

**'Being an educator' in university-based  
youth worker education**  
A hermeneutic phenomenological study

Joshua J. Spier

BA, MIntl&CommunityDev

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School of Education  
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law  
Flinders University

Primary Supervisor: Professor David Giles

## Table of contents

Table of contents .....	2
List of figures .....	7
List of tables .....	7
Summary of the thesis .....	8
Declaration .....	10
Acknowledgements .....	11
Dedication .....	14
Abbreviations .....	15
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	17
Doing ‘youth work’ in Australia .....	18
What drew me to the research? .....	22
The purpose of this study .....	24
Words and meanings .....	25
My research approach .....	26
Pre-understandings of ‘being an educator’ .....	27
The fore-structure of understanding .....	28
Experiences as a university student .....	29
Experiences as a ‘professional’ youth and community worker .....	32
Experiences as a lecturer amidst undergraduate youth work education .....	33
Moving towards greater clarity about my pre-understandings .....	34
Being drawn by a ‘way’ of researching .....	42
Structure of the thesis .....	46
Chapter 2: Contextualising being an educator .....	48
The assault of neoliberalism .....	48
The struggle of being an educator within higher education today .....	50
The challenge of carelessness .....	53
The challenge of learning to be an educator in the university .....	55
The challenge of being a human services educator in contemporary Australia .....	57
The historical context of university youth work education in Australia .....	58
The ambiguity of ‘youth work’ as a distinct occupation in Australia .....	62

The challenge of stemming a tide of cuts and closures .....	65
Youth work as still yet-to-be-professionalised.....	66
The divergent pathways of formal youth work education.....	67
Conclusion.....	68
<b>Chapter 3: Being an educator .....</b>	<b>70</b>
Historical concepts of the ‘educator’ .....	70
The word ‘educator’ speaks .....	71
The educator as nourisher .....	72
The educator as midwife .....	73
The educator as ‘the one who knows’ .....	76
The educator as awakener .....	82
The educator as dependent on educable students.....	83
The educator as intellectual exile.....	85
Listening to Indigenous Australian voices.....	88
Critical concepts.....	88
Pre-understandings of the educator in professional youth work .....	93
In summary.....	97
An ontological-phenomenological question emerges .....	97
<b>Chapter 4: A philosophical path opens.....</b>	<b>100</b>
My path to Heidegger.....	101
Heidegger’s path to Being and Time.....	104
Overviewing some path-clearing ideas .....	107
What does ‘to be’ mean?.....	107
What is the difference between ‘being’ and ‘beings’?.....	109
What is ‘Dasein’?.....	111
Heidegger on the human condition .....	113
Phenomenology as <del>method</del> path .....	115
Phenomenology as ontology .....	119
Phenomenology as hermeneutics.....	120
How does language ‘play’ in the delicate task of uncovering the meaning of being?.....	125
The path is circular.....	127
What is being? .....	129
‘Care’ as an essential meaning of being human.....	130
‘Being with’ as an essential meaning of being human.....	131
Time as the primary meaning of being .....	132
Discourse as essential to the everyday existence of Dasein.....	133
Concluding remarks .....	134

Chapter 5: Retracing footsteps .....	137
Beginning footsteps.....	138
Beginning to understand the challenging nature of the quest .....	140
Journaling from the beginning .....	141
Uncovering meanings through stories of lived experience .....	142
What kind of text calls for hermeneutic thinking about the meaning of ‘being’? .....	143
Gathering a text composed of educators’ stories .....	145
Gaining approval to gather educators’ stories of lived experience.....	145
The hermeneutic researcher goes first .....	146
Locating and inviting the storytellers.....	147
Guiding the conversation to draw out stories.....	151
Gathering sufficient stories .....	155
Working with the stories .....	156
Working the text: initial movement of interpretive writing.....	156
Interpretive writing towards understanding existential themes .....	159
Challenges encountered along the way .....	161
The challenge of staying with my phenomenological question.....	162
Trustworthiness and rigour.....	162
Concluding comments.....	164
Chapter 6: Being in conversation .....	168
Philosophical underpinnings .....	168
When genuine conversation happens .....	170
When genuine conversation does not appear to happen.....	187
When a conversation is experienced as ‘not yet’ .....	196
When the moment for a conversation appears to have passed.....	198
Concluding remarks .....	200
Chapter 7: Our having-been-ness is always in play .....	203
Philosophical underpinnings .....	203
When our own having-been-ness does not appear to matter.....	204
When we recognise our prior having-been-ness as mattering.....	205
Interlude.....	216
When our own having-been-ness ‘comes back’ to us .....	217
When our having-been-ness is seen by someone else as mattering .....	222
When what we have ‘not been’ matters to others .....	228
Concluding thoughts.....	229
Chapter 8: Dwelling in possibility.....	232
Philosophical underpinnings .....	232

When we are able-to-be.....	234
When our own ability-to-be appears to be limited.....	240
When it appears that we are unable-to-be.....	243
When we are uncertain of our own ability-to-be.....	250
The possibilities of others are always bound up with our own.....	254
Concluding comments.....	257
<b>Chapter 9: Conclusion: In the life stream of being.....</b>	<b>259</b>
Gathering sparks.....	261
A thesis flying up from the thesis.....	264
Resonance with other research.....	266
Implications for practice.....	269
An invitation for educators: listen and work with your life stories.....	269
Another invitation for educators: listen to one another's stories.....	270
An invitation for leaders: listen to educators' stories.....	270
Another invitation for leaders: support educators to work with their stories.....	271
An invitation for policy makers: create a culture of listening.....	272
Limitations.....	272
A finite pathway.....	273
The finite nature of hermeneutics.....	273
The range of participants.....	274
Possibilities for further research.....	275
Possibilities for further phenomenological research related to:.....	276
1. The experience of educators from other fields.....	276
2. The 'ontological education' of university educators.....	276
3. The everyday experience of youth work practice.....	277
4. The development of university leaders and managers.....	277
5. The experience of university youth work education.....	277
'Look how much I've grown!'.....	278
Concluding comments.....	279
<b>References.....</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>308</b>
Appendix 1: Ethics approval.....	308
Appendix 2: Letter of introduction to participants.....	310
Appendix 3: Participant information sheet.....	311
Appendix 4: Participant consent form.....	313
Appendix 5: Confidentiality agreement - transcription services.....	315
Appendix 6: Post-interview letter to participants.....	316

Appendix 7: Interview guide questions.....	317
Appendix 8: An example of an extract from an interview transcript, followed by a crafted story derived from this extract.....	318
Appendix 9: Story titles.....	319
Appendix 10: A crafted story followed by an example of an initial description and interpretation of a crafted story .....	322
Appendix 11: An example of notions for a participant's stories.....	324
Appendix 12: An example of a poem written to convey notions in a participant's stories .....	327

## **List of figures**

Figure 1: A clear trail in the forest .....	101
Figure 2: Sharing an evening meal.....	123
Figure 3: Campfire in our front yard.....	260

## **List of tables**

Table 1: Australian university-based youth work education.....	94
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## Summary of the thesis

The purpose of this study was to understand shared meanings of ‘being an educator’ in the everyday context of Australian university-based youth worker education (UYWE). While it has long been known that university teachers are integral to the education of different health and social care professionals, research that seeks to understand the lived experience of educators is less common. My own experiences of being a lecturer within a youth work-specific bachelor degree provided the impetus for this inquiry.

The focus of this study is ‘being an educator’, a phenomenon that is ordinarily covered over as a person becomes absorbed in the busywork of their university world. Hermeneutic phenomenology provided a way of uncovering taken-for-granted meanings of ‘being an educator’ as revealed in the everyday experiences of lecturers in UYWE. In particular, Martin Heidegger’s unique approach to the question of ‘being’ in *Being and Time* (1962) instructed the design, sensibility and pathway of this research.

Over a span of eight months, twelve interview conversations with lecturers (from across five institutions) were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. The participant group reflected a diversity of academic ranks, professional backgrounds, disciplinary origins, and ideological and pedagogical approaches to the practice of UYWE. And yet, each participant had in common the experience of lecturing within a higher education youth work course.

Stories of lived experience that appeared to address the question of being an educator were derived and crafted from the transcripts. These weaved together a rich phenomenological text that was hermeneutically interpreted in light of the philosophical writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger. The interpretive process looked beyond explicit meanings towards more primordial and tacit ontological understandings.

Three overarching existential themes came to light. When a person enters the university world of youth work education, their past is not dead but continues to be in play. In addition, the variable experience of being in conversation emerged as an

integral aspect of being an educator. A further understanding is that being an educator is 'dwelling in possibility'. That is, educators commonly appear to exist in an ontological state of flux in relation to their own possibility of being as an educator.

Discourses related to the practice of UYWE have been chiefly concerned with specific curriculum content, educational values, outcome-based rationales and pedagogical techniques. Expanding the horizons of these discourses, this research points to an overlooked meaningfulness of being an educator as it unfolds for practitioners within their everyday university communities. In doing so, this project highlights the humanness of educators as they support the professional development of aspiring youth workers.

## **Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

Date:

## Acknowledgements

This thesis bears witness to the relational support and guidance that I have been given by many educators, some of whom I will name.

My entrance into professional youth worker education came through the invitation of Dr Phil Daughtry. It was Phil who first empowered me to be a lecturer with a community of inspirational educators and student youth workers (2009–2014). My fellow educators and students impressed upon me a deep concern for the everyday lives of young people struggling in society. In particular, students who participated in my classes constantly challenged me and provoked my thinking. To each of my former students, the phenomenon of interest that opens this research only addressed me because of a ‘dance’ of education that I shared with you.

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This research was only possible because of the continuing influence of my parents, including my parents-in-law, and grandparents in my life. I carried your lifelong encouragement with me into this research. To my brother Simon and the rest of my immediate family, your enduring graciousness still speaks.

To my wife Christy, words cannot attest to the life you have been for this research and for me. While the title page of this thesis may name a sole author, we both know that it was really ‘our project’ all along. You led me to daily nourishment. Christy, know that it was you who allowed the vague melody of my thoughts to compose themselves amidst our shared lives.

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According to a Taoist saying, ‘the great leader, when their work is done, the people will say, “we did it ourselves”’. Any ability to say ‘I did it!’ stems from my lived relationships with others who have led me in various ways, named and unnamed. Indeed, it is truly ‘we’ who have done it. I am deeply grateful to you all for joining in play with this inquiry.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my children with love and appreciation.

## **Abbreviations**

AYAC	Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
UYWE	University-based youth worker education

Then said a teacher,  
Speak to us of teaching.  
And he said:  
The musician may sing to you  
of the rhythm which is in all space,  
but he cannot give you the ear  
which arrests the rhythm  
nor the voice that echoes it.

(Adapted from Kahlil Gibran, 2013, pp. 67-68)

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The focus of this research is the meaning of ‘being an educator’ in university-based youth worker education (UYWE) in Australia. Much has already been said about the practice of UYWE that relates to the meaning of being an educator in this context, whether explicitly or implicitly. However, there are some people who have *had the experience* of being an educator amidst UYWE programs. This study seeks to gather and interpret experiential narratives towards addressing this question: what are the vital meanings that are unique to the lived experience of ‘being an educator’ in the context of Australian UYWE? This project arises from my past experiences as an educator with student youth workers.

For those of us who have sought to educate youth workers in a specialised degree-level course, it may go without saying that being a professional educator matters. An educator begins with a tacit sense of what they are being called upon to be and to do. They immediately encounter students who have an unspoken expectation that they will be ‘educated’ through the educator’s *educating*.

The movement of this educational process is tacitly and mutually understood as work-based study *in* professional youth work (Dall’Alba, 2009b, 2009c; Gibbs, 2011; Heidegger, 1962). Implicit in this process are taken-for-granted understandings about the participant known as the ‘educator’ (or ‘lecturer’ or ‘academic’). The educator is typecast to initiate the process – to educate. But how can we tell the educator apart from the other participants and from the ‘dance’ of education itself?

In interpreting the stories offered by educators themselves, this study looks to uncover the challenges, unique vocation and hidden resoluteness that come with being an educator with student youth workers in the university. Emerging from this study are hints of contextualised meanings of being an educator, as revealed in the voices of practitioners whose stories have been told and graciously given for this inquiry.

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

(W.B. Yeats, 2004, p. 60)

### ***Doing ‘youth work’ in Australia***

This study is guided by a philosophical research approach known as *hermeneutic phenomenology*, which is introduced later in this chapter. According to this approach, meaning is always highly context-specific (Gadamer, 2013; Heidegger, 1962). The words ‘being an educator’ will evoke different connotations for different people, across various times, sectors and situations, irrespective of any value we may consciously give to them as practitioners. One particular context in which the phenomenon of being an educator has been historically experienced in Australia, and some other countries, is UYWE. Here, educators are integral to the educational processes and experiences provided for pre-service professionals that prepare them to join thousands of agencies across Australia where youth workers are employed (Bessant, 2012, p. 52).

A central concern in this context, which explicitly informs the everyday activities, pedagogies and curricula design of educators, is the challenge of ensuring that graduates not only take up their chosen vocation with technical competencies, but also with an ‘attribute that entails having a regard for “good or bad” [appropriate or otherwise] when working out what action is best for a particular situation’ (Bessant & Emslie, 2014, p. 141). Youth work, when viewed in this way, is an occupation that, in its own right, demands the same virtuous capacity for ‘prudent judgment’, or *prudentia*, as architecture, medicine, law, political leadership and the like (Arendt, 1998, p. 91).

The ‘usefulness’ of youth work (as a discrete occupation) to the life processes of Australian society manifests itself in heterogeneous settings today (Arendt, 1998, p. 92). For example, university-graduated youth workers may find themselves involved in: accommodation services (supporting vulnerable young people who are in the out-of-home care sector); street-based work (providing safety and building relationships with young people on the streets); health services (including drug and alcohol rehabilitation, counselling services, mental health services); public advocacy (analysing discourses and activities of the media and other policy makers related to social issues facing young people); church-based work (engaging young people with respect to their faith/spiritual development); local government work (engaging young people in their local communities and democratic processes); youth work in schools

(delivering attendance programs, behavioural programs, ESL programs, sports and recreational programs, and employment and broader life skills programs for disadvantaged students or students deemed by the school or the wider community to be at risk); or family support (working with young people and their families experiencing financial, relationship or other difficulties) (Australian Government Department of Education, 2013; Bessant, 2012, 2009; Corney, 2006; Davies, 2013; White, Omelczuk & Underwood, 2009). Across these kinds of situations, there have historically been diverse approaches to intervening in, and improving, the everyday lives of young Australians, in terms of changing practice models, processes, ideologies and guiding assumptions about the meaning and experience of ‘being young’ in Western societies in late modernity – both explicit and implicit (Bessant, 2014; Cooper, 2012; France, 2009; Gabriel, 2013; Jones, 2009; White, Omelczuk & Underwood, 2009; White & Wyn, 2013; Wyn & White, 1997).

