carpentier , 2009, p.6) .** Furthermore, they contend that these new students would "fall into the category of 'poorly or underprepared' students according to the new Wits [University of the Witwatersrand] lexicon" **(Cross & Carpentier , 2009, p.7) .** For Cross & Carpentier, therefore, the nature of studenthood of these 'new students' in South African higher education is of concern:

> "If the access to the university by 'new students' is accompanied by difficulties of adaptation which principally, but not exclusively, manifest themselves through a higher rate of failure and drop out, it becomes important to ask the question to make an inquiry into the processes of their "affiliation" to studentship, that is to ask the question *how do they become students*?"[their emphasis] **(Cross & Carpentier , 2009, p.11) .**

Validly, it is noted that they argue for a 'production of new norms' in terms of the following question posed both for the 'new students' and their ('new'?) teachers in South African higher education.

Widening participation does not appear to be commonly articulated and agreed upon both as an ethos and as part of a discourse of higher education. The Open University Widening Participation Conference's call

for papers in 2012 reveals appreciable shifts in meaning and uses of terms such as access, widening participation, equality and diversity, and lifelong learning. It would seem that the role of higher education in a modern society needs widespread and creative clarification, and 'discourses of inclusion' would be helpful at a time when what some consider to be "prevailing neo-liberal policy aims to position higher education as an economic venture and students as customers," **The Open University Widening Participation Conference Call (2012).**

Drawing on Perkin (1991), **Codling & Meek (2006, p.32)** indicate that university education continued to be the province of society's privileged classes up until the Second World War, and it is also noted that the higher education landscape changed remarkably after the war, as outlined by Goedgebuure & Meek's (1997) five phases of higher education in the post-war years:

- Rapid expansion in the 1950s and 1960s.
- Diversification in the 1960s and early 1970s.
- Consolidation and the establishment of more economical alternatives to the university in the late 1970s.
- A focus on specific issues such as diversity, quality improvement, efficiency and internationalization in the 1980s.
- Reduction in public expenditure and a focus on economic viability in the 1990s.

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In the period of the 2000s onward, we learn from the findings of Universities UK sponsored research that in 2003/04, forty percent of higher education students were studying part-time more often for "sub-degree or taught postgraduate qualifications" and the popular study choices were "allied to medicine, education, business and administrative studies, and combined subjects" **(Tight , 2012, p. 219).** It is also noteworthy that most of the part-time students were studying locally and received no financial support from their higher education institutions as Tight's postwar scorecard also illustrates:

Table 5
The Widening Participation Postwar Scorecard

The Widening Participation Postwar Scorecard (Tight 2012: 223)		
Social Group	Verdict	Score (out of 5)
Women	Now outnumber men, both overall and in the majority of the subject areas, though their under-representation in most STEM subjects remains an issue. Indeed, the participation of men may now be viewed as the problem.	5
Lower Socio-Economic Groups	Repeated attempts to enroll more students from these groups have yielded limited returns. Higher education participation continues to be viewed as 'not for the likes of us' and financially risky by most from lower socio-economic backgrounds.	1
Mature Adults	While most students are now officially mature, they are mainly 'young mature' and concentrated in newer institutions. Part-time students, the great majority of whom are mature, remain unfairly treated in funding regimes in comparison to full-time students.	3
Ethnic Minorities	Most ethnic minority groups now participate in relatively greater numbers than the majority white population. Concentration in newer institutions in large cities remains a concern.	4

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The literature points to the 'uses' of the widening participation agenda in higher education. For example, we note from **Woodin (2013)** of the link between the widening participation agenda in addressing the perceived skills gap in the United Kingdom and that of rising youth unemployment. Here of particular interest is the raising of the school-leaving age at certain historical moments, most notably that "in the current moment of global instability that the participation age is to be raised to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015" **(Woodin, 2013, p. 638).** This is interesting as it shows the variability of age as a marker for being either a 'traditional' or a 'nontraditional' student.

Taking into account the contradictory discourses in widening participation, **Stevenson *et al* (2010)** argue that the confusion leads to unclear practices across higher education landscapes. Drawing on their own institutional study in the United Kingdom, they observe that "there is continuing ambiguity as to which groups comprise 'widening participation' students" **(Stevenson *et al*, 2010, p.107)** and they also raise the concern that contrasts in government discourse lead to different paradigms and models of ways in which widening participation takes effect in higher education institutions. A most important finding from their document analysis has been that the university as their case study "no longer has a widening participation policy as such, rather a range of related terms (e.g., student diversity, inclusion, equality) are used in institutional policy documents such as the teaching and learning strategy" **(Stevenson *et al*, 2010, p.109).**

The literature also suggests that widening participation also affects 'old' and 'new' providers of higher education differently. Drawing on marketing research involving more than 100 United Kingdom higher education institutions, **Schofield *et al* (2013)** assert that different universities have different marketing tools for attracting and retaining the students they would like to serve: "… old universities believed their reputation to be their most effective marketing tool … whereas the new universities … need to attract students in a different way in the absence of an established reputation for excellence" **(Schofield *et al* 2013, p. 196).** These observations are highly relevant for the South African university as my case study, which could be described as a relatively new, medium-sized, public university. As part of this study I also argue that the nature of this university is currently transitioning from a 'nontraditionally-oriented' institution to achieve its aim of being a University that embraces diversity in all its forms.

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The literature also suggests that certain international policy shifts may have signalled diminished participation for 'nontraditional' students at certain higher education institutions worldwide. With reference to UK-based research findings on nontraditional students in higher education, and drawing on Bowl's (2003) work, **Smith (2008, p.3)** directs attention to policy shifts at the time that placed nontraditional students at the margins of future higher education agendas:

> "…Whereas in the mid 1990s most institutions considered their widening participation policies to be synonymous with their policies on mature learners, this is no longer the case. Since the late 1990s, HEFECE's emphasis has turned towards increasing the participation of younger learners from lower socio-economic groups. This has been at the expense of mature learners and it should

> be acknowledged that there has been a general lack of attention paid to widening the participation of mature students."

More recently, the literature confirms that overall undergraduate student numbers in England have been reduced, and is predicted to negatively affect higher education opportunities for mature students:

> "The 2012 BIS grant letter to HEFCE confirmed that the 10,000 University Modernisation Fund student numbers would not be consolidated and announced an additional cut of 5,000 student numbers for 2012-2013. In addition Ministers have introduced a student number allocation system that incentivises institutions to chase young candidates AAB or equivalent qualifications in 2012-2013 and ABB or equivalent in 2013-2014 rather than mature students who may have lower or non-traditional qualifications" **(McVity & Morris, 2012, p.39).**

Bundy (2006) contends that widening participation took a particular form in South Africa's higher education landscape. Because of South Africa's experience of apartheid, as a country it did not experience the rapid global changes in higher education characteristic of the 1980s and beyond. It is noted in particular that South African universities were affected by the academic boycotts of the 1980s and one consequence is that the higher education "…experience since 1994 has sometimes emerged like a film projected at fast speed; the sequence is recognisable, but seems jerky, exaggerated and frenetic" **(Bundy 2006, p.9).**

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Therefore, upon closer scrutiny, there are important matters to take into account about South Africa's higher education landscape when scholars point to increased and broadened participation of black South African students as a major gain since the 1990s. There is a view that the increase in black South African students is *proportional to* the falling enrollments of white South African students. Here it is noted, for example, a decline of nearly 50 000 white South African students in 6 years; there were 220 000 in higher education in 1993, and 164 000 in 1999:

> "The reasons for this decline are still somewhat conjectural, but they appear to involve a move to private institutions, an increased tendency of white school-leavers to go overseas, and issues of affordability for less affluent white families (but who earned too much to qualify for student loans under the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, NSFAS). What this meant was that the overall

> participation rate for the age cohort 18-24 years actually fell from 16 percent achieved in 1993/4 to 15 percent in 1999/2000" **(Bundy 2006, p.12).**

Cooper and Subotsky (2001) suggest that possible reasons for transformation in racial composition occurring at Afrikaans historically advantaged institutions: " …most Afrikaans HAUs have developed niche areas of study -undergraduate teacher training and nursing courses, postgraduate diplomas and selected coursework masters often offered, as indicated, after hours to attract part-time students, or through telematic distance education delivery, satellite campuses and affiliated colleges - all of which have attracted African students" **(Cooper & Subotsky, 2001, p. 45).**

Reporting for Times Higher Education on the post-apartheid situation of South African universities, **Macmillan (2000)** offers a bleak but plausible account that South Africa's former homeland universities were still struggling and its "six black and rural universities are in crisis." The author also goes on to say that almost all of South Africa's universities had experienced a decline in student numbers "as white students move out of the system, but the decline in the black and rural universities since 1998 has been dramatic."

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This view is shared by Bundy, who states that higher education enrollments by black African students need to be considered carefully. Some scholars suggest the rise in student numbers in this regard may be a way of disguising a 'skewed revolution' in South Africa:

> "African students are disproportionately enrolled in distance programmes, in the humanities as opposed to science, technology and business degrees; and in undergraduate and diploma courses. Finally, although hard evidence is scarcer than anecdotal accounts, it appears that the South African case is similar to other experiences of massification of higher education, in that expanding access does not lead directly to increased equity. The participation rates rise most steeply for the more affluent: …" **(Bundy, 2006, p. 12).**

It is also noted from the literature that there are only a few studies currently focusing on poverty in higher education, and these are all quantitative in nature. In addition, the literature also suggests that there do not appear to be contemporary studies of a *qualitative* nature that "provide in-depth insights into the experiences of poor students in South African higher education institutions" **(Firfirey & Carolissen, 2010, p.988).**

Widening participation practices in South African universities need to take into account development discourses and transformation considerations specific to the country's higher education history. There is also at least one generation of South Africans, predominantly poor, who have not had the opportunity to participate in formal schooling at the level of high schools and tertiary education. Concerned with poverty reduction in South Africa, **Walker *et al* (2009, p. 568)** describe "pro-poor professional capabilities and functionings" that South African universities might consider in developing human capital and potential along the following lines: "It is a form of professionalism that we suggest South African universities committed to social transformation ought to make available through their professional education and courses" **(Walker *et al* , 2009, p. 567).** Interestingly, Walker herself raises important concerns about the role of universities in relation to the approach suggested:

> "We are left with three problems: First, can or should universities influence the political context within which they are embedded? Second, if universities produce the right kind of graduates will this really bring about poverty reduction if the political climate is not aligned with such graduate outcomes? … Third, problem is that of imagination - we need new normative education policy goals that point to the fully human lives we could live in the plural well-being we could achieve" **(Walker, 2010, p.490).**

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Similarly, in related matter of university education and professional capabilities **Walker & McLean (2010, p.850)** acknowledge the added complexities that "meanings and practices of social and educational transformation are contested in higher education in South Africa and elsewhere." It is therefore helpful to find Walker's list of capabilities that "might constitute human flourishing and help guide policy in evaluating e/quality in university education" **(Walker, 2010, p.909),** and these eight core capabilities are noted accordingly: practical reason; educational resilience; knowledge and imagination; learning disposition; social relations and social networks; respect; dignity and recognition; emotional integrity; emotions; and bodily integrity, **(Walker, 2010, p.910).** It is helpful to have such a list towards a construct of the kind of South African higher student a strand of the scholarship may be shaping as part of one kind of development discourse.

From the scholarship, it is clear that widening participation agendas have unfolded unevenly in higher education contexts across the world, and therefore the construct of a 'nontraditional' student may not be comparable from one university to the next. For the South African university as the case study,

'nontraditional' students are put together variously and complexly by the institution, and a range of 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student identities may be evident in contemporary 'nontraditional' student constructs. This discussion is taken further in the document analysis chapters, Five and Six.

2.2 The Lifelong Learner in Higher Education

Constructs of the lifelong learner in higher education may have been shaped in three main ways: through scholarly understandings of what it means to be a learning society, through lifelong learning policy and models, and through university practices. Each is discussed in this section following an outline of a shift in the term from lifelong education to lifelong learning. The elaboration in this section is relevant to the way in which various institutions worldwide have constructed lifelong learning students at their universities, and especially how the university as part of my case study has constructed theirs.

It is noted from **Jarvis (2014)** that the shift from using the term 'lifelong education' to 'lifelong learning' may have come about apprehensively in European Union's policy arena in the 1990s: "… Lifelong learning differed conceptually in a number of ways from lifelong education as education and learning are different concepts, though at the time there was considerable confusion and overlap between the two terms" **(Jarvis , 2014, p.52).** Jarvis also indicates that the European Commission developed and refined its concept of lifelong learning over the years, presumably over the kind of student higher education (and possibly labour) had sought to attract: "In its first policy document (European Commission 1995) on lifelong learning the EC argued that the aims of lifelong learning were employability and citizenship. … In the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (EC 2000) that followed there were four aims: employability, citizenship, social fulfilment and personal achievement …" **(Jarvis , 2014, p. 53).** Later still, the "aims of lifelong learning had become: personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/ adaptability" **(Jarvis, 2014, p. 53).**

Harvey (2000) asserts that higher education's primary role is "increasingly to transform students by *enhancing* their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities while simultaneously *empowering* them as lifelong critical, reflective learners. In his view, the 'New Realities' facing higher education is not about 'downgrading' higher education to training, but more about responsiveness: "… in a rapidly changing world, graduates need to be lifelong l*earners*" **(Harvey, 2000, p. 3).**

Cropley & Knapper (1983, p.16) ascribe the following attributes to the ideal 'lifelong learner' in lifelong *education*: "The lifelong learner: (1) should be strongly aware of the relationship between

learning and real life; (2) should be aware of the need for lifelong learning; (3) should be highly motivated to carry on a process of lifelong learning; (4) should possess a self-concept favourable to lifelong learning; and (5) should possess the necessary skills for lifelong learning."

2.2.1 The Learning Society

In her summary, as reproduced below, of what a learning society *could* mean, **Gewitz (2008)** offers an insightful and clear account of what she considers to be emblematic of learning society discourse. Noting that there are hosts of scholarly contributors who "have produced accounts of the lineage and various components of learning society discourses" **(Gewitz, 2008, pp. 415-416),** in her table of information illustrates a refinement of what she considers to be the four main discourses pertaining to a learning society and lifelong learning policy.

Table 6
The Learning Society and Lifelong Learning Policy

The Learning Society and Lifelong Learning Policy	
Discourse	Emphasis of the Discourse
The Discourse of Personal Fulfilment	personal development, personal growth and, potentially, personal fulfillment
The Discourse of Citizenship	duties and entitlements of individuals in relation to other members of society
The Discourse of Social Inclusion and Social Justice	social solidarity, equality of access and respect for difference
The Discourse of Work-related Learning	the relationship between learning and work

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The most important lesson drawn from her paper relevant to my own study is that there may be an amalgam of ideological variation that could present practical challenges educationally, and which may also place strain on the best intentions of a lifelong learning ethos and discourse. It could be inferred, then, that what it means to be lifelong learners in higher education may actually be highly interpretable, varied and context-specific constructs and it may not be possible to say what a lifelong learner may 'typically look like' or 'be' in higher education institutions.

There is appreciable scholarly contestation about what a learning society may be and what a lifelong learning culture may look like within such a learning society. **Axford & Seddon (2006),** for example, put forward the view that the learning society can be described as a "world of individuated choice" where changing roles of the state and the market require "active individuated responses to risk and responsibility" **(Axford & Seddon, 2006, p. 178).**

The scholarship also engages with the connection between learning societies and learning contexts in which nontraditional students may find themselves. In this regard, it is noted from **Edwards (2005)** that discourses of lifelong learning are enacted within a multiplicity of varying contexts, which are invariably fluid, and he contends that alternative ways of thinking about them might lead to more dynamic understandings of what our learning contexts really are:

> "Context is not an open backcloth upon which we wander, but is made in different ways by different actors through our wanderings" **(Edwards, 2005).**

Edwards argues that the notion of many contexts, of polycontextuality, is pedagogically significant, and asserts that the metaphors ascribed to various learning contexts might also be usefully revisited. Within the context of higher education **Coffield (1999, p.496)** argues there are "strict limits to an *educational* solution to creating a learning society," [his emphasis], and he also asserts that certain obstacles need to be removed in order to facilitate the flourishing of a lifelong learning culture in particular higher education contexts:

> "…the 16 hour rule which controls the amount of time the unemployed can devote to study; the indefensible differential in the funding of part-time and full-time students; output-related funding which encourages 'cream-skimming' (i.e. the concentration on those most likely to obtain a qualification); and the remorseless drive in all sectors of education and training to demand more for less" **(Coffield, 1999, p. 496).**

In the era of apartheid education in South Africa, learning societies and 'learning subjects' were segregated for nearly four decades. **Slamat (2010)** recalls the regrettable history of South African higher education where many higher education institutions were created on the basis of race:

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> "Given this unfortunate state of affairs, the reality is that each South African institution has what has been called its 'traditional' community, mostly defined in terms of race. Geography and race coincided because of the Group Areas Act. This is a historical fact but it is not where it ends" **(Slamat , 2010, p.107).**

Indeed, he proceeds to say that the dilemma for most South African higher education institutions remains:

> "Who else do they include in "their" community at the present moment, following their repositioning statements in response to a changed political and higher education landscape?" **(Slamat, 2010, p.107).**

Referring to educational endeavour in South African higher education under apartheid, **Bozalek & Boughey (2012)** observe that the contexts of higher education institutions at the time were designed to be unequal: "[a] historically black university (HBU) was … more likely to offer nursing rather than medicine and public administration rather than political philosophy," by comparison to historically white universities (HWUs) **(Bozalek & Boughey, 2012, p.690).** In addition, it is noted that although numerous HBUs "were to function as centers of intellectual thought in the movement against apartheid", the national research agenda of the country "impacted on them alongside understandings of their function as contributors to certain categories of labor for a segregated workforce" **(Bozalek & Boughey, 2012, p. 691).** Post apartheid, it is noted that the broadly anticipated redress funding for formerly HBUs did not materialise, which in turn "impacted heavily on institutions that were 1) under-resourced in the first place and 2) suffering from the inability of the poor black working class students they mainly attracted to pay tuition fees" **(Bozalek & Boughey, 2012, p. 693).**

In this overview it would seem from scholarly engagement that the creation of lifelong learning cultures remains difficult and complex across many higher education contexts because of distinct influences that impact on the success of these undertakings. The observations in this section are taken up in Chapters Four and Five as part of the case study.

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2.2.2 Lifelong Learning Policy and Models

More than a decade ago **Duke (2002)** contended that it would not be easy to find a nation in the world today "in which educational policy is not committed rhetorically to enabling lifelong learning" even though the practical realisation remained "a central policy dilemma" **(Duke, 2002, p.25).**

More recently, much of the recent literature still points to an ambiguous higher education policy context regarding the concept of lifelong learning. The observations of **Taylor Webb (2011)** are illustrative of how these policy ambiguities may have wide-ranging implications for the ways in which the purpose of lifelong learning is understood in higher education contexts and consequently how nontraditional students might be understood in certain university settings:

> "Several authors have critiqued the idea of life-long learning for its opaqueness, indicated that the idea, instead, produces, 'enterprising subjects' (Edwards, 2002), 'worthy citizens' (Walker, 2009), and 'fabricated learners' (Andersson and Fejes 2005). Nicoll and Edwards (2004) noted that the ambiguity of lifelong learning leaves the concept hollow but imbued with powerful rhetorical opportunities for governments. … The juxtaposition of quotes illustrates how lifelong learning is synonymous to perpetual training" **(Taylor Webb, 2011, p.745).**

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Is the goal of lifelong learning indeed achievable, having observed that lifelong learning may be set up in such a way " to rhetorically build and appeal to a range of different audiences, some of whom may feel themselves to have been misled? " These are questions posed by **Edwards & Nicoll (2001, pp.109-111).**

In Southern Africa, and with reference to attempts in the early 2000s by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to build coordinated approaches to lifelong learning in the region, it is noted from **Preece & Hoppers (2011, p.2)** that "… these did not materialize and efforts to address its multifarious aspects remain fragmented and piecemeal across the continent as a whole."

Conceptualising lifelong learning as the most recent problematisation of education across the lifespan, **(Centeno, 2011, p.134)** contends that the concept of lifelong learning "has become not only the most studied subjects in the field of education but also a recurring topic in policy and entrepreneurial discourse" **(Centeno, 2011: 133).** There is also evidence in the literature to suggest that an appreciable number of studies, from 1996 to 2008, have historically documented the evolution of lifelong learning's international discourse **Lee et al (2008, p.446).** It is also noted that the different discursive and policy

approaches of certain intergovernmental agencies "during the 1970s and 1908s" (**Lee et al, 2008, p.457)** have in certain respects resulted in hybridized lifelong learning concepts and policy discourses internationally.

Regarding current narratives of lifelong learning and the ways in which lifelong learners are being constructed in particular higher education contexts, **Fejes (2006)** offers instructive insights and poses the very interesting question regarding constructions in policy documents of nontraditional students in higher education today:

"… What visions of the *future* are constructed in the policy documents? How are subjects constructed as being and what are they to become?" **(Fejes, 2006, p.698).** [*my emphasis*] His observations about the implications of particular constructions of nontraditional students in official documents are also pertinent to my own case study:

> "Today, an educable subject is constructed in official documents. It is argued that not everyone (the risk groups) is a part of lifelong learning. … The goal is to make this educable subject employable" **(Fejes, 2006, p.701).**

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Referring to national education policy discourse in South Africa, **Silbert (2009)** asserts that the "notion of the 'ideal South African learning subject' … contradicts the reality of continued class, race, cultural and gender divisions that influence ways in which identity is constructed" **(Silbert , 2009, p. 385).** Noting from Fejes & Nicoll (2008) that subjects are fashioned in terms of social positioning, subjectivity and voice, **Silbert (2009, p.386)** contends that an "explication of the subject" within the context of South African higher education policy is vital for the following reasons: South Africa's complex and contested past, the possibility of new articulations post-1994 education policies, and the production of new subjects.

Noting that the notion of lifelong learning has several contested meanings, **Schuetze (2006)** observes changes in lifelong learning models from something which were once in the 1970s a "somewhat idealistic and elusive social justice reform model to a more utilitarian, human capital based model a generation later" **(Schuetze, 2006, p.302).** Interestingly, **Schuetze & Casey (2006)** suggest there are four main models of Lifelong Learning "all sailing under the same banner … while charting different courses" and "diverging political agendas" **(Schuetze & Casey, 2006, pp.282-283)** but, in their view, it is only the first model that embodies lifelong learning for all as a normative concept.

Table 7
Lifelong Learning Models

"Lifelong Learning for ALL"	An emancipatory or social justice model which pushes the notion of equality of opportunity and life chances through education in a democratic society.
"Lifelong Learning for self fulfillment"	A cultural model where lifelong learning is a process of each individual's life itself, aiming at the fulfillment of life and self-realisation.
"Lifelong Learning for all who want, and are able to, participate."	An 'open society' model in which Lifelong Learning is seen as an adequate learning system for developed, multicultural and democratic countries.
"Lifelong Learning for employment"	An human capital model where Lifelong Learning connotes continuous work-related training and skill development to meet the needs of the economy and employers for a qualified, flexible and adaptable workforce.

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In terms of the overview of key lifelong learning concerns presented in this section, it would seem that the weight of the question posed by **Coffield's (1999, p.486)** detailed study into lifelong learning years ago continues to be pertinent for a present-day inquiry along similar lines:

"If the thesis is so poor, why is it popular?"

Scholarly works consulted in this section provide confirmation of persistent conceptual and implementation challenges associated with lifelong learning. These reflections are taken up during the course of this study because it is important to understand the implications of educational provision borne out of higher education policy contexts in which nontraditional students may be variously understood and portrayed.

2.2.3 University Practices

It is noted from **Jallade & Mora (2001)** that many challenges are encountered when attempts are made to align international lifelong learning concepts and agendas with university practices: "… present practice in European universities clearly shows that the labour market/ employment/ career development objective has taken precedence over the personal development/ second chance objective" **(Jallade & Mora, 2001, p. 376).**

Candy (2000) offers the reassurance that universities are not rendered redundant within the context of an information society. On the contrary, there is a distinct and enduring role for lifelong learning. He asserts that universities best represent knowledge work in a world dominated by knowledge and therefore "have a distinctive and enduring educative role in the production of lifelong learners and of graduates capable of informed action" **(Candy, 2000, p.276).** It is also plausible that process work in most industries has become knowledge work and therefore "the informated workplace also provides a vehicle for workers to exchange knowledge and insights and … to ask 'why' and 'what if' questions" **(Candy, 2000, p.270).**

The related view offered by **Jarvis (1999)** is that universities are not only "for the study of work-based information - they are also for the study of humanities and culture. Yet the place of these seems to be declining in such an instrumental society although new trends are occurring …" **(Jarvis, 1999, p. 256).**

Drawing on Trow (1974), **Singh (2011)** contends that scholarly engagement on widening participation in higher education are with reference to countries where "the passage from elite to mass systems has already taken place" **(Singh , 2011, p.485)** and she asks how similar higher education matters, such as social inclusion for example, might be addressed in low-income countries, like sub-Saharan Africa, as a case in point. Indeed, it would seem that "access and success issues in African higher education" **(Singh, 2011, p.486)** were fraught with challenges:

> "A study of access and widening participation trends in higher education in Tanzania and Ghana **(Morley 2010)** indicates lower participation rates for women, disabled and mature students and those from a lower socio-economic states" **(Singh , 2011, p.486).**

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With regard to the role of lifelong learning in university practices, there appear to be two main observations emanating from the literature relevant to my own study. While some universities in the world may be re-evaluating the continued nature of their formal lifelong learning undertakings, other universities may not have an appreciably diverse student mix to make lifelong learning a meaningful endeavour at these higher education institutions.

2.3 The Adult Student in Higher Education

"*Teaching the more mature student calls for more mature teaching*." This is the encouraging and arguably minority view of **Morton (1963)** within the context of the enormous expansion of adult education programmes in American higher education in the early 1960s. He notes that at the time some faculty strongly felt that "under no conditions should the faculty teaching load be augmented by assignment to one or more extension, non-credit, or community service courses" **(Morton , 1963, p. 84)**. He also believed faculty at the time should embrace the challenge that teaching adults presented: "… an added challenge for flexible teaching plans, utilization of student experience, encouragement of creative and analytic thinking, and relating of instruction to adult lives and careers" **(Morton, 1963, p 84)**.

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And one finds, quite interestingly, in earlier literature that a consciousness and form of provision had already been set in motion for nontraditional students in American higher education as early as 1937, when the American Council on Education held a two-day conference addressing the field of student personnel work subsequently reported on in the form of a brochure as The Student Personnel Point of View, and revised in 1949. Of the 17 elements comprising the Student Personnel Program, elements 12 and 16 are of particular interest and relevance to my own study:

> "12. Opportunities for self-help *through part-time* and summer employment, geared as nearly as possible to the defined vocational objectives of the student.
> 16. Counselling for *married students* and for those contemplating marriage to prepare them for *broadening family and social responsibilities*" **(Williamson et al, 1949).**

Speaking within the context of research universities decades later, **Kasworm (2010)** argues that adult undergraduate students in these higher education environments may think about their student identities differently and in more layered ways:

> "Unlike earlier studies of adults in adult degree programs or in community colleges with a strong open access and adult learner presence **(Kasworm, 2003b, 2005),** these adult students held more complex and multilayered understandings" **(Kasworm, 2010, p.149).**

In her view, these adult students prioritise their positionality within a university, and the main focus might be on proving themselves to be competitive academically, for example. This is so because as adult undergraduate students they "believed they were often viewed not as part of the dominant culture, as being other within their research university culture. ... These adult undergraduates also suggested another layer of positional identity focussed on themselves as learners, as older and more life-complex learners. This second layer of meaning making was the interior learner positionality in relation to their other life experiences and adult roles, of seeking connected classroom experiences, a place of respect, and value as more mature and engaged learners within the classroom" **(Kasworm, 2010, p.149)**.

The literature also suggests that, for some scholars, both "adult learners" and "adult students" together form one category of student in higher education. For example, noting that the original purpose of American higher education was to educate the advantaged youth, **Caruth (2014, p. 93)** believes that, adult students and adult learners, as one category of first-time entering undergraduates, have decidedly different needs from their 'traditional counterparts', and these needs have to be identified and accommodated.

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2.3.1 University Adult Education

Within the context of the United Kingdom, **Jarvis (2014)** outlines how some universities reconfigured their orientation from adult education to the education of adults. He points out that adult educators are aware that several of the liberal adult education subjects have been relegated to leisure time activities at unaffordably exorbitant fees preventing the enrollment of many. Referring to his experience of a university Adult Education Department in 1976, he recalls that there was a sharp distinction, a major division, between education and training:

> "Education was regarded as fundamentally knowledge-based while training was about skills development: the former taught in Adult Education Institutes (AEIs) and the Responsible Body (RB) institutions (university adult departments, the WEA (Workers Education Association) and the WI (Women's Institutes)) and the latter in colleges of further education and the emerging polytechnic sector" **(Jarvis, 2014, p46).**

In his view, this meant that adult education departments in universities remained on the margins of universities because they offered no qualifications and appeared to do little research: "indeed, many academics did not regard adult education as a university subject. Indeed, it was a field of practice but hardly a field of study" **(Jarvis, 2014, p.46).**

In time, postgraduate certificates in education (PGCEs), Masters degrees and doctorates were offered by these university departments. Adult education had then become "the education of adults which was also a field of study, so that the focus was no longer so much on the adult as on the field of practice and study" **(Jarvis, 2014, p.48).**

2.3.2 Part-time Study by Adults in Higher Education

Some adult students and adult students who study part-time at higher education institutions come across in the literature not always as student-centred constructs of those institutions but more so as changing constructs linked to varying institutional strategies and plans. This section attempts an overview of what may be some of the reasons for this based on the part-time provision experience at universities in four countries: Sweden, Ireland, Canada and South Africa.

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In the Swedish education context more than two decades ago, the point made by **(Abrahamsson, 1984)** about part-time studies leaves the reader with more questions:

> "[The] concept of part-time students is not used in regular statistics. … Within faculties of humanities and the natural sciences, a new pattern of studies had emerged in recent years. Similar tendencies are probably also to be expected within other faculties. This new pattern of studies is characterised not only by an ongoing decline in numbers of students opting for general study programmes but also by the increasing number who are interested in shorter study programmes and in evening and part-time studies" **(Abrahamsson, 1984, p.289).**

Healy & Slowey (2006) note more recently that higher education statistics for Ireland's part-time learners "tend to be very vague and imprecise." This is so because the way in which participation has expanded for nontraditional learners in Ireland has been "through the rapid growth of higher education provision in institutions other than universities" **(Healy & Slowey, 2006, p.372).** From a lifelong learning

perspective, it would seem, therefore, that Ireland's policy challenge would be the development of "an integrated approach to higher education policy which addresses the changing nature of the student body, including, in particular, mature and part-time learners" and, in addition, there "are lessons to be learnt from the pedagogical and curricular approaches drawn from adult education policies" **(Healy & Slowey, 2006, p. 373).**

McClean & Rollwagen (2010) share insights pertaining to an evolution of part-time study by adults at McGill university, established in 1821 and one of the oldest universities in Canada. Although the first reference to university extension work and part-time study could be found in the McGill annual reports as early as 1891 **(McClean & Rollwagen, 2010, p.744),** "the first sustained institutional commitment to part-time study at McGill came with the creation of an extension committee in 1920" **(McClean & Rollwagen, 2010, p.745).** The extension courses at McGill University included lectures in the evening and in several instances students had the option of writing a final examination for which they would receive academic credits if they had successfully passed these evening courses. However, it is also reported that the University experienced a decline in part-time study in the 1930s, a slight resurfacing in the 1950s, and the matter was again formally raised institutionally in the early 1960s. McGill's director of University Extension in 1969 again made a plea for part-time degree-credit study opportunities, and ended with a recommendation as follows:

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> "McGill must accept the fact that it is no longer 'private' and must take the consequences: i.e. contribute substantially to the educational needs of working people in English speaking Quebec. It is recommended that Senate strongly endorse a recommendation to broaden our educational effort immediately through development of evening graduate degree programs and, as soon as possible, through programmes of evening study leading to undergraduate degrees" **(McClean & Rollwagen, 2010, pp. 748-749).**

They conclude with a striking observation about construction and reconstruction of part-time provision for adult students at McGill University:

> "The demand from adults to pursue university degrees on a part-time basis was recognised in the early 1920s. This demand did not disappear between 1933 and 1973. Why then did leaders at McGill decide to stop offering part-time study opportunities in 1933, and start doing so again 40 years later? It is clear that more proximate causes, rather than structural factors such as economic

change or labour market competition, must be examined to develop such an answer," **(McClean & Rollwagen, 2010, p 751).**

Walters et al (2011) refer to an important development in a changing South African higher education landscape; namely that the emphasis on efficiency and successful throughput contained in the country's new funding formula for higher education may have had an adverse effect on educational choices currently available to part-time students. In addition, "there has also been pressure from the Ministry to increase student numbers at the university without the increase in staff capacity, so workload is a factor which can work against the idea of running after hours classes" **(Walters et al, 2011, p2).** These developments still affect the majority of South Africans presently seeking higher education, where the "effect of the disparity in the social system puts certain privileged schools and universities out of the reach of the majority" of citizens, **Bozalek & Boughey (2012).** This view is underscored by **Mouton et al (2013)** who propose of addressing current access challenges in South Africa's tertiary system by using distance education "as a means to open the door for further studies" **(Mouton et al, 2013, p.297).**

Provision for the part-time student in higher education appears to present appreciable challenges in university contexts worldwide as stakeholders attempt to understand and embrace the part-time student experience as an integral part of modern university life. Interestingly, it is a fluid construct that may straddle institutionally constructed 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student boundaries particularly within the context of widening participation and the massification of higher education.