To give a more concrete sensibility of what it is like to be a youth worker and to do youth work, Blacke (2013) offers a helpful ‘day in the life of a youth worker’:

Kevin Mullins, works part-time with young people in a high-school-based youth centre ... He says: ‘A normal working day is a mixture of admin, project planning, facilities management at the youth centre and face-to-face work with young people.

‘Typically, my mornings are taken up with preparation for upcoming projects. One of my current projects involves exploring beliefs and values with the school’s year 10 group (aged 14–15). I am working with these young people to research and debate arguments for and against abortion and capital punishment. This project aims to raise their awareness of controversial issues and give them the tools to engage in debate while addressing their own feelings on the topics.

‘In the afternoons, I often spend time in one-to-one mentoring sessions, listening and advising young people who need additional behavioural support. Inevitably there is admin that requires attention, so I try to catch up on emails before after-school sessions. After school I run sexual health sessions with years 10 and 11, exploring issues such as sex and the law.

‘Being a youth worker is not a nine-to-five job. In the evenings I regularly spend time catching up with young people on issues affecting the local housing estate. At the moment I am delivering workshops on stereotypes and prejudices, establishing where stereotypes originate from and how to challenge them.

‘Providing positive, engaging activities and continuing to create opportunities for exploring, addressing and tackling the issues which affect young people makes this a very challenging but incredibly rewarding role’. (2013, para. 7-11)

Finally, to help situate the meaning of 'being an educator' in the context of this study, what follows is an experiential narrative that gives a sense of the complex nature of being a youth worker, of *doing* youth work in Australia today. The following story is told by Peter, one of the participants in this study who is employed as a lecturer in a university undergraduate youth work course. Prior to working as an academic, Peter worked for over a decade as a youth worker. In the interview for this research, he shared how he is still doing youth work, and recounted the following experience:

*I am still doing youth work. I work every Sunday night with young people living in out-of-home care: young people that have been removed from their homes and are now living under the 'care' of the department of human services.*

*A girl Sarah is in care because of domestic violence. Her mother won't tell her who her father is, and the stepfather was very violent, and the mother is verbally very violent towards her. Sarah's got a temper and she swears a lot as a result of that, but she is a wonderful kid. I have great respect for her and we have a really good relationship.*

*On my first shift in resicare, there were three [young] people at home out of the four, there's another staff member on who's been around for a long time, and myself sitting there at the table over dinner, everyone eating. It was roast chicken this first night. And it's silent. It's very awkward.*

*I looked at the guy quietly out of the side of my eye to see if he would take the lead on how to make the night roll. He just sits there eating his food. He's been there years – he doesn't care. So Sarah leans across the table, looks at me, and goes, mate, make some fucking conversation you c\*\*t! [Laugh]. She remembers that as a hilarious start to our now positive relationship.*

*One night three of the [young] people were home out of the four. Sarah had been on the couch. We had been watching a TV show. I think it was X-Factor. Every Sunday night we all watched the same show and it's a good little community experience. During the ads she was texting someone [on her mobile phone]. It turns out she was texting her mum. She's got two little brothers, and she had said something like, please tell my brothers I said goodnight and that I love them.*

*Her mum is really rude to her so I can only guess what she wrote back because she never told me. She got up off the couch, stormed off to her bedroom, and closed the door. And I could tell she was in her bedroom crying ...*

*When you live in care you have no privacy because she's a self-harmer. She's covered in scars from hurting herself to cope with the stresses in her life. So we go and knock on the door: Sarah are you ok?*

*She's not answering. She's locked the door. She [might be] in there hurting herself, and it could go wrong when she's really upset. So we get our keys and we tell her we are unlocking the door. We open the door, and there she is ... not hurting herself. She's curled-up in a ball, on her bed, crying ... And that was it.*

*That moment of, there she was, vulnerable and hurting and in pain, and completely alone, and she is fifteen. And I just had this moment of ... She's crying for a home that doesn't exist. She's crying for a belonging or somewhere to be cared for that she doesn't have. And at this very moment, who cares for her? I couldn't even care for her properly right then. What I wanted to do was give her a hug. We can't go into their rooms unless they are hurting themselves, so we stand at the door and say, oh, are you okay? Of course I was as pastoral as I could be, and I didn't say it superficially, but that is how it felt to me – at that time I was limited by the parameters of that which I had to work in ... (Interview 9: Story 6)*

This story can only point to how one youth worker, who also teaches youth workers in the university, experienced a moment of doing youth work in Australia. And yet this story shows that primary to the profession of youth work is not a set of practices, but a *relationship* (Sercombe, 2010, p. 11). Peter's relational encounter with Sarah happened to occur in a particular out-of-home residential care facility for young people who do not experience a sense of at-homeness and safety when living with their families. While this is only one of the diverse work situations in which youth workers are currently involved across Australia today, it partially brings to light the essential relational nature of doing youth work. Professor Howard Sercombe has had a lifelong involvement in youth studies as a youth worker, and has helped to pioneer university youth work education in Australia as an academic and researcher. He suggests that, across diverse settings, youth workers fundamentally work to 'create a kind of sacred circle within which [they] will meet a client (to use the general term), work with whoever they are, and whatever they have done, in order to create possibilities of transformation' (2010, p. 11).

And yet, as revealed in the above story, as youth workers actually go about this creative relational work, they may often find themselves dwelling in uncertainty; 'on

the edge' between knowing what they *want* to do and knowing what they *should* do professionally (Anderson-Nathe, 2008, p. 98).

In the increasingly complex occupation of being a youth worker in Australia, it is critically important that beginning youth workers are able to form trusting relationships with university educators who have deeply explored, for themselves, what it essentially means to show, and lead people into, the world of youth work practice (van Manen, 1991, p. 38).

### ***What drew me to the research?***

What withdraws from us draws us along by its very withdrawal, whether or not we become aware of it immediately, or not at all. Once we are drawn into the withdrawal, we are drawing toward what draws, attracts us by its withdrawal. (Heidegger, 1968, p. 9)

This study focuses on the lived experience of being an educator in the everyday context of UYWE courses in Australia. What are the fundamental aspects of being a unique kind of professional educator who educates pre-service youth workers in the university world? This research arises from my practice as a lecturer within a Bachelor of Social Science in Youth Work. It was through my own experiences of educating student youth workers, in a tertiary setting, that something beckoned me as yet-to-be uncovered about the meaning of 'being an educator' with student youth workers.

I come to this research with a personal history of sharing educational experiences with others in both formal and informal contexts. These have occurred within my past and ongoing family situations, formal and informal learning communities, and various paid and unpaid work engagements as a youth and community worker and community educator. My experiences also occur as a husband and father of three children. Likewise, my master's research also focused on the experience of 'transformative learning' in my own context of practice as an educator.

My recent experiences (2009–2014) as a lecturer within a Bachelor of Social Science (Youth Work) have drawn me to this research. In 2013, I attended the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) Conference with lecturers from my team. Over 200 delegates gathered together from around Australia (youth researchers and academics, youth policy makers, youth sector representatives and young people) to foster

collaboration within the sector, and to spark dialogue across issues that affect the everyday lives of young Australians. As this three-day event unfolded, I listened to the keynote addresses, the panels and the workshops. I noticed there was little explicit mention of pre-service/undergraduate 'youth work education'. In particular, there was no apparent talk of the importance and practice of UYWE. Yet I knew that several key speakers and workshop facilitators were alumni of university-based youth work courses around Australia. Other speakers were key pioneers, lecturers and coordinators of these youth work courses. These educators were being called upon to speak to many of the priority themes of the conference.

While I found much of what was discussed relevant to my work as an educator for youth workers, a puzzling question formed: given our shared commitment to promote the life chances of young people and our collective efforts towards advancing youth work practice, where is the space to engage in dialogue about the education of professional youth workers? Was this matter considered to be so peripheral that it was inconsiderable? Or had it become so implicitly important that it had become unconsidered, taken for granted?

As I became drawn by this apparent absence, I listened to my colleagues address other pressing matters. In what they were saying, I began to discern fleeting hints of their everyday educational lives. Beyond the national conference, I discovered some Australian academics were publishing papers and conducting research specific to the university education of youth workers. These voices provided me with a wealth of insight into the rationales, educational aspirations and values, curriculum content and pedagogical approaches that were being articulated for the field in which I belonged. But as I sought to apply these to my own practice and language, something more hidden beckoned me.

Prior to educating youth workers I had worked as an educator in other contexts, but as I designed and provided learning experiences for the students I worked with, I struggled to come into a clear understanding of the kind of educator I was called upon to be; the kind that responds to students' often unspoken expectations and desires to be initiated into a particular vocation of 'youth work'. What I wanted to know was: what is the nature of being this kind of educator?

In all that has been asked concerning the curriculum content, commitments, beliefs, underlying ideologies and values, student profiling and progressive pedagogies, perhaps there was something implicit that had not yet been asked about. Perhaps the meaning of ‘being an educator’ with youth workers in the university situation remains elusive and taken for granted. I wondered: *what does it mean to be a professional educator in UYWE?* The appearance of un-answerability in relation to this seemingly obvious question drew me.

### ***The purpose of this study***

The study explores the experiential narratives of 12 Australian practitioners (of varying academic rank and background) who have educated students within UYWE courses. The purpose is to uncover meanings within experiences of being an educator in Australian university courses specialising in the preparation of youth workers. Not all participants identified themselves in terms of belonging to the academic field of youth work. Some said that while they teach within UYWE they continue to ‘come from’ another disciplinary home (e.g. sociology, political science, community development). Nevertheless, they have all experienced the phenomenon of being an educator in an Australian UYWE course.

This study is not about the student experience in higher-level professional and work-based programs (for such inquiries see Dall’Alba, 2009c; Gibbs, 2011; Houston & Pelavaniuc, 1998). Rather, this study seeks to explore primordial meanings of being an educator as shown in particular lecturers’ everyday activities in UYWE. And yet, some familiar ways of understanding the university educator are not so much well-trodden ontological ground as completely trampled underfoot (Cuthbert, 1996, p. 3).

This research gives attention to what the ‘lived experience’ of being an educator in a UYWE program might mean to people in their actual everyday experiences of this process (Giles, 2008; van Manen, 1990; Willis, 2012). I draw upon the philosophical insights of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger to reveal taken-for-granted understandings of the phenomenon of ‘being a university educator’ amidst the everyday context of UYWE.

The ordinary word ‘educator’ runs to the heart of what this hermeneutic (interpretive) investigation is seeking to uncover. The nature of this study is to bring

both researcher and reader back in touch with an original form of life where a word like ‘educator’, which has become habitually used as terminology, still had living ties to the lived experiences from which it originally sprang (van Manen, 1990, p. 59). This means that I purposefully did not define the word ‘educator’ (as a term) for the participants, nor did I ask them to define or theorise it for me. Instead, my aim is to explore the complex nature of the meaning and experience of being an educator. Contextualised meanings of ‘being an educator’ are held ajar.

### ***Words and meanings***

What are words, that they have such power? (Heidegger, 1982, p. 141)

In this section I introduce some words that are particularly meaningful in this study. These words are ‘at play’ in the light and shadows of the interview texts, relevant literature and interpretive writings that have come through the research process. Heidegger distinguishes between *words* and *terms* (1982). Terms are used (to signify things). Words are spoken (Dahlstrom, 2013a, p. 236). When words are experienced *as words*, they open up a world of meaning for us, giving us momentum in our being (Dahlstrom, 2013a; Heidegger, 1982; Ziarek, 2013).

An important word that is frequently voiced in this study is the word ‘educator’. This study primarily draws on the narratives of particular people who have had personal experiences of being an *educator* within UYWE programs. This study also draws on literature which contextualises the participants’ experiences of being an educator in Australian UYWE courses. In the interviews, several participants spoke the word ‘educator’ (or ‘youth worker educator’) to identify themselves. But others drew upon different words like ‘lecturer’, ‘teacher’, ‘researcher’ and ‘academic’ when describing how they are as educators. While participants do not always speak the word ‘educator’ to name their vocational self-understanding, in this study I voice the word *educator* to describe the common practice of the participant group: ‘lecturers’ (adjunct, sessional, part-time, full-time), ‘associate professors’ and ‘professors’ who have all (across varying levels of seniority and academic rank) been employed to prepare pre-service youth workers. Given the nature of this ontological inquiry, the more existential meanings of being an educator need to be kept open.

The phenomenon is also contextualised as being an educator within an Australian *university* situation. I thus recruited participants from Australian institutions with university status and self-accrediting authority (with the exception of one institution that does not have university status, and thus seeks accreditation for their degree course from the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency in Australia). All participants have practised within accredited bachelor courses specialising in the vocation of professional youth work in Australia. Across the institutions, a youth work-specific course is predominantly offered as a ‘Bachelor of Youth Work’ or ‘Bachelor of Social Science (Youth Work)’.

In Australia, tertiary and further education (TAFE) institutions are key providers of YWE (Bessant, 2012, p. 59). In this study however, ‘youth work education’ refers only to programs within the university (unless otherwise indicated). Thereby, I acknowledge that the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ of pre-service youth workers is not limited to the university sector. Nevertheless, in this study I am expressly interested in what it means and ‘what it is like’ *to be* this kind of educator amidst the everyday university world (van Manen, 1990, p. 42).

### ***My research approach***

In this research I seek to uncover deeper understandings of the phenomenon of being an educator in the everyday world of UYWE through lecturers’ stories of lived experience. This approach is named *hermeneutic* (or *interpretive*) *phenomenology*, and is guided by the philosophical writings of Martin Heidegger [1889–1976] and his former student, colleague and lifelong friend Hans-Georg Gadamer [1900–2002] (Gadamer, 1994).

Heidegger (1962, 1999) was first to appropriate the field of *hermeneutics* (traditionally, the theory and art of interpreting various kinds of texts) for the phenomenological analysis of our everyday experiences of ‘being’ human in the world (ontology) (Crotty, 1998; Gadamer, 2007, p. 21; Grondin, 1994; Ironside, 2012; Moules, 2002; Palmer, 1969; van Manen, 2014). Gadamer’s work continues the ‘ontological turn’ that philosophical hermeneutics had taken in the wake of his teacher’s writings and lectures of the 1920s (Coltman, 1998; Figal, 2002; Gadamer, 2013, p. 493; Grondin, 1994; Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2014). Although the expression ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’ today is often used to refer to a diverse family of

approaches (where those closely related are gathered together with others that are related only by name), in this study it refers to my way of inquiring into the meaning of lived experience of educators through Heidegger's and Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenologies (Healy, 2011; Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson & Spence, 2008; Wood & Giddings, 2005).

For me, the notion of hermeneutic phenomenology points to two essential characteristics of this research. Firstly, it is *phenomenological*, in the sense that the inquiry explores the (pre-theoretical) experiential nature of a particular phenomenon, named in this study as 'being an educator' (van Manen, 1990). Secondly, the inquiry is *hermeneutical*, in the sense that it is a way of questioning contextual meanings of a common way of being human in the world (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1962). A hermeneutic manner of questioning is recognised as vital because the essential meanings that our familiar activities are based upon (which always belong to a particular background of shared concerns and cultural practices) become 'covered up' as we go about the everyday lives in which we are absorbed (Heidegger, 1962, p. 7; Lafont, 2005). This inquiry is also hermeneutical in so far as it is essentially a journey of 'playful thinking' and dialoguing about the possible fundamental meanings of 'being' an educator amidst a particular field (Heidegger, 1982, pp. 11, 29–31). Critically, the light and experience of evocative language lets my hermeneutic journey unravel towards a 'seeing' of essential lived meanings (Heidegger, 1962, p. 56; van Manen, 2014).

### ***Pre-understandings of 'being an educator'***

For this inquiry, following in Heideggerian and Gadamerian ways of research means ruminating on hidden meanings of lecturers' stories of lived experience in order to allow new possibilities to challenge my own prior assumptions; to expand my 'horizon of understanding' (Gadamer, 2013; Heidegger, 1962). As the researcher, this kind of research process is set in motion by beginning to disclose and interrogate my own implicit 'pre-understandings' and life experiences of my phenomenon under investigation (Giles, 2008; Grondin, 1994; Smythe, 2011; Wright-St Clair, 2015). For both Heidegger and Gadamer, bringing a hermeneutic project to life in this manner is pivotal for any inquiry seeking to interpret the lived meanings of a particular way of being human in the world (ontology). Indeed, we inescapably bring our concealed pre-understandings to any given text, whether explicitly or implicitly.

That is, our tacit background sense of things is always in play, making the practice of interpretation possible (Heidegger, 1962, p. 275).

I came to this phenomenological inquiry with pre-understandings of what it means to *be* an educator within a university youth work program. As the researcher, my pre-understandings arose from my past experiences of living in the world with others. These pre-understandings were inescapably in play as I encountered the participants' experiential stories.

This section begins by laying out an important philosophical insight from Heidegger (1962) relevant to the interpretive researcher's 'fore-understanding'. Following this, I will share some of my personal experiences that appeared to shape my pre-understandings and thinking in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. Finally, in the third sub-section entitled 'Becoming clear about my pre-understandings', I discuss my dominant foregoing understandings that came to light through a pre-understanding interview-conversation with my primary supervisor. Guided by my methodology, this section reveals my elusive, taken-for-granted prior understandings and prejudices about the phenomenon that I blindly carried into this study (van Manen, 1990).

### **The fore-structure of understanding**

Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 194)

In an informative passage for phenomenologists in the tradition of hermeneutics, Heidegger says that interpretive researchers are always guided by a certain 'fore-structure of understanding', whether they are aware of it or not (1962, p. 151). Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology embraces the background understandings of the researcher, rather than attempting to 'bracket' them out of the process, as had been the move in Edmund Husserl's [1859–1938] phenomenological *epoché* (Husserl, 2001, 2012). However, the personal pre-understandings I had brought along with me, as the researcher, had grown so obvious that I was initially oblivious to how they were already in play, projecting my research journey forward.

Heidegger (1962, p. 191) suggests that the researcher's practice of interpreting moves within a certain fore-structure, composed of a certain *fore-having, fore-sight*

and *fore-conception*. *Fore-having* is the prior intelligibility with which I understood in advance the phenomenon which I was seeking to explore (Heidegger, 1962, p. 190). This means that I had already come into an understanding of the worldly significance of being an educator in UYWE before saying or interpreting anything about this phenomenon (Harman, 2007, p. 34; Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 16). *Fore-sight* is the prior way of seeing that always guides how we interpret specific phenomena of interest (Heidegger, 1962, p. 191).<sup>1</sup> New moments of insight that arrived in the research process were only able to evolve out of my prior fore-sight. Finally, *fore-conception* refers to the way that, even before I began to undertake the research activities, my interpreting moved forward with a projected sense of what meanings would be unmasked. In undertaking the task of interpretation, I was always limited by the particular range of vocabulary and concepts that were already readily available to me (Lafont, 2005, p. 277).

Rather than attempting to stand outside of my pre-understandings, I have increasingly become more aware of their importance (Heidegger, 1962, p. 195). This involved remaining alert to moments when I inevitably fell back into popular unspoken, taken-for-granted, obvious meanings of the phenomenon passed on to me by my historical-cultural situation (1962, p. 195). Such constant vigilance required that my 'before-understandings' were brought and re-brought to the surface. Then, and only then, could I move into a clearer space where fresh insights could emerge through an ongoing encounter with the participants' stories that emerged in conversation (Smythe et al., 2008). My hermeneutic approach was pivotal in guiding me to enter a state of alertness by carefully attuning to my pre-understandings. Having laid out Heidegger's notion of fore-structure of understanding, I will now reflect on some particular lived experiences that tacitly informed my pre-understandings I brought with me into the research.

### **Experiences as a university student**

I came to this study with pre-understandings that were formed by my past experiences as a student: first in primary/secondary schools, and then in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. My experiences of the phenomenon of being an educator as a post-secondary student unfolded within the life contexts of

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<sup>1</sup> For example, before something familiar that I use (or do) everyday becomes obscured from me in some way (e.g. 'this is not working'), I have already been able to recognise it in advance as being this or that in relation to a practical context (Heidegger, 1962, p. 191).

particular (Australian) universities and certain historical-cultural situations (Heidegger, 2007, pp. 99–100). Moreover, these experiences happened in particular academic programs in relationship with irreplaceable peers and academic educators-supervisors.

Unlike several of the participants in this study, my experiences as an undergraduate student did not occur in the context of a youth work university course. Rather, I initially entered into a psychology education course (for 6-months), and then a teacher education course (2 years), before completing an Arts program majoring in cultural studies and sociology. A pivotal, yet perhaps taken-for-granted, aspect of this nomadic journey was my lived (pedagogical) encounters with different university educators. Today I am unable to recall much of what they said in the numerous talks I attended. Rather, what still reverberates for me from my encounters are different ways of being an educator: how I was affected and the gifts of thought I received (Palmer, 1998, p. 22). While most educators seemed authorised and conversant with their respective knowledge speciality, not all presented with a kind of authority that sparked my curiosity and drew me into a thoughtful engagement with their respective historical-philosophical stream of thought (Greaves, 2010, p. 124; Heidegger, 2007, p. 100).

#### *Being surprised by a 'personal touch'*

Moving from my schooling experiences with teachers, I remember initially feeling disturbed by the impersonal nature of 'being an educator' within the university situation. Such was the apparent anonymity of university educators that it came as a shock when, later in my undergraduate years, I received a personal phone call from one of my educators, an older lady. On the verge of failing her class, her voice gently inquired whether I was planning to submit an overdue major essay. She told me she was 'interested in reading [not marking] it', and was 'happy' to accept it late 'even though', she added, 'I am not meant to'. Such was her small subversive act, of seeking *me* out, that I surprisingly found myself writing a neglected essay, an essay that I had not been previously inclined to write. Perhaps being an educator within the university was not always what it appears. Perhaps it could mean more than simply shovelling information and blindly following the spoken and unspoken 'rules' of what university educators are expected to do (Palmer, 1998, p. 22).

### *A telling moment*

There are other living moments that have stayed with me: moments that broke through the banal and guarded appearance of being an educator in the university. I recall a time when, at the conclusion of a particular lecture course, one of our lecturers started to tell us that a known professor was retiring. As this lecturer began publically to acknowledge his ‘peer’, his years of service and so forth, suddenly his talking trailed off. I was shocked to realise that he was fighting back tears. He seemed unable to utter words of genuine admiration for his trusted colleague, mentor and friend, and I suddenly saw a meaning of being a university educator in a new light.

Leading up to this moment, I had sat through hours of his lectures, being presented with cultural theories in a dry, calculated, matter-of-fact fashion. And yet, unfolding before me was an event of silence, even awkwardness. Beyond disclosing a side to a particular personality, this moment seemed to reveal something about a human aspect of being a university educator that hid behind what might be more visible on the academic stage. I began to wonder what else might be concealed in relation to the fundamental characteristics of the experience of ‘being an educator’ in the everyday ‘life context of the *university*’ (Heidegger, 2007, p. 100).

### *Experiences as a graduate university student*

I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, but with no clear professional pathway immediately in sight. However, while I was studying in my undergraduate years, I had accumulated some ‘extracurricular’ experience as a singer/songwriter, band member and music festival organiser. This helped me to become employed as a community development worker in local government, specialising in local recreation, sports, arts and cultural development. Although I was paid, and titled, as a ‘Community Development Officer’, my early real-world encounters with the challenges of becoming a prudent practitioner showed me an absence. While I may have been able to cite theories about community cultural development, I realised I still had much to learn about the art of working with marginalised community groups in genuine ways. It was this revelatory experience that first germinated my interest in seeking professional development through postgraduate study in community development.

After I finished my role with local government, I worked as a community/adult educator with a Christian relief and development agency (TEAR Australia). This further sensitised me to community-based participatory ways of working with vulnerable communities. While undertaking this work, my wife and I welcomed our first child into our lives. Being drawn to the philosophy and practice of community development, I decided once again to be a university student, beginning a Master's program focused on international and community development. This experience took place in the different context of 'cloud' (online) study, also known as 'off-campus study'. As part of completing my Master's in Community Development, I elected to do a dissertation component. For this project, I encountered a different form of 'being an educator' in the university through my lived relationship with my research supervisor. Even though I only met with him once 'offline', our informal talks that occurred via 'distance modes' provoked for me new ways of thinking, not only about community development praxis, but ways of doing research.

My dissertation supervisor invited me to consider the possibility of focusing my research on my own practice as a novice instructor in a youth development program. He told me about Living Educational Theory, a heuristic approach to action research that educators have used reflexively to explore and voice the personal meanings imbued within their own practice context (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). From this, the forward direction of my Master's project emerged: an exploration of the meaning of a transformative education unit I had designed and delivered. A key part of this project involved interviewing some of my students to find out about the learning experiences that occurred for them through the process I had offered (Willis, 2012). Perhaps it was my pedagogical encounter with my dissertation supervisor that allowed me first to attune to an *existential possibility*: that any kind of educator is always-already open to seek and question the meaning of their own being (Dahlstrom, 2013a, p. 61; Greaves, 2010, p. 27).

### **Experiences as a 'professional' youth and community worker**

Like a majority of the participants in this study, prior to commencing my practice as a lecturer (and this research project) my own career background working with young people had already presented me with tacit presuppositions about the meanings of professional youth work *and* UYWE. One of my particular prior experiences as a paid 'youth worker' involved providing specialist homelessness services for young

people. I recall being the only practitioner on my team who did not have education qualifications specific to social work or youth work. I wondered how our diverse education backgrounds mattered. Was there a form of education that provided ‘optimal’ preparation in youth work? I also recall particular senior members of our team not being university-educated. I confess to my occasional concern that their professional capacity was deficient in some way. What did the absence of university education mean in practice for enacting our mutual form of youth work?

And there were other even more unsettling moments. I occasionally witnessed my non-university-educated colleagues relating with young people and tackling complex crisis situations in ways that told me I would only ever be ‘half the youth worker’ they were. Coinciding with this experience, I began taking on some sessional lecturing within a professional YWE course. I was no longer amused by the satirical humour of George Bernard Shaw (1903):

When a man teaches something he does not know to somebody else who has no aptitude for it, and gives him a certificate of proficiency, the latter has completed the education of a gentleman ... He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches. (pp. 229-230)

Perhaps, when it came to forming good youth workers, the importance of university education was over-emphasised, perhaps even ‘disabling’ (Illich, 1977)?

### **Experiences as a lecturer amidst undergraduate youth work education**

It was through working in a tertiary program as a lecturer that I came to experience the everyday phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ of pre-service youth workers. In 2008, I was invited to develop and teach a new unit that would form a key part of a youth work-specific bachelor course in a small tertiary college. Over the following six years, I worked part-time developing and delivering specific units that contributed to this degree, including Youth Participation and Community Development, Introduction to Sociology, and Theories of Youth. My everyday experiences as a lecturer with particular students and peers in the past shaped the way I strived towards possible meanings of the phenomenon of interest. As a hermeneutic researcher, at each step of the way my unfolding interpretive work in this study was guided beforehand by my tacit presuppositions that arose from my own situated experiences of being a lecturer (Heidegger, 1962, p. 275).

Having pondered personal lived experiences relevant to the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE, in the following subsection I seek to articulate some specific pre-understandings that came to light through the hermeneutic research process.

### **Moving towards greater clarity about my pre-understandings**

We shall not cease from exploration,  
and the end of all our exploring  
will be to arrive where we started  
and know the place for the first time. (T.S. Eliot, 1963, p. 208)

The starting place for this hermeneutic exploration was to begin to illuminate my contextual presuppositions relating to the research theme (Heidegger, 1962, p. 275). It was essential that I constantly revisited this place throughout my research journey. As the researcher, how I already understood the meaning of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE was tacitly in play throughout all steps of the research project (1962, p. 275).

As a means of ‘unconcealing’ my pre-understandings, I followed the guidance of researchers who have preceded me in the tradition of Heideggerian phenomenology by participating in a pre-understandings interview (Giles, 2008; Smythe, 2011). In this encounter, my primary supervisor asked me about my specific lived experiences of ‘being an educator’ within a youth work course. This event was more akin to a genuine conversation than a formal or conventional interview. My supervisor ‘led’ the conversation in a way that allowed it to ‘lead us’ (Gadamer, 2013).

Following the interview, I transcribed the recording of our dialogue, allowing me meditatively to read and re-read ‘between the lines’ of my experiential text (Finlay, 2012, p. 21). The focus was on unveiling my elusive bias, assumptions, disposition, ‘tonality of thinking’ and pre-conceptions pertaining to my taken-for-granted meanings of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE (Ziarek, 2013, p. 102). In musing on the whole text, some distinct stories emerged from within the whole. I extracted these parts and, in the weeks succeeding my interview, hermeneutically interpreted them through interpretive writing and dialogue with my primary supervisor.