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2.3.3 'Adultification' of Higher Education

It is noted from Abrahamsson (1984) that Sweden alongside several western countries experienced a marked decline of higher education enrolments of young students at the beginning of the 1970s. It is also noted that the youth's appreciable lack of interest in higher education studies "… and a free sector of educational opportunities in the faculties of arts and sciences happened to be beneficial and timely for the older generation" **(Abrahamsson, 1984, p.291).**

From one vantage point, Swedish policy issues in the early 1980s were factors influencing "increased competition between young and adult students" **(Abrahamsson, 1984, p.286)** in terms of the admissions process and within the context of "economic stagnation and a more restrictive public budget" **(Abrahamsson, 1984, p286).** Very interestingly, we also note the following:

> "Thus the so-called 'adultification' of the Swedish system of higher education, where students above 25 years of age are in a majority in many programmes and most separate courses, does not mainly imply strong participation of so-called underprivileged adults with a restricted educational background. Rather, a number of adults tend to be educationally well-equipped as far as both qualified professional experience and prior schooling are concerned" **(Abrahamsson, 1984:286).**

In terms of policy perspectives, Abrahamsson argues that the codified policies of adult participation in higher education in countries such as Sweden and the UK have a distinct influence on participation levels and organisational structures. In this regard it is noted that in Sweden higher education work is done with "heterogeneous student groups and that there are no specific curricula or classes which are open only to adult learners. … Thus we have a mixed student culture, rather than a segregated one" **(Abrahamsson, 1984, p285).**

Therefore, the adultification of higher education could possibly be explained predominantly numerically in the sense that there were less young students in the system from a particular point onwards, and the adultification of higher education might not mean that adult students had made a particularly unique imprint on areas of university life:

> "Thus there are different criteria to be used if we want to analyse the realities behind the concept of 'adultification'. … In general one could say that 'adultification' is a long-term process with roots back on the late 1950s. The reform of 1977 is an adaptation to a long-term pattern" **(Abrahamsson, 1984:292).**

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2.4 SUMMARY

Student 'nontraditionality' as part of higher education discourse does not appear to mean the same thing from one context to the next. There are possibly different kinds of non-traditionality in higher education studenthood, and it is likely that certain South African higher education contexts may offer particular and unique perspectives in this regard.

SECTION 3: 'NONTRADITIONAL' STUDENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 South African Higher Education and Nontraditional Student Discourse

> "Labels hide unidentified, unexamined assumptions - we need to know what good things students learn from their disadvantaged backgrounds. … Deficit thinking applies a narrow pathology-seeking assessment to groups of people and fails to recognise individual strengths."

This is the view of **Smit (2012, p. 377)** who argues that diversity in higher education needs to be valued and deficit thinking, in particular with regard to South African higher education, needs to be problematised.

It is possible that some of South Africa's historically disadvantaged higher education institutions may have unique experiences of 'nontraditional' students, which are not currently reflected in the mainstream literature pertaining to 'nontraditional' students in higher education today. In historically disadvantaged South African universities during the apartheid era, 'nontraditional' students by design had an appreciable presence in historically disadvantaged higher education institutions, and have always been in the majority in these higher education settings. However, **Cele & Menon (2006)** make the important point that although South African society still has the will to transform itself, it would seem that "the inability of the education system to produce graduates breeds new forms of social exclusion - exclusion from living meaningful lives as critical citizens and playing a part in the mainstream economy" **(Cele & Menon 2006, p.40).**

It is noted from **Badat (2010)** that South Africa's 1997 Department of Education White Paper signalled the main 'social purposes that higher education was intended to serve'. One of the social purposes was the role of lifelong learning: "To mobilise 'human talent and potential growth through lifelong learning' (DoE, 1997, 1.12) " **(Badat, 2010, p3).** Closer scrutiny of this Government Gazette reveals in my view a mixed language of 'education and labour', so to speak, where the following competencies were required of *personpower* [my emphasis]:

> "1.12 These economic and technological changes create an agenda for the role of higher education in reconstruction and development. This includes: … High level skills training: the training and provision of person power to strengthen this country's enterprises, services and

> infrastructure. This requires the development of professionals and knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills, but who are socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation" **(Government Gazette No 18207, 15 August 1997).**

Deacon et al (2009) also point out that many higher education institutions recognise student prior learning needs and in addition adopt more formal approaches to recognition of prior learning (RPL) which "target not only school leavers but adults returning to formal education (and who are assumed to have life and work experience)" **(Deacon et al, 2009, p1077).**

Recent literature reveals interesting core assumptions about nontraditional students in South African higher education. It would seem that these students are seen to be disadvantaged in many areas (economically, educationally and culturally) and the reader infers they are still from historically ascribed racial categories such as 'Coloured', 'Indian' and 'Black'. It is further noted that the majority of 'nontraditional' South African students run the risk of not being able to gain access to a university education. As gazetted, the role of lifelong learning as a means to making (all?) higher education students capable and continually employable means that in a fundamental sense all South African higher education students could be regarded as lifelong learners. The valuable insight offered by Smith (2012), that there are positive attributes to students described as nontraditional, is taken up further in this study.

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3.2 ' Nontraditional' Students at one South African university

Nearly a decade ago, the Southern African Regional Universities Association described the University of the Western Cape in the following way on their website: "UWC has 14,788 students and 50 distance students in 2006. No breakdown was available for the number of full-time and part-time students. Of the student total, 13,522 were South African citizens, while 593 were from other SADC countries and 382 from non-SADC countries (HEMIS data, 2006), " **SARUA website (accessed 2013/12/09).**

More recently, and as part of case study research on throughput at designated South African universities, the student composition of the University of the Western Cape is described in the following way as part of a report produced by the **Council on Higher Education (2010, p.129):**

> "… at UWC we begin by acknowledging that students are a heterogeneous group. They arrive at the institution with differing home cultures, high school cultures, teaching and learning cultures

> and intersecting identities of race, class, gender, ideology , ethnicity, language, sexuality, nationality and specific historical experiences."

From this CHE report into access and throughput in South African higher education, it is also noted **(CHE, 2010, p.130)** at the time that the University of the Western Cape attracts students widely across the African continent (Tanzania, Congo, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Nigeria, Rwanda and Swaziland) and beyond (China). In this regard, it is also noted from **Walters (14 Oct 2011) (accessed 2013/12/09)** that it is "… part of the university's DNA to have adult students as an essential part of its student population."

Using UWC as one of three South African university cases into access and throughput, from this CHE project there is reportedly a leitmotif running through the data, and a finding relevant to my own study, namely that it is not only the nontraditional student population at UWC who may *generally* [my emphasis] be perceived to be underprepared for university education:

> " The '*underprepared student'* argument emerged strongly from our data. It takes a variety of forms, depending on the faculty. In the Science Faculty almost all staff interviewed said there was a problem with students' grounding in mathematics. … In the Arts Faculty, the argument revolved around students admitted on the basis of RPL[recognition of prior learning] criteria" **(CHE, 2010, p. 150).**

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Significantly regarding the case of UWC, the CHE study concludes that there "is a need to actively conceptualise all citizens as lifelong learners":

> "Yes, of course students must graduate; that is the goal. But that vital percentage of undergraduate students across the system who do not graduate in five years - could there not be a better, more complex and accurate ways to think about their relationship to education and learning than to label them flatly as 'failures' and 'dropouts'?" **(CHE, 2010, p. 167).**

3.3 SUMMARY

The ways in which 'nontraditional' students at UWC are 'typically perceived' institutionally and beyond potentially yield useful insights in assisting the institutional understandings for their ongoing academic

advancement, and for higher education nomenclature in general. It is an important finding that lifelong learning is put forward as having a distinct role in addressing the academic unpreparedness of *all* UWC students.

SECTION 4: CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND HIGHER EDUCATION'S 'NEW' NON-TRADITIONALS

Student development theories would lead the way significantly in providing an understanding a range of possible nontraditional student constructs if they took into account possible gradations of 'traditionality' and 'nontraditionality' in all of today's higher education students. In this regard, revisiting portrayals of certain nontraditional student constructs in the conceptual models identified in this section is an important part of the scope of this literature review. In this section, the iconic model of Tinto is discussed **Tinto (1975)** and retention and attrition models explicitly dedicated to nontraditional students have also been selected from the literature: **Bean &Metzner (1985, 1987); Pascarella (1989); and Benjamin (1994)**.

Through their models, the literature suggests that these identified scholars represent the appreciably concentrated and clearly articulated thinking about nontraditional student constructs in higher education. Therefore, the relevance to my own study are the ways in which their insights have assisted in shaping particular constructs of nontraditional student at institutions of higher education.

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My argument in this section focuses on how constructs of 'nontraditional' students are represented by the theorists concerned as part of a discourse in higher education.

4.1 Tinto (1975)

> "There is no great secret to successful retention programs, no mystery which requires unraveling. … It is within the reach of all institutions if they only give serious attention to the character of their educational mission and the obligations it entails" **(Tinto, 1987, p. 18).**

Even though some scholars would say that Tinto's iconic 1975 student integration model of attrition "remains the most influential model of dropout from tertiary education" **(McCubbin , 2003, p.1)** detractors also point to less impressive "practical benefits" **(McCubbin, 2003, p.9)** of a model designed to explain certain kinds of "dropout behaviour that may occur in particular types of higher education

settings" **(McCubbin, 2003, p.7)**. A study conducted by **Brunsden et al (2000)** as a case in point concludes that the 'focus of attrition research needs to shift away from the broad influences of the institution that Tinto's approach emphasises" **(Brunsden et al , 2000, p.307)** and, in addition, theory should ideally be "developed from a range of investigative methods" **(Brunsden et al, 2000, p.308).** From the literature it is also noted that scholarly work done in the UK in the 1990s "questioned the innate validity of Tinto's model" and there is also evidence in the scholarship both in the USA and UK that, especially with nontraditional students, "external factors may have some influence … on a decision to leave" **(Laing & Robinson, 2003, p.178).**

My own study has been informed by the view that much can be learnt from Tinto's early and revised works about the ways in which the scholarship perceived nontraditional students at the time. Even if Tinto's models may not have addressed attrition concerns of nontraditional students at the time, there is much to gain from his suggestions for future research, and his awareness of inclusion and exclusion considerations of disadvantaged and marginalised as students in higher education two decades ago. Also particularly relevant to my own case study are his observations about the critical undertaking *various higher education institutions* have in understanding the *kinds of students* they have pledged to serve **(Tinto 1987)**, and more specifically that "*institutional commitment* is a condition for student success" **(Tinto , 2005, p.90).**

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Acknowledging that scholarly research had just scratched the surface of the relationship between individual institutions and individuals students, **Tinto (1975)** makes candid observations especially about the limitations of his own research at the time: "What we do know at present is quite crude; namely that four-year institutions, private institutions, and high quality institutions have lower dropout rates than do two-year institutions, public institutions, and lower quality institutions. How these differences come about or for which types of persons these differences are greater, smaller or even reversed is, thus far, beyond our reach" **(Tinto, 1975, p. 116).**

How does Tinto refer to students in his 1975 institutional model of attrition? My scan in this regard suggests that he refers to students in various ways but much more frequently as individuals than homogenized members of a traditional student category; for example: as *persons* **(Tinto, 1975, pp. 89, 94, 97, 98, 105),** as *individuals*, **(Tinto, 1975, pp. 90, 93, 94, 96, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 110, 119),** as *college persisters* **(Tinto, 1975, p.100),** and as *students* **(Tinto, 1975, p.105).** Even for the 'traditional student set' to which Tinto may only have been directing his work at the time, it is interesting that

students are highlighted mainly as *individuals*, for example: … "with *individual* characteristics and dispositions" **(Tinto, 1975, p.93)** and "*individual* characteristics, prior experiences, and commitments," **(Tinto, 1975, p.96)**. By implication this puts forward the likelihood that individual characteristics of nontraditional students may also have been highlighted in a similar study, suggestive of a possible common ground of individualizing student identity and experience across a wider pool of higher education students, and thereby blurring the 'traditional-nontraditional' binary.

Tinto's candid reflections on his 1975 attrition model are therefore not discounted in this study because his suggestions **(Tinto, 1975, p.119)** for further research remain relevant for most nontraditional, and arguably also most traditional, students in higher education currently:

- The relationship between race and dropout from higher education;
- The phenomenon of dropout from urban institutions of higher education;
- The exploration of student and faculty subcultures and persistence in college;
- The detailed following up of entering cohorts of individuals in various types of higher education institutions.

As pertinent are his observations regarding the need for new research on student departure **(Tinto, 1988, p.451)**:

> "… For instance, do *older students* and/ or *foreign students* understand the temporal quality of persistence in the same way as do other students? Anecdotal evidence alone suggests they do not."

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Table 8

Constructs of 'Nontraditional' Students: Tinto

Tinto's Work	Constructs of Nontraditional Students	Context for the Construct
1975 (1975:119)	*Not directly, but areas of commonality could be inferred from the way in which Tinto refers to students generally and he specifically mentions subpopulations of the student body in his suggestions for future research.*	the relationship between the individual and the institution
1982	*As disadvantaged students.*	as part of

(1982:692)		recommendations for future research
1988 (1988:451)	*As older students and/or foreign students.*	pointing to the need for new research on student departure
2004 (2004:10)	*As 'low income' students who have more 'individual' goals than the degree as their goal.*	who goes to college and who graduates from college

Tinto revised his student integration model in 1982, but he also emphasises the importance of acknowledging his own theoretical limitations and the limits of scholarly thinking at that time when his 1975 model of attrition was published. As part of a host of future research recommendations, *disadvantaged* students are mentioned in particular: "Studies of dropout among specific student groups of students, especially among the disadvantaged, may aid in the development of institution and system policies designed and targeted to assist the educational continuance of particular subpopulations of the student body" **(Tinto, 1982, p. 692).**

their

It is in Tinto's more recent works that his constructs of nontraditional students come into view more clearly. For example, in a 2004 study of who goes to college and who graduates from college in American higher education, a distinction is made between 'high income' and 'low income' students **(Tinto, 2004, p. 6),** the latter being nontraditional students. Interestingly, but not necessarily a view that I endorse, is that nontraditional students are perceived to have more *'individual'* goals than the degree as a goal: "… not all students begin college with the goal of completing a degree. For many, college may be the vehicle for upgrading job skills, gaining a promotion, or changing jobs. For others, it may simply be a way of gaining more knowledge" **(Tinto, 2004, p.10).**

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4.2 JP Bean and BS Metzner (1985 and 1987)

To date, the literature indicates that very few retention models are oriented towards non-traditional students in higher education. Scholarly contributions from **Bean & Metzner (1985 and 1987)** stand out as conceptual models of nontraditional undergraduate students, who, when compared to their 'traditional' counterparts, are generally '*older, part-time and commuter students*' **(Bean & Metzner, 1985, p.485).**

Bean & Metzner (1987, p.35): indicate that little is known about the attitudes and performance over time of nearly half of all the undergraduate students attending part-time college in America. Owing to the heterogeneity of the population, they contend that it is a complicated task to accurately model nontraditional college student attrition behaviour: "… The problem may not be intractable, but it will probably devil researchers for a long time."

It is still not clear why it is assumed that a traditional student set may be regarded as homogeneous, and a nontraditional student set may be regarded as heterogeneous. Nevertheless, they believe that an "… understanding of multiplicative effects in the regression of dropout could greatly enhance our understanding of this heterogenous population" **(Bean & Metzner, 1987, p.35).**

With particular reference to nontraditional students enrolled in institutions of higher education, it is noted that very little research was available at the time "beyond a simple tabulation of dropout rate," **(Bean & Metzner , 1985, p. 485)** and studies conducted with commuter students were predominantly descriptive with few theoretical models guiding attrition research.

Therefore, one of the main purposes of the Bean & Metzner 1985 study was to define nontraditional undergraduate students in higher education at the time:

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> "Non-traditional students can be from any part of the country; from rural or urban settings; rich or poor; black, white or Hispanic; 18 years old or older; not employed, working full- or part-time, or retired; male or female; with or without dependents; married, single or divorced; and enrolled for vocational reasons in a single course or in a degree or certificate program. Due to this heterogeneity it is very difficult to develop a profile of a typical nontraditional student" **(Bean & Metzner, 1985, p. 488).**

Here, and very relevant to ways of seeing nontraditional students as part of the UWC case study, the way in which nontraditional student constructs are described is very interesting; *not* as part of a dichotomy with students perceived as traditional in higher education today but rather *as a matter of extent*:

> "The difference between traditional and nontraditional students *is a matter of extent*; traditional and nontraditional students cannot easily be classified into simple dichotomous categories. … It is necessary, but not sufficient, for a nontraditional student to have at least of the three

> characteristics (part-time, commuter, older than 24). … Nontraditional students are distinguished by the lessened intensity and duration of their interaction with the primary agents of socialization (faculty, peers) at the institutions they attend" **(Bean & Metzner , 1985, p. 488).**

And the final definition takes issue with Tinto's claims of academic and social integration within institutions of higher education as factors towards the success of nontraditional students:

> "Thus we come to an appropriately cumbersome definition of a nontraditional student: A nontraditional student is older than 24, or does not live in a campus residence (e.g. is a commuter), or is a part-time student, or some combination of these three factors; *is* ***not*** *greatly influenced by the social environment of the institution*; and is chiefly concerned with the institution's academic offerings (especially courses, certification, and degrees,) **(Bean & Metzner, 1985, p. 489).**

It is also instructive to note the way in which **Bean & Metzner (1985)** have understood the attrition similarities and differences between traditional and nontraditional students in higher education. Firstly, they note that there are common elements in the four models of dropout process for *traditional* students as developed respectively by Spady (1970), Tinto (1975), Pascarella (1980) and Bean (1985).

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Very interestingly, they expect that longitudinal processes of attrition are likely to be ***similar*** both for traditional and nontraditional students "regardless of their institutional setting or student subgroup affiliation" and go on to suggest that the "…most important variables, however, are likely to differ for subgroups such as older students, part-time students, ethnic minorities, women, or academically underprepared students at different types of institutions, particularly 2-year, 4-year commuter, and 4-year residential colleges." It is noted that the 1985 model proposed by Bean & Metzner is sufficiently accommodative to support studies pertaining to "different populations in various institutional settings" **(Bean & Metzner, 1985, p.530).**

But the following cautionary observation is the most interesting and relevant to my own study:

"However, a model that tries to capture the *general differences* between traditional and nontraditional students will miss many of the details of the attrition process for nontraditional students and thus may fail

to account for much of the variance found in specific nontraditional subpopulations" **(Bean & Metzner , 1985, p.530).**

Also interesting is the claim made by Bean and Metzner (1987), that "… there are a few multivariate studies of nontraditional students guided by theory. Those that do exist compare nontraditional with traditional students (e.g., Pascarella and Chapman, 1983), and the theory used was developed for traditional students" **(Bean & Metzner , 1987, p.16).**

From these observations it would seem that the scholarship producing student attrition models were primarily concerned with dropout rates in higher education, and there may have been an assumption that nontraditional students have higher dropout rates than traditional students.

Interesting also to note from **Bean & Metzner (1985, p. 489)** is the sensitivity they display for understanding as far as possible the nuances embedded in the experience of students regarded as nontraditional: "Since many nontraditional students drop out, stop out, or transfer, a researcher needs to be careful to choose an operational definition of attrition that is appropriate to the research problem to be investigated."

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Bean and Metzner (1987, p.35) also contend the following: "Future researchers should study why a student leaves a particular institution separately from why students drop out of higher education altogether and thus separate the institutional and student perspectives on dropout. This approach is especially appropriate for nontraditional students who often transfer, stop out, *or meet their educational goals before graduating"* [my emphasis].

At the outset, my challenge was in thinking about the assumptions of homogeneity underpinning traditional student constructs and heterogeneity for nontraditional student constructs. This remains an unresolved reflection currently.

Table 9

Constructs of 'Nontraditional' Students: Bean & Metzner

Overview			
Bean & Metzner's Work	Constructs of Nontraditional Students	Constructs of Traditional Students	Context for the Construct
Bean & Metzner (1985)	older part-time commuter		student attrition: to develop a conceptual model of the dropout process for the nontraditional undergraduate student (1985:486)
Metzner & Bean (1987)	commuter part-time a heterogenous population	under age 25 enrolled full time residing at their college	student attrition: to estimate a conceptual model of nontraditional student attrition (1985:15)
Metzner & Bean (1987)	a heterogenous population [Why is heterogeneity assumed? - my question.]	a homogenous population [Why is homogeneity assumed? - my question.]	
The construct of 'one of a kind' for traditional students vs the construct of 'heterogeneity' for 'nontraditional' students?			

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4.3 ET Pascarella and PT Terenzini (1991)

When they published a synthesis of their studies conducted between 1968 and 1988 on the impact of college on students, **Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)** realised quite dramatically that the 2,600 or so studies they reviewed "did not necessarily provide a complete or comprehensive portrait of the American undergraduate student population"**(Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998, p.152).** That is to say, there was the realisation that the knowledge base for their work, "How College Affects Students", had limitations because it allowed these researchers appreciable insight into a population of students who were no longer the majority in American postsecondary education.

This major, if unavoidable, limitation on their work was not lost on reviewers:

> … Ironically, just as analysis of the experiences of college students reached an apex in terms of quantitative "technique and vigor," the population of interest began shifting. Now at the end of the 2 decades, our college campuses are no longer predominantly populated by the students described in this book" **(Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998, p.152).**

Also very relevant is the view that by the time students attend community colleges, "with their open admissions policies, faculties rewarded essentially for teaching, and their disproportionate numbers of non-resident, part-time, older, non-white, and working class students, they are virtually off the radar screen in terms of public recognition or concern," **(Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998, p.156).**

Referring to community colleges in the United States, there is a strong sense that higher education practitioners and policy makers, however, "cannot afford to spend another decade in ignorance of the educational influence of a set of institutions that educate nearly 40% of our students," **(Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998, p.157).**

Table 10

Constructs of 'Nontraditional' Students: Pascarella & Terenzini

Overview		
Pascarella & Terenzini	Constructs of Nontraditional Students	Context for the Construct
1991	*'25 years of age or older, attending college on a part-time basis, or attending college full-time but also having jobs and working at least 20 hours per week, non-resident, non-white, working class'*	a college environment for 'nontraditional' students

4.4 The Five Principles of Andragogy

Quinnan (1997) offers a postmodern interpretation of the main principles of andragogy as originally put forward by Knowles. However, it is already pointed to in the literature that the concept of an adult in higher education today should not only be shaped in terms of age but should take into account a range of different influences and experiences. Nevertheless, this postmodern exploration of the five main principles of andragogy in my view opens possibilities for all students in higher education today:

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Table 11

Overview: Extending Andragogy Through Postmodern Theory

	The Five Principles of Andragogy	A Postmodern View
1.	The learner is self-directed.	"Emphasis is placed more on the embeddedness of individual identity within the various discourses through which each person has acted or is acting" **(Quinnan, 1997, p.92).**
2.	Adults enter into education with a wealth and variety of experiences younger students do not have.	"Postmodernism envelops this same experiential base in a discourse, epistemology, or "way of knowing" that presupposes a particular world view" **(Quinnan, 1997, p.92).**

3.	Adults are psychologically more ready to learn than traditional-age students.	"Through the course of living and learning, adults continuously revisit their value systems at time of internal and external crisis. Reevaluation of beliefs typically happens at moments of dissonance or disjuncture, when the adult encounters a problem that s/he is cognitively unequipped to resolve" **(Quinnan, 1997, p. 93).**
4.	Adults bring a life-centred, task oriented, experience-informed orientation to learning.	"In contrast to detractors of experiential learning, postmodernists contend that 'every' as learning substance is far more useful than the homogenized curricula taught in formal educational programs that represent a solitary, albeit lionized, Westernized intellectual tradition" **(Quinnan , 1997, p. 93).**
5.	Adults are internally motivated to learn.	"Postmodernism offers another rationale for why adults are internally motivated to continue their education. It emerges in the principle of praxis, or reflective learning as a perquisite to informed action. Acquainted firsthand with the inequality of the rampant world, some adults have reached a phase of psychosocial development where they long to make a difference, to contribute in various ways to the betterment of all persons, especially those residing on the margins" **(Quinnan, 1997, p93).**

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Scholarly thinking in this regard is noted in an especially encouraging and helpful way because it shows that it should also be possible to make sense of current nontraditional student constructs conceptually beyond the present ways in which we use the terms in higher education currently.

4.5 SUMMARY

In this section, some of the more popular conceptual and student attrition models were chosen to provide some insight into how they saw 'nontraditional' students as a type, how they were described as students, and what they thought their educational needs to be at the time.

It is evident from the literature reviewed that 'nontraditional' students constructs were largely underdeveloped as student identities and would benefit from re-imagined possibilities and future research.

SECTION 5: 'NONTRADITIONALITY': CONSTRUCTS FOR THE FUTURE?

> "… that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, "there" in discourse about it. And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for the effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient" **(Said, 1978/1995, p.22).**

Burke & Jackson (2007) believe that there is considerable uncertainty and misunderstanding in the world today about higher education's aims and purpose, and who its intended participants should be:

> "This has increasingly been the case as universities have opened their doors -albeit not always very widely - to growing numbers of students" **(Burke & Jackson, 2007, p.39).**

In this higher education climate, they ask whether a 'refashioned' lifelong learning ethos may assist matters in determining what qualities today's higher education students should have. In this regard reconceptualisations of lifelong learning include reconstructions of lifelong learners, and to revisit what they may mean now and for the future: "learning for life, critical learning and reflexive learning" **(Burke & Jackson , 2007, p.213).** Would there be similarities with what Melanie Walker proposes as part of the capabilities approach? And what could a possible integration look like as new, re-imagined, constructs of nontraditional students in higher education today?

There is also a strand of the scholarship making the case that nontraditional undergraduate students are not unlike any other kind of undergraduate student in higher education. For example, **Benjamin's (1994)** observation of *all* higher education undergraduates is that they in general may struggle with many complexities associated with and in addition to university life:

> "Undergraduate students lead complex lives. They struggle to meet the academic requirements of their program of study, while simultaneously coping with competing demands of parents, friends,

> romantic partners, employers and others. They may further confront acute and/or chronic problems with health and finances as well as unexpected life events" **(Benjamin, 1994, p. 248).**

It is also noted from the Million+ University Think- tank Report **(McVity et al, 2012)** that of the undergraduate students studying for first degrees at universities in the United Kingdom in the 2009 to 2010 period, the 429 460 *mature students* (*defined according to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as students who are aged 21 or over on 30 September of the academic year in which they start a degree course*) represented 30.2 percent of all first-degree undergraduates.

Their insights in particular are of relevance to my own study, and in terms of my own argument, which is really that there are gradations of nontraditional students as part of a continuum of all students in higher education presently:

> " Mature undergraduates are not a homogenous group and share much in common with their younger peers. We do not wish to suggest there is a universal mature student experience, that age is the overriding influence on student life or that there is a binary divide between the experiences of younger and older undergraduates "**(McVity, et al, 2012, pp. 3-4).**

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Having said this, some risks seem to be exclusive to 'nontraditional' or mature students. A case in point is the risk of the future participation of *mature students, as a group*, owing to recent changes in the higher education funding regime and the adult skills policy. While it is noted that Million+ and NUS see the advantages of the extension of fee loans to part-time undergraduates there is also a concern that mature students generally tend to be debt averse and it is therefore not clear whether the extension of feel loans would encourage participation or serve as a deterrent to mature students in this higher setting.

On a more positive level it is also noted from the report that mature students enter university with extensive and transferable experience drawn from wide-ranging careers , and are able to share experiences and skills along the lines of time planning, organisational planning, "working in groups and presenting to audiences. This experience is beneficial to all students and helps to shape the culture of learning at any institution. Public funding for mature students via teaching funding and the Student Loans Company also contributes to institutional revenues" **(McVity et al, 2012, pp.1).**

The literature, therefore, suggests that complexities around the identities of nontraditional students are in urgent need of redress, and the identified positive attributes of nontraditional students could be mainstreamed as part of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and learning arrangements.

5.1 Higher Education Nomenclature and 'Nontraditionality'

It is likely that influences in higher education would continue focussing on individualism in society, where the burden of many of the state's responsibilities, such as education, is shifted onto the individual. Therefore, it is likely that neoliberalism, for example, may continue to play a role in further disrupting/ individualising higher education student constructs as we currently know them.

Regarding nomenclature shifts in higher education, it is noted from **Sebalj et al (2012)** that a significant shift is occurring in the staffing nomenclature within Australian universities where the term 'Professional Staff' is replacing the descriptor of 'General Staff': " …The growing specialization and professionalisation of this group, as well as the shifting nature of university staffing identities and roles, are implicated in the development of changing terminology" **(Sebalj et al, 2012, p. 464).**

His interesting conclusion is also noted, and it is highly analogous to this present study of 'nontraditional' students in search of dynamic redefinition: "The perspectives gathered on staffing nomenclature reflect an occupational group wanting to define itself – to be visible, to be recognized, to be valued" **(Sebalj et al, 2012, p. 469).**

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This research is interesting because, just as it challenges the boundaries of the traditional academic/ non-academic binary, the door is also left open for the possibilities of new academic constructs alongside new student constructs, thus adding to the depiction of the "shifting nature of academic and professional staff identities and work roles in today's universities"**(ibid: 470).**

While 'third space' **Whitchurch (2008, p. 2013)** students is hardly an appropriate naming for the increasing and increasingly diverse higher education population in the world presently, there is a dynamic element to the concept of a 'third space' if it allows an exploration of current language ascribed to nontraditional students worldwide.

Whitchurch (2013, p.87) contends that Third Space professionals in higher education could be regarded as reminiscent of "Wenger's 'brokers', who assist with the process of developing understandings across

groupings, but whose position may be uncertain and even perilous if, as is likely to happen on occasion, some individuals appear to be disenfranchised (Wenger, 1998)."

I had not thought of the 'nontraditional' student as a 'higher education broker' before I had encountered this area of the scholarship and it seems to me now that there are useful insights to gain from exploring this metaphor in the ensuing chapters. Certainly the nontraditional students of today may perhaps not possess the self-knowledge of their own studenthood, that is to say, of their own experience as students, but they might feel that they are on the "brink of something" and this metaphor is mentioned for this reason.

5.2 'Post-nontraditionality': Possibilities for the Way Ahead

From the literature reviewed, what is the scholarly thinking of our role in re-imagining nontraditional students in higher education today?

Although they were speaking mainly of global flows of particular students in particular higher education contexts, the views held by **Sellar & Gale (2011)** may have an applicability for all higher education students when they assert that a 'new global imaginary of student equity' is needed in the world today. Very interestingly, it is noted that all higher education stakeholders need to understand:

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> "… where new injustices have emerged, or old ones persist, in what has become a global field of higher education" **(Sellar & Gale, 2011, p.2).**

Such a task, however, presents several creative challenges. Noting that discourses of widening participation in higher education are not 'monolithic or homogenous' **(Burke, 2012, p. 24)** , it may be possible for a conversation to begin at this point for revisiting commonly held (mis)beliefs of constructions of nontraditionality and nontraditional students in higher education presently, and what "naming (and shaming) the widening participation subject" and policy discourses might offer **(Burke 2012, p.58)** in reconsidering student identity discourses of difference and "sameness" **(Burke, 2012, p.61).** Referring specifically to classing and/or classifying the student-subject, it is noted that individual university applicants not only subject themselves, but may also reconstruct themselves, in relation to university power relations:

> "Such processes of subjection are complicit on the re/construction of unequal classed, gendered and racialised positioning and subjectivities and the marking out of difference. Widening participation discourses are underpinned by discourses of deficit, in which the different and the 'Other' subject is named and identified in terms of what she is seen to lack" **(Burke, 2012, p. 129).**

In this regard, I would support the direction proposed by **Iverson (2012)**, who believes that a change in language is necessary and practitioners might want to ask "new questions about diversity and community, inclusion and difference" **(Iverson 2012).** Drawing on Yanow (2003), she notes that human beings are genetically far more alike than we are different, and by extension:

> "… the use of labels and categories creates 'artificial boundaries' that may serve more as 'a proxy for economic and behavioral problems … [and] continue to perpetuate inequality' " **(Iverson, 2012, p. 168).**

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Even though Iverson was referring specifically to diversity policies for higher education students, there is value and much relevance to my own study in terms of her invitation: rather than unquestioningly accepting current standards or superficially acknowledging the limitations evident in higher education nomenclature, practitioners would do well if there was commitment in determining who and what are served by current classifications and categorizations.

5.3 SUMMARY

The discussion in this section takes into account emerging scholarly writing about the changes and increasingly indistinguishable boundaries in higher education nomenclature regarding staffing structures and responsibilities, and there has been an analogous exploration as to what this might mean for nontraditional student constructs, especially noting that significant segments of 'third space' professional staff engage directly with significant segments of nontraditional students.

SECTION 6: CHAPTER SUMMARY

> "In the depths of this Oriental stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual items evoke a fabulously rich world: the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Eden, Troy, Sodom and Gomorrah, Astarte, Isis and Osiris, Sheba, Babylon, the Genii, the Magi, Nineveh, Prester John, Mahomet, and dozens more; settings, in some cases names only, half-imagined, half-known; monsters, devils, heroes; terrors, pleasures, desires" **(Said, 1978/1995, p. 63).**

In demarcating the scholarship, the main task attempted was to better understand the assumptions and contexts behind 'nontraditional' student constructs in higher education today. Said's remarks guided my thinking and I appreciated the analogy in terms of my own study. The context of Said's assertions says something about the mindset of scholars whom he pejoratively labeled as "Orientalist" when their assumptions about Islam and the Arab peoples were continually promoted but went unprobed, "… and whose opinions increasingly shaped Western Policy in the Middle East" **(Watson, 2003, p.43).**

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In the review of the literature, I found it important to ask what the implications may be if my scholarly assumptions about 'nontraditional' student constructs are continually being promoted but not revisited; taking into account that there is a multiplicity of terms for 'nontraditional' students in higher education currently. What would be the danger in perpetuating a kind of "*nontraditionalism*", that is to say, a kind of unreflective scholarly thinking about higher education's 'nontraditional' students currently, a thinking which in itself might present challenges in providing the best possible educational experience for current, '*post*' and '*new*' -nontraditionals and today's higher education students generally? What are the implications of contributing to these 'disjunctures' **(Sellar & Gale 2011)** by not reflecting appropriately on the 'nontraditionalisms' currently in use in higher education today?

With regard to this study, the literature reviewed suggests that there could be new ways in which we should be thinking about nontraditional student constructs in higher education presently:

- **Age** as a marker for adult studenthood should be revisited, especially noting that 18 year old higher education students in one part of the world may be vastly different in experience and capability than their counterparts in another part of the higher education landscape.

- **Fulltime study** is no longer the exclusive domain of a younger 'more traditional' student set, and neither is part-time study the choice exercised only by older 'more nontraditionally aged' students.
- **Working students**, the literature suggests, can be of any age.
- **Nontraditional students** are generally seen to be **"students at risk"** and this perception should be revisited because all students encounter a measure of learning challenges during their lifecycles as students.
- **Nontraditional students** are also predominantly seen to be students who have **"stories of struggle"** more so than other categories of student. This perception should also be revisited because all students potentially have their stories of struggle, and students should not need to feel that they should be struggling on multiple fronts before their stories of struggle are legitimised. Perhaps our perception of the 'real stories of struggle' have prevented others from being heard by students who may have felt that their stories did not merit being heard or acknowledged.
- **Nontraditional students**, **numerically**, can no longer be seen as students **"at the margins"** or students **"in the minority"**. However, the **status and identity of nontraditional students** seem to be in the balance presently, and remains an ambiguous construct: ironically, these students remain only partially visible as the 'unacknowledged other' even though they are the majority student set in the world today, and sadly, the literature suggests that in some contexts we have we not moved beyond seeing nontraditional students as the 'lesser students' especially within the contexts of research universities.

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6.1 The Argument So Far

The scholarship has been consulted from distinct vantage points in trying to understand the thinking behind 'nontraditional' student constructs in higher education. The argument presented in this chapter informs the way in which the documentary analysis discussion takes place in Chapters Five and Six.

6.1.1 The massification of higher education, widening participation and lifelong learning are particular languages which have shaped nontraditional student constructs in distinct ways, most notably from an increasingly diverse student pool, and who now traverse an already fluid 'traditional'-'nontraditional' student binary.

6.1.2 Scholarly views diverge around whether or not nontraditional students should be regarded as part of a binary with their 'traditional' students, who are normally younger as

the key differential. I agree with scholarly thinking that suggests 'nontraditional' student constructs are not part of a 'nontraditional- traditional higher education binary' and may have added significance if they are seen to be part of a continuum of higher education student constructs, both 'traditional' and 'nontraditional', which are transitioning all the time.

6.1.3 Young higher education students within a designated age range invariably appear in the literature as definitive markers for a commonly accepted idea of a traditional student, and some basic attributes are replicated in many conceptual and attrition models as well as comparative studies of '*traditional*' students and their '*nontraditional*' higher education '*counterparts*'. Here it becomes important to ask in which sense the constructs '*traditionally-aged'* 18-24 year olds in higher education are fixed and unchanging, and is it not possible that higher education's complexities might require appreciably varied institutional support for *every* higher education student currently regardless of whether they have been categorised '*traditionally-aged'* or not? At the same time, is it not also very likely that 18-year olds in higher education today would benefit appreciably from institutional support originally intended for 'nontraditional' students to flourish academically?

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6.1.4 In interesting ways, the literature consulted also provides evidence to suggest that there are shifts in the generally accepted constructs of '*traditional*' and '*nontraditional*' students in higher education, and I probe whether these shifts both for '*traditional*' and '*nontraditional*' students are leaning towards what has generally been recognised as '*nontraditional*' student constructs. This is another way of trying to ask: who is the student in higher education today? When the literature talks about the massification of higher education, does it mean only that more older students are studying, or that more traditionally aged students may be studying part-time? These questions are important parts of the 'traditional - nontraditional' student construct landscape.

6.1.5 Constructs of '*nontraditional*' students have changed, and are also different in different periods in higher education. Today, these constructs are possibly best reconfigured to present a continuum of creative possibilities for *all students* rather than a fixed binary between '*traditional*' and '*nontraditional*' students.

6.1.6 The challenge is how one reads current maps of '*traditional*' and '*nontraditional*' higher education student constructs, and how one potentially contributes both towards new maps and constructs. The literature points to shifts in the needs of both 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' students in higher education currently. For example, there is evidence of commuter students and international students in higher education who may be *traditionally* aged and who have *nontraditional* needs.

6.1.7 Conceptual, retention and attrition models that take into account gradations of 'traditionality' and 'nontraditionality' in today's higher education students would lead the way significantly in understanding 'new' nontraditional student constructs.

6.1.8 There appears to be a gap in the literature seems concerning the scholarship's lack of reflection on the currency of terms such as 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' for all higher education students, and whether new categorisations might better promote the educational interests of all students now and in the future.

6.1.9 There is possibly more than one construct of student '*traditionality*' and '*nontraditionality*' in higher education, and these may be coexisting alongside one another shaped by particular higher education landscape and institution-specific influences. South African higher education contributes in interesting ways in this regard.

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6.1.10 Current literature suggests that 'nontraditional' students may predominantly have been in the minority at higher education institutions in most parts of the world, and are becoming the 'new' majority only relatively recently, while the reverse may be true for some historically disadvantaged universities in South Africa, where a certain kind of highly politicised 'nontraditional' student may always have been in the majority, and possibly for a much longer period than nontraditional students in other higher education institutions across the world.

6.1.11 Nontraditional students at the University of the Western Cape may have exceptional experiences and attributes to contribute to the scholarship pertaining to student constructs

generally in higher education, and possibly as a distinct kind of 'nontraditional' group in higher education currently.

6.1.12 Higher education may require a new language in which to reflect the rapid changes of within its environment, and to revisit anachronistic nomenclature for growing segments of university staff and students.

6.2 The Questions That Remain

Section 6.2 attempts to draw awareness to 'nontraditional' student communities and settings that have not been part of the scope of this literature review but are important at future points to consider insofar they may have a role in shaping 'nontraditional' student constructs.

6.2.1 Are 'Post-nontraditional' Students Already Under Construction?

The literature points to various kinds and systems of higher education available to students today and higher education institutions of the future may influence the constructs of all students in their charge. Considerations relevant to this study are ways in which certain constructs of 'nontraditional' students are aligned to certain kinds and systems of higher education, and what the significance of this may be for higher education students. For example, the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s** ongoing University Futures project presents four scenarios for higher education systems, as outlined by the OECD Secretariat: Open Networking, Serving Local Communities, New Public Responsibility, and Higher Education Inc.

Interestingly, all future higher education systems scenarios presented are arguably favourably oriented towards 'nontraditional' student provision. While this orientation does not automatically make the 'nontraditional' student as we know them the student of 'the future', it does suggest that the concept of 'nontraditionality' and the 'nontraditional' student comes up for review as a dynamic, expanding and changing concept.

These scenarios, as outlined below, serve as useful reference points for thinking about future constructs of all students in higher education, who may possibly have 'nontraditional' and 'post-nontraditional' attributes as part of their student identity continuum:

Scenario I Open Networking

In the first scenario "higher education is very internationalized and involves intensive networking among institutions, scholars, students and with other actors such as with industry," (OECD, not dated: 2). This Open Networking model reportedly focuses on collaboratively relies on the increased networking of institutions and students are permitted to choose courses from what is termed the global post-secondary education network. Students are allowed input in curricula and degree design. They also have the autonomy to study abroad or exclusively online, and their studies can be completed anywhere in the world.

Scenario II _____ Serving Local Communities

Higher education institutions in the second scenario "are focused (or refocused) on national and local missions. They are embedded in their local and regional communities, and are dedicated to addressing local economic and community needs in their teaching and research," (OECD, not dated: 4). Largely because of an altered research role for universities, in this scenario universities and polytechnics are of a similar status and are similarly socially responsive to collaborative partnerships with industry "to design relevant initial and lifelong training," (OECD, not dated: 4). Higher education institutions in this scenario also accommodate elderly people by making provision for recreational education, and in doing so have an extended, and perhaps also a regenerative, function in areas where there are ageing communities.

Scenario III New Public Responsibility

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In the third scenario higher education remains primarily publicly funded with an added emphasis on "new public management tools" (OECD, not dated: 6) which steer students in the direction of financing their studies possibly through "income contingent loans," (OECD, not dated: 6).

Scenario IV Higher Education Inc.

In the fourth scenario there is competition amongst higher education institutions to provide commercial education and research services on a global scale, and in doing so there is stiff competition for students. "Many universities are opening new institutions or branch campuses abroad, franchising educational programmes, etc. Individual institutions and even whole higher education systems specialize according to their competitive advantage," (OECD, not dated: 8).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS AND RESEARCH METHODS.....83-116

INTRODUCTION

The *methodological frameworks* and *research methods* used in this study are drawn from three main sources: Michel's Foucault's 'history of the present approach', Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography and Carol Bacchi's problematising questions for policy analysis. The following methodological concepts are clarified in this chapter: *discourse, archaeology and genealogy, subject, and institutional ethnography*. This chapter also reflects on the usefulness of the selected methodology in answering the research question.

In this Chapter the methodological aspects of this study are discussed in four sections:

Section 1 provides an overview of the research problem;
Section 2 explains why a qualitative paradigm and post-structuralist conceptualisations are appropriate as methodological frameworks guiding this study;
Section 3 clarifies the benefits of selecting a case study approach to put forward the case of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) with reference to its 'nontraditional' student constructs;
Section 4 highlights the main methodological reflections of this study.

SECTION 1: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Current constructions of 'nontraditional' students do more in fragmenting student identity rather than presenting clear and unambiguous representations of a growing segment of higher education's student population in the world today. The construct of "the traditional student" has accordingly been revisited by certain strands in the scholarship:

> "Yet the construction of a 'normal' student persists, and is reinforced by the classification of others as 'non-traditional'. … In the move from an elite to a mass higher education system, it is these students that represent 'the masses': homogenized, pathologized and marked as 'Other' compared with existing students who are perceived to be there 'as of right, representing the norm

> against which the others are judged and may be found wanting' (Webb 1997:68). Within this discursive framing, mass equals lower standards and 'dumbing down' **(Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003, p.599).**

While this study has a general interest in higher education's language and nomenclature pertaining to 'nontraditional' students, specifically this study probes how 'nontraditional' students are currently constructed at one South African university and also imagines what future constructions may look like for students described in this way.

1.1 Research Question

My research questions, therefore, are the following:

> "How are 'nontraditonal' students constructed currently at the University of the Western Cape, and how did this come about? Furthermore, can 'nontraditional 'students at this University be thought about differently?"

1.2 Ethical Procedures

This study has been granted ethical clearance via the University's Faculty Board Research and Ethics Committees, and has been conducted in accordance with the University's research ethics requirements, as stipulated in research policy approved by Senate and Council in November 2009.

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SECTION 2: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Paradigm: Qualitative and Reflexive

Why does this study take the form of a qualitative research inquiry? Because I understand 'nontraditional' student constructs as qualities that are assembled subjectively more than objectively, and that student identity in itself is an unstable construct within a transitioning higher education ecology, I began the exploration with no certainties and fixed concepts against which 'nontraditional' student constructs were to be appraised. I needed a frame of reference that provided the most appropriate forms of overarching questions to assist me in an analysis of 'nontraditional' student portrayals, which were interpretable and changing more than fixed and resolute. Perhaps most importantly, the institutional experience of 'nontraditional' students at the South African university as part of the case study would be potentially

useful to that institution, only, and it was not intended as part of the research design that any findings and insights gained from this study would be replicable and generalizable beyond the institution as the case.

The observation that qualitative researchers take into account the significance of an interplay between three main elements during the research process, as conveyed by **Denzin & Lincoln (2008),** provided relevant insight into the specific research journey I was embarking on, both in terms of the university chosen as the case as well as my positionality as a 'nontraditional' student currently:

> "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" **(Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.13).**

The literature points to several philosophical and methodological challenges encountered by researchers using qualitative modes of inquiry, and researchers are accordingly encouraged to understand the complexities associated with numerous traditions and strands of qualitative research.

It is noted that there are "at least eight" historical moments characterising qualitative research predominantly in North America, and presumably also in other parts of the world: *"The eighth moment asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community "* **(Denzin & Lincoln , 2008).**

A common definition of qualitative research across historical moments presents challenges, and 'means different things in each of these moments' **(ibid).** However, I have embraced the following understanding of qualitative research in my own study:

> "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. ... At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" **(Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.4).**

Furthermore, it would seem that qualitative researchers can influence the kind of imprint and complexities they add to the research contexts in which they choose to work. Understandings of a 'fractured' future pertaining to the "eighth and ninth moments" **Denzin & Lincoln (2011)** in a sense allow creativity on the part of researchers.

The overview of historical moments and historical fields in qualitative research adapted from Denzin & Lincoln (2008) provides a description of these moments as well as a relevant contextual location for my study. The overview also provides a measure of confirmation that it has been appropriate to have chosen a qualitative paradigm in which to conduct my research. That is to say, my study brings into view the variability and impermanence of certain higher education constructs and thereby validates in some way how the eighth and ninth historical moments have been depicted in the scholarship.

Methodologically, there is value in highlighting that my exploration of 'nontraditional' student representations at UWC are also influenced by my own co-constructions of 'nontraditional' students both as a university student and staff member at two regional universities in Cape Town. That is to say, clarification of my own role is less useful bracketed and more useful highlighted especially as I have for more than two decades regarded myself both as a 'traditional' and at other times as 'nontraditional' student at these universities.

Evidence of reflexivity, therefore, in my own study has also been influenced by the questions **Alvesson & Karreman (2011)** have posed, and these have guided my approach when I searched and encountered 'nontraditional' student constructs in my study:

> "Can I make sense/ construct this research material in another way other than suggested by the preferred perspective/ vocabulary? … Can I let myself be surprised by the material? ... Can others in the research community also be surprised? Can it productively and fairly be constructed in a way that it kicks back at my framework and how we - in my research community - typically see and interpret things?" **(Alvesson & Karreman, 2011, p.60).**

I regard my own reflexivity, therefore, as an important interpretive component in this study. However, what it means to be reflexive as a researcher is a challenging concept, and scholarly insights have assisted in clarifying the main principles for my purposes.

Reflecting largely on his own role as a qualitative researcher, **Cui (2012)** finds that "insider and outsider positions" **(Cui, 2012, p.100)** require continual discovery and negotiation during the research journey. In terms of his own experience, it was important for him to have a constant awareness of where he thought himself to be located within the insider-outsider *continuum* [my emphasis] in relation to his research material. In this regard, he draws on Reinharz (1997) and notes as an example that the ethnographic

researcher may bring more than one 'self' to the field, and 'those "brought selves" could be a mother, a woman or an academician" **(Cui, 2012, p. 95)**.

2.1.1 Validity

Applicable to my own study, I have tried as far as possibly to continually self-aware in terms of my role and influence in the research process, and, as noted from the literature, this is considered to be one of the main attributes of a reflexive researcher.

Kirpitchenko & Voloder (2014) offer an instructive and similar take on insider and outsider *positions* [my emphasis]. In their view the claim to insider and outsider positions "involves a stabilization of statuses and identities, and in the process scholars reveal their authorial authority in fixing and locating positions and making claims about their significance in social lives" **(Kirpitchenko & Voloder, 2014, p.14).** Very interestingly, they question and flag for ongoing scholarly conversation how the adoption of insider and outsider positions serve research, and suggest instead "not positions but rather *moments* of insider-outsider *awareness*" **(Kirpitchenko & Voloder, 2014, p.70)** [my emphasis].

Taking these views into account, and noting that higher education constructs such as 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' categories and nomenclature are constantly evolving, it becomes a complex personal reflection to know which 'brought selves' I have allowed into my own study. It is also challenging to articulate how my 'insider' and 'outsider' moments as part of my own studenthood and student identity have influenced the research process of this study.

To this end, my 'brought selves' in this study are identified as lifelong learning student, female, relatively new researcher and higher education professional. The continuum of my own insider-outsider moments is marked by distinct points of familiarity and unfamiliarity regarding nontraditional student constructs in higher education. Trying to understand my personal range, I feel I am the closest as an insider when I can identify with the challenges presented to mature-age higher education students who study on a part-time basis over several years to obtain their desired qualifications. I feel less of an insider when 'traditionally-aged' students choose the same or very similar modes of study to me in order to complete their own qualifications. I feel an outsider when 'nontraditionally-aged' students choose to study on a fulltime basis. I also feel an outsider when I contemplate what new names there may be in future for 'nontraditional' students like me.

The 'outsider' examples offered from my own insider-outsider continuum are possibly more obviously explained by my not having a good sense of the key drivers motivating certain higher education students in terms of what has just been outlined. My 'insider' examples cited are perhaps more interesting; while I have identified certain higher education students with whom I presume an unsaid closeness and understanding, these familiarities may not be the case at all when tested in some way. Chapters Five and Six in particular attest to my learnings and unlearnings in this regard.

As concluding remarks in this section, the interconnected and cross-cutting nature of qualitative research, as shown by **Denzin & Lincoln (2008)** and the adoption of reflexive research dimensions as suggested by **Kirpitchenko & Voloder (2014), Cui (2012)** and **Alvesson & Kärreman (2011)** have assisted in shaping my research strategies, which in turn have guided particular insights into my exploration of constructions of 'nontraditional' students as part of the case study.

2.2 Conceptualisation: Post-structuralism and Postmodernism

Postmodern and poststructuralist thinking have influenced this study's conceptual exploration of nontraditional student constructs in higher education. The literature highlights that these kinds of research frameworks by definition set out to challenge ways in which theories, assumptions, theoretical strategies and claims are constructed. Selecting such an approach for my own study valuably provides a framework for testing certain assumptions behind nontraditional student constructs currently in use in higher education, and more particularly at the University of the Western Cape.

In terms of my own study, the relevance of these kinds of conceptualisations is that "[instead] of an integrated theoretical frame of reference which guides an analysis towards unequivocal, logical results and interpretations, the idea is to strive for multiplicity, variation, the demonstration of inconsistencies and fragmentations, and the possibility of multiple interpretations" **(Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p.183).**

As encapsulated by **Bacchi (2009),** the main foundations and intellectual traditions which have assisted in shaping this study's methodological framework are recognised:

> "To develop these arguments a WPR [what is the problem represented to be] approach to policy analysis draws upon four intellectual traditions: social construction theory; poststructuralism, including poststructuralist discourse psychology; feminist body theory; and governmentality studies" **(Bacchi, 2009, p. 264).**

My choice of a poststructuralist approach is not because I understand this thinking to be without challenges and unified as a body of thought. Instead, I attach a high value to a set of conceptualisations which are able to facilitate a meaningful rediscovery of nontraditional student constructs in higher education. Equally, I also place a high value on a philosophical framework that is able to accommodate multiple truths in terms of research outcomes. These core assumptions about post-structuralism influenced my certainty that such an approach would keep the investigation of this study open in the best way possible.

Noting one poststructuralist view that ideas "… are the effect of the meanings we learn and reproduce" **(Belsey, 2002, p.7),** I've understood this in my own study to mean that there are a multiplicity of influences on constructions and co-constructions of nontraditional students that need to be taken into account. And more importantly, this approach facilitated an understanding that multiple and varying constructions of nontraditional students in higher education may prevail as equally valid, and it is not necessary to seek one legitimizing construction for all nontraditional students in higher education.

In particular, this study draws on the work of two scholars, Michel Foucault and Dorothy Smith, respectively, in order to explore nontraditional student constructions in robust and creative ways within a case study approach. As part of the methodological framework for this study, it is significant to state that Foucault's intellectual work is historically marked as having a structuralist orientation in the 1960s and a poststructuralist orientation in the 1970s particularly regarding his stance on power, which is understood by the scholarship as a force which is not limiting and repressing, only, but also has the capacity to be creative and generative:

> "Power as he envisages is not a reality lying there for its meaning to be discovered. It is itself a generator of reality and meaning. … There is no standing back from this power and the discourses it effects" **(Crotty, 1998, p.205).**

As succinctly encapsulated by **Elliott (2001, p. 81)** a postmodern perspective seeks to apply concepts and terminology of poststructuralist analysis of language (for example, Foucault (1979) and Derrida (1976)) to social life. It is relevant to this study that their ideas are centrally concerned with "discontinuity, fragmentation, and disjuncture". Also significant is that their discourses take place within each site

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representing knowledge/ power contestations, with a predictable outcome: the dominance or hegemony of a prevailing discourse.

My case study set out to explore how dominant or hegemonic constructs of 'nontraditional' students at the University may have come about and how they may have transitioned into hybrid constructs, which may already be part of 'nontraditional' and 'traditional' student identity.

2.3 Michel Foucault : A History of the Present Approach

2.3.1 What it is

I have drawn upon Foucault's conceptualisations of 'archaeology' and 'genealogy' as forms of research inquiry and I have used his 'history of the present approach' as foundational to my research inquiry. These are complex concepts, and the relevant clarifications by **Satka & Skehill (2011)** and **Skehill, Mirja, & Hoikkala (2012)** have valuably guided the way in which I have conducted my study.

Understanding 'archaeology' and 'genealogy' as complementary modes of inquiry within the context of a case study approach presented challenges and in this regard I drew on explanations from **Satka & Skehill (2011)** and **Skehill, Mirja, & Hoikkala (2012)** for additional clarity.

Archaeology in the Foucauldian sense is understood by **Satka & Skehill (2011)** in the following way: "*Put simply, archaeology refers to the construction of discourses – such as 'social work' as a strategy – and genealogy refers to relations and interactions between discourses such as social work and its surrounding political, social, cultural and institutional discourses* (Skehill, 2007),".

Genealogy, by contrast, is viewed in the following way by **Skehill, Mirja, & Hoikkala (2012, p. 12):** "*Genealogy, in our opinion, offers a way to move from describing, interpreting and analysing the in-depth case study set out in earlier steps towards a broader critical appraisal of how this relates to the broader legal, organizational, political, intellectual and social context (see Garland, 1992).*"

In my own study I have considered archaeology and genealogy as complementary methods of knowing, and specifically that genealogy "… concentrates on the strategic use of archaeology to answer problems about the present" **(Kendall & Wickhamn, 2000, p. 33-34).**

Meadmore et al (2000) describe genealogy as a 'new kind of history' and, drawing on Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982), emphasise that this form of inquiry "seeks not an in-depth investigation or an uncovering of what might be 'behind the scenes' but rather an elaboration of 'the surfaces of events, small details, minor shifts and subtle contours" **(Meadmore et al, 2000, p464).**

Taking into account that a "genealogy is neither serendipitous nor ungoverned" **(Meadmore et al, 2000, p.466),** two anticipated methodological considerations in particular are addressed in this section: what has been problematised in my study and what do I understand as "the present" in relation to the University of the Western Cape; the case I have selected.

Although reportedly not easy to define, genealogy in the Foucauldian sense does not regard "the" subject to be essentially universal and unchanging; instead there is an interest in "genealogies of modern subjectivities." That is to say, genealogy's concern is diagnosing or understanding the present, and therefore Foucault's project is sometimes characterised as 'the history of the present' (Foucault 1979: 31), **Sharp (2011).** Significant in its applicability to this study, "… the goal of genealogy is to 'transform' that reality, by opening up new possibilities for thought and action," **Sharp (2011).**

Foucauldian genealogy is also regarded as "unmasking or denaturalising work", and these functions have guided my methodological thinking by focussing on " 'small' stories, the marginalised topics, and the taken-for-granted practices" in addition to knowing how and when to be "precise about the practices and the tactics being used to scrutinise them" **(Meadmore et al, 2000, p.466).**

The methodological reflections by **Fejes (2006)** of the advantages of a Foucauldian-inspired genealogical approach for his own research are also taken into account. He argues that a meaningful historical survey is one "containing ruptures and irregularities, not progress" **(Fejes, 2006, p81).** Accordingly, while a chronology of constructions of 'nontraditional' students at the University of the Western Cape may be useful in understanding "a timeline of congruencies and incongruencies" regarding how nontraditional students have been, or may not have been, understood and experienced institutionally, this study becomes meaningful in a more useful way when insight is gained into *how* these "regular and irregular" circumstances have come about and why particular constructions of nontraditional students at particular times in the institution's history may have been the only possible constructions at the time, and may continue to be so presently.

There is also alignment in thinking with **Skehill (2007)** in terms of her own research on the history of social work in the Republic of Ireland, when she contends that Foucault's methods offer "the possibility that history can be done in a way where the past is not constructed in simplistic terms of progress or decline" **(Skehill, 2007, p.450)** and it is meaningful "to use history as a means of critique of taken-for-granted 'truth' in the construction of practices and discourses" **(Skehill, 2007, p.451).**

Similarly, **May (2005, p.66)** suggests that a return to Foucault's writings is "… not to discover, for instance, whether the penal regime of torture ever overlapped with that of rehabilitation, but to recall the contingencies of our own history … . We return to his writings because he speaks to us, from out of our past - … - of who we have been and who we are, and he does so in ways that allow us to imagine who we might become. …Our task, the task that remains to us, is to live those possibilities."

In my attempts to understand 'nontraditional' student constructions at the University of the Western Cape, I have taken into account that this kind of genealogical approach can be compared to what **Meadmore et al (2000)** likens to a literary genre 'detective story'. Accordingly, the undertaking in my own study has been "to identify clues rather than to search for general causality" **(Meadmore et al, 2000, p.464).** In so doing, my search for clues has not taken a linear path, and has often moved between the past and the present in order to understand 'nontraditional' student constructs at the University of the Western Cape.

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For the reasons outlined, this study has taken a derived version of Foucault's history of the present approach as an appropriate form of research inquiry to understand institutional constructions of 'nontraditional' students at the University. Accordingly, selected concepts and methods derived from Foucault's work have been used as a fitting and imaginative exploration into understanding current constructions of nontraditional students at the University of the Western Cape, and they are also reflections as to whether different constructions of students perceived in this way at the University may be possible.

Further, the relevance of a derived approach for my this study has made possible flexible, open and iterative probings that place constructions of 'nontraditional' students at the core of an unfolding institutional story of the ways in which these constructs have taken root , sometimes in hybridised ways, at the University of the Western Cape.

2.3.2 What it entails

A history of the present in large measure requires a "revaluing the value of the present"; that is to say to reappraise the current state of affairs regarding nontraditionality and nontraditional students at UWC. In this regard, methodologically, there is a revaluing of the common elements of a Foucauldian inspired archaeology and genealogy, in terms of what the shared "critical intent" **Garland (2014, p.371)** may be towards the present.

As Garland explains, the point of genealogy is not to search for "origins". … It is, rather, as the name suggests, a search for processes of descent and emergence:

> "The idea is not to connect the present-day phenomenon to its origins, as if one were showing a building resting on foundations, a building solidly rooted in the past and confidently projected into the future. The idea, instead, is to trace the erratic and discontinuous process where the past became the present: an often aleatory path of descent and emergence that suggests a contingency of the past and an openness of the future" **(Garland, 2014, p.372).**

> "Its point is not to think historically about the past but rather to use historical materials to rethink the present" **(Garland , 2014, p.373).**

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But what does the detail in Foucault's 'history of the present' approach, or his genealogical method, look like and how has the use of these elements unfolded beneficially in this study? Drawing on the work of Foucault, **Bacchi (2010)** foregrounds the advantages of a "problem-solving paradigm" as an approach to research inquiry, and her observations in this regard enrich the present study:

> "Since the way in which the 'problem' is represented - how the issue is problematized - is so important to the ways we live our lives, I conclude (rather provocatively) that we are governed through *problematisations*, rather than through policies" **(Bacchi, 2010, p.4).**

The two methodological challenges referred to at the beginning of this section are again addressed here: what has been problematised and what do I understand as "the present" in my own study. How have I

demarcated a history of the present for UWC, and what are the most important concepts shaping that present?

In terms of 'nontraditional' student constructions at UWC, how have systems of thought originated, how did they come to operate as mechanisms of power and knowledge, and how did they present certain categories and claims as natural, self-evident and inevitable.

It was this regard especially useful to understand 'problematization' from another strand in the scholarship, and in insights from **Garland (2014, p. 367)** were applied in the following way: for UWC as the case study it was not important whether 'nontraditional' students were being portrayed "correctly" or "incorrectly". I learnt from Garland that the issue was whether institutional perception of 'nontraditional' students carries a certain kind of power, and the interest of this study would be to understand what kind of power this might be. And here, in which sense is the institution as a instrument of power felt the most?

Therefore, my study looked at how UWC has "ordered its thoughts" **Garland (2014, p.370)** about 'nontraditional students' at the University and the kinds of discourses that might have been produced by this ordering.

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2.3.3 Further Clarification of Concepts: Discourse

> "Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history; the problem is not therefore to ask one-self how and why it was able to emerge and become embodied at this point in time; it is from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complicities of time" **(Foucault, 1972/2006, p.131).**

The three definitions of "discourse" selected highlight different aspects of the concept, and each aspect has value in terms of this study as they are all relevant and complementary in understanding different facets of nontraditional student constructs in higher education.