Later, nearing the end of my research journey, I returned to my stories and initial interpretations to question them again. Throughout this back-and-forth process, there were moments when light seemed to stream into an open clearing, revealing my hiding pre-understandings (Heidegger, 2011, p. 319). In other moments they

appeared to withdraw again into the shadows. Hence, ‘seeking to see’ my tacit presuppositions (that I obviously carried into this study) can never be finished. Nevertheless, it was essential to bring certain of my pre-understandings, which appeared to be hiding, out into view so as to allow them to be held open, challenged and enriched through my oncoming encounter with the participants’ stories of lived experience. Indeed, Gadamer (2013) says that it is our very pre-understandings that give ‘the hermeneutical problem its real thrust’ (p. 283).

I will now touch on some pre-understandings relating to the phenomenon under investigation that came to light in these moments.

*Asking about a phenomenon that I have already lived*

Interpreting the stories derived from my pre-understandings interview helped me to become aware that I was holding an assumption about the phenomenon I was researching: *I had personally lived it*. Moreover, this was not some bygone experience that I had never, or no longer, cared about (Heidegger, 1962, p. 82). Rather, it became clear that I was speaking of a practice I was already attentively caught up in doing myself. A hidden pre-understanding emerged: As a researcher, I was setting out to ask others about being that which I had already been (‘being an educator’ specific to youth work).

I realised that I was unable to remove myself from the context of my own living past. Thus, as a researcher, I could not journey towards uncovering ‘what it means to be an educator’ as an outsider. What also emerged was that I was predisposed to this aspect of my background in fluid ways. I had lived through events that had moved me and mattered to me in contrasting ways. As I prepared to talk with other practitioners, I became aware that their experiences would inevitably speak to mine.

The oldest of the old follows behind  
us in our thinking and yet it  
comes to meet us. (Heidegger, 2001, p. 10)

*Being a ‘fraud’ or ‘facilitator’*

Before journeying through the research, how I saw the role of being a university educator went ahead of me. In repeatedly dwelling with my interview texts, what became apparent was that I was guided beforehand by a (culturally derived and

historically effected) sense of what ‘lecturers’ in bachelor-level youth work education *are* supposed to do, and not do (Gadamer, 2013). Running through my stories was my early background sense of how the shared practice of ‘lecturers’ in youth work was meaningful in a broader context (Blattner, 2006; Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1962). Thus, I had blindly assumed that there was a ‘correct’ way to undertake the lecturer role. This was implicit in the story about my initial encounter with the role of ‘lecturer’ in a youth work program:

*I got to write a new core unit/subject for a Bachelor of Social Science in Youth Work. Before I knew it, I was thrown into my first lecture class with 30 youth work students. I felt I needed to play this role as a ‘lecturer’, and I had a baptism of fire ... In setting up the course, I felt that to be a legitimate lecturer I needed to be setting these kinds of tasks and readings ... But I didn’t really create a supportive environment for the students, to get to know the students. In this first year, I had a lot of conflict with students. I stepped in; I felt I needed to be this lecturer, like I was playing this role as lecturer. I set all this literature but I didn’t take people with me, didn’t create ways for it to be their journey – I thought it was my duty as a lecturer: I’m not there to be your friend; I am there to be a lecturer.. In that first year I felt like I was trying to do a role as lecturer, and all I’d based that on was my own experience as an undergrad student ...*

*I think I didn’t fulfil the role as I saw it. Deep down I felt like – even though I was delivering content and giving a conventional lecture, and loading people up with ideas – I was a bit of a fraud. Because I had [written] this slapstick subject from nothing, it hadn’t come through deep thinking or deep experience in the field ... I felt I was asking students about acts that I hadn’t done. Underlying was this, should I be doing this? Probably not. So I tried to impress them with this guy sounds like a real lecturer because he’s saying terms and ideas I’ve never heard of [laughs], and he’s trying to get us to read all this stuff that makes no sense. And I set a lot of technical texts, saying to them, well this is a degree, if you wanna become a youth worker, well get with the program. I think I have softened; my approach has shifted ... (Interview 1: Story 2)*

This story shows me how I already saw the role of lecturing pre-service youth workers in a certain slant of light. In my initial experiences of trying to be an educator in a lived relationship with particular students, my early mode of practice met with some resistance. While my practice had implicitly focused on trying to educate in a certain academic mould, I came to see that this way of practice itself was not ‘supportively’ allowing student learning to succeed. Perhaps I had come to see that it was not simply the students who had ‘failed’ – but my naive *way of being a lecturer* that was deficient in a specific way.

Despite my beginning struggles as a lecturer, emerging was a sense that – while I could not make what ‘I was’ in my role as a lecturer into something else – I could nonetheless ‘fall into it’ in different ways, be it in this or that way (Heidegger, 2007, p. 101). Indeed, *my initial experiences brought me into a pre-understanding of the educator as ‘fraud’ or ‘facilitator’ of learning*. In other words, my experience had given me pre-understandings of ‘how to be’ and ‘how not to be’ an educator in UYWE. I was perhaps heading into the research with an unspoken binary between a right and wrong way to tackle the role in a university situation.

I was holding an assumption that practice resembling conventional ‘lecturing’ was likely to be a deficient way of being an educator that relied on a false claim to authority (Gadamer, 2013, p. 292), akin to being an emperor with no clothes. And, by contrast, being a good educator meant to create a supportive environment that animates the thinking and stories of students themselves. I had already differentiated between specific positive/negative approaches that the educator could inhabit within their university role. This foresight was not only in play in my ongoing lecturing practice. It coloured my thinking and interpretation through the course of this research.

*There is a causality between the ‘knowing educator’s’ practice and the ‘out-coming’ of the student’s learning*

Another emerging assumption, alluded to in the previous story, was the notion that the educator is central and primary to both the process of professional youth work education and the outcomes of students’ learning. I had implicitly thought that whether or not a student came to devote themselves to their university studies successfully, and to become a university-educated youth worker, was first and foremost determined by the presence and absence of the educator’s possession of a unique blend of non-theoretical practice skills related to youth work *and* theoretical academic knowledge (in the relevant fields) implicit within university teaching (Heidegger, 1962, p. 86).

Wrapped up in this idea was also an unspoken projection that some educators appear to be ‘naturally suited to’ teaching the particular profession of youth work within the university. I sensed some had acquired a knack for university teaching while others

did not, regardless of how well they knew the subject area they were teaching (Huston, 2009).

In play here was my fore-conception that not every colleague I had encountered possessed the rare combination of part academic lecturer (co-belonging to the university tradition) *and* part guru professional (co-belonging to the youth work tradition) required to effect the specific holistic feat of UYWE. In my routine dealings with my colleagues, I categorised them as being inclined towards either one or the other (academic or youth practitioner).

Within this was perhaps a taken-for-granted binary split between the theoretical academic and the non-academic professional (Heidegger, 1962, p. 86; Whitchurch, 2013, pp. 3–5). Hence, while all colleagues acted in a common worldly role, I saw them differently. I carried with me a belief that the ‘best’ lecturers in youth work bring the ‘best of both worlds’ together in their grafted teaching behaviour. And it was this form of behaviour that I unthinkingly believed struck the perfect blend of the theory and practice of youth work. Accordingly, I was blindly suspicious that if a student did not come to understand and be successfully educated and prepared as a future youth worker, it was often the result of some deficiency in the educator’s wedding of academic and non-academic competencies.

*‘Being an educator’ starts when a person starts educating*

I held the assumption that the meaning of ‘being an educator in UYWE’ originated in a person’s first time educating within a youth work–specific course. I projected that the first moments when a person entered the academic fray to educate future youth workers was the ‘now’ when their meaningful experience of ‘being an educator’ in youth work began. My background sense of when the educator’s starting place temporally occurred shaped my framing and questioning in the interview conversations. My opening questions typically invited a participant to ‘take me back to the start’ by telling me about their first experiences teaching in a youth work program.

Thus, I unthinkingly presumed that the stories ‘of relevance’ would be the ones set within the definite temporal window in which the educator works as an educator with student youth workers. In other words, I saw that the meaning of being an educator

opens at the precise moment that a person starts educating. In equal measure, I also held a related assumption that the meaning of ‘being an educator’ expires the day a person stops acting in this role.

*‘Being an educator’ in UYWE gets its meaning from the possibility of being a youth worker*

Returning to my pre-understanding interview helped me to realise that I had assumed that people educating pre-service youth workers in the university situation shared a genuine interest in preparing students to be ‘good youth workers’ in relation to vulnerable young people (Sercombe, 2010). From my experiences, I knew that educators in Australia did not always articulate the same definition of ‘youth work’ (AYAC, 2013), nor always ‘see eye to eye’ on what makes a good youth worker (AYAC, 2014). Nevertheless, I had come to see that what made it possible to have any communal discourse (or even dispute) about the issues of ‘youth work’ (e.g. the ideal qualities of ‘youth workers’) is a shared, undiscussed, background sense that this differentiable vocation obviously exists (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 190–192).

I saw this shared taken-for-granted understanding in play beneath the surface of the stories within my interview text.

*Youth workers have to be mavericks in the sense that they need to improvise ... My hope is that graduates who go on to be youth workers could be a maverick in the sense that, if the map gets burnt up, they can improvise, they can even critique what their boss is telling them. The future youth workers I teach, work with – I want mavericks graduating ... In an unspoken way, I guess I give priority to being a maverick. (Interview 1: Story 3)*

More than merely bringing my explicit projected assertions about what I was hoping my graduates would turn out like *as* future youth practitioners, I brought a more primordial sense that educators *like me* commonly do what we do for the sake of a possibility of graduates who can work with certain young people in some way (Heidegger, 1962, p. 116). My experiences as an educator in a youth work program foretold me that ‘being an educator’ in this specific work-based field is central and integral to the process of youth worker education.

That which is understood gets Articulated when the entity to be understood is brought close interpretatively by taking as our clue the ‘some-thing as something’; and this Articulation lies before our making any thematic assertion about it ... In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a

‘signification’ over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world. (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 190–191).

*The meaning of being an educator is bound in linear time and physical space*

An assumption I held strongly was that each particular educator exists within objective, measurable time and space. Previous experiences raised my concern about the conventional university educator’s (lack of) ability to be fully ‘present’ to the students they are physically with, and to be *intentionally* ‘present’ to the specific spatial learning surroundings they are physically located in (Spier, 2013). In the light of this perceived deficiency, I projected that university educators needed to cultivate ‘mindfulness’ techniques to become more fully present to the moment-to-moment of pedagogical interactions (Barbezat & Bush, 2013). In my fore-understanding, I privileged geometrical-spatial and sequential-temporal contexts as containing the expression of *being* an educator.

I moved ahead to encounter the participants’ stories expecting they would feature places and people they had plainly been in proximate and physical contact with in their university settings. In terms of the lived experience of ‘being an educator’, I anticipated that meaningful events would be situated ‘inside’ the definite bounds of where ‘education’ is allocated, both spatially and temporally. In other words, meaningful events would be enclosed in ‘classroom’ situations and pre-set times where education was scheduled and expected to take place. In a similar fashion, I sensed I would encounter stories focused on the likely times when educators were acting ‘on duty’ with the certain students and peers who were there in the university workplace, that is, where and when they were paid and expected to work as an educator.

*‘Being an educator’ with pre-service youth workers is a serious business*

As I planned to interview kindred educators, I expected that their explicit beliefs on the social exclusion of young people in our society would echo mine. I expected to hear familiar sociological ‘takes’ on why young people were often in a position of marginalisation and disempowerment, and reflective arguments for why and how professional youth work positively responds to this situation. However, I became

aware that I was also carrying a more hidden expectation that I would encounter a serious mood related to this plight of certain subgroups of young people.

As a youth worker, I had encountered children who had been placed into the ‘temporary care’ of the government. I was deeply affected by meeting children who had appeared to have ‘fallen through the cracks’ of society. Typically, they came to us having been neglected and abused by their primary family ‘care-givers’; exiled from the mainstream schooling system; and already initiated into a juvenile justice system as ‘young offenders’. We were also frequently alerted to the fact that children in our ‘caseload’ were ‘at risk’ of self-harmful behaviours, including suicide.

It had thus become self-evident to me that being a youth worker was not always ‘fun and games’. There came an implicit seriousness about what youth workers were being called upon to do within a broader society. It was a high-stake activity, often a matter of life and death, whereby a young person’s future life chances and wellbeing were seen to ‘hang in the balance’. Prior to embarking on this research, I had already encountered some colleagues in UYWE who seem to be assailed by this same kind of attunement towards young people. Thereby, I began researching with a fore-conception that I would encounter stories that had a similar mood of seriousness to them: the university education of youth workers is ‘no laughing matter’.

*Being an educator within the university has ‘onstage’ and ‘offstage’ aspects*

It took time for me to see that I was holding an assumption that being an educator in the university involved the ‘upfront’ performance of the educator presented to individual students and groups of students. In addition to this realm, I also assumed that there was a ‘backstage’ to the educator’s everyday experiences. I did not equate the ‘backstage’ to the ‘inner life-world’ of the educator relating to their performance (e.g. fears, insecurities) (Palmer, 1998, p. 27). Rather, I saw it more as a split between the educator’s formal interactions with students *and* the more ‘behind the scenes’ interactions with peers and managers in the university workplace. Implicitly, there was no ‘between’ to the onstage–backstage of the educator’s existence in the university. Nor was I pre-looking for any possible horizon of meaning that might relate to unlikely aspects of the educator’s life, such as the home situation.

In this section, I have sketched some of the implicit pre-understandings that I brought to this research. The following section reveals how I came to find myself doing a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation.

### ***Being drawn by a 'way' of researching***

... even if *we* can't do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something *with us*, provided that we engage ourselves with it? (Heidegger, 2014a, pp. 13–14)

I began my doctoral education with a preliminary research topic, rather than any primary conviction about wanting to use phenomenology. In this way, I had assumed that 'the done thing' was to establish my research question first, because my choice of methodology was dictated by the nature of the question I was asking. Having completed my Master's dissertation (evaluating the effects of a transformative learning program), I originally sought potential PhD supervisors who had a research interest in this area. From this, I began working with several supervisors.

In the first months, still trying to confirm my research topic, I explored the possibility of focusing my PhD on alternative approaches to teaching practice in Australian higher education. My initial interest was the cultivation of 'teaching presence' in the practice of university educators (Kessler, 2000; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). I had originally intended to identify best practice and case studies from around the world that could be applied in the Australian context.

During this initial scoping phase, I had several conversations with one of my supervisors, Professor David Giles, on his hermeneutic phenomenological research. I knew nothing about 'phenomenology' let alone 'hermeneutic phenomenology'. I had never heard of the philosophers Martin Heidegger or Hans-Georg Gadamer. Nevertheless, what I heard and subsequently contemplated through these early conversations was personally transformative. What was especially surprising, given my fixation on trying to 'tie up' my research question, was that Professor Giles did not seem to be prioritising the consolidation of my specific research question. Instead, he talked about letting the 'phenomenon of interest' emerge from the everyday life and practice world that I was *already* living in (van Manen, 1990).