In his dissertation, **Fejes (2006, pp. 20-22)** offers a view that 'discourse' highlights meaning-making, and also alerts the reader to what may be sayable and visible within particular discursive situations:

> "During his career, Foucault made several different definitions of discourse thus making it impossible to fix any definition. … Discourse is, according to Foucault, 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak **(Foucault, 1972, p.49)**'. Such practices produce meaning, form subjects and define what is and what is not possible to say within specific institutions and societies in different historical times – who can speak them, where and with what authority **(Foucault , 1981)**."

In the Archaeology of Knowledge (1969), Foucault himself emphasises the descriptive possibilities of a discourse, and this to my mind offers an insightful and useful approach in attempting to understand the potential complexities that can be associated with constructions of nontraditional students in various higher education settings, and most notably at one South African university, as the case study:

> "We can now understand the reason for the equivocal meaning of the term discourse, which I have used and abused in many different senses: in the most general, and vaguest way, it denoted a group of verbal performances; and by discourse, then, I meant that which was produced (perhaps all that was produced) by the groups of signs. But I also meant a group of acts of formulation, a series of sentences and propositions. Lastly – and it is this meaning that was finally used … - discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far they can be assigned particular modalities of existence. … I am well aware that most of these definitions do not conform with current usage: linguists usually give the word discourse a quite different meaning; logicians and analysts use the term statement in a different way. … But I would like to reveal a descriptive possibility**,** outline the domain of which it is capable, define its limits and its autonomy" **(Foucault, 1972, pp. 120-121).**

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In institutional ethnography, the ways in which people participate in relation to any discourse is foregrounded, as explained in a glossary:

> "The term has been used in many senses; it is used by linguists to denote streams of talk or text, and it is used by Michel Foucault (1981) to identify conventionally regulated practices of using language that formulate and recognize objects of knowledge in distinctive ways. The conception of discourse used in this book builds on Foucault's use. Discourse refers to the translocation relations coordinating the practices of definite individuals talking, writing, reading, watching, and so forth, in particular local places at particular times. People *participate* in

> discourse, and their participation reproduces it. Discourse constrains what they can say or write, and what they say or write reproduces and modifies discourse. Though discourse is regulated in various ways, each moment of discourse in action both reproduces and remakes it" **(Smith, 2005, p. 224).**

2.4 Dorothy E Smith: Institutional Ethnography

2.4.1 What it is

It is noted from the literature that there "are many ways in which institutional ethnographers go about their work" and "… even the choice of informants is determined by the course of the inquiry rather than by a pre-determined plan" **(Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p.56).** As a complementary mode of inquiry, this study draws on Smith's form of institutional ethnography and I am drawn to its suitability as an institutional ethnographic approach because, as noted by **Deveau (2008),** it ranks the experiences of people highly as important data sources as part of any research undertaking.

Particularly because a documentary review is the primary mode of inquiry of this study, the observations of **Smith (1974)** of texts, and factual texts in particular, are relevant and important considerations to the documentary review process, and assists in foregrounding the role of people in the production and use of all texts:

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> "The factual property of a statement is not intrinsic to it. It is the knower's method of reading a statement and using it or a teller's method of arriving at a statement which lends itself to that method of reading. The use of the term 'fact' or 'in fact' or the like announces that what follows is to be treated by that method. … Changing them into factual statements is a social accomplishment, not merely a syntactic or logistical transformation" **(Smith, 1974, p. 258).**

This study has not drawn on the approaches of Foucault and Smith in sequential ways but rather in complementary ways as other researchers, as **Skehill & Satka (2011),** for example, had successfully attempted in their studies in social work.

> "Institutional ethnography… does not aim to understand the institution as such. It only takes the social activities of the institution as a starting point and hooking onto activities and relations both

horizontal and vertical it is never confined to the very institution under investigation. Hereby the connections between the local and the extra-local are made, making the workings of society visible," **(Smith Interview 2004).**

2.4.2 What it entails

The form of institutional ethnography relevant to this study concerns three main elements: the experiences of people, institutional processes and the notion of the role of texts in ruling relations.

2.4.3 Further Clarification of Concepts: Text

Thinking for a moment about Smith's observations, and desires, as an ethnographer and about what she may ideally have wished for discursively from the texts she interrogated, I have identified with her observations during the course of my study:

> *"In a sense, I want to lift discourse off the page and pull it into life. I want to step outside the artifice of the text's stasis and rediscover discourse as an actually happening, actually performed, local organizing of consciousness among people"* **(Smith, 2001, p. 177).**

> "*Texts hook you up beyond the local; they are not contained within the local setting. And the more I began to explore that the more I began to see how important that was in the whole development of what I have to come to conceptualise as the 'living relations*" **(Smith, 2004).**

Chapters Five and Six address what it means in terms of *'lifting the discourse off the page'*, how texts have *'hooked ... beyond the local'* , and what the significance of '*living relations'* may be in terms of institutional portrayals of 'nontraditional' student constructions at UWC as the case study.

The University's documentary texts constitute the major part of the data consulted as part of the institutional ethnography. **Smith's (2005)** documentary analysis insights regarding have been especially relevant to understanding ways in which the University's "work knowledges" are "assembled" and

"mapped" within an institutional settings and have guided my research inquiry as the ensuing chapters will show.

2.5 Summary

This section has attempted to highlight the main methodological features of a history of a present approach and an institutional ethnography as applicable to the case study at hand. A history of the present approach is understood less as mining for historical detail but more as using historical material from the past to see the present in dynamic ways. An institutional ethnography has value in understanding the experiences of people as part of the data, and has guided ways in which the document analysis process has been approached.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 A Case Study

With the University of the Western Cape (UWC) selected as the case in this study, my conceptualisation straddles two kinds of thinking presented by **Ragin & Becker (2000)**, when they point out specifically that some cases can be made, and that some cases are generally regarded as objects of study **(Ragin & Becker, 2000, p.9)**.

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Table 12
Conceptual Map for Answers: What is a case?

Conceptual map for answers to "What is a case?"		
Understanding of cases	Case conceptions	
	Specific	General
As empirical units	1. **Cases are found** (Harper)	2. **Cases are objects** (Vaughan)
As theoretical constructs	3. **Cases are made** (Wieviorka)	4. **Cases are conventions** (Platt)
Ragin, C. C., & Becker, H. S. (2000:9) Table 1.1		

In this study, I've put forward the case of UWC both as "an object to be studied for an identified reason that is peculiar or particular" **(Hyett et al, 2014, p.2)** and also as a specific and noteworthy theoretical construct in attempting to understand the origins of nomenclature for a segment of students who could be regarded as 'nontraditional' at one South African university.

In formulating a meaning of case study, it is noted from **Flyvbjerg (in Denzin & Lincoln 2011)** that a commonly accepted definition is "the intensive analysis of an individual unit". However, it is also noted that, as a strategy of inquiry, he identifies five misunderstandings of case study method and presents alternative views in terms of the following:

- general rather than case knowledge is more valuable;
- one cannot generalize from an individual case;
- the case study is not suited to theory building;
- the case study has a tendency to confirm the researcher's biases; and
- it is difficult to develop generalizations based on specific case studies. Instead, he argues that concrete case knowledge is more valuable than the "vain search" for predictive theories and universals; **(Flyvbjerg, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.247).**

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Again as indicated by **Flyvbjerg (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.302),** it is also noted that "these five misunderstandings may be said to constitute the conventional view, or orthodoxy, of the case study." In the table that follows, alternative ways of engaging with these misunderstandings are offered.

Table 13

The Case Study Paradox .....

The Case Study Paradox		
	Misunderstanding	**Revision**
a	General, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge.	Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete case knowledge is therefore more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals.
b	One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute towards scientific development.	One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" and the transferability are underestimated.
c	The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.	The case study is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to these research activities alone.
d	The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions.	The case study contains no greater bias towards verification of the researcher's preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias of falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification.
e	It is often difficult to summarise and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.	It is correct that summarising case studies is often difficult, especially as concerns case process. It is less correct as regards case outcomes. The problems in summarising case studies, however, are due more often to the properties of the reality studied than the case study as a research method. Often it is not desirable to summarise and generalize case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety.
Bent Flyvbjerg in Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 302)		

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How have I engaged with these misunderstandings and the revisions in terms of my own case study? The following synopsis presents my thinking in this regard:

- The University of the Western Cape (UWC) presents itself as a significant case study given this South African university's former classification as an historically disadvantaged institution under apartheid. It is also among the few of these similarly disadvantaged institutions to take a different direction from mergers when South African higher education institutions were historically reconfigured to 23 from 36 at the start of the new millennium. In terms of concrete case knowledge, therefore, there is appreciable engagement with a segment of 'nontraditional' students on this campus, and insight from this study is potentially important for the institution in this regard;

- While this study has not set out to generalize findings and insights, "force of example" and transferability have a place as intended outcomes of this chosen method. The example of UWC is highlighted in two ways. Firstly, by being a nontraditionally-oriented higher education institution by default in terms of South Africa's political history, and secondly, by virtue of this higher education institution's unique and long-standing history of part-time provision in the region;

- A case study method has not been selected for the purpose of testing hypotheses in this study. The case study method does, however, ably facilitate the exploration of the ways in which the phenomenon of nontraditional nomenclature has come about at one South African university;

- I do not hold the view that the case study method has the tendency to confirm my preconceived notions as the researcher of this study. Instead, this university as a case study site provides reflective opportunities for my own experiences and challenges of familiarization and defamiliarization in relation to the research question, noting that the University of the Western Cape is also the higher education institution where I am enrolled as a student and it was also my former place of work for more than five years.

- "Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety." This remains the intended outcome of my own study.

Drawing on Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), **Tight (2010)** suggests that case study research can be seen as a style of (educational) research foregrounding the following features which:

- will have temporal characteristics which help to define their nature
- have geographical parameters allowing for their definition
- will have boundaries which allow for definition
- may be defined by an individual in a particular context, at a point in time
- may be defined by the characteristics of the group
- may be defined by role or function
- may be shaped by organizational or institutional arrangements

  (Tight, 2010, pp. 330-331).

Taking this into account, therefore, he asserts that it may be reasonable to believe "that the nature and status of case study seems unclear" and at the same time he points out that as with "many other social terms, there is no reason why we should expect it to have a single agreed meaning" **(Tight, 2010, pp.330-331).**

As noted from the review of their case studies, **Hyett et al (2014)** point out that few "provided details of the researcher's relationship with the case, researcher-case interactions, and how these influenced the development of the case study" **(Hyett et al , 2014, p.7).** They also contend that readers should be placed in a position to understand the researcher's role and position, as well as how self-examination has taken place in relation to the case study. Therefore, my identified roles and direct connections to the University for an appreciable length of time are taken into account as part of the case study pertaining to nontraditional student constructions and co-constructions, and self-examination forms part of the discussion in this chapter:

- as an **alumnus** of the case university for more than a decade
- as a **PhD candidate** in the recent period
- as a **University staff member** in contract and permanent positions since 2007.

3.2 Documentary Analysis

Drawing on Giddens (1979) to highlight challenges of reliability and validity in documentary analysis, **Cohen (2008)** observes that researchers are faced with hermeneutic encounters at several stages when "they interpret a world that is already … a pre-interpreted world" **(Cohen , 2008 , p. 203).** That is to say,

in my own research, reflection was needed on what it means to reinterpret and re-ascribe meaning to interpretations of 'nontraditional' student constructs found in institutional documents selected as part of the case study:

> "As well as having a life of their own, documents are interpretations of events. … Understanding their context is crucial to understanding the document. Documents are multileveled and have to be interpreted at their many levels; they need to be contextualized" **(Cohen, 2008, p. 204).**

"Documentary analysis has several attractions (Bailey 1994:294-6). It can enable the researcher to reach inaccessible persons or subjects, as in the case in historical research. … Documents, written 'live' and *in situ*, may catch the dynamic situation at the time of writing. … On the other hand, documents bring difficulties (Bailey 1994:296-8). They may be highly biased and selective, as they were not intended to be research data but were written for a different purpose, audience and context. They, themselves, may be interpretations of events rather than objective accounts" **(Cohen et al, 2007, p. 201).**

In this study, two main dimensions informed the documentary analysis. Institutional texts consulted were primarily of a contemporary nature, mainly in the form of annual reports and university newsletters and bulletins that were intended for and free available within the public domain within and beyond the campus community. The next set of institutional texts selected focused on what was institutionally authored for various audiences primarily in university settings for and similar to the case study institution.

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3.3 Overview and Rationale for Selection of Institutional Texts

A collection of institutional documents spanning a large part of the institutional life of the University of the Western Cape, approximately from 1982 to 2016, has been selected for document analysis. Documents predominantly intended for the public domain have been selected, as these statements point to a particular, and public, institutional story about UWC's 'nontraditional' students, a story out of which *'nontraditionalities'* and *'nontraditional'* student constructs have been personally (re)assembled by me through this study.

The types of institutional texts selected for document analysis are mainly *official University newsletters*, *university reports*, *university research reports* as well as two *mission statements*. Expressed in numbers,

'n' equals approximately 140 of the institutional documents collected for analysis. All of these documents are in the public domain.

Why were these kinds of institutional texts selected for documentary analysis?

Official University Newsletters. The University newsletters and bulletins predominantly carry the flagship stories of the University and, more than the official annual reports, it is here where the reader enjoys photographs of students celebrating many of their academic triumphs. These documents definitively show what the University strategically and institutionally regards as important news and important successes.

University Mission Statements. Both the 1982 mission statement of the University as well as the University's mission statement currently in use are selected as contextual markers for understanding how nontraditionality and 'nontraditional' students may have been thought of and included as part of the institutional fabric for the most recent 31 years of UWC's fifty-year history.

University Self-Evaluation. The institution's 2007 self-evaluation report for the national audit of the Higher Education Quality Committee was selected to probe how constructions of 'nontraditional' students are possibly viewed both in the University but also beyond the campus for an external readership.

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University Annual Reports. Similarly, the University's Annual Reports for were selected also to gain a consolidated sense of how 'nontraditional' student constructions have been institutionally portrayed.

University Sector Reports and Publications. Work from University sectors such as the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) and the Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) has been selected for documentary analysis in order to ascertain how particularly relevant parts of the University have contributed towards institutional portrayals of 'nontraditional' students.

University Diaries. Produced officially and annually by the University, these diaries are made to students and are intended to provide important contact information as well as some history of the institution.

3.4 Research Process

Official institutional texts and documents form the core of the document analysis: the official records, policies and reports of the University, as well news bulletins and other media intended for the campus community and beyond. In addition, the official records, policies, reports and news bulletins of selected departments within the University also form part of this selection.

I have drawn on Bacchi to makes sense of the relationship between policy and problem as she illustrates:

> "It directs attention to the ways in which particular representations of 'problems' play a central role in how we are governed. … policies 'claim' to 'fix' things; hence, by their nature they assume the existence of a 'problem' that needs 'fixing'. … In effect, we are governed through problematisations rather than through policies" **(Bacchi, 2009, p. xi).**

Considerations pertaining to how we are governed, whether through "problematisations" or "policies", and how Bacchi uses these considerations as a way of advancing her what-is-the-problem-represented-to-be approach to understanding policies or texts in general, have guided my approach to engaging with texts selected for document analysis.

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The questions guiding the document analysis, as presented by **Bacchi (2009, p. xii),** serve to underscore the proposed research method:

- What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
- How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
- What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
- What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
- How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended?
- How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

3.5 Summary

This section has attempted to highlight the relevant features of a case study and documentary analysis as it has unfolded as part of my research journey. There has also been some reflection on the challenges presented in each instance.

SECTION 4: CHAPTER SUMMARY

4.1 Reflections on Methodological Frameworks and Research Methods

For ease of reference, the main methodological considerations are briefly outlined in this section as a precursor to a reflection on the research process. Reflections in this section take into account what it means to say that this study has employed a derived approach of a Foucauldian method. Also considered is what it means to have used a form of institutional ethnography as depicted by Smith.

In broad terms, a 'history of the present' approach in this study has been meaningful and innovative as a form of inquiry, representing an alignment with the views of **Skehill (2007, p.453)** in this regard:

> "A history of the present approach poses a question in the present and works backwards through particular historical moments which allows for non-linear and multi-lateral layers of analysis. Rather than seeking to provide the right answer, the final explanation, a history of the present involves a process of 'raising questions where others had found answers' (Dean, 1994:4)."

However, closer reflection is warranted on how such an approach was put into practice and what the affordances and constraints there may have been in terms of this study.

A Foucauldian 'Method'

Reflecting on the shortcomings of a Foucauldian discourse analysis, it is noted from **Hook (2001)** that a "strictly Foucauldian method of discourse analysis" does not exist and the "various methodological injunctions prioritized by Foucault can be better accommodated within the ambit of critical genealogy"

(Hook, 2001, p.36). In his view, the way in which Foucault perceived the notion of discourse "is situated far more closely to knowledge, materiality and power than it is to language" **(Hook, 2001, p.36).**

As further reference to Foucault's detractors, the following is also noted from **Skehill (2007, p.451)** pertaining to areas of his work that have been challenged repeatedly over the years:

> "Numerous critiques of the substance of his studies also raise questions about: his anti-humanism and tendency towards control and discipline; his refusal to ascribe to accepted conventions of historical study; his alleged over-emphasis on discontinuity; his concentration on local practices within institutions over broader themes of politics and culture; and his conceptualisations of the self and subjectivities, to name just a few."

Although this is noted, in this present study a view is maintained that researchers are encouraged to forge their own creative methods in relation to Foucault's writings, again as noted by **Skehill (2007, p.451):**

> "As advised by Chambon and Irving (1999), multiple readings of Foucault are necessary for researchers to appreciate this complexity and to use his work to develop their own innovative approaches to the study of history, maintaining an open-mind which is willing to engage in a process of raising questions rather than seeking to find the 'right' answer (Dean,1994)."

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Smith: Institutional Ethnography

The University's documentary texts constitute the biggest part of institutional data consulted, and Smith's insights particularly about the "finalization" and "stability" of texts are relevant to this study:

> "Most factual documents are not made detachable from specific organizational contexts of interpretation. … Nonetheless even where there is a restriction on who has access to a document, there is finalization of a version of the text. Traces of how it came about which may appear in documentary form, its previous drafts, corrections, alternative wordings, etc., which provide for scholars of literature an inexhaustible mine of indeterminacies – all are obliterated (Thorpe, 1973). The text is stabilized. It has no apparent history other than that incorporated in the text (or

> in features of its frame) and does not require a history as product of the various occasions of its use" **(Smith, 1974, p. 260).**

The ways in which "work knowledges" are "assembled" and "mapped" within an institutional setting are useful insights drawn from **Smith (2005)** with reference to my own study that explores why institutional constructions of nontraditional students are currently what they are at the University.

It is noted from the literature that a combination of a derived approach from Foucault's 'history of the present' approach and Smith's institutional ethnography has been already been successfully employed by scholars of a recent study, and their insights are noted accordingly:

> "Useful and challenging as this mode of inquiry is, the use of archaeology and genealogy limits one to the exploration of the construction and relations between discourses and discursive practices. If the researcher wishes to bring into the picture the view of situated agents … in a particular social setting in time and place, it requires alternative methodological tools such as those developed by Smith and her followers" **(Skehill & Satka, 2011, p.4).**

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My analysis attempted to show how UWC's predominant and overt 'nontraditional' orientation as an institution may have influenced the way in which 'nontraditional' student constructs may have taken root, at various points, in the history of UWC.

4.2 Reflections on the Research Process

Drawing on Burchell (1993, p.277), **Meadmore et al (2000)** argues that the first requirement of conceptualising a genealogy is a particular orientation to the present:

"Games of truth and error are at the heart of genealogical work. The genealogist produces one truth in the act of writing up his/her research. … Writing in the present tense seems to imply knowledge 'in the making', rather than as established truth," **(Meadmore et al, 2000, p.474).**

Similarly, their observations of what lies at the core of genealogical work are also taken into account:

> "Intellectual work of this kind will necessarily involve 'new truth games, new ways of objectifying and speaking the truth about ourselves, and new ways in which we are able to be and required to be subjects in relation to new practices of government" **(Meadmore et al, 2000, p. 464).**

In terms of my own study, I agree with these observations insofar as I have found myself (re)writing a particular story about 'nontraditional' student constructions at the University of the Western Cape; a story that has a particular 'present' truth from my own vantage point and influenced by my own constructions and co-constructions of nontraditional students in higher education.

However, wherever I may have written in the present tense, the complex process of knowledge 'in the making' warrants further reflection. This is so because a Foucauldian 'history of the present' approach for this case study has been *my demarcated present*, and it is *my* present already in the very recent past. Insights borne out of this study potentially contribute to knowledge "in the making" particularly when 'nontraditional' students are perceived from various vantage points.

Because my identity and experience as a 'nontraditional' student in higher education have already been declared as factors influencing my choices in this study, it is pertinent to raise the following reflective points about myself as the researcher of this study and as a nontraditional student in higher education. Has the 'pausing of time' in this history of the present approach changed who I am presently? And how did I get to become a different kind of 'nontraditional' student in higher education, possibly?

As a 'nontraditional' student I feel a closer association with a much larger, longer, and less conventional continuum of 'nontraditional' students than previously imagined. A re-imagining of what a nontraditional student may look like, and how such a student can 'be,' both in the world and in the world of higher education, has taken place at a personal level. The paths of my thinking in these instances are elaborated upon in Chapters Four and Five.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

Discussion in the first part of this chapter clarified why a qualitative research framework was considered the most appropriate way in which to explore the research question. Regarding this study's conceptual exploration into nontraditional student constructs in higher education, reasons were provided for suitably

aligning this study's inquiry to poststructuralist thinking, and specifically drawing on Michel Foucault's history of the present approach and Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography in this regard. Motivations for selecting a case study approach foregrounded the significance and 'force of example' of the case of the University of the Western Cape in this study. Discussion in this chapter ended with practical considerations and challenges associated with an application of Foucault's genealogical method and Smith's institutional ethnography.

Taken as a whole, discussion in this chapter positively re-affirmed methodological choices made in this study, highlighting reflexivity and rhizomatic thinking which have deepened understandings of re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs at one South African university in particular.

Appendix A
An Overview of Historical Moments and Historical Fields in Qualitative Research in North America

An Overview of Historical Moments and Historical Fields in Qualitative Research in North America Adapted from **Denzin &Lincoln (2008:20- 27)**		
Historical Moments	**Historical Fields**	**As Described By Denzin & Lincoln**
First 1900 to 1950	**traditional**	In this period, qualitative researchers wrote 'objective,' colonizing accounts of field experiences that were reflective of the positivist scientist paradigm. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.20)
Second 1950 to 1970	**modernist, or golden age**	Builds on the canonical works from the traditional period. Social realism, naturalism, and slice-of-life ethnographies are still valued. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.22)
Third 1970 to 1986	**blurred genres**	Qualitative researchers have a full complement of paradigms, methods, and strategies to employ in their research. Theories ranged from symbolic interactionism to constructivism, naturalistic inquiry, positivism and postpositivism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, critical theory, neo-Marxist theory, semiotics, structuralism, feminism, and various racial/ethnic paradigms. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.23)
Fourth 1986 to 1990	**the crisis of representation**	A profound rupture occurred in the mid-1980s. Qualitative researchers sought new models of truth, method and representation (Rosaldo, 1989). There was an erosion of classic norms in anthropology (objectivism, complicity with colonialism, social life structured by fixed rituals and customs, ethnographies as monuments to a culture) was complete. Critical theory, feminist theory, and epistemologies of color now competed for attention in this arena. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.25)

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Fifth **1990 to 1995**	**the postmodern,** **a period of experimental and new ethnographies**	The ethnographer's authority remains under assault today. A triple crisis of representation, legitimation, and praxis confronts qualitative researchers in the human disciplines. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:26)... The fifth moment, the postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing, struggled to make sense of these crises. New ways of composing ethnography were explored. Theories were read as tales from the field. Writers struggled with different ways to represent the "Other," although they were now joined by new representational concerns. Epistemologies from previously silenced groups emerged to offer solutions to these problems. The concept of the aloof observer was abandoned. More action, participatory, and activist-oriented research was on the horizon. The search for grand narratives was being replaced by more local, small scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.27)
Sixth **1995 to 2000**	**postexperimental inquiry**	A period ushering in a new host of authors into the interpretive community. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.27)
Seventh **2000 to 2004**	**the methodologically contested present**	A period of conflict, great tension, and, in some quarters, retrenchment. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p27)
Eighth **2005 to present**	**the fractured future**	In this moment scholars ... are confronting the methodological backlash associated with "Bush science" and the evidence-based social movement. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.27)
? Ninth	**? Beyond the fractured future**	

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Appendix B
Using a Derived Approach from Foucault and Smith

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Using a derived approach (from Foucault and Smith):
"Re-imagining Nontraditional Students in Higher Education: The Case of One South African University."</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Michel Foucault</th><th>Dorothy Smith</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Archaeological Method: pertaining to the construction of discourses.

A method that would facilitate systematic reporting and recording of the ways in which certain discourses pertaining to constructions of mature students at the University of the Western Cape have come about.</td><td rowspan="3">Institutional Ethnography.

A method that foregrounds the notion that the world is text-mediated, and that texts contribute significantly to governing and practices in daily life.

A useful method to understand how institutional discourses and practices at UWC may have been influenced by ways in which constructions of mature students have been documented in institutional texts.

The following steps are envisaged as part of the proposed research:

Step One: Deciding the problematic

Step Two: Organizing the data (One data set would include various institutional texts. Another would include broader institutional discourses pertaining to constructions of mature students at the University.)

Step Three: Analysis (The analysis would include identifying agent positions as well as discovering regulatory texts and discourses.)

Step Four: Geneaology as a tool to make history speak back to the present</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Genealogical Method: pertaining to the relations between discourses.

A method that would facilitate a broad understanding of the way in which discourses regarding mature students in higher education have come about at UWC.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">History of the Present.

A mode of inquiry that combines archaeological and genealogical analysis and one where a set of constructions of mature students at UWC would be used to problematise the present.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Commonalities</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Both theorists offer powerful tools for analysis of discourses, subjectivities and power relations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>POWER-KNOWLEDGE</td><td colspan="2">For both <u>Smith and Foucault,</u> their focus of power is at the micro-level. With reference to the research question, they usefully provide a basis for</td></tr>
</table>

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RELATIONS	understanding power existing in multiple sites as well as in texts which are part of those sites.
Divergences	
It is noted that Foucault and Smith differ on the views of **the subject** and in this regard researchers may need to choose depending on the nature of the research problem.	
DISCOURSE and DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	For **Foucault**, 'discourse' can be described as a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation. The focus of his discourse analysis is on the object, the subject, the concept and the strategy. Foucault's archaeological and genealogical tools facilitate the discovery of hidden rules or discursive orders that may influence the formation of discourses and social practices. **Smith** had originally taken her concept of discourse from Foucault but had subsequently drawn from Bakhtin to include the possibilities of investigating discourse as social organization. She views discourse as a dimension of the ruling relations and this is inclusive of texts, which have an intermediating function.
THE SUBJECT	For **Foucault**, the subject is a non-fixed, fluid, discursive construction which is produced through social discourses in which subjects are positioned in the field of power relations and within particular social practices. **Smith** put forward the view that problems of knowledge needs to be solved with the active presence and participation of participants.
POWER-KNOWLEDGE RELATIONS	For **Foucault**, power must be understood beyond its negative effects. In his view, power 'produces' and produces 'reality', and 'domains of truth' and 'rituals of truth'.
Adapted from: Satka, M., & Skehill, C. (2011). Michel Foucault and Dorothy Smith in case file research: Strange bed-fellows or complementary thinkers? *Qualitative Social Work* , 1-15. Skehill, C., Mirja, S., & Hoikkala, S. (2011). Exploring innovative methodologies in time and place to analyse child protection documents as elements of practice. *Qualitative Social Work* , 1-16.	

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Appendix C
A Case Study

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">(i) A Foucauldian Archaeology & Genealogy and (ii) an Institutional Ethnography
A Case Study

Re-imagining ‘nontraditional’ student constructs in higher education: a case study of one South African university</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">CASE STUDY</th><th colspan="2">Archaeology & Genealogy (Foucault)</th><th colspan="2">Institutional Ethnography (Smith)</th></tr>
<tr><td>a.</td><td>Description/ Definition</td><td colspan="2">Archaeology: an excavation of an institution’s archive for clues of mature student constructions.

Genealogy: an attempt to explain from a ‘history of the present approach’ how institutional constructions of mature students have come about.</td><td colspan="2">Institutional Ethnography: a qualitative mapping of the social relations governing an institution, in order to show linkages between the ways in which people have shaped existing perceptions of mature students at the University.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">b.</td><td rowspan="2">Design classification</td><td>Empirical</td><td>Primary Data</td><td>Empirical</td><td>Primary Data</td></tr>
<tr><td>Textual Data</td><td>Low Control</td><td>Textual Data</td><td>Low Control</td></tr>
<tr><td>c.</td><td>Key research questions addressed by the design</td><td colspan="2">Exploratory and descriptive questions, as stated above.</td><td colspan="2">Exploratory and descriptive questions, as stated above.</td></tr>
<tr><td>d.</td><td>Typical applications</td><td colspan="2">Analysis of everyday discourses.</td><td colspan="2">Case studies of companies or organisations.</td></tr>
<tr><td>e.</td><td>Meta-theory</td><td colspan="2">Poststructuralism</td><td colspan="2">Constructivism</td></tr>
<tr><td>f.</td><td>Conceptualisation/ mode of reasoning</td><td colspan="2">Predominantly inductive: interpreting and making sense of “chunks” of discourse.</td><td colspan="2">Inductive; a-theoretical. No hypothesis is formulated. In some cases certain “general ideas” or “expectations” act to guide the empirical research.</td></tr>
<tr><td>g.</td><td>Selection of cases/ sampling</td><td colspan="2">Both sampling and non-sampling methods used to select texts.</td><td colspan="2">Theoretical or judgement sampling.</td></tr>
<tr><td>h.</td><td>Mode of observation/ sources of data</td><td colspan="2">Data usually collected through interview methods (transcripts) in natural field settings. Otherwise, existing discourses (eg. conversations or speeches) may also be analysed.</td><td colspan="2">Participant observation; semi-structured interviewing; use of documentary sources and other existing data.</td></tr>
</table>

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i.	**Conceptualisation/ mode of reasoning. Analysis.**	**Conceptualisation/ mode of reasoning:** Predominantly inductive: interpreting and making sense of "chunks' of discourse.	**Analysis**: Analytic induction; grounded theory approach.
j.	**Strengths**	High construct validity; in-depth insights.	High construct validity; in-depth insights; establishing rapport with research subjects.
k.	**Limitations**	Given that most discursive practices are context-dependent or context-bound, such studies are limited in their generalisability.	Lack of generalisability of results; non-standardisation of measurement; data collection and analysis can be very time-consuming.
l.	**Main sources of error**	Lack of generalisability; lack of control over the data production process interviewer effects where new data are collected.	Potential bias of researcher; lack of rigour in analysis.
Research design framework adapted from **Mouton, 2008** (Chapter 10).			

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CHAPTER FOUR: CASE DESCRIPTION 117- 133

Introduction

> "What happens when a norm of behaviour becomes the exception numerically, yet the social construction of that norm remains prominent? When such a situation occurs, those who do not conform to that norm tend to be marginalized despite their existence as the collective majority. Conceptually, they become, in essence, a *marginalized* majority. This is exactly what has occurred for the majority of postsecondary students in the United States" **(Deil-Amen, 2011, p.1).**

There are times when UWC's 'nontraditional' students could be regarded as a 'marginalised majority' and at other times this would not be an apposite depiction. 'Nontraditional' studenthood at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) is presented in this case description as an historically complex construct and has been institutionally portrayed as such since 1959, when the University was first established as a university college. Because South African student identity has also been shaped politically by South Africa's trenchant apartheid and post-apartheid experiences for at least five decades, this case description highlights the connection between certain national imperatives and the ways in which the University has institutionally depicted 'nontraditional' students at certain times in its history.