Even though I was yet to understand a hermeneutical phenomenological way of doing research, what was appealing to me was a mode of researching that had been life giving and profoundly transformative for Professor Giles. Gradually, as I considered this possibility more seriously, it became less a method that I could potentially do something with, and more a unique immersion experience that could do something with me. As van Manen says, paraphrasing Heidegger:

The more important question is not: Can we do something with phenomenology? Rather, we should wonder: Can phenomenology, if we concern ourselves deeply with it, do something with us? (1990, p. 45).

While I was yet to come into a deep appreciation of the nature of phenomenology, I found a 'yes' emerging in response to this call.

In beginning to make sense of this unfamiliar methodology, van Manen's (1990) description of phenomenology, and its applicability for educational research, immediately clicked with me. I was animated to hear phenomenology being described as the study of lived experience; as the *thoughtful* contemplation of the experiential and ontological meanings we live *as we live them*; as a quest for what it means to be human; as a poetising activity (I had come as a songwriter and musician); and as an interpretive study that pays attention to our lived relationships with others (van Manen, 1990). Rather than looking to explore specific methods that higher educators could use to prepare professionals (Palmer, 1998; van Manen, 1990), I started to wonder about possible overlooked meanings of experiences I had already lived as an educator with others in my vocational world.

We had the experience but missed the meaning. (T.S. Eliot, 1963, p. 194)

I had never expected that I could possibly do a PhD that was focused on researching *lived* experience relevant to my own specific region of practical involvement in the world. It seemed almost too good to be true. And yet, it resonated with my own experiences in the world. Turning my attention from theoretical improvements to the educator role to the lived experience of this phenomenon, I embarked on a research journey that continues to reach every aspect of my living, educating and relating as a father, husband, friend and person in the world (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008). Having accepted the call to concern myself deeply with phenomenology, the central focus of my research emerged with a sense that it had been there all along, waiting for me. I began attuning to the lived experience of the everyday practice of being an educator with professional youth workers.

As I began to journey in a way of phenomenology, I moved towards a fuller understanding that there was not one right way of doing phenomenological research, or even of doing hermeneutic phenomenology. At first desperate to find fixed guidelines and formulas, I slowly accepted that this was not a research pathway that could be paved by ‘calculative thinking’ (Heidegger, 1966). Again and again, the research approach that would enable my inquiry emerged from talking with Professor Giles. If there was one stance that we returned to time and time again, it was a central interest in the question of *being* (ontology). I am deeply grateful that David was able to become my primary supervisor.

In early conversations, David would speak in ways that seemed strange yet thought-rousing. What he was saying would entice my thinking. For example, David’s gestures in our conversations towards peculiar notions like ‘Dasein’, ‘being thrown’, ‘sorge’, ‘clearing’, ‘ontic/ontology’, all appeared puzzling, yet alluring. At the time I was not aware, but he was perhaps opening up for me the language and sensibilities of a research approach known variously as *phenomenology*, *interpretive phenomenology* and *hermeneutic phenomenology*. Later, I came to understand my methodological approach primarily as being ‘ontological phenomenology’ (van Manen, 2014; van Manen & Adams, 2010). My experience of being able to continue this ongoing dialogue with Professor Giles has been a life-altering, relational gift. These times always beckoned me to keep ‘chewing’ (ruminating) on the existential meanings that lay within stories, waiting to reveal the nature of a particular way of being human in the world, rather than to ‘produce’ research output efficiently.

Professor Giles also pointed me towards other experienced scholars who share a passion for phenomenological inquiry. I was especially fortunate that Dr Peter Willis later joined my team as my associate supervisor. Peter brought a wealth of insight as a senior lecturer in adult learning and education at the University of South Australia. I was also able to draw on his practical wisdom related to phenomenological-existential approaches to arts-based research, reflective practice and transformative education (Willis, 2000, 2002a, 2012).

Another formative experience in my understanding of this research approach was my participation in the 2014 Institute for Heideggerian Hermeneutical Methodologies

(IHHM) at Indiana University, directed by Professor Pamela Ironside. This weeklong forum gave me a deeper induction into the scholarship of hermeneutic phenomenology and its practical applications in the context of research in the human sciences. The forum coincided with my interpretive analysis stage, whereby the workshops on analysing, interpreting and reporting data were particularly timely.

Following this intensive, I was also able to attend the weeklong Institute for Hermeneutic Phenomenology with visiting philosophers Assistant Professor Andrew J. Mitchell and Professor John Lysaker from Emory University. This second institute was more advanced and provided me with a unique opportunity to participate in deep conversation with experienced hermeneutic researchers and professional philosophers. We were guided through a course entitled ‘Testimony and the poetics of the self, Celan, Gadamer, Derrida’. As a group, we hermeneutically engaged in dialogue with texts of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1997) and Jacques Derrida (2005) on the poetry of Paul Celan (1995), a holocaust survivor.

The experience of joining a community of experienced researchers and philosophers in the hermeneutic tradition was profoundly transformative for me. In unexpected ways, being immersed in communal interpretations of Celan’s poetic texts, and thinking about the implications for our research work, opened up new ways of working with my textual data. I was also able to meet personally with Professor Ironside and Emeritus Professor Sharon (Sherry) Sims to seek their ‘phenomenological nod’ regarding my emerging themes (van Manen, 1990). Their insights sharpened my thinking and affirmed what was becoming clear from my initial analysis.

In this section I have shared some of my story of how I came to encounter the familial ways of research known as Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology and ontological phenomenology. I will offer further dimensions of my experience following in this research tradition in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis. In summary, I came to be drawn along by a challenging encounter with the free-flowing, let-the-thoughts-come nature of hermeneutic phenomenology (Smythe, 2011, p. 37). My methodological pathway led me to my question and brought my research project to life, granting me openings towards refreshed understandings of ‘being an educator’ in a way that I had not previously thought possible.

### ***Structure of the thesis***

This research is presented in nine chapters.

This introductory chapter has provided an opening into this study. I have shared the impetus for this research, and the prior experiences and pre-understandings I brought with me to the research. I have laid out the purpose of the research. Finally, I revealed how I came to use a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach.

The following chapter (Chapter 2), ‘Contextualising being an educator’, situates this research historically and culturally by describing sweeping challenges that appear to be converging on an educator who is thrown amidst modern Australian universities today. Recent demands and murkiness are also seen as specific to the lived experience of educating within Australian UYWE programs.

Chapter 3, ‘Being an educator’, muses on the literature relevant to the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ in Australian UYWE. Applying a hermeneutic approach to reviewing literature (Smythe & Spence, 2012), the focus is on uncovering different pre-understandings and fore-conceptualisations of the educator implicit in various texts. Emerging from this exploration is a call to investigate meanings within the lived experience of those who are *being* educators in the everyday context of UYWE.

Chapter 4, ‘A philosophical path opens’, summarises the key philosophical ideas that have opened a way of being in and moving through this research. I give the most attention to the contributions of Martin Heidegger because they provide a unique vehicle for understanding the meaningfulness imbued within human experiences of ‘being’ in the world (ontology).

Chapter 5, ‘Retracing footsteps’, shows how a philosophical path opening from Heidegger’s ideas has shaped the unfolding of the research process. The purpose of the chapter is to hold open the research process for interrogation by others. I reveal challenges encountered along the pathway and how I addressed these.

Chapters 6 to 8 present lecturers' stories of lived experience alongside my interpretive commentary. As a whole these discussion chapters point to essential aspects of the meaning of 'being an educator' within Australian UYWE today.

Chapter 6, 'Being in conversation', reveals the essential conversational nature of the experience of being an educator in UYWE. Educators are constantly immersed within the surprising interplay of conversing with others. I present stories that show contrasting modes of conversation that appear to happen and matter for educators within their educational community.

Chapter 7, 'Our having-been-ness is always in play', contemplates how we are always in relationship with our living past as educators, whether consciously or not. Who and how we have been in the world continues to reach us beyond the measurable time and space of historical experiences, influencing our everyday experiences as educators within a university world. In addition, an educator's having-been-ness and not-having-been-ness can sometimes be a matter of concern for others.

Chapter 8, 'Dwelling in possibility', uncovers how the educator constantly exists in a fluid state of flux regarding their own ability to keep being an educator amidst a challenging world of practice. As we find ourselves thrown into different practice situations, we are constantly experiencing our own existential 'possibility-for-being' as an educator in contrasting modes.

Chapter 9, 'Conclusion: In the life stream of being', discusses key understandings emerging from this research and their practical implications for Australian UYWE and beyond. A series of recommendations are offered for further research. This chapter also reflects on how the research experience itself might open possible ways of dwelling in the university world for other educational researchers.

## Chapter 2: Contextualising being an educator

The previous chapter showed the personal context and pre-understandings that I brought to this inquiry. This chapter situates the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ (in youth work) within the context of modern Australian universities. In hermeneutic research, literature pertaining to the context of the study is treated with equal importance as literature relating to the topic (Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 23). Setting the context is important because this study assumes that *understanding* always proceeds from its own particular backdrop of time, place and cultural practices (Gadamer, 2013, p. 310; Heidegger, 1962, p. 275; Kisiel, 2013, p. 16; Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 23). From reviewing literature pertinent to the context of this study, what arises is a concern about the converging and contradictory demands that the educator is confronted with in Australian universities.

In this chapter I firstly consider historical-cultural forces that have come to dominate universities today. Recent transformations have led to modern universities in countries like Australia being infected by an unforgiving focus on economic rationality (Thornton, 2014). The scope of this reform is such that some commentators have identified a ‘culture of carelessness’, grounded in Cartesian rationalism, that pervades higher education organisations (Lynch, 2010). This tendency is being exacerbated by the mechanics of neoliberalism, namely new managerialism, bureaucratisation and marketisation, all of which are negatively impacting the everyday working lives of educators in the university sector. After exploring these universal challenges, I then describe the historical background and recent complexities specific to Australian UYWE. Particularly destabilising for educators in this specialised field is an ongoing struggle to establish, cultivate and defend ‘youth work’ as a distinct and valued profession within higher education and society at large.

### *The assault of neoliberalism*

Within the fiercely competitive global market today, the governments of knowledge-based economies have come to reimagine universities, paradoxically, as vehicles for both social change and the expansion of prosperity (Ramsden, 2003, p. 3). Now more than ever it seems that higher education is frequently referred to as an industry in a competitive and neoliberal marketplace (McAlpine & Akerlind, 2010, p. 8). Whether

this is essentially a good or bad turn for higher education – a ‘problem or solution’ (Gibbs, 2001) – continues to be contestable.

Many critical commentators speak with grave concern about the erosive impact of neoliberalism upon contemporary higher education (Gibbs & Barnett, 2014; Giroux, 2014; Nussbaum, 2010). In listening to the discussion about neoliberalism’s assault on traditional forms of university education, the sense of a dark force can be discerned, a force not only killing the spirit of higher education (Smith, 1990) but dramatically altering the very nature of what it means to be an educator in the university today.

Towards the end of the 1980s, neoliberal policies began to bite in the sphere of Australian higher education (Connell, 2013). Neoliberalism has been described as a value-based, normative economic and social theory that is underpinned by an assumption that our relationships to our public world and with one another are mediated via the free commercial market (Lynch, 2014, p. 4; Molesworth, Scullion & Nixon, 2011). One dominant expression recognised in contemporary universities, aligned with neoliberalism, is a mode of governance called ‘new managerialism’ (Kirkby & Reiger, 2014; Lynch, 2014; Thornton, 2014; Watts, 2006). This involves a way of governing that prioritises the enactment of technical changes that are guided by dominant market interests and the goals of capitalism (Jamrozik, 2001; Lynch, Grummell, & Devine, 2012).

Those who point to the threats that neoliberalism present to higher education seem to focus on the centrality of contemporary universities. That is, the concern is how the historical institution of the university is being corrupted by the maligned reorientation towards creating privatised citizens and towards a way of education that educates students primarily for themselves (Giroux, 2002; Lynch, 2010). Such analyses address new shortfalls in the delivery of time-honoured public goods needed to serve a democracy’s higher educational needs (Anderson, 2004; Giroux, 2014; Nixon, 2011; Thornton, 2014). According to this line of argument, democratic societies, in order to stay alive, do not fundamentally require their higher education institutions to produce specialist graduates capable of acting as ‘useful machines’, but rather, ‘complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and achievements’

(Nussbaum, 2010, p. 2).

While this critique demands consideration, there seems to be an absence of concern for the taken-for-granted centrality of the educator in higher education. That is, a question that perhaps goes unasked is how the ‘dark force’ of neoliberalism might be affecting, in often concealed ways, the everyday experience of being an educator in today’s university world.

Anderson (2004) reminds us of the presupposed importance of the educator, which is easily overlooked amidst the increasing busyness/business of higher education:

A story is sometimes wistfully repeated within academic circles of an Oxford don who, when referred to as an employee of the university, replied indignantly, ‘Sir, we are not *employees* of the university. *We are the university*’. The contemporary Australian university is hardly an environment in which academics would make this claim. It is, however, axiomatic that the capacity of public universities to meet Australia’s higher education needs is largely dependent upon the academics teaching and researching within them. (p. 185)

I will now explore this often forgotten and silenced interest in the contextualised experience of those engaged in the vocation of university education, for educators are inescapably bound up in the crisis in higher education.

### ***The struggle of being an educator within higher education today***

According to some texts, educating in today’s university context can still be satisfying, even pleasurable for a person (Nelson & Watt, 1999, p. 282; Wyn & Sherrington, 2006). Young scholars can find reassurance that, for many academics, there is a ‘sense of vocation’ in doing the job of university teaching that remains intact today (Wyn & Sherrington, 2006, p. 1). Prospective university educators are told that there are abundant aspects available for different people to enjoy, whether it be: intellectual stimulation; having an opportunity to change the world for the better (by influencing debates about public policy); the personal rewards that come from teaching a module that students both enjoy and learn from; contributing to the personal development of a particular student; or even doing administrative tasks (pp. 1–2).

Sounding almost like an apologetic for the increasingly countercultural decision to become an educator today in contemporary higher education, the authors go on to

declare:

Real satisfaction can be derived from a sense of purpose and belonging that an academic community can still provide, even if universities look increasingly like educational service businesses run as impersonal bureaucracies. (Wyn & Sherrington, 2006, p. 2)

While these authors evidence their claims, they do gesture, albeit fleetingly, to recent drawbacks that erode the educator's 'sense of vocation' amidst the university (p. 1). Thus, even those actively promoting the vocation to potential newcomers seem to concede that preserving enlivening dimensions that have historically come with being an educator is not straightforward in today's higher education sector.