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Discussion in all sections of this chapter therefore connects institutional portrayals of 'nontraditional' student constructs to particular periods influencing the University's history, and the final section focuses on possibilities for a re-imagined 'nontraditional' studenthood with a picture of the University's current student set in mind. The five subheadings (1959 to 2001) used in this to this case description are aligned with historically significant periods institutionally ascribed as such on the University's website (Appendix D):

1959	Early Days
1975	A Freer Climate
1987	Towards Democracy
1990	New Order
2001	Vision of the Future

2016 Beyond Binaries/ Re-imaginings

My attempt at a methodologically thick case description provides a window on the institution's "thoughts, emotions and web of social interaction" **(Ponterotto, 2006, p. 542)** regarding its 'nontraditional' student patterns and also lays the basis for the ensuing document analysis in Chapters Five and Six. Institutional texts directly informing this case description are indicated in the following table.

Table 14

Specific Institutional Texts Informing this Case Description

Period	Text	Type of Text
1968	UCWC's Student Affairs Report	report
1982	UWC Objectives	mission statement
1989 - 1991	UWC Annual Financial Reports (3 separate reports: 1989, 1990 and 1991)	report
1995	CACE Annual Report	report
1999	University of the Western Cape Annual Review	report
2003	UWC Language Policy	policy
2012	Schedule of Fees	schedule
2012	UWC Student Diary	student diary
2012	Becoming UWC. Reflections, pathways and unmasking apartheid's legacy.	book
2013	Early History of UWC. Reflections on the History and Alumni of the Early Years. 1960-1980.	book
2014	UWC Green Diary	diary
2015	New UWC Branding	branding
2015	International Schedule of Fees	schedule
2016	Call for UWC Ambassador	leaflet
2016	UWC Residential Services. Placement and Administration, Housing and Residence Life	brochure
2016	CE@UWC. Community Engagement at the University of the Western Cape	newsletter report
2012-2016	General Calendar (2 separate calendars: 2012 &2016)	handbook
2016	SRC Affiliated Organisations	booklet
2016	Office for Student Development. Student Guide 2016.	booklet
not dated	UWC Admissions Policy	policy

What is a university and how is its identity represented?.This case description finds relevance in four distinct institutional narratives that *Drori et al* define as the university and its social role: guild-like classic, professional scientific, localized, and organizational, Appendix E: (Drori, Delmestri, & Oberg,

2016, pp. 176-177) Interestingly, the University of the Western Cape has legacies and aspiration in each of these categories, which poses many possibilities for student constructions for the future.

Section 1: 1959. Early Days

Since the 'early days' in the 1960s, the University College of the Western Cape (UCWC) was compelled under South African apartheid law to draw its students only from a racially-determined applicant pool. UWC , from the outset, had a prohibitive, and yet legal, blueprint as a university designed *only* for South African people who were historically reclassified by the state, and also variously self-ascribed as, Coloured, coloured, or 'so-called coloured'.

> "The aim of government was to allow for limited training for lower to middle level positions: e.g. teachers for 'coloured' schools, social workers, nurses, ministers of religion, and clerks for the separate 'coloured' civil service" **(University of the Western Cape, 1999, p. 2).**

But the University did not comply in every respect and, in 1963, found a way to make certain aspects of its political and educational positions clear on a world stage. In this year, staff and students developed the current badge, which positioned UWC emblematically within an international 'Republic of Scholars' (*laurel leaves*). In its own country, however, UWC persevered in forging an authentic identity as a higher education institution while navigating a highly turbulent political landscape. Unrelentingly, the University bolstered itself through its regional contribution (*proteas*) as a higher education institution.

And as evident in the University's recent student diaries, a story of institutional aspiration, capability and commitment is related annually via its badge to new cohorts of students:

> "… The protea, the national flower of South Africa, is found in greater abundance and variety in the Western Cape - the home of UWC- than anywhere else. The three proteas symbolize Teaching, Culture and Education. The Greek Temple is the international symbol for academia and our recognition that we are part of it. The laurel leaves indicate competition and victory. Colours: The blue background represents brightness in our endeavour as an institution to obtain international insight. The gold represents the earth in which our achievements are anchored. The motto Respice Prospice: to look back is to look forward. Take what is good from the past and build the future" **(UWC Student Diary, 2012, p. 1).**

What has been emblematically inscribed on the badge - of the 'old' alongside the 'new', the 'local' alongside the 'international' - is taken up in the reflections of a current University professor, capturing what the architects of apartheid may have had in mind for UWC, albeit in a not altogether benign way:

> "That the plants the planners chose for the new landscape were indigenous was, it seems, no accident. For indigeneity too was part of the rhetoric: their own place, their own people, their own local plants. The badge devised for the Coloured college set the columns of a Greek temple, that icon of culture and learning in the West, below three King Proteas. For not only was the Protea the national flower of the Republic and a plant that grew wild in the Western Cape. It was also (or so the rector explained at the time) a flower which our Coloured people cherished, thus typifying, he said, the appreciation which they had for their own" **(Martin, 2012, p. 25).**

At UCWC, student numbers were small but growing, and at the time dropout rates "… were horrendous…" (Herman, 2013, p. 3) as noted by an alumnus of the time and member of staff in subsequent years. Another alumnus at the time reflected on the irony of the situation, that for most of the 1960s the apartheid-engineered status quo remained intact:

> "Today, after four and a half years [1960 to mid-1964], the position is far from what the founders asserted, and the status quo is likely to remain. All the lectureships and senior positions, bar the Philosophy lectureship, are held by whites" **(Nortjie, 2010, p. 14).**

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Against a backdrop of apartheid repression, attempts at normal college life nevertheless broke through in the form of several clubs and societies initiated in 1968, as indicated in a UCWC student affairs annual report of that year:

> "Gedurende 1968 is 'n besondere poging aangewend om U.K.W.K. se verenigsingslewe te vestig en om studentaktiwiteite te bevorder" **(Universiteitskollege Wes-Kaapland., 1968, p. 3).** *My translation: "During 1968 an exceptional effort was made to establish UCWC clubs and societies and to promote student activities in this regard"* **(Universiteitskollege Wes-Kaapland, 1968, p. 3).**
>
> Vereniging vir Christenstudente (Society for Christian Students), Congregational Society, Anglican Society, Gavan Duffay Society[1], Geografiesevereniging (Geography Society), Musiekvereniging (Music Society), Debatsvereniging (Debating Society), Dramavereniging (Drama Society), Rugbyklub (Rugby Club), Sokkerklub (Soccer Club), Tennisklub (Tennis Club), Tafeltennisklub (Table Tennis Club), Krieketklub (Cricket Club), Netbalklub (Netball Club), Skaakklub (Chess Club), Swemklub (Swimming Club), Dansklub (Dance Club), and Dramavereniging (Drama Society), (Universiteitskollege Wes-Kaapland., 1968, p. 3).

Interestingly, the terms 'coloured' and 'nontraditional' do not appear once in any of these names for their clubs and societies; they come across as 'normal' names for 'normal' students. And in one sense they are.

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[1] One of the founders of the Irish Nationalist newspaper.

The majority of graduating UCWC students in the 1960s became teachers, and "students who were prepared to enrol for teacher education were given a paltry state bursary of ninety rand and a loan of another ninety rand per annum with the proviso they taught in state schools after qualifying and for a period of one year more than the bursary or loan" **(Herman, 2013, p. 3).**

To make sense of institutionally portrayed 'nontraditional' students in UWC's early days it is important, therefore, to take into account that student intake in its entirety was governed by South Africa's apartheid ideologies of the time. In a conventional sense, therefore, students could be considered to be 'nontraditional' because they came from families who were financially unable to continue supporting

their university studies beyond unsuccessful first attempts. In addition, if the aim of the government was to provide *training* through UCWC, it is reasonable to assume that training was offered on a part-time basis, or after-hours, already in these early days presumably to accommodate an appreciably large contingent of working adult students, namely teachers.

Alumni contributions in an Institutional Advancement publication "*Hek Toe*!" (loosely translated from the Afrikaans exhortation to mean: "[let us march] *to the* [university] *gate!*" as an act of protest against the apartheid state) confirm a widely accepted understanding that the majority of the UWC students enrolled in the early years were 'first generation students' to attend university, and that a "significant (and increasing) minority came from conservative rural communities" **(Institutional Advancement, 2014, p. 38).**

This part of the case description for the 'early days' suggests that UWC's own circumstances of 'non-traditionality', expressed as its unrelenting opposition to its apartheid tutelage especially in the early days, continues to play a seminal role in shaping student identity in various ways at UWC. The University's authentic history and growth have moulded a particular and in some senses an inimitable mosaic of 'nontraditional' students on its campus, and beyond.

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Section 2: 1975. A Freer Climate

> "We never accepted their racist ideology. Instead we believed in our common humanity and destiny as South African students … for a brief moment … we truly lived in the house of tomorrow," - UWC Alumna and Committee of 81 Member Nicky Van Driel, who had two spells in detention, in 1980 and 1981 **(UWC Institutional Advancement, 2014, p.12).**

In the mid-1970s, student numbers at UWC continued to be relatively low and the academic flourishing of these students remained an institutional priority. In this period, UWC resolutely worked towards galvanising as a formidable higher education institution, and fought prominently alongside other historically disadvantaged South African universities in actively denouncing apartheid education. In this period, there is also an institutional officialisation of certain kinds of 'nontraditional' students in this period: poor students and adult learners.

The University's mission statement, formulated in 1982, is an example of the institution's message to the South African nation, if not the world, of its intention to provide an anti-racist university education to all South Africans, and especially to indigent students who could not afford university education:

> "…UWC interprets its role as a university to include a firm commitment to the development of Third World communities in South Africa. By this means it aims both to serve its immediate community and to keep open the possibility of new options emerging for South African society" **UWC Objectives, 22 October 1982.**

It is important to acknowledge that "Third World" is a strongly contested concept, and my understanding of it in terms of this case study has been drawn from the work of Hadjor (1993), who offers a contextualisation appropriate to the circumstances of the University at the time:

> "Before the term "Third World" appeared, a very different vocabulary held the field. Words like 'backward', 'underdeveloped', 'uncivilized', 'primitive', even 'barbarian' or 'savage', abounded and expressed both the traditions of Western superiority, whether it be in a racist or paternalist version. Such terms express the inferiority of what is being described and at the same time suggest an objective for the improvement of such societies: to be 'advanced', 'developed', 'civilized' - in other words to emulate the countries of the West. The term "Third World" does not carry these connotations" **(Hadjor, 1993, p.3).**

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Instead, there are indications, in his view, that 'Third World' may depict " a world of ideas and culture …able to exist and function on its own independently of the other worlds which dominate it" **(Hadjor, 1993, p.4).**

The establishment of the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, in 1985, is another example of institutional dedication to a highly prominent 'nontraditional' student population, which would go on to become institutionalised in various ways for more than two decades hence:

> "The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE), established at UWC in 1985, was the first department of adult education at an Historically Black University. It prioritised adult education, which meant training, research, networking and support for adult educators who were located within poor, working class communities and linked to the democratic movement. CACE

> was part of building adult education as a legitimate field of study. CACE was instrumental in developing the first popular educational methodologies and training materials on gender equity and anti-racisim. Innovative learning methodologies were also developed to support the development of community based rural facilitators" **(Popular Education South Africa, 2016).**

The 'adultification' of higher education worldwide, and how this has been institutionally constructed at UWC, is discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

Section 3: 1987, Towards Democracy

> "In 1994, when Nelson Mandela was made president, I was a student leader at the University of the Western Cape. … In 1997 I wrote my final examination and added another degree to my qualifications. I got married while still a student and was a father at 25 - a youngster with a wife, a new baby and no fulltime job. I had a part-time job as a facilitator of student leadership workshops and relied on my friends and family to pay the rent for the house I had rented in Mowbray in anticipation of my first-born son, Resego. So I was a man in search of any job" **(Tabane, 2014, pp. 420-423).**

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It is important to note that UWC gained university status in 1970 for the first time and not in 1959 as the University College of the Western Cape. Of relevance here are **Buchler *et al's*** observations that UWC in the 1980s "began to admit black African students in defiance of government policy" **(Buchler *et al* 2007:141).**

The University of the Western Cape's website **(http://www.uwc.ac.za/Pages/default.aspx accessed 11 November 2013)** gave prominence to the following events spanning five decades in the history of the institution, and they are most notably political events alongside milestones linked to institutional development and student growth:

> UWC during this period presents a picture of a university struggling on two fronts: how to democratize this University without being financially crippled by an apartheid government for doing so. Student composition remained largely working class, and so-called Coloured, as institutional attempts to diversify were systematically thwarted by apartheid powers of the day.

Most notably in 1987 the state froze funding at 1986 enrolment levels. This in turn meant that UWC began to experience appreciable financial losses as greater numbers of African students sought admission to the University. Because the government subsidy system "applied only to coloured and Indian students, African students had to find other funding and there was a high rate of non-payment of fees" **(UWC Institutional Advancement, 2014, p. 39).** It was therefore especially difficult to retain African students in the university system without securing additional sources of funding for this purpose.

The University endured yet another predictable setback when the then Minister of Education FW de Klerk decreed UWC subsidies would be contingent upon the conduct of its staff and students. And even though this action was declared unlawful by the courts, in 1989 UWC's subsidy was cut drastically. Signing off on 20 July 1990, the Director of Finance highlighted challenges as part of the review of the University's 1989 financial year:

> "The University has managed to survive a very difficult financial year. Our subsidy from the State which is determined by the SAPSE formula was cut by 52% during a year in which our student numbers increased from 11 770 to 12 405," (De Wet, 31 December 1989)."

By the late 1980s, challenges persisted in increasing throughput as well as diversifying UWC's student composition. Both University rectors, Professor Van der Ross and Professor Gerwel, attempted during their respective tenure periods to open access to tertiary education. Challenges were presented institutionally when students struggled to cope with academic demands because many had low matric passes to begin with.

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Section 4: 1990, New Order

Writing on 1 October 1992, the Registrar of Finance and Services highlights challenges as part of the review of the University's 1991 financial year:

> "Despite the continued cut in State subsidy the University is still achieving its mission of providing access to tertiary education for disadvantaged students. … Of growing concern to us is the level of outstanding tuition fees. The bad economic climate has hit the communities from which our students are drawn, particularly hard and many of the students struggled to pay their fees. … The work study programme which was launched in 1991 has certainly enabled some

> students to earn an income which they could use to reduce their indebtedness towards the university. The continuation of this programme is an important element in the student financial aid package," (De Wet A. J., 31 December 1991).

In 1992 the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) adopted its position statement pertaining to the theory and practice of adult education at UWC, and it is also significant that in 1995 a new single Ministry of Education with commitments to lifelong education was established in place of the eighteen departments under apartheid (CACE Annual Report, 1995, p.8).

In the University of the Western Cape's Annual Review in 1999, the Rector at the time, Professor Cecil Abrahams, attested to a more diversified student body than has previously been the case:

> "In the early days, the university served students mostly in the education, social work, nursing and language fields of study. While the students and much of the support staff were 'coloured', the teaching and senior administrative staff were 'white'. … Today, UWC boasts seven well-developed faculties offering university diplomas and degrees in a large number of fields right up to the doctoral level. Furthermore, the university has grown from 160 students to 10 000. African students now form the majority at the university and women outnumber men by a ratio of 56:44. … Although stigmatized by its apartheid roots, UWC set itself up as a higher education institution of learning with a particular interest in the disadvantaged and marginalised communities from the surrounding areas and, indeed, from throughout the country" **(Abrahams, 2000, p. 2).**

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In the same review of that year, Professor Shirley Walters clarified the rationale behind the establishment of the Division for Lifelong Learning:

> "The new Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) was established in 1999 to help position UWC as a leading lifelong learning institution. … During 1999 the first 'It's never too late to learn' campaign was launched to highlight the importance of UWC's 30-year-old part-time programme and to begin to position the university in the public eye as a lifelong learning institution. … Key challenges include the need to provide access to students from diverse backgrounds, age groups, lifestyles and socioeconomic circumstances and to expand lifelong learning opportunities" **(Walters, 2000, p.16).**

What is to be made of the paradox presented when the majority of UWC's students may be institutionally perceived as 'traditional' and at the same time the University prides itself as a national forerunner in part-time provision historically? Can the majority of UWC's students formally be categorised as 'traditional' students in higher education if the following are not formally tested: have they joined the University immediately after high school, are they enrolled fulltime, do they reside on campus, and are they ready to begin university-level classes?

These perceived disconnects might indeed be evidence that the University has for some time been finding its way around new student identities, which are less binarised and more hybridized. The interesting question would be, though: is there a raft of 'nontraditional' student characteristics as the backdrop to the entire spectrum? In terms this study, the case of UWC suggests that it may be possible to see it this way.

Section 5: 2001, Vision of the Future

UWC's current Admission Policy is structured in two parts, the first of which is admission policy as from 2009 and the second section is admission policy prior to 2009. Although the most recent section of the policy guides on alternative admissions, it does not mention part-time students, whereas the admission policy prior to 2009 mentions part-time students, once, within the context of exemption requirements as stipulated by the Matriculation Board (UWC Admission Policy, undated, p. 8). This is an interesting reversal when one notes from the 2011-2012 report of activities of the School of Public Health that the 96 Masters in Public Health graduates were mostly part-time students:

> "Most of the School's students are health professionals studying part-time while they work. They are often employed in demanding management positions, and most are professionals with families. These commitments combine to present them with the typical challenges facing mature, part-time students. In addition, the MPH students largely study at a distance, which means that support is given mostly by email, through extensive feedback on their written assignments and mini-theses, as well as through contact sessions such as mini-thesis week, Summer and Winter Schools and, more recently, via electronic discussion groups" (School of Public Health. Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, undated, p. 6.)

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> "Accommodation will only be offered to students who are registered for diplomas, degrees or postgraduate degrees, on a fulltime basis" (UWC Residence Admission/ Re-Admission Policy, 2011, p. 3).

> "Family members such as children, siblings, parents, spouses, and cousins, etc, are not allowed to cohabitate in university residences" (UWC Residence Admission/ Re-Admission Policy, 2011, p. 7).

It is significant too from the University's most recent residence policy that only fulltime students are accommodated at the 13 residences for approximately 3300 students currently housed at Cecil Esau, Cassinga, Coline Williams, Basil February, Ruth First, Eduardo Dos Santos, Hector Petersen, Chris Hani, Liberty, Gorvalia, Disa Court, Kwik Foods, and Caltex, (Residential Services, 2016). "The ResLife Academic Support Unit plays an integral part in the creation of living and learning communities at UWC residences. … It also aims to prepare students for the world of work within their career stream," (UWC Green Diary , 2014, p. 33).

During this period, UWC remains a relatively young, growing, medium-sized South African higher education institution, where the norm of behaviour of its student body especially in recent times appears to be hybridised, and has largely been institutionally determined. UWC student identities come into view from particular institutional understandings of studenthood, and may in turn underscore scholarly views suggesting that conventional student categories are becoming less homogenised in higher education worldwide and more permeable as the result of mission and vision influences of higher education institutions serving particular student populations.

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Section 6: 2016, Re-imaginings

> " …the frustrations of post-1994 were more about 'the kinds of students that were enrolling in the Nineties - students were not exposed to the hardships that preceded what was really a result of struggles and so did not have the kind of motivation that characterized the late Eighties… " **(Tabane in UWC publication *360 Degrees*, 2006, p.9).**

> "At a time when the White Paper on Community Colleges is being celebrated as a 'step in the right direction' for all those youth and adults who have been excluded from education, the closing

> of adult education centres is weakening rather than strengthening the sector and contradicts the intent of the White Paper" (Popular Education South Africa, 2016).

Who are the 'nontraditional' students at the University of the Western Cape? As a student population, have they become different over two eras as the reflections below from a student leader suggests? The two quotes above suggest that student participation and student identity may be evolving in complex ways requiring due consideration.

This case description has attempted to introduce what I understand as *constructs of nontraditionality* of students at the University of the Western Cape. Additions to the University's lexicon ("commuter students", "residence students" , "on-campus residence students" and "off-campus residence students" Appendix F), suggest something more about student identity currently, and it is challenging to uncover. Some of these insights nevertheless assist in showing how students at the University continue to be shaped variously as subjects in particular periods in South Africa's history, and perhaps uniquely so at the University of the Western Cape.

UWC's history as a historically disadvantaged institution in South African higher education presents a unique backdrop against which constructions of its students are to be explored in this study, and in this chapter. That is to say, there are foundations of 'nontraditionality' that have been uniquely laid because of the turbulent development of the institution in the early years.

Re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs as part of this case description presents an initial picture of student identities which have been formed by institutional layering and hybridization over nearly six decades. Interestingly, the University's motto (Respice Prospice: "to look back is to look forward") may be a key starting point for understanding institutionalized student constructs of yesterday, today and tomorrow. How one looks back is the challenge for us all, and all needn't look back in the same way.

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Conclusion

How has this case description depicted 'nontraditional' students at the University of the Western Cape?

In certain periods, starting from the earliest times in the history of the institution, some UWC students were described as part-time and as adult learners. In the more recent periods, the identities and roles of UWC students may be described as more hybridized, corresponding to transitioning international higher education trends and lifelong learning agendas.

On the one hand, a clear picture emerges numerically of 166 students enrolling in 1960 and, fifty-four years later, in 2014, the annually reported headcount enrollment at UWC showed that 20 583 students were studying at the University in that year. Stated another way: there were 124 times more students in 2014 than there were in 1960. And yet on the other, conceptual challenges arise when one tries to give a picture of what 'nontraditional' students may look like at the University, since the time when they first enrolled. Indeed, challenges arise in depicting the norm of scholarly behaviour for both 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' students since the University's inception.

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Taken forward in this study, notions of a re-imagined UWC student are discussed in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six. The point of re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs in terms of this study would not be to contemporize existing student binaries by presenting them as updated 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student categories. What can already be said, as illustrated by this case description, is that UWC students and their identities may require institutional understanding beyond conventional higher education student categories, which have less value being uncritically perpetuated rather than globally re-appraised.

Appendix D University Icons as Institutional Narratives .....

Categorizing University Icons as Institutional Narratives				
	Guild-like classic narrative	Professional scientific narrative	Localized narrative	Organizational narrative
Identity context of the university	Learning, along with reverence to the charter-granting authority	Enlightenment and erudition; science, technology and professional practice	National, regional, or otherwise local identification	Branded, marketized, and universalized imagery
Exemplary university iconography	University of Heidelberg (1386, Germany)	Hashemite University (1992, Jordan)	Minia University (1976, Egypt)	Hong Kong Polytechnic University (1970, China-HK)
Common stylistic features	Mostly seal design	Mostly seal or shield design	Commonly seal or shield design	Commonly a borderless design and graphically abstract
	Literal rendering of images	Symbols of enlightenment	Often combine symbols of both the profession and of the nation or location	Contain a simplified graphic design or modern-font acronym
	Commonly include name of university	Symbols of the sciences and profession		
Number of universities	147	38	47	375
	232			375
Extracted from (Drori, Delmestri, & Oberg, 2016, p. 171)				

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Appendix E Significant Periods in UWC's History.....

The University's Own Depiction of Institutionally Significant Periods		Excerpts from the University's webpage relevant to this Study
1959	Early Days	"[The University offered "Coloured" students] limited training for lower to middle level positions in schools, the civil service and other institutions designed to serve a separated Coloured community."
1975	A Freer Climate	"In its mission statement of 1982, UWC Objectives, the university formally rejected the apartheid ideology on which it was established, adopting a declaration of nonracialism and 'a firm commitment to the development of Third World communities in South Africa'."
1987	Towards Democracy	"The term of Professor Jakes Gerwel, who took office as Rector in 1987, saw an unambiguous alignment with the mass democratic movement and a new edge to the academic project." "The University also formalised its 'open' admissions policy, providing access to a growing number of African students, and paving way for rapid growth."
1990	New Order	"UWC's research productivity now places it in the upper group of universities and technikons in the country. A thorough-going review of structures and academic programmes was also begun in the 1990s. … In the words of Professor Cecil Abrahams, Vice-Chancellor from 1995, UWC is committed to being 'a Place of Quality, a Place to Grow'."
2001	Vision of the Future	"Towards the end of 2001 former UWC rector Professor Brian O'Connell assumed the Vice-Chancellorship amidst a plethora of processes to restructure the higher education system in South Africa. In 2002 the Minister of National Education mapped the future higher education landscape. One of the outcomes of the restructuring process was that UWC would retain its status as an autonomous institution."
Source: https://www.uwc.ac.za/Pages/History.aspx).		

This case description argues for an account of 'nontraditional' student constructs beyond the binaried ways in which students are generally perceived both in higher education and at UWC.

This Study		
2016	Beyond Binaries	A period of flexible provision in teaching and learning. Fluid relationships between categories such as 'traditional' and 'nontraditional', and 'majority' and 'minority' when applied to UWC's student composition.

Appendix F SRC Manifesto Launch 2013-2014 .....

CHAPTER FIVE
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS PART 1 .....134- 169

INTRODUCTION

> "Archaeology is not in search of inventions; and it remains unmoved at the moment (a very moving one, I admit) when for the first time someone was sure of some truth; it does not try to restore the light of those joyful mornings. But neither is it concerned with the average phenomenon of opinion, with the dull grey of what everyone at a particular period may repeat" **(Foucault, 1969/2006, p.161).**

This Chapter is the first part of this study's presentation and findings. The focus is at a broad level institutionally by comparison to the next chapter, which focuses more specifically on documents authored in different sectors of the university, and often with the intention of facilitating a more intimate dialogue within the University.

During the course of this document analysis, I've encountered the 'light' and the 'dull grey' in bittersweet ways and at times caught myself wishing 'nontraditional' student constructs might spring from the pages without complication already in re-imagined forms. The 'joyful mornings' were few, and instead institutional portrayals came into view, mostly unexpectedly, as if from a kaleidoscope revealing shifting institutional patterns of 'nontraditional' student mosaics over time.

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Certain 'nontraditional' student constructs have been uniquely embraced institutionally, adding testimony to the distinctive ways in which UWC continues to endure in becoming an even more formidable higher education institution:

> "… In Becoming UWC we follow the ethos cultivated over the last fifty years at our institution of never performing according to the script of a chronicle foretold" **(Lalu & Murray, 2012, p.20).**

While it has been hard in one sense to find opinions about UWC that could be described as 'dull grey' in the data consulted, average opinion in the Foucauldian sense also has a place in my attempts at understanding UWC's intricate 'nontraditional' montage on its own terms, and is understood to mean those 'nontraditional' student constructs which appear to be the most commonly accepted and promoted

institutionally, often unreflectively so and without contestation. The University's cultivated ethos, emblematically depicted in royal blue, silver and gold, has turned out to be a complex institutional culture in which to understand and re-imagine 'nontraditional' students within its charge. The document analysis in this chapter draws on a selection of institutional texts as indicated in the following table.

Table 15

Specific Institutional Texts Informing this Documentary Analysis Chapter .....

Period	Text	Type of Text
1982	Mission Statement of the University	mission statement
1999-2015	UWC Annual Reports	reports
1999-2013	On Campus Newsletters	newsletters
2012-2013	School of Public Health (SoPH) News Bulletins	bulletins
2000-2013	UWC, 360 Perspectives (separate bulletins)	popular review bulletins
2004	Institutional Operating Plan 2004	plan
2007	University of the Western Cape. Self Evaluation Report to the Higher Education Quality Committee.	self-evaluation
2011-2012	School of Public Health Annual Reports	reports
2013	SOPH website (accessed in 2013)	website
2014	SOPH Programme Handbook for 2014	handbook
2001	Koen Study: Part-Time Provision	institutional study
2004	Barnes Study: Part-Time Provision	institutional study
2005	Senate Lifelong Learning Committee. Adopted: 25 October 2005	standing orders
2008	HECQ Audit Report Executive	report

	Summary, 2008:14-15	
1997* -current	Mission Statement of the University	mission statement

Institutional texts from the School of Public Health (SoPH) were specifically included because of the School's continued association with distance learning and blended learning programmes.

SECTION 1: 'NONTRADITIONAL' STUDENTS AT UWC: AN OVERVIEW

1.1 Where to Begin: UWC's 'Nontraditional' Student Pathway

Methodologically, I have been guided to understand that a genealogy of UWC's 'nontraditional' students would "…begin with a certain puzzlement or discomfiture about practices or institutions that others take for granted" **(Garland, 2014, p. 379).** The analysis in this chapter shows, therefore, that the reasons behind institutional depiction of 'nontraditionalised' student constructs at UWC are often complex, and these complexities are the interest in this chapter, as with this study as a whole. It is significant that certain institutional narratives come to the fore in distinct ways when 'nontraditional' student matters are being addressed and, as informed by **Iverson (2012),** these insights have been taken into account as part of the analysis.

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The 'nontraditional' student constructs as institutionally depicted in official newsletters, magazines and news bulletins were useful first encounters to understanding how the University experienced 'nontraditional' students in its charge.

Approximately forty "*On Campus*" institutional newsletters were reviewed mainly in hard copy, and in more recent years electronic copies were available. From the copies obtained, the oldest were dated in the 2000s, and these newsletters represent the recent period in UWC's history in my view. A few copies of the institutional magazine "*360 Perspectives*" are also part of the document analysis.

About eleven bulletins of the "*SoPH" News Bulletins* (School of Public Health) were reviewed. Both in electronic and hard copy form, the bulletins consulted covered the recent period from February 2012 to April 2013. The main coverage of the SoPH bulletins for this period included special developments and updates in the School, and were inclusive of the following announcements: annual conferences, symposia,

health assemblies and winter schools; collaborative TB/HIV activities; SoPH graduates at PhD, Masters' and postgraduate diploma level.

1.2 UWC's 'Nontraditional' Student: What is the Problem Represented to Be?

The problematisation of UWC's 'nontraditional' student constructs has also been assisted by guiding questions derived from **Bacchi (2009),** who distinguishes her understanding of a problem-oriented approach from the common usage of the word "problem". That is to say, her approach goes beyond the conventional understanding of what problems may denote and connote – things which may be "difficult to deal with" or "a puzzle" - and her focus is rather on the dynamic of change:

> *"*The word 'problem' in a 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach means something quite different. It refers simply to the kind of change implied in a particular policy proposal*"* **(Bacchi, 2009, pp. x – xi).**

Bacchi's probes have not been followed sequentially and have instead been used at different times to bring out the best kind of understanding behind institutional portrayals of 'nontraditional' student constructs.

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1. *What's the 'problem' represented to be in the specific clusters of texts identified at this stage?*
2. *What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?*
3. *How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?*
4. *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?*
5. *What effects are produced by the representation of the 'problem'?*
6. *How/ where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?*

1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in the specific clusters of texts identified at this stage?

Based on the University's own reflections on its vision and mission in relatively recent times, the impression formed from the case study data is that strategic considerations majorly influence the University's external representations of 'nontraditional' students in institutional texts intended for the public domain. The 'problem', or the challenge implied in change, seems to be how the University positions itself both in relation to its future and to its past. And in terms of this study the question might be: what kind of student identity might be the most emblematic in embracing institutional legacy and academic excellence going forward without compromise either way?

For the past decade at least, there is evidence of a sustained dialogue in the University's communications regarding who its desired students would be as part of UWC's growing and increasingly competitive institutional profile. It is interesting that institutional depiction of 'nontraditional' students comes across repeatedly as narratives of disadvantage, access and flexible provision (Appendix H) and does not seem to go beyond those constructs. It would seem that fluidity of student identity is not evident in institutional portrayals of the following kinds of 'nontraditional' students in particular: *lifelong learners, certain categories of international student, poor students, part-time students, recognition of prior learning (RPL) students, first-generation higher education students, disabled students and certain kinds of postgraduate students.*

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Furthermore, the use of the word *'diverse'* is also encountered repeatedly in institutional texts at least within the past decade. It is most significant that this construct would signify institutional thinking of the University's desired *future* student population taking into account that UWC has been created historically on 'nontraditional' foundations, albeit inadvertently so. The dynamic, therefore, between 'non-traditional' students and 'diverse' students seems to be left institutionally unexplored in the documentation consulted, and this 'problem' presents creative opportunities for re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs not only for students described as such but for students *as a whole* at the University.

As part of the re-imagining process, it may be possible to perceive the University's 'nontraditional' and 'diverse' student constructs as student categories carrying certain aspects of student identity which are yet to be institutionally articulated, and here the 'problem' would be how to name those aspects of student

identity that are not institutionally familiar and yet they continue to transition as constructs along a 'traditional'-'nontraditional' student continuum.