Indeed, since the significant advent of neoliberalism in Australian universities in the late 1980s, university educators have expressed various sources of distress. In particular, the dimensions of neoliberalism like new managerialism, bureaucratisation and marketisation have been cited to be negatively affecting the everyday experiences of educators in the university sector (Avis, Kendal & Parsons, 2003; Gornall, Cook, Daunton, Salisbury & Thomas, 2014; Lynch, 2010; Raoul, 2012; Thornton, 2014; Walker & Nixon, 2004). Educators have expressed growing dismay at how neoliberalism has altered the practices and nature of educating in the university. They can no longer relate to staff at other universities as colleagues but as competitors; they are now constantly forced to verify, measure and sell the economic validity of courses that were never designed to be sold in the first place (Connell, 2013).

Literature also reveals the educators' shared displeasure with the insistent demands of auditing and performance evaluation – entrenched processes that they are expected to comply with and drive. These activities are troublesome for many as they not only refocus and distract from research and teaching efforts, but also alter the very cultural life and mood of the university. Now fully institutionalised into the average day of educators, frustratingly, even ironically, are 'performative technologies' perceived to redirect attention to the *measurable*, no matter how inappropriate this may be in educational terms (Lynch, 2010, p. 55). What this dynamic creates is arguably a type of Orwellian surveillance of the educator's everyday work by the university institution (Lynch, 2010, p. 55).

Other scholars allude to still further pressures mounting upon educators in today's

universities, notably the unpredictable and often irrational rationalisation of staff and funding cuts despite swelling student numbers (Gibbs & Barnett, 2014; Hare, 2015; van Onselen, 2013; Walker & Nixon, 2004). Furthermore, in discussing sanitised and dehumanising aspects like knowledge commodification, marketisation, productivity agendas, accountability regimes, bureaucratisation, economic rationalism and micro-managerialism, many voices in the literature explicitly or implicitly call upon educators, leaders and concerned citizens alike to take collective action to reclaim higher education from market-driven neoliberal ideologies (Giroux, 2014; Gornall, Cook, Daunton, Salisbury, & Thomas, 2014; Nussbaum, 2010; Raoul, 2012; Walker & Nixon, 2004).

Adding to this grim picture, Gibbs (2004) attunes to a shared mood of ‘distrust’ that assails those who partake in the contemporary life of the university. Gibbs says that the ‘existential distrust’ that has come to belong to the modern university means that the personal horizons of learners and educators are constrained to ‘what is known about the knowable, measurable and economically valuable and leaves little room to engage students creatively in the exploration of knowing’ (p. 155). Learning and teaching in higher education are now reduced to a restrictive narrative of utilitarianism, whereby there is no longer any impetus to know, explore and invent that which will not secure a job (p. 155). To distrust in the university, existentially,

is to favour hegemony and passivity, leading to egocentric manipulation and exploitation. At its worst it misuses other scholars (e.g. research students) as objects for the satisfaction of another academic’s career. A discourse of distrust anchors the university in the safety of the present, restricting personal horizons to what is known about the knowable, and leaving little room to creatively engage students in the exploration of knowing. (p. 155)

As a mark of the extensiveness of a multifaceted struggle, there are studies that now show a bleak trend of disillusionment amongst people who already teach in the university scene, and those considering taking up this career pathway. Indeed, the university is becoming a ‘harder sell’ in terms of attracting and retaining academic staff to work as educators amidst a neoliberalised university sector. It appears that the hallmarks of competitiveness, competency standards, quality assurance and performance indicators, which now shape the everyday vocation of educating in the university sector, might be deterring people from staying in and joining the profession (McAlpine & Akerlind, 2010, p. 6; Ramsden, 2003, p. 4).

Ramsden (2003) voices this possibility by representing educators' increasing and common displeasure with teaching in the university context:

[University teachers] are unimpressed especially by the administrative effort associated with quality assurance and accountability. It uses up time and energy that could be focused on the core business of research and teaching ... The idea of learning as a dialogue between student and teacher appears to retreat before a tide of bureaucracy. Tensions arise especially from the requirement to do more with less – to teach more undergraduates, to supervise more research students, to get those students through their degrees more quickly. (p. 4)

Coates and Goedegebuure (2012) concur, suggesting that such tensions are now making the possibility of being an educator in the university 'unattractive' for people. They interpret the academic profession as 'untenable' due to the 'onslaught of pressures that touch its core', including the rise of competitiveness, performance-based funding, quality control, and the changing nature of professional work (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012, p. 876). Concern has been expressed that the academic workforce is shrinking, while student numbers and corresponding workloads associated with mass education are increasing (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012; Fitzmaurice, 2010). If this is a fair impression, then it is no wonder that Coates and Goedegebuure (2012) call for the urgent reimagining and recasting of academic work. The summary offered by Giles and Kung (2010) starts to resonate: 'On an educator's personal journey [in higher education] towards greater congruency and authenticity, the workplace can be challenging and, at times, life-less' (p. 309).

### ***The challenge of carelessness***

Academic and activist Kathleen Lynch has examined the impact that neoliberal discourses and practices are having on the traditional ethic of care in higher education communities (Lynch, 2010, 2014; Lynch, Grummell & Devine, 2012; Lynch, Lyons & Cantillon, 2007). While Lynch analyses the ways that higher education organisations and management are deeply gendered and male-dominated, she discloses a hidden cultural manifestation of neoliberal reform, born from market pursuits, which affects both men and women in the higher education sector. She describes this aspect as a 'culture of carelessness' (Lynch, 2010, p. 54).

While aligning with the critical perspective on neoliberalism, Lynch believes that carelessness in higher education does not merely spring from neoliberal capitalism. Rather, she says it is rooted in the classical Cartesian view of scholarly work, namely

the idea that the educator's work is 'separate from emotional thought and feeling and that the focus of education is on educating an autonomous, rational person, *homo sapiens*, whose relationality is not regarded as central to her or his being' (p. 59). What this means for higher education, believes Lynch, is that a 'new managerialism' has become prevalent, ascribing moral status to carelessness: 'The pursuit of unbridled self-interest (rationalized in terms of a "career") has not only been normalized, it has status and legitimacy' (p. 59).

Lynch discloses the mode of senior management in higher education that is premised on dominance and carelessness, and guided by an idealisation of the worker as 'one that is available 24/7 without ties or responsibilities that will hinder her or his productive capacities' (Lynch, 2010, p. 57). The academic, irrespective of their gender, is expected always to be on call even if not 'at work': 'much of the work, including answering emails, writing papers and books, is implicitly expected to be undertaken in "free time", including at nights and weekends' (p. 57).

But Lynch's critique goes even further. Her work is not about blaming the unethical, deliberative or careless behaviours and stances of individual university managers. Rather, she contends that capitalism breeds an 'organizational culture marked by increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (to the university and higher education), and a declining sense of responsibility for others' (p. 57). Such is the extent of this cultural life form that even the educator's act of caring for one's own wellbeing is now incidental.

According to Lynch (with Lyons and Cantillon, 2007), it is a mark of the deep-rootedness of Cartesian rationalism that being an educator has been equated more with the activity of 'leading out' than it has with the activity of social 'caring' (p. 3). Cartesian rationalism, captured in the phrase 'Cogito ergo sum' (I think therefore I am), has embedded an understanding of the educator and 'the person to be educated' as autonomous, economic and rational beings, who are engaged in a process that prepares the student, qua education, to achieve her or his potential in the public sphere of life while ignoring the relational caring self (p. 3). This analysis highlights a situation where educators are perhaps vulnerable to being mistreated due to the carelessness of others, especially by senior managers who primarily march to the rules of a market-driven sector, whether consciously or not.

What begins to become clear is an absence of humanising care in contemporary higher education for the key players who make it happen, a situation in which the educator's *educating* tends to be measured primarily in cold economic terms, while their human experiences are sidelined (Galvin & Todres, 2013).

### ***The challenge of learning to be an educator in the university***

Who educates the educators? (Thomson, 2001, p. 255)

The literature reveals that teaching within the university is no easy task, irreducible to the mere acquisition of a set of competencies (Fitzmaurice, 2010; Gadamer, 2013; Heidegger, 1968; Scown, 2003; Taylor, 1991). And yet, the neoliberalisation and commodification of higher education breeds pressure on teachers to perform at the top of their game constantly in a competitive marketplace.

Thus, in light of the mass increase in class sizes occurring in Australia and internationally, curriculum content and innovative pedagogy have received more attention (Arvanitakis, 2014; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Entwistle, 2009). This has given rise to the challenging of traditional pedagogical forms, such as the lecture, that have long been used and accepted around the globe. For example, the normative lecture is now seen as old-fashioned 'chalk-and-talk', as mere information transmission (Friesen, 2011), and the lecturer as an antiquated 'sage on the stage' who should be replaced by an interactive 'guide on the side' (King, 1993).

It seems that an historical demand for the kind of academic who can enact the role of entertainer and charismatic communicator continues to play out implicitly in contemporary discourses concerned with retaining academics capable of being 'quality' teachers in higher education settings (Bexley, James & Arkoudis, 2011; Fitzmaurice, 2010). But some commentators warn that idealistically expecting academics to be born 'expert' educators amidst the hostilities of mass education (sometimes involving frightening audiences brimming with passive students), may deter people from joining the sector, and in turn, destabilise the higher educator sector (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012; McAlpine & Akerlind, 2010; Scott, 2007).

Corresponding to this concern is the question of whether those who are called upon

to teach within university courses are being adequately *educated to educate* in this context. It is conventionally thought that university-based educators will either naturally possess or independently acquire the necessary ‘competencies’ needed to provide quality education: that they will somehow perform to internal, national and global benchmarks of teaching excellence (including successfully achieving the high levels of student-rated ‘customer satisfaction’), and deliver on a range of measurable teaching performance indicators (Ballantyne, Bain & Packer, 1997; Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012; Fitzmaurice, 2010; Hay, 2011; Ramsden, 2003). Yet in the Australian context, university faculty are still rarely prepared formally or elaborately for the intricacies of pedagogical involvement in university teaching. While in recent years many Australian universities have introduced a raft of different models and development programs to support new faculty in learning to teach in the university, these opportunities are not always mandatory or particularly helpful, in terms of actual educational development outcomes for those who partake in them (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012; Hicks, Smigiel, Wilson & Luzeckyj, 2010; Johnston, 1997).

Studies reveal that beginning lecturers are likely to report being inadequately prepared in the skills, strategies and practices of university teaching (Young & Diekelmann, 2002). Coates and Goedegebuure (2012, p. 876) suggest that moving into academe is not as seamless as it once was. Indicative of this trend, a National Research Student Survey (NRSS) was conducted in 2010 across 38 universities in Australia to explore the career intentions of research students, and found that nearly half of all PhD student respondents aspire to work outside a university (Edwards, Bexley & Richardson, 2011, p. 24).

One of the key factors believed to be straining the vocation of university teaching is the increasing dissonance between the academic skills that students are assumed to have when they enter university, and the actual competencies that they demonstrate. Ramsden (2003) puts it bluntly:

Widening participation means that today’s academics are also expected to deal with an unprecedentedly broad spectrum of student ability and background. They can no longer rely on students having detailed previous knowledge ... Attainment in literacy, the primary generic skill, often leaves much to be desired. One in five students in the United Kingdom, and one in three in Australia, will drop out. (p. 4)

Jansen and Meer (2012) support this assessment, reporting that beginning students

are less likely now to arrive equipped with the prerequisite academic competencies needed for university education, such as essay writing, critical thinking and independent learning. They cite a mismatch between student and university expectations as a core factor in student non-completion (p. 3). In such a predicament, there is implicit pressure placed on the university educator to take on the extra responsibilities of coaching students in academic practices, which are considered by university teachers to be distinctly different from those developed in high school (p. 3).

Across different academic disciplines and settings there is a lack of clarity and induction around the meaning, pedagogy and intentions regarding university teaching (Ballantyne et al. 1997; Norton et al. 2005). For example, while there is some evidence that university teachers are beginning to move away from what Freire (2000) calls the traditional ‘banking’ model of education towards more relational, dialogical and participatory approaches to learning, many university teachers continue to believe that their essential role orients around knowledge transmission and measurable outcomes (Emslie, 2009a; Hay, 2011, p. 14; Norton, Richardson, Hartley, Newstead & Mayes, 2005).

While there may be some scope for university teachers to self-determine and cultivate their own teaching objectives and methods based on their personal values, personal interests, preferences and teaching style (Ballantyne et al., 1997, p. xxviii; Corney, 2004a, 2004b; Hay, 2011; McAlpine & Akerlind, 2010), this possibility for autonomous practice may make it harder for university teachers who are starting out. This uncertainty is perhaps further accentuated by the differences in cultures across disciplines and institutions, especially when it comes to the preparation of future faculty in a still unestablished and niche field like youth work (Roholt & Baizerman, 2012, p. 138).

### ***The challenge of being a human services educator in contemporary Australia***

For academics working in a field related to a specific helping profession, there seem to be tensions exasperated by political factors linked to their human services area. Those who teach within specialty programs, like youth work courses, are arguably situated in a broader realm of social welfare services that have been government-sanctioned and framed by an economic rationalist and neoliberal agenda (Bessant et

al., 1998; Bowie, 2004; Emslie, 2012; White & Wyn, 2013). In specific relation to youth-oriented studies and services, universities operate in a dynamic relationship to the state and society at large and are thus a politically charged ‘sites of tension’ for educators who provide student youth workers with specialty university education (Roholt & Baizerman, 2012, p. 127).

On this point, Palmer speaks of the weighty societal responsibility that is implicitly placed upon the shoulders of educators who teach university programs like youth work:

We blame teachers for being unable to cure social ills that no one knows how to treat; we insist that they instantly adopt whatever ‘solution’ has most recently been concocted by our national panacea machine; and in the process, we demoralize, even paralyze, the very teachers who could help us find our way. (1998, p. 3)

### ***The historical context of university youth work education in Australia***

Having considered some of the significant and universal demands of being an educator in the context of contemporary higher education, I now turn my focus to the backdrop and challenges unique to Australian UYWE today.

For over forty years, Australian government and youth work sector reports and independent research have talked about the need for the quality education of youth workers (Bessant & Emslie, 2014, p. 139; Chew, 1995; Ewen, 1981; Hamilton-Smith & Brownell, 1973; Maunders, 1990). While the provision of formalised education for youth workers has a long history in Australia (originating as far back as 1919 when the Australian YMCA conducted a short one-off course aimed at retraining returning servicemen), it was not until 1944 that youth work education in Australia emerged as an ongoing concern (Brooker, 2014, p. 139; Ewen, 1981, p. 36).