I. Official Policies and Plans

Policies and plans as case study data also state very clearly that the University has made a deliberate attempt to *'diversify'* its student intake and, as with the annual reports consulted, it is also not clear what diversification may mean in terms of the University's existing student categories, and how 'nontraditonal' students are being officially planned for in this regard. It is significant that the University's current student diversification plans may be informed by a different kind of institutional intent presently. While former University contexts may have influenced an institutional *embracing of* students regarded as 'non-traditional', more contemporary contexts seem to have brought about an institutional ambiguity which could inform a *turning away from* students the institution has historically regarded as 'nontraditional'. This in itself is an interesting problematisation of a 'nontraditional' student construct at one formerly disadvantaged South African university.

As with the official Annual Reports, the main problematisation would be how the student body should eventually become more diversified, and whether a diversified student population might also be inclusive of an increasingly diverse 'nontraditional' student set as currently participating at the University.

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II. Official Annual Reports

With reference to the University's official annual reports consulted from 1999 to 2015, institutional narratives pertaining to student composition is largely nonspecific in that 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student constructs are not particularly mentioned. There is, however, evidence of institutional motivation for an increasingly diversified student body according to planned institutional criteria, and student diversity may therefore mean a more representative national and international student demographic at UWC at some point.

The unaddressed 'problem' in these annual reports is that student diversity already exists both within the University's current 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student populations, and when this kind of

diversity is left institutionally unaccounted for, one feels impelled to ask how 'student diversity' is being defined institutionally and how the University's historical experience of its 'nontraditional' students are being appraised in these terms.

III. Official University Newsletters

Institutional portrayal of 'nontraditional' students through the University's newsletters often takes the form of part-time students, "lifelong learners" and RPL students (recognition of prior learning) celebrating their hard-won success after having navigated many obstacles in their personal, work and student lives over many years. Academically successful 'nontraditional' students are generally depicted institutionally as having studied against all odds to achieve the academic success they were looking for. Traditionally 'young' students who are successful do not appear to be depicted in the same way, however. The 'problem' in this regard would be the following: within the context of South Africa's political and economic challenges, are 'traditional' students expected to succeed based largely on untested institutional assumptions that they may be laboring under less personal, work and student responsibilities because they may be younger students who also happen to be studying fulltime?

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Another key observation from the case study data is that all the academically successful 'non-traditionally' aged students featured in the newsletter articles attribute their academic success to the *outstanding institutional backing and support they enjoyed*, and mostly so in their respective *departments or faculties*, which are portrayed uniformly as *sympathetic* to the many challenges 'non-traditional' students encounter on their journeys to success. The discomfiture here would be the following: while some documents other than the University's official newsletters confirm a history of the University's longstanding provision for part-time studies, this form of flexible provision does not appear to enjoy institutional promotion in most official documents intended for the public domain. Where applicable, it is also interesting that the success of part-time teaching and learning arrangements for 'nontraditional' students does not appear to have been extended institutionally beyond these 'nontraditional' students and tested on other students at the University who may potentially also benefit from similar teaching and learning arrangements.

Examples are cited particularly in Appendix H at the end of this chapter: Predominant Images of 'Nontraditional' Students at UWC through Institutional Newsletters, Magazines and News Bulletins.

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?

It may be important to restate that under South African apartheid law the University was compelled to offer places to 'Coloured' students only, many of whom were not university-ready. Accordingly, UWC was heavily challenged for decades to produce institutional successes without being able to influence the intake of its students.

Because student numbers were extremely low initially, it is significant that 'nontraditional' students may have comprised nearly two- thirds of the University's intake in the early years: one picture formed from the case study data suggests a significantly large intake of students enrolled as teachers and administrators, and may have studied on a part-time basis for an appreciable duration of their time to degree.

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Nearly sixty years later as a national and international higher education institution, while the University continues to demonstrate institutional commitment to designated student populations served historically, there is also espoused institutional aspiration for diversity in relation to its current student body. In this regard, the institutional assumptions seem to be two-fold: either the University's student body is not diverse as it is, or it is not sufficiently diverse. In each case, the challenge lies in understanding what student diversity already means institutionally for a community of scholars that continues to increase year by year, and in which ways student diversity needs to be a distinguishing feature now and for the future.

3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?

Because of the UWC's hard-won financial stability and reputational currency as a thriving higher education institution, the University currently enjoys leverage in determining student intake from a broader applicant pool, and is now able to identify certain kinds of students it wishes to have as part of its student population more so than in previous decades.

However, and with reference especially to relatively recent annual reports, a contradiction is presented when no student differentiation is highlighted in the reporting narratives year after year, and yet there is also evidence of institutional motivation for student diversity in the same case study data.

While I have accounted for the representation of the 'problem' in this way, an exploration of student diversity invites University engagement in important ways. The questions would be: what kind of student diversity is the University seeking and how would this alter what already exists as its current student population?

4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?

The two silences identified in the case study data provide opportunities for continued University engagement pertaining to the relationship between institutional legacy and aspiration, as well as providing a window on what might be new about student identity within the University's current student population.

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Firstly, there may be institutional challenges in articulating how to continue demonstrating institutional commitment to the UWC's earliest students, the indigent students whom the University continues to attract, and at the same time to be articulating a new institutional vision in which the University describes the 'new' students it would like to attract.

Secondly, institutional engagement towards greater clarity of the University's student categorisations historically and presently also comes across as significantly 'trouble-free' or unproblematic as evident in the case study data. For example, notions of fulltime and part-time are often ambiguous constructs both in relation to 'traditionally aged' and 'non-traditionally aged' students, and it is noted from selected texts that students could be in positions to self-select particular categorizations. This is not a judgement but rather an encouraging example of the fluidity of student identity, and should be acknowledged as such institutionally.

Further, it would seem that 'age' would have been the most reliable variable formerly in understanding something fundamentally different between 'nontraditional' students and their 'traditionally-aged'

counterparts at the University. However, age as a construct might be usefully revisited institutionally as there may be international immigrant and undocumented students participating in higher education as 'traditionally' young and at the same time would benefit from institutional provision formerly thought to be applicable to certain 'nontraditional' students only.

The problem could be thought about differently, and considerations here would include the extent to which 'student diversity' necessarily means 'new students', and what this particular kind of student diversity might signify beyond the 'traditional'-'nontraditional' student continuum of students the University is already responsible for. Identifying this 'new' student component may be the key to understanding something fundamental about student identity currently at the University, and it might also be the way to understanding why 'nontraditional student' constructs may represent a larger and more fluid student mosaic than originally thought possible institutionally.

5. What effects are produced by the representation of the 'problem'?

A distinct assemblage of institutionalised constructs has come into view with this document analysis. Appended in tabular form at the end of this chapter, they are taken up in the ensuing sections of this chapter, and also in Chapter Six.

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6. How/ where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

The images of 'nontraditional' students conveyed via case study data in the form of institutional newsletters and bulletins in particular suggest there are times when institutional portrayal seemed to confirm conventional notions of students described as such and at other times 'nontraditional' students appeared to be institutionally unarticulated. When reasons were not immediately apparent for this range of institutional depiction, the work of **Iverson (2012)** provided a measure of clarity regarding how various kinds of institutional dialogue pertaining to 'nontraditional' student constructs could be interpreted:

> "While multiple and competing discourses circulate, some discourses are taken up and supported more readily than others. These dominant discourses tend to be reaffirmed through their institutionalization. … Dominant discourses can be identified most easily by the way in which

> they have become taken-for-granted or naturalized. As such, even though alternative discourses exist, they are often not apparent" **(Iverson, 2012, pp.154-155).**

Some of the earliest evidence of institutional commitment to poor students can be found with reference to the 1982 UWC Objectives where there is historical reference to Third World, less financially resourceful, communities whom the University pledged to serve. For me it is personally interesting that a poor student could be young or old, and flexible forms of work and study conditions may be needed in order to succeed. That is to say, if case study data suggests there may be institutionally strategic turns away from part-time provision, would this be the same as saying the University would be reducing its intake of indigent students in future? Furthermore, is the institutional circle of student diversity drawn more widely or narrowly because of this?

In other examples, three SoPH bulletins dedicated special coverage to the School's graduate students, who seemed from their reports to be distance learners **(SoPH Bulletins: March 2012, October 2012 and March 2013).** In their reflections, some mature-age students elaborated upon key challenges they experienced in needing to uphold the demands of study, work and home commitments. And most interestingly, although most students shared some personal challenges about distance learning, one student also mentioned that a favourable case could be made for *mainstreaming distance learning as a preferred mode of study* **(SoPH Bulletin, October 2012)** for all students.

The point is that although certain kinds of teaching and learning arrangements may formerly have been associated with 'nontraditional' adult learning at the University there are some students who have expressed the view that flexible provision experiences might positively influence a broader range of students at the University, and even those conventionally considered 'traditionally-aged'.

Taken together, and perhaps inadvertently so, these kinds of portrayals of nontraditional students in institutional newsletters could represent, for several years already, *a kind of nontraditional student diversity*, which is largely unarticulated, largely invisible, in the institutional mainstream as a critical mass of *"new nontraditional"* students and yet, on the other hand, highly articulated and largely visible in certain sectors, certain 'pockets', of university life.

The examples mentioned above, therefore, are suggestive of disruptions of the stereotypical institutional portrayals of 'nontraditional' students as there is evidence of the following 'anomalies': much younger students may also be motivated to choose *part-time study* in order to assist their families by *working fulltime*. It is also interesting to reflect on the ways in which student constructs may be the same and different in certain respects. It would seem that for all students at UWC, there may be value in having flexible teaching and learning provision for all students beyond what has been historically ascribed to certain 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' students.

At some point methodologically, I had opened myself up to the realisation that I should be looking beyond student constructs that come into view as immediately familiar, and should spend more time understanding the contexts of less well developed student constructs that strike me as unfamiliar. It was important for me to realise that texts are not to be regarded as 'useful' or 'relevant' to my study only when the familiar could be confirmed. Institutionally portrayed constructs of 'nontraditional' students, therefore, reflect varied institutional moments and as such prompted another realisation in me that constructed student identity is less usefully experienced as a binary ('traditional' vs 'nontraditional') and more usefully experienced as part of a continuum ('traditional'-'nontraditional') of student identity.

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As part of the journey of this documentary analysis I found myself revisiting certain texts, which were initially perceived to be 'not useful' and 'unfamiliar' once I realised they potentially unlocked certain information about seeing 'nontraditional' students in new and different ways. I consciously began to re-engage with certain texts beyond the 'familiar'.

SECTION 2: 'NONTRADITIONAL' STUDENTS AT UWC: A CLOSER LOOK

The 80-paged 2012/2013 issue of *"360 Perspectives" Magazine* offers rich and varied learning accounts of several alumni who offer an unsurprisingly uniform recipe for success: hard work.

Where age is mentioned, it is usually to denote that the successful alumnus could be considered a 'nontraditional' or a 'mature-age' student at the time of graduation. One example is of an alumnus who graduated in 2012 with a Master of Arts Degree at the age of 45, and another is the obituary to a former alumnus, who in 2004 attained her Master's Degree in Religion and Theology at the age of *80 and by studying part-time*: "*Boyd's husband took her to class at night and faithfully waited for her with his flask of coffee until she was done*" **(UWC, 360 Perspectives Magazine Issue 1, 2012/2013, p.80).**

Interestingly, also, is that a *traditionally-aged student* chose to complete his law studies on a part-time basis because he did not do well in his first year of study and was mindful of the economic hardship his failing would have on his family who were supporting his studies: "*I did poorly in my first year and failed most of my subjects… I felt my parents couldn't afford to waste their money on me failing…"* **(UWC, 360 Perspectives Magazine Issue 1, 2012/2013, p.36)** and for this reason he *chose to work fulltime* and to *study part-time* at the University.

But what is the point of these 'archival snapshots' **(Iverson 2012)** you may ask? In my view they raise important considerations regarding the origins of 'nontraditional' student constructs at the University: are they 'academic' or 'administrative' constructs mainly?

2.1 A 'Nontraditional' Student Lexicon?

Definitions and terms listed in Part 1 of the **UWC General Calendar for 2014** suggest that student constructs are also shaped administratively, out of necessity, and in some ways are experienced as the most visible, predominating, construct in that area of university affairs. For example, the University's distinction between *fulltime* and *part-time* students may largely be administrative markers in the institution's student nomenclature rather than markers of educational identity. In addition, it is likely that occasional students may fall in either category (*fulltime* and/or *part-time)*.

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Table 16

Definition of Student Terms: University Calendar .....

TERM	DEFINITION
Student	Any person who has been admitted to the university and has registered either fulltime, part-time or as an occasional student for a particular module, course or qualification.
Fulltime Student	A registered student who attends the university's timetable for day students.
Part-time Student	A registered student who attends the university's timetable for after hours tuition.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	The formal acknowledgement by Senate of the knowledge and skills a student possesses as a result of prior learning, which may have been gained formally, non-formally or experientially, and which may be considered for the purposes of admission to a programme.
Occasional Student	Is a student who has been allowed to enroll at the University for a specific module or course for non-degree purposes.
Source: University of the Western Cape 2014 University Calender Part 1 General Calendar pp105-106	

> " 'More than simply a group of statements or a stretch of text on paper, discourse can be characterized as dynamic constellations of words and images that legitimate and produce a given reality' (Allan, 2003, p47). For instance, a university student handbook is at once a written document that reflects a given reality, an archival snapshot; yet it also contributes to producing a given campus reality, transmitting a code for conduct, and shaping students' perceptions of themselves and others in a particular context" **(Iverson , 2012, p. 154).**

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While such terms and definitions may be vital to any university's general calendar, one outcome of this document analysis is to ask the question whether *administrative identities* of students may be more essential in the life of the institution when compared with the *educational identities* of the UWC students portrayed in the literature.

Furthermore, and in terms of UWC's current nomenclature specifically for 'nontraditional' students, another important outcome of this document analysis is to ask whether the University may be considering additional educational identities along the 'traditonal'-'nontraditional' continuum of student constructs. There is evidence, for example, of young 'traditionally-aged' international, immigrant, and undocumented students who may benefit from flexible forms of provision while they are studying at the institution, and who may also need more accommodating residence life rules, possibly.

2.2 Part-Time, After Hours and Adult Learners ……..…… ……

Through substantive institutionally-authored studies into part-time students, after-hours students and lifelong learners, there is a robust presence of 'nontraditional' students at the University albeit with an unevenly experienced set of teaching and learning arrangements for these students, as reported in these studies. The excerpts taken from the studies of Koen (2001) and Barnes (2004) highlight some of the anomalies in relation to institutional perception of certain kinds of 'nontraditional' students.

For example, Koen's 2001 study portrays the part-time student experience at the University in the following way:

> *"The interview sample consisted of 40 students who were mainly concentrated in three faculties: Arts, Community and Health Sciences and Natural Sciences. The selected stories capture some of the more general points raised in the interviews"* **(Koen, 2001, p. 6).**

> *"The median age among these UWC Masters and Doctoral Students is 37 years, well over half are employed permanently (67%), study part-time (60%), married (56%), have dependents (65%), and work in order to pay their fees (70%). Most (87%) must contribute to family income, are motivated to complete their studies, feel hamstrung by economic and family responsibilities and have benefitted positively from interactions with staff and student peers, but are constrained by life circumstances from completing their degrees in the minimum period"* **(Koen , 2001, p. 7).**

> *"No support is provided to part-time students. … You get the sense from colleagues that part-time students are not dedicated but I think it's just incredibly difficult for them to study here. … There are no seminars to which part-time students are invited. It has always been like this"* **(Koen, 2001: 85).**

Yet another picture of part-time provision emerges from another institutional study conducted by Barnes in 2004 study:

> *You know, it's very difficult for us students to live off-campus. The university just takes it so - you're living at home, but not all of us have parents who can see to us. A lot of us have to support ourselves. In order to qualify for NSFAS you have to be a fulltime student. That's why I decided*

to study fulltime. My fees are paid. But now I have to see to my board. I work part-time and this means that my whole weekend - from Friday afternoon to Sunday night seven o' clock - is taken up with work. If there are assignments due, it's difficult. When there are a lot of assignments due in a week, I skip classes so that I can do them (Respondent 1, Focus Group 2). ***(Barnes, 2004, p.71).***

And the following formulation in the University's 2004 Institutional Operating Plan (IOP) is also significant insofar as highlights that further alignment may be needed between how 'nontraditional' students are institutionally perceived and the kind of teaching and learning arrangements that is institutionally provided for these students:

5.7 Issue 5: Pursuing Lifelong Learning Opportunities

"The University has a long tradition of lifelong learning, which includes part-time studies and adult education. The University has an established Division for Lifelong Learning that is broadly responsible for widened access through RPL, services to part-times students, and securing workplace learning contracts. At the time of writing the Division has been reviewed and an outcome is awaited. Lifelong learning and extended learning opportunities hold important prospects for sustainable partnerships with industry, business and the public sector. In a context of skills shortages and huge unemployment, the University stands to gain from actively pursuing lifelong learning opportunities. The University is a member of the Centre for Extended Learning, a consortium of public postsecondary providers. Pursuit of these options and short-term profit gains should, however, be weighed up against the institution's capacity to sustain excellent performance against long-term objectives.

It is critical for UWC to develop a shared and more detailed vision for lifelong learning and help nurture a learning society and in the process develop a more diverse student body" **(UWC Institutional Operating Plan, 2004, p.84).**

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University of the Western Cape. (25 June 2007). *Self Evaluation Report to the Higher Education Quality Committee.* Bellville: UWC.

In 2007, the Review Panel of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) made the following observations about the role of lifelong learning at the University, and in particular that considerations needs to be given to ways in which flexible provision in teaching and learning could benefit *all* (my emphasis) students.

> 36. The Panel found through interviews that while a number of initiatives have been taken at the institution to mainstream lifelong learning, there is still a lack of conceptual clarity among some staff in the faculties about the differences among the range of modalities of courses offered. Given this lack of clarity, the Panel would like to suggest that the University devise a process, preferably led by the DLL, to ensure that there is a consistent understanding across faculties of the differences between Part-time Studies, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and Adult Education Programmes and Continuing Education (CE) in terms of purpose and target enrolment population, credit level, assessment requirements, expected outcomes and modes of certification and how all of these relate to lifelong learning as an educational philosophy.
>
> **Recommendation 13**
>
> The HEQC recommends that UWC devise a process, preferably led by the Division for Lifelong Learning, to clarify the differences between Part-time Studies, Continuing Professional Development and Adult Education Programmes, and Continuing Education in terms of purpose and target enrolment population, credit level, assessment requirements, expected outcomes and modes of certification and the way all of these relate to lifelong learning as an educational philosophy.
>
> Source: HEQC Audit Report Executive Summary, 2008:14-15 (http://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/institutional_audits/institutional_audits_2007_uwc_executive_ summary.pdf)

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The recommendations of the external body present institutional opportunities to re-imagine lifelong capabilities appropriate for the flourishing of all UWC students, then and now.

2.3 Blended Students?…….. …….

> "Since … we are governed through problematizations (not policies) the best way to understand the terms in which rule takes place is to study (open up for interrogation) problematizations" **(Bacchi, 2010, p.4).**

The School of Public Health (SOPH) Report on Activities for 2011 -2012 provides very insightful information about the ways in which nontraditional students are portrayed at the University of the Western in a very recent period. These reports were used as an institutional guide for how 'nontraditional' student issues were being thought about, and how they might further be institutionally problematised. In this regard **Bacchi's (2010)** observations were framing considerations in engaging with 'nontraditional' student constructs in the School.

It is noted from the SOPH Report that the University of the Western Cape's School of Public Health is 21 years old (established in 1993), currently manages approximately 30 projects and had 96 alumni graduating in the 2011 and 2012 Masters in Public Health (MPH) Programme. Reflections from some of the MPH students have been summarised for the purposes of this study in the following table.

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I am mindful of the MPH students who may not be represented in the 2011-2012 report on activities, and there is an awareness that there stories may not be similar to the insights shared by the ones captured in this table. However, those represented have interesting stories to share about their study experiences and indirectly how they see themselves as students.

Table 17

Insights from Masters in Public Health (MPH) Graduates .....

The School of Public Health (SOPH) Report on Activities for 2011 -2012 Insights from Masters in Public Health (MPH) Graduates		
p5	2012 MPH Graduate, Frederick Miruka, Kenya	"… It was really tough because I was new to this mode of study and had a lot of fieldwork that required travelling. During this period, I got a lot of support from the module

		convenors and the administrators which kept me going. …"
p6	2012 MPH Graduate, Yohanna Avong, Nigeria	"… Yes, the distance learning has challenges but these were minimized by the attitude of the … staff. You always felt you were working with a family because of the love, care and kindness you experienced."
p10	2012 MPH Graduate, Parfait Uwaliraye, Rwanda	"…, and am happy and proud to be among the first trained managers of health care in my country. …"
p13	2012 MPH Graduate, Juanita Arendse, South Africa	"…Through participatory research, local experts … were involved in the design, piloting and validation processes of tool development."
p14	2011 MPH Graduate, Anafi Mataka, Botswana *(graduated cum laude)*	"…I feel very honored and delighted to be one of the three MPH students graduating cum laude this March. I must say it has not been smooth sailing though. It has been a bumpy road with roadblocks here and there. When I started my MPH studies I was a bit skeptical about long-distance learning since I was working fulltime."
p16	2012 MPH Graduate, Sulakshana Nandi, India *(graduated cum laude)*	"…Working through the MPH was not easy but it has all been worth it The most satisfying thing for me is that the MPH has equipped me with knowledge and skills that I am using on a daily basis in my work. ..."
p17	2011 MPH Graduate, Vandana Prasad, India *(graduated cum laude)*	"…The curriculum was a great resource of readings that ranged from the classics of public health to contemporary material. Being forced to take time off from work to read and write ensured that I brought myself up to date and refreshed my own understanding of public health issues. ..."
p18	2011 MPH Graduate, Duduzile Nsibande, South Africa	"…Studying MPH part-time at the UWC has really changed my view of distance learning. The anticipated 'long and lonely journey' was changed into an exciting learning experience. I really appreciated the endless support and friendliness of the lecturing and administrative staff. …"

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p19	2011 MPH Graduate, Dr Marianne Visser, South Africa	"…[I was] principal investigator of a trial … at the Delft and Delft South Community Health Centres… our data provided us with a valuable opportunity to conduct an analysis of predictors of early treatment responses among trial participants."

The **SOPH website (accessed in 2013)** is a useful repository of Open Education Resources and Flexible Learning materials and models for students enrolled on SOPH courses. In addition, a significant feature of the 87-paged **SOPH Programme Handbook for 2014** is the foregrounding of the University of the Western Cape's current mission statement; its preamble and ten contemporary aims, and an encouragement for SOPH students to get to know their University better beyond the SOPH. On page 20, there is discussion on "mode and pace" of study and "other students' experiences on studying part-time".

From the documents selected, these students come across as *distance learners*, *part-time students*, *adult learners/ students*, students attending *block courses residentially* for some of the year. It can be said they experience a range of flexible teaching and learning arrangements at the University in order to enjoy the best possible educational experience.

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Bacchi's observations provide very interesting ways of thinking about students as subjects and particularly in relation to lifelong learning at the University. Clearly the 'nontraditional' students who've graduated in the MPH Programme are trained problem-solvers who are keen to make improvements in designated communities, and predominantly so on the African continent.

> "These are subjects who are encouraged to think for themselves as (personally) responsible for all the ills ('problems') in their lives, subjects who must continually reinvent themselves through lifelong learning if the labour market requires it **(Bacchi, 2009, pp.222-227).** They are the ones who are to 'solve the problems' set by others, rather than challenging specific ways of thinking about the world and social relations. As I have already suggested, such subjects, (who largely blame *themselves* for all the ills in their lives) are (more easily) 'governed'," **(Bacchi, 201, p.12).**

The 'nontraditional' construct portrayed in the School of Public Health texts selected could be summed up in the following way: *Distance learners*, *part-time students*, *adult learners/ students*, students attending *block courses residentially* for some of the year and experiencing a range of flexible teaching and learning arrangements at the University.

For the purposes of this study, are the SOPH students representative of the 'new' kind of nontraditional students UWC is seeking to attract and retain - the 'blended student', the new nontraditional?

SECTION 3 LIFELONG LEARNING AT UWC

3.1 UWC's Ethos of Lifelong Learning

> Lifelong learning is a philosophy and an approach which encourages and enables students to continue to learn through provision of flexible, convenient, relevant learning opportunities and curricula which promote lifelong learning qualities. In order to be 'relevant' continuous engagement is required with schools, workplaces, governing authorities, and communities both locally and further afield. (Extract from **Standing Orders Document, Senate Lifelong Learning Committee. Adopted 25 October 2005).**

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It is significant that the University has had only a working definition of Lifelong Learning since 2005. Was the thinking that more University stakeholders might work towards a more definitive lifelong learning statement over time? What are the contestations in this regard?

For this study it is important to know how the circle is drawn institutionally around lifelong learners and what the contestations may be.

3.2 University Mission Statements (1982 & Current): UWC Objectives and the Current Mission Statement

The 1982 Objectives of UWC is selected as a key document for analysis because it marks the break from the University's apartheid tutelage since 1959 and at the same time signals the beginning of a new era for the University, which has sometimes been referred to in this research as the 'contemporary UWC'. The 1982 Objectives could be interpreted to be the bridge between 'old' and 'new' objectives for the

University in the sense that there are espoused ideals which remain firmly tied to the University's history and present locale while others by comparison foreground forward-looking regional and national strategic imperatives.

Regarding this case study, "Constructions of "Non-traditional" Students in Higher Education," what could be gleaned from this document concerning the thinking and the problematisation of these concerns?

This document analysis suggests that UWC's espoused ideals in "1982 UWC Objectives" document could be regarded as reaffirming institutional commitment both towards student intake historically linked to the University as well as to the new possibilities as endorsed by the Council of the University of the Western Cape, which is expressed as follows:

> "*... Furthermore, while the University will encourage a wide range of cultural and sporting activities on campus, it will assist students, as far as it is able, to make their extracurricular enterprises of some value to the community. The distinctive character of the University will be shaped by it being a community of students, lecturers and researchers with a predominant concern for the development of Third World communities, particularly in the Western Cape* " **(UWC Objectives. As accepted by the Council of the University of the Western Cape - 22 October 1982).**

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It would seem that the document embraces all students and makes a commitment towards the success of all students who are studying at the University. Reflecting on the statements contained in the 1982 Mission Statement, it would be amiss to be looking for specific references to 'part-time' students, for example, even if the argument could be made that UWC enjoys the reputation, for approximately forty years, of being among the largest part-time studies providers in the region.

It could be said that the 1982 Mission Statement portrays its commitment towards students in anticipated and conventional ways. This seemingly unremarkable portrayal of students may not be surprising but given the turbulent history of the University of the Western Cape, could there possibly have been a different way of institutional thinking about the students it attracted from the outset, and might it have been possible to have foregrounded different aspects of their scholarly identities, perhaps? Or to have made them more visible in the 1982 Mission Statement?

I would suggest that a reading of the 1982 Mission Statement reinforces the view that the document serves as a primary contextual marker for the *beginnings* of what could be considered an essentially *new university* making a new path for itself guided by broad transformative institutional objectives.

Arguably, It may not have been possible, appropriate, and perhaps not a priority, to differentiate between student categories (traditional and non-traditional, fulltime and part-time) in the 1982 Mission Statement, as had been done twelve years later in the Lifelong Learning Mission Draft Report of 2004.

But it does mention something about "third world". Would the term have been a proxy for indigent students, students who need to be in position to earn money for a living while they are studying? Students who may need to come to class after working hours?

Therefore, an analysis of the 1982 Mission Statement leaves the reader with the impression that the construct of 'non-traditionality' could have been articulated as the 'third world' component the 1982 Mission Statement.

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Nevertheless, and since its inception, the concept of 'non-traditionality' is worthy of further exploration in UWC's positioning and re-positioning of itself as a higher education institution. Non-traditionality both as a stance against the dictates of an apartheid administered institution in the first two decades of its existence, and also as a recognition of the flexible mode of delivery to masses of its students.

Perhaps all the negative aspects of the construct of 'non-traditionality' of the University carried connotations of deficiency under its apartheid tutelage, and there was now a mission to be 'traditional' as far as possible, if this was to be equated, perhaps wrongly, with academic excellence nationally and internationally. This may have led to student constructs coming across as strategically 'neutral' (a student is a student is a student) , or perhaps even 'neutered' (non-traditional students not being required to flex a distinct scholarly identity), in this period even though there is an unambiguous and public institutional commitment towards the success of all students enrolled at the University via this same mission statement.

While the University's current mission upholds core values in relation to its previous institutional missions (1982, 1997*) by remaining, for example, anchored and 'alert to its African and international context', it is worth considering what currently espoused commitments to 'nurturing the cultural diversity of South Africa', 'the educational disadvantaged' in terms of their studies and the provision of 'lifelong learning through programmes and courses," (UWC Mission Statement, current) might mean both for existing and possibly future constructions of mature students at the University.

3.3 University Report (2004): Monitoring the Implementation of the Lifelong Learning Mission

Selected as one of the pivotal institutional texts for this document analysis, the Lifelong Learning Mission Report was produced in 2004, which is the same year as the third democratic elections in South Africa, and it is also the year when the Council on Higher Education produced a report on the review of higher education in South Africa, in the first decade of our country's democracy (1994, 1999, **2004**, democratic elections).

This document of a university-wide lifelong learning monitoring function that had been the charge of a particular university sector for a considerable length of time and which coincided with an important moment in the history of the University, and the history of the country.

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It is pertinent to ask the extent to which monitoring could be regarded as a form of 'rule' and, by extension, how monitoring of this kind might have shaped the dominant and peripheral ways in which students, and mature students in particular, have been constructed at this University.

Evidence of constructions of all University students as lifelong learners, as possibly also a distinct group of mature students, are available in three areas of the mandate of the Division for Lifelong Learning, most notably in the area of Recognition of Prior Learning, and for work pertaining to access for students considered to be non-traditional, as well as in the area of Workplace Learning, for work pertaining to appropriate skills development for the students who need to study and work at the same time, as well as in the area of Part-time Studies for supportive university-wide work for students regarded by the University (or formally self-described) as part-time.

By comparison to the other institutional texts selected and university sectors encountered as part of this case study, I would need to state my engagement with the Division for Lifelong Learning predates this research; mainly that I've also been a part-time researcher at the DLL, and a mature-age student studying part-time on a Masters' course offering convened by the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education, which is located in the same building as the Division for Lifelong Learning. The Masters in Adult Learning and Global Change was co-produced and co-convened by the founding Director of the Division for Lifelong Learning.

Therefore, my perspectives of this research both as an insider and an outsider to the DLL, present distinct affordances and constraints when engaging with institutional texts emanating from this university sector. The advantages include my appreciation of the history and mission of the DLL and that I've have been part of research and co-authoring processes with colleagues in the DLL, in the area of part-time studies. The constraint is that I may therefore have a disproportionately high and informed sense of 'nontraditional' student constructions in this university sector by comparison to other sectors of University work.

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It is noted from the document that ten years ago "UWC's accredited part-time studies provision is approximately 37 years old and is the largest part-time university provision in the Province" **(UWC Task Group, 2004, p.3)** and that part-time studies provision had been an institutional response to the apartheid government's stipulations at the time particularly in the areas of teaching, nursing and the civil service.

Interestingly, this document also tells us that at the time there appeared to be a large measure of leeway available to students to determine how they might like to be categorise themselves, and it could be inferred that registering as a part-time student may have offered certain expediencies: "…at UWC becoming a 'part-time' student is a matter of choice on the application form … The motivations for registering `part-time` or `full-time` vary from lifestyle, to access to bursaries, residences, parents' medical aid, or preferring to fall under part-time rules to bursaries, residences, parents' medical aid, or preferring to fall under part-time rules **(UWC Task Group, 2004, p.3).**

This document also reveals that provision of National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding for part-timers for the first time in 2004 proved to be a breakthrough in facilitating university access to

students who were unable to study fulltime. From the table shown below, it is noteworthy that there had been an increase in part-time students at UWC between 1999 and 2004

Table 18

Part-time students in 1999 and 2004 by age .....

Faculty	**Total**		**30+ years**		**25-29 years**		**21-24 years**		**18-20 years**	
	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004
CHS	146	247	125	222	19	20	2	5	0	0
EMS	735	1,013	413	722	212	194	101	92	0	5
Arts	302	316	242	268	46	35	14	12	0	1
Dentistry	13	208	11	147	2	54	0	7	0	0
Education	295	1,002	268	951	26	45	1	5	0	0
Law	243	277	151	220	72	42	19	14	0	1
Science	36	77	23	51	11	24	2	2	0	1
Total	1,770	3,140	1,233	2,581	388	414	139	137	0	8
Distribution	100%	100%	69,7 %	82,2 %	21,9 %	13,2 %	7,9%	4.4%	0,0%	0,3%

Source: page 17, Appendix 2 Table 9

Monitoring the Accreditation of the Lifelong Learning Mission 2004, 27 October 2004.

The amalgam of perspectives obtained from institutional documents representative of various university sectors, and perhaps distinct knowledge communities across the University, has made possible a deeper engagement of student constructions.

In this regard, I argue, firstly, that the University of the Western Cape's favourable orientation toward 'nontraditionality' since its inception makes possible a particular kind of 'nontraditional' student construct. Secondly, I also argue that both *mission statements of the University (1982 and the current one)* provide strong institutional continuity and are contextual markers for understanding how

'nontraditional' students may have been thought of and continue to be included as part of the University's institutional fabric.

I also argue that instances of discontinuity in a cross section of *university reports* selected for analysis provide reliable and creative insight into ways in which the University has consciously positioned itself in relation to students it would wish to attract and retain. What may have been considered historically contingent by the institution at particular moments of UWC's history forms an important part of the argument in understanding the kinds of '*nontraditional students'* at the University.

This chapter, therefore, has attempted to highlight the *ways in which* student constructions are represented in official university records and the *ways in which* University sectors through their various discursive formations either confirm or present different constructs through their interactions with specific groups of students.

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SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

4.1 The Continuum of Student 'Nontraditionality'

Lifelong learning as an ethos at UWC and lifelong learners as higher education student constructs at the University are largely associated with the pioneering and unrelenting work of the Division for Lifelong Learning. As this document analysis confirms, this observation carries affordances and constraints in understanding constructs of UWC's 'nontraditional' as well as students in 'general' at the University.

There is evidence to suggest that lifelong learning and lifelong *learners* could be seen as narrowly representing only particular sections of the University's student population, most notably adult students, recognition of prior learning students, and part-time students. By extension, it could be construed that flexible teaching and learning arrangements may be intended for these students, only. When flexible provision is granted, only these categories of students may be seen as institutionally included. When it is not, only these categories may be seen as being institutionally marginalised.

Given today's changing higher education ecology, flexible teaching and learning arrangements should ideally be available for all higher education students, and UWC has the mandate through its lifelong learning philosophy to ensure appropriate educational provision for ***all*** students enrolled at the University.

There is value in considering a name change from *lifelong learner* to *lifelong learning student* on condition that constructs of lifelong learning students at the University could be regarded as a construct for every student rather than for only a few student categories currently. All UWC students might then be able to experience the University's commitment to lifelong learning, as espoused in both mission statements, are intended for everyone at the University.

The current form of *lifelong learner*, arguably serves as an administrative proxy for adult learner and part-time student. Through this case study, the question is asked whether a change in name from *lifelong learner* to *lifelong learning student* may possibly denote a more meaningful student construction for all students at the University.

UWC's mission statements do not distinguish between different kinds of students in terms of its commitment to lifelong learning. It could therefore be inferred that lifelong learning as a form of flexible teaching and learning provision is intended in principle to all students at the University. For the most part, institutional research undertaken by certain knowledge communities at the University necessarily foregrounds part-time students, adult learners, and recognition of prior learning students as lifelong learners:

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> "Perhaps the most important is that difference and diversity are defining characteristics of the students and their approaches to learning" **(Elliott, 2001, p. 45).**

However, it is also possible that something may be lost, for all UWC students, in constructing certain students exclusively in these terms although the accommodation of difference and diversity for certain types of lifelong learners on campus may still be necessary.

Appendix G Portrayals and Problematisations of 'Nontraditional' Students at UWC .....

Portrayals and Problematisations of Nontraditional Students at UWC: Some Examples from Institutional Newsletters			
Problem	**Image**	**Solution**	**Discourses**
(a)	**(b)**	**(c)**	**(d)**
How are problems related to nontraditional students represented?	What are the predominant images of nontraditonal students? Who is being produced? Which subject positions are being discursively constituted?	How are solutions related to 'nontraditional' students represented?	What discourses are employed to shape these images, problems and solutions?
The need for an educational opportunity in higher education by	nontraditionally-aged students	can be met by UWC being a leading lifelong learning institution. **On Campus (26 October 2000:15).**	Discourses of disadvantage, access and flexible provision.
The strangeness of the UWC campus for	new foreign students and refugees (who study fulltime)	can be addressed through an appropriate orientation programme. **On Campus (22 June 2001:7).**	Discourses of disadvantage and access.
Teaching and learning challenges experienced by	part-time alumni	have on occasion led to initiatives such as full-time bursary funds enabling students not to study part-time if they so wished. **On Campus (1 August 2002:10).**	Discourses of flexible provision.
Language barriers, financial constraints and challenges in accessing subject information by	foreign students	signal the need for an appropriate institutional response. **On Campus (11 November 2005:4).**	Discourses of disadvantage, access and flexible provision.
Completing studies after an absence by	returning students	is institutionally facilitated by part-time provision in teaching and learning. **On Campus (Spring Graduation 2006:3).**	Discourses of access.
Unsuccessful	nontraditionally-aged,	may qualify institutionally	Discourses of

matriculants inclusive of	recognition of prior learning, adult students	via a system of recognition of prior learning (RPL). **On Campus (Spring Graduation 2006:11).**	access.
Motivated by wanting a life free of financial hardship,	first-generation higher education students	are able to secure NSFAS student loans which make university education possible. **On Campus (April 2006:7).**	Discourses of access.
Implementing South Africa's national transformation agenda inclusive of	lifelong learners	calls on university support for lifelong learning courses such as Life Skills and Community Peace Building. **On Campus (Sept 2006:9).**	Discourses of flexible provision.
The need for flexible provision in teaching and learning by	postgraduate students	is accommodated via part-time and distance course offerings in the School of Public Health **On Campus (Issue 3, 2010:13).**	Discourses of access and flexible provision.
Identifying knowledge and skills gained through experience, informal and formal education of	recognition of prior learning (RPL) students	is facilitated by a Recognition of Prior Learning Programme at UWC's Division for Lifelong Learning. **On Campus (Issue 5, 2010:5).**	Discourses of access and flexible provision.
Assisting university-readiness in	poor prospective students	inspires partnerships between universities and businesses to fundraise for disadvantaged schools. **On Campus (May 2011:4).**	Discourses of access.
Formalising lifelong learning in higher education for both	young and adult students	requires universities to play a definitive role in lifelong learning at all levels. **On Campus (Oct to Dec 2012:6).**	Discourses of flexible provision.
Financial hardship experienced by	poor students without first-families	motivates some of these students to become exemplars of a better way of life for other students in similar situations. **On Campus (February 2013:6).**	Discourses of disadvantage and of access.
Financial	poor students	motivates some of these	Discourses of

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hardship on the families of		students to become exemplars of a better way of life for other students in similar situations. **On Campus (April 2013:20).**	disadvantage and of access.
Financial constraints on the families of	traditionally-aged students	motivate some of these students to work fulltime and study part-time at the University. **(UWC, 360 Perspectives Magazine Issue 1, 2013: …).**	Discourses of disadvantage and of access.

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Appendix H Predominant Images of 'Nontraditional' Students at UWC .....

Predominant Images of 'Nontraditional' Students at UWC through Institutional Newsletters, Magazines and News Bulletins	
1 *lifelong learners*	The examples cited of lifelong learners suggest a naturalizing of lifelong learning at the University: The October 2000 "*On Campus"* newsletter announces "UWC: a leading lifelong learning institution" as the cover story, and reports that a lifelong learning award had been given "to Mr Oersen, the **82-year-old graduate** who received his Masters degree in music, cum laude," **On Campus (26 October 2000:15).** The University of the Western Cape's Division for Lifelong Learning recently congratulated a group of students who successfully completed a course in Life Skills and Community Peace Building," **On Campus (26 September 2006:9).** At the 9th Annual Julius Nyerere Lecture held at UWC on 19 October 2012, Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo, Deputy Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning indicated that universities play an important role in lifelong learning: "As adults we need to learn continuously. … Literacy is the foundation that allows people to engage in further learning opportunities and in turn job opportunities," **On Campus (October to December 2012:6).**
2 *certain categories of international students*	The examples cited of foreign and refugee students at the University suggest that they may yet to be included within the institution's definitive categories of 'nontraditional' students: In 2000 the International Students Organisation (ISO) was established with Ignatius Ticha, who hails from Cameroon, as its first chairperson. He reports as follows: "When **new foreign students** come here for the first time, they feel strange, and they need someone to show them around until they are acquainted with the situation," **On Campus (22 June 2001:7).** Also interesting is that the University has "students who are refugees and they are also here on a full-time basis," **On Campus (22 June 2001:7).** In 2005, a **Ghanaian** Masters in International Law graduate Anabela Gama reflects on her challenges at UWC at the time: "Language barrier constraints and financial challenges became unbearable but even more difficult was getting more information on this topic," **On Campus (11 November 2005:4).** In 2013, Basotho-born Julia Kali graduated with a master's degree in medical anthropology. She did not let her own hardships stand in the way of helping others: "She is an amazing woman. I have learnt a lot just by watching the way she works. How she relates to the students and even to the staff members is incredible. **Not having money and being at a foreign university with no friends and family is a serious challenge**, but what she has done with her life, and with the little that she has, is inspirational," **On Campus (April 2013:18).**
3 *poor students*	The examples cited of poor students highlight rurality and foreign national status amongst this category of 'nontraditonal' students:

	In 2013, Sive Ntsonda received his Honours Degree in Development Studies. Raised in a South African village called Ngqeleni in the Eastern Cape, "**with no money** and motivated only by **the desire to get his family out of poverty**," he has this to say: " I hope that my achievement will inspire not only my siblings but also other children who grew up in a situation similar to mine to get an education, so they can better their lives," **On Campus (April 2013:20).** Third year Bachelor of Science student Luyanda Dyasopu is involved in the Achievers Alleviation Programme at UWC, which offers counselling and advice to prospective students in the UWC vicinity: " I feel better now, because I no longer have these problems with food and such things. I know many people now and some, including my lecturers, have been helping me with food and other daily necessities," **On Campus (February 2013:6).** UWC has piloted the Thuthuka Education Upliftment Project since 2009 and had recruited more than 150 students from disadvantaged schools over a recent 3-year period," **On Campus (May 2011:4).** In June 2008, Bheki Henry Thobela was among the top ten students in the Information Systems department. "On his arrival at UWC in 2006 his brother organized money for him to register. After that he was left with R60 to his name. Fortunately he was introduced to the Student Christian Organisation (SCO) who took care of him," **On Campus (March 2009:6).**
4 *part-time students*	Familiar reporting on the University's part-time experience: In 2002, Hassen Kajie was chairman of the Institute of Charted Accountants. On Campus reports that Kajie started his career as a clerk at Silveray Stationers and **studied part-time**: "My parents had a small shop, with only enough money to support the family's basic needs, so I studied part-time until I became a CA. … One of our projects is to provide a bursary for **full-time studies**. And UWC can play a role here," **On Campus (1 August 2002:10).** Cum laude for Courtney Davids, **studying part-time** while looking after her family: "My husband would sit in the car with the baby, while I would attend class. Sometimes I would hear my baby crying from class," **On Campus (Spring Graduation 2006:3).** As a leading example for her daughter, who also studies at UWC, Michelle Hendricks obtained a BCom General degree in 2013: "Being a **part-time student**, working and running a household are not easy tasks. You need to be dedicated and push through the tough times," **On Campus (April 2013:18).**
5 *recognition of prior learning (RPL) students*	The examples cited of RPL students highlight adversity amongst this category of 'nontraditonal' students: Sharrone Mitchell: "I failed matric due to the silent trauma of sexual abuse by family members - a devastating blow since it was the first time ever I failed a final examination. … I embraced the opportunity to enter the University of the Western Cape via **recognition of prior learning (RPL) at the age of 32**, thirteen years after failing matric," **On Campus (Spring Graduation 2006:11).** UWC alumnus Clinton

	Abrahams did not pass Grade 11 and followed an RPL rout to become a clinical psychologist at the University of the Western Cape. In 2010, he was an intern clinical psychologist at the Lentegeur Psychiatric Hospital where he facilitated psycho-education in the adolescent ward: "I have a particular understanding and experience of the debilitating implications that can come out of single parent families, said Abrahams," **On Campus (Issue 5 2010:5).**
6 *first-generation higher education students*	The example cited of first-generation higher students highlights rurality amongst this category of 'nontraditonal' students: "**19-year old Ncumisa Poni** … is the second of four children. Both her parents still live in Centani. She last saw them at Christmas last year and misses them. .. Ncumisa is proud to be **the first one in her family to attend university**. When she enrolled at UWC, she got a NSFAS student loan and lived at Cecile Esau residence," **On Campus (April 2006:7).**
7 *disabled students*	An example of 'nontraditional' student not frequently encountered in the institutional literature: Despite having lost more than half of her eyesight to an unknown disease some years ago, Noluthando Ntsimango graduated from UWC with an Honours Degree in Industrial Psychology: "… First year in particular was quite tough. There was a lecturer who **would use a pointer and I would not see a thing**. I don't know how I managed to pull through it," **On Campus (April 2013:6).**
8 *postgraduate students*	"Nontraditional" in the sense that they may require special teaching and learning arrangements. In 2010 Samantha Smuts completed her Master's in Public Health with distinction. "She added that the School of Public Health is well respected and the course was offered on a part-time basis and through correspondence. Studying at the School of Public Health was also an advantage for Smuts because she could be flexible with her study time and UWC offered the perfect solution," **On Campus (Issue 3, 2010: 13).**

Appendix I Objectives of the University of the Western Cape, 1982 .....

UWC OBJECTIVES
Accepted by the Council of the University of the Western Cape on 22 October 1982

It has become necessary for the University of the Western Cape to take stock of its situation, and to set itself specific objectives so that it may more adequately fulfil its role as a university in that situation.

The following aspects of its situation have to be taken into account:

- The history of the establishment of the university;
- The university's rejection of the politico-ideological grounds on which it was established;
- The existence of two other universities in its immediate vicinity;
- The university's inescapable involvement, because of its history and location, with a catchment area which affords exceptional academic opportunities and challenges;
- The predominance through a large and very significant part of the university's traditional hinterland of a lifestyle and circumstances which may be described as Third World;
- The co-existence of First and Third World lifestyle as an insistent fact of South African society;
- The largely First World orientation of South African universities.

With these considerations in mind, UWC interprets its role as a university to include a firm commitment to the development of Third World communities in South Africa. By this it aims both to serve its immediate community and to keep open the possibility of new options emerging for South African society.
This commitment of the University will be reflected in:

- Programmes aimed at bridging the gap between the requirements of university studies and the resources the students bring with them;
- Teaching and learning methods and facilities;
- Encouragements both of research and of the developments of course material which has a bearing on the Third World;
- Appointments policy, insofar as an active interest in the realization of these objectives will be a recommendation;
- Outreach programmes to the schools;
- Continuing education programmes;
- Such other programmes and activities as may from time to time be deemed necessary.

Furthermore, while the University will encourage a wide range of cultural and sporting activities on campus, it will assist students, as far as it is able, to make their extracurricular enterprises of some value to the community. The distinctive character of the University will be shaped by it being a community of students, lecturers and researchers with a predominant concern for the development of Third World communities, particularly in the Western Cape.
The main prerequisite for the fulfillment of the university's commitment is that the admission of students and the appointment of lecturers and researchers to universities should in no way be restricted on the grounds of race, colour, religion or ethnicity.

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Appendix J UWC Mission Statement, current .....

The University of the Western Cape is a national university, alert to its African and international context as it strives to be a place of quality, a place to grow. It is committed to excellence in teaching, learning and research, to nurturing the cultural diversity in South Africa, and to responding in critical ways to the needs of a society in transition. Drawing on its proud experience in the liberation struggle, the University is aware of a distinctive academic role in helping build an equitable and dynamic society.

In particular it aims to:

- Advance and protect the independence of the academic enterprise
- Design curricula and research programmes appropriate to its southern African context
- Further global perspectives among its staff and students, thereby strengthening intellectual life and contributing to South Africa's reintegration in the world community
- Assist educationally disadvantaged students gain access to higher education and succeed in their studies
- Nurture and use the abilities of all in the University community
- Develop effective structures and conventions of governance, which are democratic, transparent and accountable
- Seek racial and gender equality and contribute to helping the historically marginalised participate fully in the life of the nation
- Encourage and provide opportunities for lifelong learning through programmes and courses
- Help conserve and explore the environmental and cultural resources of the Southern African region, and to encourage a wise awareness of them in the community
- Co-operate fully with other stakeholders to develop an excellent, and therefore transformed, higher education system.

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CHAPTER SIX: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS PART 2.....170-190

INTRODUCTION

> "Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined…. The point is that the very designation of something as Oriental involved an already pronounced evaluative judgement …" **(Said, 1978/1995, p. 207).**
>
> "… the modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalizing" **(Said, 1978/1995, p. 325).**

UWC's 'nontraditionals' may be 'rarely seen' not because they are too few but rather because participation continues more intricately than may have been institutionally anticipated and therefore in some ways appears to be fundamentally unseen. The University's modern 'nontraditionals' and 'post-nontraditionals' are a composite institutional construction larger and more complex than might have been thought possible, and with traces of a 'nontraditional' fluidity extending in various ways to all students at the University, it would seem.

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However, if 'nontraditionalised' student attributes have in some ways influenced student identity beyond its 'nontraditionally' demarcated student body, this development is not overtly evident in University narratives and instead takes on an unarticulated or, at best, quiescent, institutional currency presently.

Beginning to know UWC as the originator of institutionally evolving 'nontraditional' student constructs is assisted therefore by Said's insights, which are analogous for their complexity when the University kaleidoscope holds stories of student mosaics resplendent with traditions and nontraditions but also bringing into view institutional patterns of 'nontraditional' students luminous at times as problems to be solved.

As opposed to the previous chapter, Chapter Six focuses more specifically on documents authored in different sectors of the university.

CHAPTER SIX: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS PART 2

The document analysis in Chapter Six is informed by a selection of institutional texts as indicated in the following table.

Table 19

Specific Institutional Texts Informing this Documentary Analysis Chapter .....

Period	Text	Type of Text
1982	University Objectives	mission statement
1982	Institute for Social Development (ISD) Occasional Paper: *The Role of the University of the Western Cape in Adult Education*	occasional paper
2000	DLL Annual Report	report
2000-2010	Division for Lifelong Learning. Continuing and Part-Time Courses. *Lifelong Learning at UWC.* (11 separate booklets)	brochures
2001	Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) Report: *ABET and Development in the Northern Cape province: assessing impacts of CACE courses 1996-1999.*	report
2004	Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) Discussion Document: *Understanding the dynamics of part-time studies at UWC*	discussion document
2004	UWC Task Group Draft Report: *Monitoring the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Mission. Accredited part-time studies provision at UWC.*	report
2005	Senate Lifelong Learning Committee Standing Orders: Adopted 25 October 2005	standing orders
2005	Division for Lifelong Learning. *Juggling to Learn. Planning for Success in the Part-Time Programme*	booklet
2009	Division for Lifelong Learning.	journal

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	A Learning Journal for Students at UWC.	
2011	Division for Lifelong Learning. Colloquium Report. *Lifelong Learners in Higher Education.*	report
2011	University of the Western Cape. *Juggling to Learn in 2011.*	booklet
2011- 2015	Division for Lifelong Learning. *Part-Time Studies in 2011/2012/2013/2015* (4 separate booklets)	booklet
2012 & 2014	UWC General Calendar of Meetings (2 separate calendars)	university calendar
2012& 2015	Division for Lifelong Learning. *Admission to UWC through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). A Guide to Procedures and Frequently Asked Questions* (2 separate booklets)	booklet
2015	University of the Western Cape & South African Qualifications Authority. *Lifelong Learning and Professional Development in 'Residential Universities'. Implementing the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*	discussion document
Current	*UWC Mission Statement*	mission statement

SECTION 1 THE ADULT STUDENT AT UWC

1.1 UWC's Adult Learners and Adult Students

The late 1970s onward would mark the beginnings of a distinct institutional orientation towards adult learners at the University, as well as attempts at institutional integration of these students into university life and beyond. The University's decades-long orientation towards adult learners stood out markedly at least from its regional counterparts, as evident in part evident from an institutional study in which **Kerfoot *et al* (2001)** recount path-breaking involvement in adult basic education, training and development courses (ABET) offered in the country's Northern Cape Province already during the 1996 to 1999 period. Presented by the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE), these courses were intended for

adult educators, trainers and development practitioners, and adult learner endeavour in this regard is noted as "benefits that CACE students have brought to other sectors and contexts" **(Kerfoot et al, 2001, p. 182).**

However, it could also be argued that in more recent times this University would also join most South African universities who are challenged in serving a rapidly growing student body of school-leavers beyond the quarter of a million adult students who had already been enrolled at higher education institutions predominantly for short courses since the beginning of the millennium:

> "Dreams of attracting large numbers of mature students into higher education in South Africa, especially those who missed out under apartheid, have proved to be just that – dreams" **(World University News, 16 March 2008).**

And yet universities continue to be called upon as part of an integrated higher education system in seeking optimal ways of strengthening South Africa's post-school system, as identified in the strategic imperatives of a relatively recent Green Paper:

> "The university system must become an integral part of the post-school system, interfacing with FET and other vocational colleges, SETAs, employers, labour and other stakeholders. Such cooperation should be taken into account in the development of an institution's programme mix and planning" **(Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training, 2012, p.40).**

How has UWC, as the case of this study, chosen to orient itself in relation to these matters, and has the construct of the adult learner been altered institutionally because of this?

1.2 "The Role of the University of the Western Cape in Adult Education" (ISD Occasional Paper, April 1982) & The University Objectives (Mission Statement, October 1982)

1982 stands out as the year in which two institutionally-authored texts narrate comparable accounts of ways in which the University's knowledge communities constructed the 'adult learner' and its equivalent monikers at the start of that decade. In the form of an April 1982 ISD Occasional Paper, the University produced a study exploring its institutional roles and responsibilities towards adult education, and the University's strategic objectives were encapsulated in its first mission statement in October that year. The

ISD Occasional Paper invited University participation to an initiation of an adult learning discourse on its campus, and the University's mission statement reflected an espoused institutional commitment to supporting students who were not in a financially favourable position to fund their own studies. At that time, these students are contextually described as belonging to "third world" communities. Taken together, the two documents bring into view an institutional construction of the 'nontraditional' adult learner and the 'nontraditional' indigent student from 'third world' contexts or communities both of whom may essentially be outsiders as students to 'traditional' higher education contexts in certain parts of the world but not so in the context of an historically disadvantaged university in South Africa, such as the University of the Western Cape. Indeed, these students may have been the 'traditional' students on campus both then and now.

The definition of Adult Education is defined broadly in the introduction of the ISD occasional paper and refers to: "*…all postschool education excluding fulltime higher education. It therefore incorporates the 3 levels of Non-formal Education which the de Lange Report (1981:25) describes*" **(Walters, 1982, p. 23).** The construction that these students may also be 'problem-solving subjects' **(Bacchi, 2010, p.11)** comes to mind, taking into account that adult students might rank vocational reasons highly for their resuming studies at a university.

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The Occasional Paper further clarifies the term 'adult education' to mean "a field of study which may or may not have an '*extension work'* component" **(Walters, 1982, p.24)** and this raises questions whether the University's responsibility may have been towards 'extension work' and 'community engagement', firstly, and whether the University's course offerings for adult 'learners' were institutionally distinct in this regard. How was problem solving linked to extension work and community engagement, and would this combination not have been considered core attributes for *any* student at the University; knowledge that should essentially be mainstreamed for all students? It is also noted that as part of UWC's 'change perspective,' adult education is listed in the ISD paper as one of seven important areas for the University's attention, and the ambit of adult education comprises the following students: *adult, part-time, and distance learners"* **(Walters, 1982, p. 20).**

Although the University's construct of an adult *learner* predominantly as an *older* and a *part-time student* is a focal point in the ISD study, both terms are used very seldom in the document by comparison to the term *adult educators,* for example. I have two observations about the way in which the *adult learner* and

the *adult student* have been constructed through the ISD study. When adult *students* are mentioned, the report highlights matters for consideration within the context of adult students who may be at South African universities **(Walters, 1982, p.44).** When adult *learners* are mentioned, the report brings to the reader's attention the context of adults studying at State night schools, **(Walters, 1982, p .50),** often with a high failure rate. Yet they are also portrayed as successful adult learners "who have graduated recently from the first diploma course in South Africa for 'educators of adults' " **(Walters, 1982, p. 50).** And here the term 'adult learner' **(Walters, 1982, p.53),** is closely tied with 'educators of adults', which introduces another view that some or most 'adult learners' may by definition also be 'adult educators' presumably mostly outside of university contexts. As institutionally depicted, this means, therefore, that *adult students* and *adult learners* are ***not*** interchangeable student constructs and may be suggestive of two very different kinds of student identities. For example, the adult *learner* may be a particular kind of student construct that intentionally positions the *University* more closely to a particular kind of community, and possibly more closely aligned to the University's commitment to reconfigurations of '*extension work'* **(Walters, 1982, p.20)** at the time, or to community engagement now, as the more recent term.

Interestingly, the ISD paper depicts the mood of university staff at the time as enthusiastic and where University "administrators appear to see U.W.C. as a 'third world university' meeting the needs of a 'third world/ developing community.' The University saw the the need for ' *'n ontwikkelings perspektief*,' [Afrikaans phrase translated to mean: a development perspective]" **(Walters, 1982, p. 17).** The question that arises is what kind of development perspective institutionally shaped the construct of the adult learner as distinct from the adult student and, with the benefit of hindsight, is the distinction real for these two student constructs.

The ISD document also brings to the fore questions about student homogeneity and heterogeneity in the construction of students as adult learners and adult students. Broadly defined, and at one level, a kind of homogeneity rather than heterogeneity is assumed about whom all post-school education students may be in order for them to be under an adult education banner. This is important when the 2008 World University News observation (as stated earlier) is considered; that *mature* students were not considered to be on the radar at universities. But post-school does not necessarily mean *'nontraditionally aged' students,* only; there is a much wider range of students who could be included in a post-school category. And in this sense a heterogeneity of various kinds of students is being catered to. This makes me reflect on the mission of adult education, and whether it might be different now as opposed to then. That is to say, given widening

participation and the massification of higher education, it may be the most important mission for universities currently, but the relationship between adulthood and studenthood need to be re-imagined as student constructs, and there may need to be another way of looking at an amalgam of the two. This is so because there is certainly a continuum between the two constructs, including many more student identities than perhaps previously imagined.

Although the ISD Occasional Paper had initiated a pioneering discourse for adult learners on campus, in which sense might it have been experienced institutionally as a *"lesser discourse"* because of the marginalised status of these adult students in society: for generations not intended as university material to begin with. And yet their participation heralded an improved educational currency for students beyond themselves.

The 'nontraditional' construct portrayed in the 1982 ISD paper seems to be the following: usually a 'nontraditionally' aged adult learner or adult student who studies part-time, and who is able to enrol for university courses beyond extension work courses should they wish to do so.

If the construct of the adult learner or the adult student was very powerfully embraced at the University of the Western Cape in the 1980s and 1990s, by the late 2010s it would seem that it may have already become a different kind of student construct as influenced by current strategic imperatives of the University.

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1.3 *Respice Prospice*: re-imagining the Adult Student at UWC

Today, what is the construct of the adult learner or the adult student at the University? And what changes to this construct are meaningful for the future?

Adult and higher education continues to have significant currency in South Africa's higher education landscape at the same time universities could valuably re-imagine the construct of the adult learner, or adult student, in current terms for the future. The case can be made that within the context of widening participation and the massification of higher education that the original 1982 institutional constructs of the adult learner continue to inform UWC's mission and orientation in relation to flexible provision for students in their charge. The difference may now be that it may inform an educational provision for a

much wider range of students than originally imagined, and the focus may also be on individual learning across the student spectrum:

> "More significant, however, is the observation that 'there is evidence that *individual students* [my emphasis] adopt different approaches to studying in different contexts in response to the perceived demands of the immediate learning situation' (Richardson, 1997, p.169)" **(Elliott, 2001, p.42).**

'Nontraditional' students are not a homogenous group and some mature students may display closer similarities to certain traditional students than nontraditional students:

> "…, it is implausible to try to generalise about mature students in relation to their prospects and success at university: as a group defined solely by age on entry they are as dissimilar in as many if not more ways and senses than they are similar. As Richardson notes, 'An unmarried mature student aged 21 living in a hall of residence is probably closer to a traditional entry student than is one aged 30 years, married and living at home with young children' (Richardson 1997, p180)" in **(Elliott , 2001, pp. 44-45).**

This might mean that the emblematic qualities of UWC's adult learners or the adult students need to be identified and taken into the core of qualities evident for all students at the University currently. If adult learners and adult students succeeded in distinct ways, these experiences must be understood and extended institutionally to any student who could benefit from a similar kind of institutional provision en route to academic success.

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SECTION 2 THE PART-TIME STUDENT AT UWC

2.1 UWC's Part-Time Student Legacy

Although the University has a widely-regarded legacy of part-time provision, there also seems to be institutional ambiguity in the recent period regarding whether this form of provision might best serve students in the future. That is to say, currently there are fewer part-time courses on offer (face-to-face from 4pm onwards) than in previous years and University thinking does not appear unanimous as to whether part-time provision should continue or at best how this legacy should live on institutionally in terms of current teaching and learning arrangements.

2.2 Discussion document: Understanding the dynamics of part-time studies at UWC (DLL, 2004)

Based on a review of the literature at the time, **Watters et al (2004)** confirm that there are appreciable complexities worldwide in understanding what it means to be a part or full-time student in higher education within the context of widening participation. It is noted that there are no universally applicable definitions in this regard and it is also not a uniformly straightforward matter for students in choosing a part or full-time mode of study. This study into part-time provision also suggests that UWC students themselves choose the label of either part-time or full-time. The following students chose to register as fulltime **(Watters et al, 2004, p. 6):**

> "I am an international student and must be registered full-time to keep my study visa even though I attend three, two-week sessions per year."
> "I want to be in residence so I must register as a full-time student."
> "I am over 21, but I want to remain on my parents' medical aid."
> "I wanted to get a student bursary."

Interestingly, this study also states that a significant number of students in the sample were motivated to secure a bursary, and stated that "getting access to NSFAS was the main reason for studying full-time" **(Watters et al, 2004, p.6).**

When do students change to part-time study at UWC? In this regard the findings by **Watters et al (2004, p.6)** suggest that students mainly change to part-time students because the academic exclusion criteria appear to be more lenient by comparison to those for full-time students:

> "These examples indicate that students who are not succeeding are encouraged by some Faculty Officers to register as part-time students rather than being told they have to leave the University. This provides the students with another opportunity to succeed without being labeled a failure," **Watters et al (2004, p.6).**

Watters et al (2004, p.9) propose that an understanding of 'part-time' usefully be considered as having three main components (legal/bureaucratic, lifestyle within the context of UWC, and curricular) towards an institutionally useful definition for students at UWC:

> *Legal/ bureaucratic definition of part-time:*
> A student who has registered for less modules than the prescribed full-time load, (equivalent to one FTE).
>
> *Lifestyle definition within the context of UWC:*
> A mature, mostly employed student with an average age of 32 years, who has to juggle multiple responsibilities (work, community, family, study, self-care) and who predominantly attends the University afternoon or evening classes.
>
> *Curricular definition:*
> A student who registers as part-time and mainly follows the part-time programmes and their specific timetables as developed by the faculties and units.

In my view these definitions appropriately include a broader range of 'nontraditional' students at UWC than institutionally anticipated. And within these proposed definitions it is likely that certain international students and certain 'young' students at UWC might also be aligned more closely with 'nontraditional' students than previously imagined.