One narration is that credentialed youth work education in Australia arose from a pre-Second World War popular agenda in Australia, aimed at advancing the physical health and fitness of young people expected to serve in the armed forces during the looming war (Brooker, 2014, p. 139; Maunders, 1990; Maunders & Corney, 2014, p. 107). In this time of preparation for war, the Australian federal government passed the *National Fitness Act* in 1941 to ensure that the ‘youth of Australia’ were

physically ready for what would be demanding roles in the armed services and industry (Collins & Lekkas, 2011, p. 714).

This Act reflected the discourse and thinking of the times, as signified by the opening of an editorial on physical fitness in the *Medical Journal of Australia* in January 1941:

These are times when the term 'physical fitness' is on almost everybody's lips, times when ability to live strenuous days, to do a man's work and more, is regarded as almost the *summum bonum* ['highest good' or 'ultimate goal'] of life. (quoted in Collins & Lekkas, 2011, p. 714)

The introduction of the Act appears to have been guided by a bilateral and publically supported campaign, as voiced by the then Australian Minister for Health, Sir Frederick Stewart, who asserted that although

this is a machine age and a time of mechanized warfare ... behind the machine, in the shop or on the battlefield, there must be a fit people ... and provision, above all, to ensure the continued fitness of the young folk to whom we will hand on that heritage for which we are now fighting. (quoted in Collins & Lekkas, 2011, p. 714)

Henceforth, the passage of the *National Fitness Act* saw federal government funds being made accessible at a local level through National Fitness Councils, which were formed in each state. These parallel bodies were coalitions of the various philanthropic organisations offering youth-specific programs in most Australian cities. The state councils comprised representatives from these key youth organisations, including the YMCA, the YWCA, the major church denominations, the Guides, the Playgrounds Association and Boys' Clubs (Collins & Lekkas, 2011, p. 714; Maunders & Corney, 2014, p. 108).

Specifically oriented to children and youth, National Fitness Councils supported programs and facilities deemed to serve the national fitness agenda: children's playgrounds, physical recreation, personal development, youth clubs and school camping programs, as well as the establishment of physical education in schools and its teaching and research in Australian universities (Bessant, 2012, p. 56; Collins & Lekkas, 2011, p. 714; Maunders & Corney, 2014, p. 107). While these programs were primarily delivered by and reliant upon volunteers, full-time workers began to be employed to lead them (Bessant, 2012, p. 56; Collins & Lekkas, 2011, p. 714; Ewen, 1981, p. 36; Maunders, 1990; Maunders & Corney, 2014, p. 107).

Henceforth, specialist training courses were developed in response to the need to train youth workers in this particular historical context in Australia. This training was initiated with a YMCA training college in Sydney (1947–1963), which later moved to Melbourne and was taken over by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (Mauders & Corney, 2014; Bowie, 2005). Meanwhile, the University of Melbourne also briefly experimented with specialised training courses for full-time youth leaders from 1944 until 1947, until this agenda was absorbed into generic social work education programs (Brooker, 2014; Ewen, 1981; Mauders, 1990; Mauders & Corney, 2014).

In the early 1970s, there was an organised movement of professional youth workers in Victoria who began to articulate a shared concern about the inadequacy of existing diploma-level ‘training’ (Mauders & Corney, 2014, p. 113). This prompted the initiation of a research project into the educational requirements of professional youth workers, leading to the publication of a significant report entitled *Youth Workers and their Education* (Hamilton-Smith & Brownell, 1973). This report made strong recommendations for professional youth work education to be relocated and ‘carried out within the mainstream of tertiary education, i.e., within a university’ (Hamilton-Smith & Brownell, 1973, p. 158). Mauders and Corney (2014, p. 113) identify this project as influential in paving the way for the entry of Australian youth work education into higher education.

Subsequently, by the 1980s some youth work education was relocated in universities (Bessant, 2012, p. 57). This coincided with a broader intellectual epoch that was gaining momentum in universities at the time, involving neo-Marxists, feminists and post-structuralists. Universities were becoming sites for challenging long held assumptions underpinning social welfare services; the deconstruction of hidden contradictions of binaries like ‘control and cure’ and ‘regulation and emancipation’ (Bessant, 2012, p. 57). This new wave allowed a kind of youth work education to germinate, one characterised by critical reflection (Bessant, 2012). This new mode guided learners and academics to challenge traditional expressions of youth work, which historically focus on the regulation, ‘leadership’ and ‘saving’ of young people in society, by disclosing the previously unquestioned power relations within them (Bessant, 2012; Mauders & Corney, 2014).

But not everyone interested in the formalised education of professional youth workers embraced the renewed intellectual route of youth work education that came with its import into universities. Despite many youth workers and academics asserting that quality youth work education was more likely to occur through specialty university education (Maunder & Corney, 2014), literature reveals that this agenda was not universally welcomed. Indeed, from the 1980s there seems to be an ongoing ideological and discursive clash about whether universities are in fact the appropriate ‘home’ for youth work education.

While this was happening in some quarters, other youth workers went in the opposite direction, by continuing to promote an overtly anti-intellectual sentiment by arguing that there was no need to educate practitioners by exposing them to ideas and various academic disciplines. It was not uncommon, for example, to hear claims that education was indulgent and pretentious and that good intentions, altruism, experience and a commitment to young people were all that was needed. (Bessant, 2012, p. 57)

Jeffs and Spence (2008) also talk about the ‘historic struggle to locate youth and community work education in the university sector’, rejecting any claims that efforts to establish university-based youth work has merely been about ‘snobbery and a hankering after mythic professional status’ (pp. 158–159). Rather, they assert that it has always been predicated upon a belief that youth workers would receive the best possible pre-service education if it was located within institutions dedicated to the liberal arts (p. 159).

More recently, Australian advocates for university-based youth work education in the Australian context, Bessant and Emslie (2014), continue to make a similar case for further investment in university-based youth work education, suggesting:

that a good university education is important for producing graduates capable of becoming experts and good practitioners in the Aristotelian sense of the word. This entails the provision of learning opportunities to attain specialist knowledge, technical expertise and ethical capacities of the kind that distinguish youth work practice from other approaches to work with young people. Such an education also promotes the prospect that practitioners are able to develop a professional habitus that advances youth work as a discrete field of professional practice. (p. 137)

And yet, forty years after calls in this vein first appeared in Australia, and despite the Australian youth sector recently agreeing that an ‘undergraduate degree’ should be the minimum level of qualification to practice youth work (AYAC, 2011), moves to

sustain and nurture the provision of UYWE still largely fall on deaf ears (Bessant & Emslie, 2014, p. 139).

For those teaching in existing UYWE programs, such a situation perhaps intensifies the normative challenges that come with teaching in the university, possibly casting shadows of uneasiness and uncertainty.

### ***The ambiguity of 'youth work' as a distinct occupation in Australia***

The nature of youth work-specific education in the university means that this phenomenon can only occur in a broader social-cultural-historical context where there is a vocation commonly articulated as 'youth work'. And yet, literature suggests that in Australia there continues to be uncertainty, including within the youth sector, about how 'youth workers' differ from other professionals who work with young people. This lack of clarity in the sector, and broader society, may be making the daily existence of educators in UYWE more tenuous.

At first, the question 'What is youth work in Australia?' may seem relatively straightforward to answer. However, when one delves into recent literature, the waters quickly become murky. Historical accounts of Australian youth work describe its ongoing story as a major governmental project (Bessant, 2012, p. 54; Bowie, 2005). In an elucidating text, Bessant (2012) tells the ongoing story this way:

Given the colonial pattern of modern Anglo Australian history, it is not surprising to discover that the history of Australian youth work points to a significant British legacy, which has more or less shaped Australian youth work from the mid-nineteenth century into the present. Early forms of youth work involved what some historians ... describe as a class-based project driven by 'respectable fears' about 'social degeneration' and social order with an interest in pacifying the urban poor ... [Child] saving was part of a larger movement dedicated to solving new social problems like delinquency denoted in Australian terms as 'larrikinism' ... Classic expressions of the importation of British models included the Sunday School movement, the YMCA and its network of sporting facilities or the spread of the Boy Scout movement. (pp. 55–56)

From these British-influenced beginnings, there are now tens of thousands of agencies across Australia where professional 'youth workers' are employed (Bessant, 2012, p. 52). While taken in its broadest sense the term 'youth worker' might apply to a range of occupational groups that work with and for young people (such as teachers, social workers and nurses, to name a few), the term 'youth work' in

Australia has commonly come to refer to a particular profession that ‘places young people and their interests first’ (AYAC, 2013, p. 3).

More specifically, professional ‘youth workers’ are identified as people who work *with* and *for* young people across areas such as health, juvenile justice, education, child welfare and child protection, employment services, housing services and residential care, youth justice, supported accommodation for homeless people and people with a disability, legal services, probation services, health services (including drug and alcohol), individual and family relationship counselling, spiritual development programs, community development activities, inclusion programs in governance and organisational decision making, leadership development, social entrepreneurship, policy development, advocacy services, drop-in centres and street programs (Bamber & Murphy, 1999; Batsleer & Davies, 2010; Bell, Vromen & Collin, 2008; Bessant, 2012; Bruce et al., 2009; Gabriel, 2013; Nash, 2009; Nicholls, 2012; Spier, 2013; White, Omelczuk & Underwood, 2009).

But Sercombe (2010) claims that what essentially sets apart a ‘professional youth worker’ is not their employment status, education level, knowledge, professional membership or code of ethics. Rather, a *professional* youth worker is someone who *professes*,

who makes a profession of some kind ... a vow, a pledge, a commitment. A professional is someone who commits him or herself to serve some sort of constituency, typically people in some state of vulnerability, with a particular focus to their service. This is essentially a moral position, an ethical commitment to serve. (p. 10)

Within the parameters of this ideal, there are marked differences in terms of work situation, work setting, work focus, underpinning ideologies-values, processes-methodology, aims-aspirations, and young people (target group) (Cooper, 2012; Gabriel, 2013; White, Omelczuk & Underwood 2009). Gabriel (2013, p. 22) suggests that the only characteristic that Australian youth workers seem to share today is that they work towards improving the life situations of young people.

Literature reveals that there are varying and often contradictory pre-understandings and experiences of youth work practice held by different people (Cooper, 2012). Roholt and Baizerman (2012) explain:

Youth work ... is not a simple category, but is rather a Wittgensteinian<sup>2</sup> [sic] ‘family of resemblances’ ... one which crosses multiple academic disciplines and semi-to-full professions. There are multiple communities of practice ... within the category of youth work. Further, there is direct youth work, hands-on work, and indirect youth work, planning, policy making, managing, supervising, and evaluating. (p. 131)

Davies (2013, p. 56) likewise draws on Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘family resemblance’ to represent youth work as a number of activities and practices which share a family resemblance. But what is the common attribute that gathers different activities into a unique type of caring profession? Sercombe (2010) says that diverse practices are jointly discoverable, as ‘youth work’, if they bear this resemblance:

*Youth work is a professional relationship in which the young person is engaged as the primary client in their social context ... This definition holds whether the youth worker is paid or a volunteer, a student or a manager, trained or untrained, a bureaucrat or an academic. If you take up the challenge of being a youth worker, your primary client is young people, and your sphere of intervention is the social context in which they live. (p. 27)*

Although different professionals may commonly identify themselves as ‘youth workers’, it seems that they might exhibit contrasting beliefs and ‘takes’ on the meaning of YW. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, youth work in Australia appears to be commonly seen as *professing*, whether explicitly or tacitly, to serve the interests of vulnerable and marginalised young people.

The meaning of ‘being a professional youth worker’ in Australia also seems to be guided by an assumption that there exists in the public world a specific group of people called ‘young people’, often described/constructed by youth workers as ‘subjects for intervention’ (Sercombe, 1997, p. 44); a distinguishable population of people who ‘experience persistent, systemic disadvantage, discrimination and unequal access to valued resources ... young people aged 12–25 years tend to be responded to by many older people in biased and unfavourable ways’ (Bessant, 2005, p. 10).

Australian youth workers are also commonly conceived as public advocates for social change: practitioners predisposed to voice strong critiques – not only in the academic world but in the public realm – concerning how young Australians are

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<sup>2</sup> I think this is meant to read ‘Wittgensteinian’, referring to Wittgenstein’s (1953) philosophical ideas about language.

conceptualised, represented, talked about, socially excluded and negatively affected by government policy, the mainstream media, and public and adult-centred discourses (Bessant, 2009, 2013, 2014; Edwards, 2009, 2010; Emslie, 2010; Westoby & Ingamells, 2007; Wyn, 2005). This means that youth workers are inclined to talk and think about ‘young people’ in socially unconventional ways that intentionally avoid the popular and common-sense stigmatising and scientific terminology of the day, such as ‘adolescent’, ‘youths’ and ‘juveniles’, thereby ‘attempting to deconstruct common discourses of youth as alien, as Other’ (Sercombe, 1997, p. 47).

The ambiguous and often misunderstood nature of professional youth work poses a serious challenge for youth work faculty in the higher education world. As Fusco (2012), Bessant (2012), and Roholt and Baizerman (2012) all identify, the lack of current clarity around what it means to be a professional youth worker makes it difficult for university educators who are trying to: 1) develop and define youth work as a distinct academic discipline and body of knowledge; and 2) design and deliver an integrated preparation program/curriculum that begins with essential professional capabilities. This tension is evident in the recent national research project funded to develop a ‘sustainability mode’ for university youth work as a ‘niche’ academic profession (Cooper, Bessant, Broadbent, Couch, Edwards, Jarvis & Ferguson, 2014).

### ***The challenge of stemming a tide of cuts and closures***

While influential Australian university educators in youth work continue to articulate compelling rationales in public for the investment in university youth work programs (Bessant & Emslie, 2014) and, as just mentioned, the leaders in UYWE have recently rallied together to conduct cross-institutional research towards co-constructing shared curriculum, frameworks and benchmarks for the future education of youth work professionals (Cooper et al., 2014), undergraduate youth work education in Australian universities continues to be threatened by cuts and closures.

Literature shows that the future of university-based youth work education hangs in the balance, despite the continual demand from government and NGO agencies for youth work graduates with a university degree specific to ‘youth work’ (Emslie, 2012). Confronted with the prevailing economic rationalism permeating Australian

higher education, Emslie highlights the urgent need to help ‘stem the tide and threats of cuts and closures to undergraduate youth work education in universities’ (p. 18).