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The work of **Watters *et al* (2004)** concerning the dynamics of part-time study at the University of the Western Cape led to the following balance sheet of 'nontraditional' students at the time:

> "…42% of all UWC students are over the age of 25 and 22% are registered as part-time students. In the research sample, 34% of students indicated they were employed with 53% of them working more than 35 hours per week. Thus many of the students at UWC cannot be regarded as 'traditional' in terms of their age, the mode in which they are studying and how they are combining work and learning. In addition to these categories UWC students are often 'first generation' students who come from social groupings that have not commonly attended university" **(Watters *et al*, 2004, p.5).**

In terms of these findings, ten years ago, the question would be: although many of the students at UWC cannot be regarded as "traditional" does this mean that many of the students at UWC *must be* regarded as

"nontraditional", and what does this mean, or is there perhaps another way of looking at UWC's students in terms of age, mode of study, and their commitments to living, working and learning?

2.3 *Respice Prospice*: re-imagining the Part-Time Student at UWC

For ease of reference, the research aims of the study by **Watters *et al* (2004)** are reproduced with the view to saying what is of relevance to nontraditional student constructs in this present study. Under the part-time terminology heading, for example, this study takes the view that it is not necessary to continue differentiating between part-time and full-time study if it means that untested assumptions are perpetuated about the kind of student part-timers and full-timers may be. Likewise, under UWC's part-time programme heading, this present study suggests that it is not correct to assume that all part-time students study in the evening. And the notion of part-time might be better considered as not a *particular time* of day but rather a *particular part* of a day.

Table 20

Extract from "Understanding the dynamics of part-time studies at UWC"

Research Aims of Discussion Document: Understanding the dynamics of part-time studies at UWC
Part-time terminology • Is is necessary to continue to differentiate between part and full-time study in terms of student classification? • What would be lost and gained by doing this either administratively, financially, pedagogically or politically? • What are the practices in some comparable countries? • What are the views of NSFAS, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Department of Education (DoE) on part and full-time students? What would they say about maintaining or doing away with the distinction?
UWC's Part-time Programme • What is the process of classification as a part-time student? • Who decides to classify themselves in that way and why? • What assumptions can we make the study patterns and class attendance of those who classify themselves a part-time? • Is it correct to assume they are studying in the evening?

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Quality enhancement of the part-time programme
• What quality enhancement measures must be put in place to improve the delivery of the part-time programme?
Source: **Watters *et al* (2004, p.1)**

> " To use the imperative within the White Paper of 'widening access for workers and adult learners' would be a more useful, strategic way of focusing attention within UWC on older, more mature, first generation, working students" **(Watters et al, 2004, p.11).**

And what would the re-imagined part-time student look like? Would it be a 'worker' and an 'adult student', and could it be possible that this might account for two thirds of the University's student population currently? This study argues that it could be any student who finds the option of part-time study a viable way of ensuring academic success.

SECTION 3 THE LIFELONG LEARNING STUDENT AT UWC

3.1 "Lifelong Learning and Professional Development in 'Residential Universities' (UWC & SAQA, 2015)

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Approved by Cabinet on 20 November 2013, it is significant that the White Paper of Post-school Education and Training acknowledges differentiation within the university sector and especially notes diversity in university missions, development trajectories and curriculum offerings **(White Paper, 2013, p.29).**

Produced in 2015 , the UWC & SAQA research report finds it significant that the White Paper highlights principles such as learner centredness and lifelong learning and also calls for higher education programmes that "are responsive to students' needs and their realities" **(UWC & SAQA Research Report, 2015).**

Interestingly, the research report is directed at 'residential universities' but it is not clear how the University of the Western Cape might position itself in these terms and how it might respond to the call both of the White Paper as well as the UWC & SAQA research report, taking into account its own strategic imperatives of which diversification of the student body remains an integral part.

The challenge remains: what is emblematic for all students in a re-imagined form of lifelong learning. That is to say, going beyond the institution's working definition of lifelong learning, how would an improved lifelong learning ethos and approach benefit all students at UWC, and what would be its essence?

3.2 Lifelong Learners and Students at UWC

The White Paper also states that as "the University and post-school sector grows, it will be essential to facilitate student success to the right programmes and institutions. It is vital to improve the information and support available to students as they make pre-admission decisions. It will also be necessary to facilitate access to institutions" **(White Paper, 2013:31).**

It may be an important moment to revisit the construct of the lifelong learner at UWC and to find out how whether a construct such as lifelong learning students might hold the diversity and inclusivity to take all students into the future institutionally.

3.3 *Respice Prospice*: re-imagining the Lifelong Learning Student at UWC

My path for re-imagining UWC's nontraditional students has been influenced by the work of **Elliot (2001),** who takes issue with prevailing higher education orthodoxies in the hope that a meaningful lifelong learning society may still be possible. In this regard, he interprets the student identity as "multi-dimensional, inhabiting deep and surface worlds, frequently surprising and self-effacing," and concludes that this kind of characterisation "sits squarely with with a postmodern society that gives centre stage to states of disorder, indeterminacy and undecidability" **(Elliott , 2001, p.23).**

Elliott also draws on the work of Barnett (1996), and is persuaded that a useful distinction can be made between the 'internal' and 'external' student. The relevance of this distinction to my study is the suggestion that the continuum of 'nontraditonal' and 'traditional' students might well have a core interior that are more similar than different:

> On the one hand, we have the student grappling with the interior demands of understanding, of inner conceptual struggle, of formulating coherent thoughts and ideas, and of definite and bold expression. This is a virtually invisible student. Sometimes, we catch such students as they show

> themselves in their hesitant responses and uneasy formulations or, indeed, their silences. On the other hand, we have the external student, the student picking up the messages of the wider world and responding more or less to them. This is the student occasionally mentioned in policy documents, whether of the state or even of the university itself. This external student also has, we should note, an invisibility about it; or rather a fictive character. It is a hypothetical student, an assumed student, a two dimensional student largely passive in the face of external demands which press themselves forward, simply acquiring uncritically the prescribed transferable skills and providing the sought-for human capital for the economy (Barnett, 1996, p.75)" **(Elliott, 2001, p.23-24).**

In this case study, certain institutional documentation suggests that the University's current student nomenclature potentially promotes an institutional opportunity for re-imagining student constructs generally, and beyond the binaries of 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student constructs. An opportunity, therefore, is being presented to revisit current student categories such as 'traditional' and 'nontraditional', 'fulltime' and 'part-time', 'mature-aged' and 'traditionally-aged', and 'learners' and 'students'.

This document analysis also gives prominence to the question whether today's higher education students may typically be constructed as an amalgam of 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' facets, and may therefore be in search of new teaching and learning arrangements in higher education presently.

Foucault's thinking pertaining to governmentality and subjectification guiding this document analysis process in broad terms, assists in illustrating how institutional considerations pertaining to nontraditional student constructs may have taken root and at various points in the history of UWC. Additional considerations informing this document analysis are drawn from Graham's observations of what it means to work within a Foucauldian framework, and the insights pertaining particularly to *statements* are noted as useful and relevant to this analysis: "…*in all the possible enunciations that could be made on a particular subject, why is it that certain statements have emerged to the exclusion of all others*…" **(Graham, 2011, p. 667).**

> '…My going to study at the University of the Western Cape in 1989 for a BA degree in social work was not something I planned. … I was happy, though, to go to UWC where two of my younger brothers Thandile and Qinisani were. … What I found difficult to accept, though, was to

> be made to share a room with someone else. Remember, I was 32 years of age when I started my studies. … Hostel life had other disadvantages for me. …" **(Gubevu, 2012, pp. 177-178).**

My second observation was to try reflecting further on aspects of the Foucauldian frame of reference and to really understand what it means when you ask the question: 'what was not possible *then*'. One's point of reference is the present when you ask that question. And it seems to be a jump over a prior question: 'how did it come about that some things *were* possible then'? Once I was in a position to identify and appreciate the things that *were* possible at that time, there was a greater chance that I could now recognise particular student constructs *for that time*.

Can re-imagined aspects of "lifelong learning" bring into being a new kind of higher education student? Are there possibly new constructs that can emerge both for nontraditional students and/or all the other students?

SECTION 4 CONCLUSION

4.1 *Respice Prospice*: assembling re-imagined 'nontraditional' student constructs

This chapter has attempted to highlight areas that have yet to be articulated institutionally about the relationship between 'nontraditonal' and 'traditional' student identities at UWC as well as the nature of student 'nontraditionality' generally at the University.

The University's perceived 'silences and ambivalences' in certain areas may be consequences of a complex transitioning from decidedly complex institutional foundations, and any undertakings to re-imagine 'nontraditional' studenthood institutionally are seen in this light (see for example, Appendix J).

Nevertheless, 'nontraditional' student constructs may at first suggest a portrayal of "difference" rather than "sameness" in relation to 'traditional' students on campus. This misperception is really at the heart of the matter as 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' student constructs have transitioned in various ways institutionally over several decades as a response to changing institutional imperatives. But more importantly, the notion of a 'traditional' student continues to be a transitioning construct alongside other student constructs on a continuum, and it's instability as a reference point therefore poses challenges for meaningful comparison between categories of student.

Furthermore, there may similarities more than anticipated between certain 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' students than among students institutionally perceived to be 'nontraditional'.

If this is the case, a reasonable question would be: what is the value, then, in attempts at re-imagining 'nontraditional' students as a category? The value of these attempts in the present study is articulated as follows:

The main value has been to understand 'nontraditional' studenthood not in deficit terms (read: 'they are not proper students') but in positive terms (read: 'as students of the present with wide-ranging student identities'). And also to understand their educational currency nontraditional noting scholarly confirmation of the increasing majority of "new students" or "new traditionals" in higher education presently.

It emerges that some 'nontraditional' student constructs at UWC may be subsets of larger ones. And this would be part of the reflection. For example, does lifelong learning as a construct continue to inform ways in which the University has thought about its adult students and its RPL students on its campus, or has a planned adult student presence and RPL student presence at the University opened up new ways in which the institution might think about its espoused lifelong learning mission and practices for all students at the University?

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Based on the document analysis, the argument so far is summarised as follows:

i. The University of the Western Cape's own 'nontraditional' orientation has made it receptive to understanding and promoting certain kinds of 'nontraditional' student constructs;

ii. Constructs of 'nontraditional' students are not part of a binary (traditional vs nontraditional) and could more interestingly be seen as part of a continuum of student constructs that are constantly changing;

iii. Different university sectors interacting with 'nontraditional' students appear to have legitimized languages and knowledges about certain 'nontraditional' students in dominant and peripheral ways;

iv. The construct of the *lifelong learner* or the *lifelong learning student* has many engaging aspects; some visible and others less so. Because of its prominence in the University's mission statement, it could be reasonable to assume that lifelong learning is implied in everything the University does. At other times one gets the sense of containment and restriction of the *lifelong learner* as a construct.

v. The University's criteria regarding the categorisation of 'part-time' and 'fulltime' students come across as unclear and arbitrary in cases, and this is a significant factor in blurring roles and identities of these students if they are to be regarded as distinct student categories. Student constructs such as 'Part-Time' and 'Full-Time' are context-specific and are not automatically 'nontraditional' and 'traditional' identities within the context of transitioning higher education landscapes.

4.1.1 Part-Time Students

"It is increasingly unhelpful to think in terms of the outmoded categories of full-time and part-time students. Those labels are an administrative and funding convenience but tell us nothing about the learning experience of students on courses. Worse, the labels conceal some key characteristics of the student learning experience such as the extent to which full-time students need to take on paid employment in order to fund their education" **(Elliott, 2001, p.41).**

This observation does not take away anything from the important and necessary work done by the University by providing part-time provision for more than thirty years. But in the spirit of re-imagining 'nontraditional' student constructs, it is pertinent to re-appraise what the construct of 'part-time' might mean for future students of the University.

Currently 'part-time' does not necessarily denote 'nontraditional student' and 'fulltime' does not necessarily denote 'traditional' student because work and family responsibilities seem to be carried by a greater number of students participating in higher education, and across a more diverse student spectrum. So the pictures could be said to be conveying unintended institutional stereotypes of both part-time and fulltime students?

> As students who are part-time distance-learners residing predominantly outside of South Africa and on our Continent - are these the new higher education students for our continent? - and for higher education generally?

4.1.2 Adult Students

> Drawing on the arguments of Foucault (1979) suggesting that we are implicated by and constructed within a multiplicity of complex and contradictory discourses or networks of power, … [Shah, 1994] makes the crucial point that mature students 'do not constitute an homogenous group, they inhabit enormously diverse histories and populations' (Shah 1994, p.258)" **(Elliott, 2001, pp.88-89).**

The question now would be how to give meaningful prominence to age when it is used in isolation as a marker for a 'nontraditional' student construct. Age coupled with experience is a more meaningful adult student construct.

The University's role in adult learning in the 1970s and 1980s is part of its heritage and a rethinking of the new adult student on campus today is appropriate, in order to capture a contemporary meaning for a contemporary adult student construct. Adult students are much more than administrative constructs of a mature-age (older than 23 years of age) and have both educational and workplace currency. Experience and age both have to be emphasised as part of the educational dimension of this adult student construct.

4.1.3 Lifelong Learning Students

Lifelong learning as an ethos at UWC and lifelong learners as higher education student constructs at the University are largely associated with the pioneering and unrelenting work of the Division for Lifelong Learning. As this document analysis confirms, this observation carries affordances and constraints in understanding constructs of UWC's 'nontraditional' as well as students in 'general' at the University.

There is evidence to suggest that lifelong learning and lifelong *learners* could be seen as narrowly representing only particular sections of the University's student population, most notably adult students,

recognition of prior learning students, and part-time students. By extension, it could be construed that flexible teaching and learning arrangements may be intended for these students, only. When flexible provision is granted, only these categories of students may be seen as institutionally included. When it is not, only these categories may been as institutionally marginalised.

Given today's changing higher education ecology, flexible teaching and learning arrangements should ideally be a available for all higher education students, and UWC has the mandate through its lifelong learning philosophy to ensure appropriate educational provision for ***all*** students enrolled at the University.

There is value in considering a name change from *lifelong learner* to *lifelong learning student* on condition that constructs of lifelong learning students at the University could be regarded as a construct for every student rather than for only a few student categories currently. All UWC students might then be able to experience the University's commitment to lifelong learning, as espoused in both mission statements, are intended for everyone at the University.

The current form of *lifelong learner*, arguably serves as an administrative proxy for adult learner and part-time student. Through this case study, the question is asked whether a change in name from *lifelong learner* to *lifelong learning student* may possibly denote a more meaningful student construction for all students at the University.

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UWC's mission statements do not distinguish between different kinds of students in terms of its commitment to lifelong learning. It could therefore be inferred that lifelong learning as a form of flexible teaching and learning provision is intended in principle to all students at the University. For the most part, institutional research undertaken by certain knowledge communities at the University necessarily foregrounds part-time students, adult learners, and recognition of prior learning students as lifelong learners:

> "Perhaps the most important is that difference and diversity are defining characteristics of the students and their approaches to learning" **(Elliott, 2001, p. 45).**

However, it is also possible that something may be lost, for all UWC students, in constructing certain students exclusively in these terms although the accommodation of difference and diversity for certain types of lifelong learners on campus may still be necessary.

Appendix K

Possible New Constructs of 'Nontraditional' Students emerging from the Documentary Analysis of Institutional Texts selected

Possible New Constructs of 'nontraditional' Students emerging from the Documentary Analysis of institutional texts selected:	
• ***Official Annual Reports***	"diversification of students" *Is there potential for new student constructs within this discourse?*
• ***Official Policies and Plans***	"diversification of students" *Is there potential for new student constructs within this discourse?*
• ***Official Newsletters***	A visibility of part-time students as successful students alongside the visibility of other work and family roles. *But where are the stories of the unsuccessful?*
• ***1982 Mission Statement***	"As students from **Third World** communities **particularly in the Western Cape"** *How can this 1982 Mission Statement be linked to the 2013 Convocation statement urging students to be linked to academic projects of the poor and destitute?*
• ***1982 Report: The Role of the University of the Western Cape in Adult Education***	*The Adult Learner/ The Adult Student*

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• ***2004 Lifelong Learning Draft Report to Senate Lifelong Learning Committee***	"lifelong learning" *Is the lifelong learner already a proxy for a new kind of higher education student?*
• ***2007 Self-Evaluation Report to the Higher Education Quality Committee***	"lifelong learning" *Is the lifelong learner already a proxy for a new kind of higher education student?*
• ***2013 School of Public Health Report on Activities 2011/2012***	*As students who are part-time distance-learners residing predominantly outside of South Africa and on our Continent - are these the new higher education students for our continent?*

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CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....191-200

RE-IMAGINING 'NONTRADITIONAL' STUDENT CONSTRUCTS AT UWC.....

Re-imagining 'nontraditional' studenthood at UWC does not require a re-invention of new names for 'nontraditional' terms currently in use at the University. Adding bits of new sparkle to the kaleidoscope of names the University currently uses in its "nontraditional" student lexicon would simply gloss over the problem this study has attempted to address, and may delay an opportunity for understanding how more of UWC's students have increasingly become 'nontraditionalised', including students for whom such 'nontraditionalising' may not have been imagined.

Over several decades, the University has constructed "adult learner", "part-time" and "lifelong learner" student identities in ways that were intended to promote and safeguard the flourishing of students perceived as such through particular periods of institutional and national development. In addition, and as influenced by worldwide higher education imperatives at the time, UWC's 'nontraditional' student constructions have been purposefully time-specific and a re-imagining is in part to acknowledge the extent to which these constructs may have become institutionally timeworn.

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Re-imagining 'nontraditional' studenthood at the University would not revolve around definitional clarity for 'mature-age' students to better guarantee admissions prospects, for example. Likewise, institutional investigation into the number of part-time or after-hours courses comprising any student's curriculum to officialise "fulltime" or "part-time" student categorisations would also not be foundational to any re-imagining process. Yet all of these considerations may count, albeit ironically so, as part of an imaginative reconstruction of the roles and identities of the higher education students at UWC today, and possibly also for all students in similarly constituted higher education landscapes worldwide.

What kind of re-imagining is therefore required? This study suggests the following:

Re-imagining may be possible if there is an institutional openness to reflect on the original assumptions for having historically assembled 'nontraditional' student constructs in particular ways and to explore how student identity could be thought about significantly differently to mirror current transitions in South African higher education and beyond. Re-imagining UWC's 'nontraditional' student constructs, therefore, is possible if the institutional imagination could allow different depictions of 'nontraditional' now and for the future, and based upon a re-appraisal of how the University's 'nontraditional' students have been

institutionally portrayed in the past. This case study's understanding of the interplay between these two sets of circumstances, the University's future and its past, have led to the following conclusions for current re-imaginings.

SECTION 1 CONCLUSIONS .....

1.1 The lifelong learning legacy of the University of the Western Cape calls for re-articulation .....

As a relatively young, fifty-seven year old, medium-sized public South African university, institutionalised constructions of "nontraditional" students have largely been informed by UWC's own orientation as a formerly disadvantaged higher education institution in pursuit of its own academic independence. UWC's unique 'nontraditional' institutional character, formed in reaction to its apartheid tutelage since the earliest period of the University's history, has scripted the 'nontraditionality' of the academic environment in which the earliest of UWC students were expected to succeed, and in this regard mainly on the strength of their own resilience, both in educational and political terms.

Taking into account that remarkably few students succeeded at UWC in its fledgling years, an unrelenting tenacity to obtain a university education features prominently in the kind of 'nontraditional' student legacy the University continues to uphold, and one which has brought to the fore the underpinnings of a special kind of lifelong learning at a time when national and international imperatives had not yet popularised its implementation in various higher education settings. Since its inception, therefore, UWC's early constructs of lifelong learning students portray broad understandings of the value of sustained educational opportunity and the importance of nurturing resilience in all students in order for them to flourish academically.

Therefore, and within the context of UWC's 'nontraditional' student legacy, a particular and largely undefined form of lifelong learning at the time made its mark institutionally and continues to inform portrayals of certain students at the University currently. It may also be likely that these lifelong learning underpinnings, broadly present in teaching and learning arrangements since the University's inception, will continue to inform flexible teaching and learning arrangements for a growing number of students at the University presently.

Re-imagining the 'nontraditional' student with reference to UWC's historically-constructed student mosaic therefore requires an institutional understanding that the lifelong learning student is by definition every student at the University. Furthermore, if lifelong learning students are institutionally constructed as

having an amalgam of 'traditional', 'nontraditional' and 'postnontraditional' student identities, appropriate forms of flexible teaching and learning arrangements will follow for all students to choose from, and for all students to succeed in contexts characterised by widening participation agendas and massification of higher education landscapes worldwide.

1.2 Every student at UWC embodies certain qualities formerly perceived as signature traits for fulltime and part- time students respectively

The customization of higher education has presented students with new and varied opportunities to say when and how they might like to learn, and *what kind of student they might like to be* in their learning. As instances in this case study has shown, the 'nontraditional' student pool at the University of the Western Cape has widened to include certain international students, and also certain undocumented students who may formerly not have been considered 'nontraditional' students a few decades prior.

Therefore, the re-imagining process in this regard would not be to allocate "fulltime" and "part-time" institutional provision only to certain students but rather to appraise whether these descriptors have provided the institution with insight into the identity of students in their charge over and above general administrative indications that certain students are officially studying at certain times of the day and for a certain duration. Going forward, there is now an opportunity to present an array of teaching and learning opportunities for *any* student who may wish to study either fulltime or part-time, or a bit of both if a combination of these modes would ensure the academic flourishing of the students concerned.

The perceived 'demise' of a legacy of part-time provision in fact lives on and flourishes through re-imagining what a new kind of lifelong learning holds as emblematic for all enrolled students at the University. The institution may need to accommodate an understanding that different kinds of students might want to enroll for fulltime classes and part-time classes at different times of their student cycles. Some students, of any age, might choose to address certain family responsibilities during the day, and may find it convenient to attend classes during the evening. Some may prefer to attend the full complement of classes during the day in order to take care of family responsibilities during the evenings. The point of this illustration is really to ask how the University gets to know its students, their multiple identities they choose to reveal and the teaching and learning arrangements institutionally available for their success.

1.3 Adult learning and lifelong learning principles affect every UWC student, even the youngest of students

Particularly with reference to South African society and its higher education ecologies, there is an appreciable number of higher education students who are in the region of the conventionally accepted "adult" age, of 18 years, who carry the weight of raising siblings, who have lost parents to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and who head households when they return from working and studying.

The range and intensity of their experiences may formerly have been associated with adult learners, or adult students, of a particular historical context and age, and a generation ago in South Africa. But these youth have been catapulted into a particular set of experiences already. Once again, their student identity may not be evident from their university demeanour, the subjects they choose to take, or the time of day they best prefer to take their classes.

Through the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) and the Division for Lifelong Learning (DLL) principles of adult learning and lifelong learning have been foundational to the success and educational flourishing of students who have entered the University through 'nontraditional' routes. The University's legacy of adult learning and lifelong learning would provide institutionally experienced insights into the kind of teaching and learning provision required to facilitate the success of a greater number and increasingly diverse student population at the University.

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1.4 Outdated student constructs obscure appropriate teaching and learning provision

Within reference to the University of the Western Cape as the case study, it may be obvious but nevertheless important to restate that institutional perception, rather than student perception, is the originator and continues to predominate in perpetuating student constructs generally at the University. It is therefore reasonable to assume that it would continue being the key producer of re-imagined 'nontraditional' student constructs.

UWC has particular variations of the 'nontraditional' student which are time-specific in terms of its history. However, perpetuating institutionally jaded 'nontraditional' monikers may obscure the provision of appropriate teaching and learning arrangements for a range of students along the University's 'traditional'-'nontraditional' student continuum.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An analysis of documents strongly suggests that 'traditional' and 'nontraditional' constructs for UWC students no longer hold as a student binary, and instead there is an amalgam of what would formerly be called 'nontraditional' student traits that now underpin the educational identity all students at the university.

SECTION 2 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS IN TERMS OF THE LITERAURE

2.1 Authenticating lifelong learning in higher education

A strand of the scholarship, characterised by **Elliott (2001),** has been amplified in terms of my study, noting especially that he invites a revisiting of the kinds of lifelong learning that higher education institutions may be endorsing, and why they may be doing so. In terms of the case study, it is especially important to know what it might mean in practice when universities espouse a particular orientation towards lifelong learning, and how this might express itself emblematically across the institution and to the students within its charge.

Attempts at authenticating lifelong learning in higher education in the way in which he suggests might also be one way of avoiding the perpetuation of certain kinds of 'nontraditionalisms' in the lexicons of higher education, and could usefully lead to finding ways of talking about contemporary student identity in ways which depict all aspects of educational distinctiveness currently.

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SECTION 3 THE LARGER RELEVANCE AND VALUE OF THIS STUDY

3.1 Scholarly literature seeking a widened student identity

This study has drawn on strands of scholarly literature seeking a widened student identity and new discourses, which may address and replace jaded student nomenclature currently in use in higher education contexts. In this regard, it would be important to understand who the students are in higher education today, their self-ascribed student statuses, preferred study modes and the kind of flexibility they might require in teaching and learning provision.

For the foreseeable future, re-imagining only a name, or host of names, for nontraditional students is neither useful, nor likely, if there are no conversations towards new discourses that make possible

innovative teaching and learning arrangements for higher education's 'new nontraditional' or 'post-nontraditional' students.

This study's findings contribute towards the groundwork of such a scholarly discourse, and does so by providing evidence and traces of ways in which 'nontraditional' students at one South African university could be thought about differently, and with the educational provision of 'new' and 'post' 'nontraditional' students in mind.

SECTION 4 GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES REQUIRING FURTHER SCHOLARSHIP

4.1 Beyond 'nontraditional' student identity: transforming the lexicons of student identity in higher education landscapes

This study has attempted to show why the designation of 'nontraditional student' is not useful as a depiction for today's students given that multiple student segments who are ascribed as such are now representative of a much larger higher education student population than might have previously been thought possible.

For the most part, higher education has arguably already become 'nontraditionalised' in its flexible modes of delivery for the new student it seeks to successfully attract and retain in higher education today. But these 'new post-nontraditional students' would need legitimising of their student identity in higher education contexts worldwide. The term 'nontraditional' students, as it has been argued in this study, comes across as a proxy for the yet-to-be-named-for 'new students' in higher education today.

A particular kind of 'nontraditional' student identity has come to light from a South African university via this case study, and further scholarship would usefully provide comparative scholarly conversation about what may be possible in terms of transforming the lexicons of higher education towards more appropriate depictions of the 'new' nontraditional and the new 'post-nontraditionals'.

4.2 Beyond 'nontraditional' student identity: transforming lexicons of student identity at one South African university

The following 'nontraditional' student constructs, are put forward as identified in Chapter 6, for further scholarly engagement institutionally; at the University of the Western Cape as the case study:

'adult learners', 'part-time' and 'after-hours' students: while each of these student terms may carry historical significance institutionally, what do they mean for the present and for the future?

'lifelong learners' vs lifelong learning students: would the latter typify the kind of attributes the institution aims to engender in every student, and what would these lifelong learning qualities be?

SECTION 5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND POSSIBLE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

South Africa's Green Paper (2012) and White Paper (2013) for Post-School Education and Training both emphasise the pivotal role of universities as part of the post-school system in reaching national development objectives. The recommendations offered are necessarily institution-specific as part of the case study, and may be relevant to similarly constituted higher education institutions worldwide.

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5.1 Constructing New Legacies and New Aspirations

Because UWC is relatively young as a university, the University's legacies and aspirations are likely to be articulated more fully henceforth, and this may give rise to growing and possibly transformed nontraditional student constructions. Student constructs that were understood in terms of University aspirations are largely associated with the University's strategic directions and with what is commonly regarded as the 'diversification' of the student body, or 'student diversity'.

As noted from the document analysis process, UWC has been the forerunner in producing certain 'nontraditional' student practices and constructs on its campus, and it is therefore entirely possible for the University to be a forerunner in its re-imagining, and in this way ascribing the best possible student identities to the students currently within its charge.

5.2 Constructing 'More Inclusive' Nontraditional Student Constructs: The Part-Time Student & The After- Hours Student

This study puts forward that it is no longer an institutional necessity to associate the Lifelong Learner exclusively with the Afterhours Student and the Part-Time Student. Noting the University's current mission statement, this study recommends that the Lifelong Learner is an embedded construct in *every student* and in every *university teacher* and *university official*.

While there is evidence of 'after-hours' student discourse as the 'demise of a legacy', there is also evidence of 'diversification' of students as a 'revival' or the 'birth of a new legacy'. Here the university's annual reports come to mind, and lifelong learning is a key construct for the present, as with re-imagined part-time and after-hours teaching and learning arrangements for all students.

5.3 After-Hours Students re-articulated to include All UWC Students

Some 'nontraditional' students as constructs are more recognisable at UWC and are spoken about more often, other constructs seem 'obvious' as part of the University's mission and yet seem to be intangible as a nontraditional student construct from the institutional documentation consulted. An important way of understanding constructs of UWC's 'nontraditional' students generally was through reflecting on what the institution understands as its legacy. Another important way of understanding nontraditional student constructs was to consider how the University understood its own aspirations.

There are continuities and discontinuities of 'nontraditional' student constructs between institutional legacy and institutional aspiration. Certain 'nontraditional' student constructs are associated with and have assisted in shaping more than one University legacy, and some come across as more articulated than others in various institutional texts selected for document analysis.

There are many 'nontraditional' students (young and old) who would value the opportunity of studying *during the day* in order to be at home with dependents (young and old) during the evenings. It is therefore recommended that a survey is conducted of the kind of student who might be interested in the flexibility offered by this kind of teaching and learning arrangement.

5.4 Annual Lifelong Learning Award: An Open Invitation to All UWC Students and University Sectors

This award re-imagined would ideally invite any university student and any university sector to put forward candidates and motivations for the annual lifelong learning recognition.

Current categories for these Lifelong Learning Awards reflect institutional depiction of the existing 'nontraditional' students, and in terms of the rationale of this study a re-imagined categories are recommended for all students currently:

(i) ***Senior Lifelong Learners Award***: celebrating the learning achievements of UWC students over 50.

(ii) ***Lifelong Learners Award***: Part-time Study. Celebrating the learning achievements of part-time students.

(iii) ***Lifelong Learners Award:*** Alternative Access: Celebrating the learning achievements of students who have entered via alternative access routes.

(iv) ***Lifelong Learning Group Award***: Celebrating the contribution of a faculty/ department/ unit/ association on campus that has made a significant contribution to the development of the UWC LLL mission.

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It is recommended that the re-imagined open criteria would create awareness that flexible provision in teaching and learning arrangements is a beneficial educational quality for *all* students in higher education today, and that the winner of the Lifelong Learning award could be drawn from any academic endeavour on campus. Hence an institutionally powerful way of mainstreaming a re-imagined form of lifelong learning at the University and at the same time producing flexible teaching and learning arrangements that would address the educational flourishing of all students at UWC.

SECTION 6 GENERAL REFLECTION

Re-imagining UWC's 'nontraditional' student constructs means parting ways with the institution's current mosaic of historically-constructed 'nontraditional' student terms, and to acknowledge that University transitions have over time created new conditions in which certain aspects of these very

'nontraditional' student constructs have become normalised in ways that continue to have a bearing on *every* student at the University in one way or another.

The current kaleidoscope of 'nontraditional' student mosaics needs to be re-assembled by revisiting what the University means by its current promotion of lifelong learning as espoused in its mission statement, and to establish whether all UWC students are benefitting in the best possible way through the current institutional advocacy of a particular form of lifelong learning.

Therefore, a re-imagining of UWC's 'nontraditional' students is to acknowledge that neither the current binary nor any re-binarisation of the 'traditional'-'nontraditional' higher education student construct as we know it provides apposite insights into the identities, roles and educational needs of the students currently within its charge.

The participation of 'nontraditional' students in higher education has been a complex matter, as Ogren observes in the early 1910s in Alabama: "... the other higher education institutions were beginning to feel the effects of the competition of the normals for students; and board members … were anxious to reduce the competition as much as possible. To do so, they tried to make the course of study of the normals as unattractive as possible to the non-professional students" **(Ogren, 2005, p.203).** In this regard, Ogren reports reduced offerings in higher mathematics and an elimination of foreign languages.

This closing chapter, therefore, puts forward conclusions and recommendations for re-imagining 'nontraditional' studenthood by looking through the University's kaleidoscope of lifelong learning arrangements in ways that may appear to be new but may really just be the re-imaginative consequence of experiencing the mosaic of student identity considerably differently, even if various pieces have been institutionally plain to see already for a very long time.

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