This situation is evident by the closure, in 2010, of the University of Western Sydney youth work course, and concerns have been raised about the upheavals in and changes to the quality of the youth work program at RMIT (Emslie, 2012). There are now a declining number of ‘boutique’ government-accredited youth work degrees, or degrees with youth work majors, offered within Australian higher education institutions and typically the numbers of students who commence youth work courses are small. At the same time,

universities are under increasing pressure to make financial savings as a result of prolonged and significant government underfunding. This context places ‘boutique’ courses such as youth work more and more at risk of restructures and rationalisations, which involve generalising youth work into other disciplines such as social work, education or psychology to enable larger class sizes and cost savings; moving youth work courses into the vocational education and training (VET) or technical and further education (TAFE) sector because they are cheaper to deliver; or closing the programs altogether. (Emslie, 2012, p. 18)

In this neoliberal landscape, governments are rationalising both higher education and the human services, meaning that universities receive less government support while still being expected to supply the growing demand for effective helping professions in the public world, such as youth workers (Bessant, 2007; Bowie, 2004; Emslie, 2012; Ramsden, 2003). In the current political context in Australia, Bessant (2007, p. 44) argues that universities are rationalising the education of youth workers because these institutions have been fiscally squeezed by successive federal governments.

Therefore, what seems to be particularly destabilising for educators in Australian UYWE is an ongoing challenge of defending the ‘stand-alone’ youth work programs, in which they design and teach, against the economically inclined prerogatives of university decision makers. This is seen as making it even more difficult to hold one’s already ‘niche’ ground in the academy as an educator in youth work.

### ***Youth work as still yet-to-be-professionalised***

From attuning to this literature, what becomes clear is that the profession of youth work in Australia is still seen by many specialists as ‘not yet professionalised’, unlike established professions such as nursing and teaching (Bessant, 2004a, 2004b;

Cooper, 2013; Emslie, 2012, 2013; Sercombe, 2004). By contrast, the academic disciplines that are firmly established within the academy are typically aligned with recognisable, registered and regulated occupations (Bessant, 2007, 2012; Emslie, 2012; Fusco, 2012). Complicating efforts to cement youth work as a sustainable stand-alone field, in comparison to many other Western countries, youth work in Australia 'is still in its infancy' as a recognised and distinct occupation (Bessant, 2007, p. 50).

Ballantyne et al. (1997, p. xxviii) report that a core aspect of a university teacher's brief is to teach the practical skills and knowledge required in a particular profession. But this task is complicated in Australian UYWE because youth work still does not have national standards, accreditation, professional association, regulations, mandatory training, a code of ethics and so on (Bessant, 2007, 2009, 2012; Cooper, 2011b; Emslie, 2012; Sercombe, 2004). This state of affairs is considered by some directly to undermine and threaten the survival of undergraduate youth work education in universities (Bessant, 2007; Emslie, 2012). It may also contribute to the youth work academic profession having a collective psyche of being the 'odd one out' amidst the rapid national accreditation and registration of other specialised health and community professions (Emslie, 2012, p. 18).

Many youth workers today are still able to practise without any formal educational qualification (White et al., 2009, p. 12), meaning that virtually anyone can self-identify as a youth worker regardless of whether or not they have had any formal education (Emslie, 2012, p. 18). Australian youth work educators have taken it upon themselves to advocate for the professionalisation of youth work in Australia. Notably, Emslie (2012, p. 21) has recently made a case that it is time for professional youth workers to be required to complete an *accredited university qualification* in order to ensure the education and quality of service delivery within the youth sector. This challenge perhaps differs from other vocationally orientated university programs, where a specialised university degree has long been a prerequisite for being allowed to practice as a trusted kind of professional in society.

### ***The divergent pathways of formal youth work education***

In Australia today, VET institutions and universities each offer separate formal youth work qualifications, thus resulting in bipolar pathways, educational values,

pedagogies, epistemologies and curricula around youth work education (Bessant, 2012; Bowie, 2004; Corney, 2004a, 2004b; Emslie, 2012). The former may be more appealing to many, for it takes less time to complete and is less ‘academically demanding’. This heterogeneous qualification process has generated debate and an ideological clash between the VET youth worker training curriculum and the Australian university youth work professional education (Bowie, 2004; Cooper, 2011a; Corney, 2004a, 2004b). This underlying dilemma of where youth work education fits as a ‘niche profession’ even caused Watts and Singh (1998) at one stage to propose that the professional education of youth workers belongs with teacher education.

The daily vocations of university youth work educators continue to be destabilised by the following unresolved question: ‘Are institutions of higher learning the best site and are faculty the best people to prepare [professional youth workers]?’ (Roholt & Baizerman, 2012, p. 129). Some influential voices are clearly saying ‘yes’ to this question (Bessant, 2007, 2012; Emslie, 2012). For example, Bessant (2012) argues that ‘a higher education framework is more likely to ensure that graduates achieve the requisite intellectual, ethical and practical capacities associated with being a well-grounded and highly effective professional’ (p. 66).

Alternatively, Roholt and Baizerman (2012) provokingly wonder whether the ‘center of gravity’ is moving youth work education away from universities, and away from graduate-degree prepared faculty (pp. 138–139). They present a possibility that youth work education may come to reside closer to the community, with more emphasis on practice than on research and with the educators being local craft masters (p. 138). This resembles bygone eras when those who taught practitioners in the crafts like weaving and pottery were master craftspeople residing in the community, away from formal and structured education (p. 128).

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has sought to show the particular context of this research. The review of relevant literature portrays the particular context of Australian UYWE as a demanding and ruthless hermeneutic situation in which to ‘be an educator’. Amidst a neoliberalised, marketised, rationalised, competitive, dehumanised, careless, busy and business-like world that is the modern university, the question of what it

essentially means to be a university educator, in the distinctive field of youth work, perhaps easily goes unheard. As Palmer (1998, p. 3) suggests, in our rush to progress curriculum content, teaching techniques, e-learning possibilities, productivity and efficiency, and graduate attributes, we might often forget to understand the human heart of what it means to be an educator.

There is already helpful literature that re-thinks approaches to university professional education programs, like youth work courses, and the learning that occurs within them (Dall'Alba, 2009c, p. 3). And some studies even invite university-situated practitioners to theorise and reflect on what it means *for them* to be a university teacher/educator (Abbas & McLean, 2001; Åkerlind, 2004; Norton, Richardson, Hartley, Newstead & Mayes, 2005). However, what tends to be often overlooked are the 'existential dimensions' that attend to what the experience of university educating might mean to the educator in her or his actual experience of these processes within contemporary higher education (Willis, 2012, p. 212).

Hence, this study moves forward, attuning towards the vital meanings of 'being an educator' as shown by the experiential narratives of people who teach within the niche field of Australian UYWE. Voiced another way, the thrust of this hermeneutic-ontological study is to allow the meaning of educating pre-service youth workers to shine forth from the educators' rich narratives of situated 'lived experience'.

### Chapter 3: Being an educator

This chapter further contextualises the research by offering a review of literature relevant to the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE within Australia. The central focus is how the educator is variably pre-understood, practised and theorised in the literature. Initially, I consider literature that shows contrasting historical conceptualisations of the ‘educator’, including a range of both positive metaphors (such as the educator as ‘nurturer’ and ‘midwife’) and critical views (for instance, the educator as ‘naive accomplice’ and ‘disabler’). In addition, I will review and interpret the literature that concerns ‘being an educator’ in the particular Australian context of UYWE. In the light of what emerges through the review process, the final part of the chapter considers what might be heard when the focus of inquiry is transposed into a new key. What appears to open is the possibility of a phenomenological contribution, drawing research towards deeper understandings of ‘being an educator’ as it is experienced in UYWE.

#### *Historical concepts of the ‘educator’*

Like threads of old spiderwebs, still sticky and hovering, the past waits for us to submit, or depart. When I least expect it, [the past] comes skittering out of the dark, spinning and netting the air, ready to snap me up and ensnare me in old and complex puzzles. Just a glimpse of a worn-out patchwork quilt and the old question comes thudding out of the night again like a giant moth. (Kogawa, 1981, pp. 30–31)

This section explores pre-understandings of the educator in historical literature, including scholarly articles, fictional works and historical records. I discuss particular texts that show how the educator has been foreseen from different perspectives.

We do not merely encounter history as an abandoned spider web, to be excavated for relics of ‘over and done with’ meanings (Rée, 1999, p. 48). Rather, deep history is how past happenings continue to matter to us today as we press ahead into our futures; these events have altered things in such a way that we are still living inside the specific region they keep weaving for us (Clark, 2011, p. 30; Dahlstrom, 2013a, p. 96; Heidegger, 1962, p. 41). Thus, I give attention to literature that discloses historical understandings that appear to live on today. This is important because understandings shared today are inevitably reworked from understandings shared

yesterday, even when they have become so commonplace that they have become transparent to us. In this way, past understandings are not always dead, but are accessible appropriations of past events, which wait to emerge out of language that speaks to us, coming alive, even from unlikely sources and at unexpected times.

When viewed against the history of humanity, we can appreciate that the English word ‘educator’ is relatively new (first appearing in the fifteenth century). The word took on different understandings as communities began articulating an aspect of their shared lives together. And yet, prior to the emergence of this English word the phenomenon (described in this study as ‘being an educator’) has perhaps long touched human beings, even in fleeting moments when the right words for experience are out of reach. That is to say, being human has always involved learning from one another and being engaged in the process of educating with others, whether or not we are conscious of this and regardless of the words we have available to convey this experience.

This means that, undoubtedly, there are pre-understandings of the educator concealed in literature stretching back further than the recorded advent of the English word ‘educator’. Early views of the educator are re-viewable in preserved texts spanning periods of ancient history from times when the English word ‘educator’ was yet to arrive. It is not possible to journey back to re-cover all prior understandings of ‘being an educator’ that have been handed down and renewed over time and across cultures. Instead, in this section I can only offer incomplete glimpses. A beginning is taken by tracing the etymological origins of the English word ‘educator’ back to the early modern period, and following where they might lead.

### **The word ‘educator’ speaks**

In beginning to look for pre-understandings of ‘being an educator’, it is easy to drift to the word ‘educator’ as the obvious place to start. Today, the meaning of this word has possibly become unquestionable: familiar, obvious and readily usable for many of us living in English-speaking contexts. Thus it is necessary to turn to literature that uncovers origins of the common word ‘educator’. Attuning to the etymological beginnings of ‘educator’ is important because this research seeks to return to an original lived mode of being in the world from which this word ‘originally sprang’ (van Manen, 1990, p. 59).

## **The educator as nourisher**

When consulting the authoritative, matter-of-fact voice of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) we are not offered a single definitive answer to the question of the entity called ‘educator’. Rather, multiple definitions are gathered and arranged for us chronologically.

The earliest known meaning of ‘educator’ (n.) is presented first: ‘A person or animal that rears offspring with respect to physical needs’ (*OED Online*, 2015). Along with this first expression the OED cites a curious sentence from 1566, thought to be the first recorded instance of this word in the English language: ‘That moste sacred fountaine of the bodie, the educatour of mankind.’ The educator of humankind, we are told, was seen as the woman’s breast. More specifically, it was the spring of breastmilk that nourishes babies in an irreplaceable way.

In search of the source of this citation, the OED refers us to the first volume of English author William Painter’s *The Palace of Pleasure* (1968). Within this collection of tales there resides one in which Painter discusses the philosophy of Favorinus [80–160 AD], a Roman sophist philosopher. Favorinus seemed to believe that, through the act of breastfeeding, not only was the child physically and vitally nourished, but the mother’s ‘very being’ was also conveyed to the child, and the child’s moral character was mysteriously being formed (Huizenga, 2013, p. 181). The particular sentence (italicised below) is from the following passage:

You kind woman, do you think that nature has given you two breasts for nothing else but to beautify and adorn your body, and not to give suck to your children? Many ominous and monstrous women have dried up and extinguished *that most sacred fountain of the body, the educator of humankind*: not without peril of their persons: thereby disgracing their beauty and decency. (Painter, 1968, p. 91, rendered into modern English by the researcher)

This text evokes a powerful, albeit surprising, early pre-understanding of the ‘educator’. It leads us to an intimate image of a child sucking rhythmically at the sanctified part of a woman.

This text also comes with a stronger provocation: the educator in this story is not the ‘sacred fountain’ belonging to just *any* woman who happens to have fresh milk on offer for neonates. By contrast, the image is of a *mother* feeding *her* offspring milk at

her bosom.<sup>3</sup> In the time when Painter's tale was written, it seems that the importance of the mother breastfeeding her own child was not always recognised. The voice of Favorinus is dissuading a woman from conforming to the socially acceptable outsourcing of the nourishment of her child to a 'wet nurse' (Painter, 1968, p. lxix). With a tone of disdain, the mother is bid to take up her responsibility to 'nourish' the child *herself, gracefully*, even radically, with 'her own milk' (p. lxix).

In this text the 'graceful mother', taking up her duty to nourish her own child, is blatantly positioned in stark opposition to the 'disgraceful mother', who relinquishes the pivotal nourishment of her child that only *she* can give. The latter is likened to a monster, invoking an image of a woman suppressing and 'drying up' her squandered milk supply, and with it her capacity to be a nurturer.

Either way, this text tells of the educator as a participant in a relational act: one that exceeds a mere impersonal and physical transaction. Emerging from this early citation is a sense of how the word 'educator', etymologically and fundamentally, grew from the past tense form of the human act of nourishing and rearing the early life of others in the world (Terasaki, 2013, p. 24). This idea is also joined by a possibility of a difficult lived process. As with breastfeeding, the fulfilment of the one seeking to educate and the nourishment of the eager recipient may sometimes be elusive, irrespective of how desperately and diligently both may devote themselves to the task.

### **The educator as midwife**

The OED also informs us that 'educator' (emerging in the mid-fifteenth century) is a past participle stem from the Latin *ēducāre*: the origin of the English verb 'educate'. Attending to the etymology of the English 'educator' therefore requires an appreciation of this much earlier Latin word.

Represented in the word 'educator' is the Latin *educare* meaning 'to rear or bring up', and it is related to *educere*, 'to lead forth' (Bass & Good, 2004, p. 162; Thomson, 2001, p. 266):

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<sup>3</sup> Mothers who have breastfed their young might agree that this early picture gestures: the calling of nourisher and recipient to each other; a complex act that requires a special space permissible for this act; and the possibility of deep fulfilment for those who are engaged in the nourishing process (Ryan, Todres & Alexander, 2011).

‘education’ seems to have absorbed the Latin *educere*, for it means not only ‘bringing up’ (in the sense of [rearing]) but also ‘bringing forth’ (in the sense of actualizing); these two meanings come together in the modern conception of education as [that] which develops certain desirable aptitudes. (Thomson, 2001, p. 266)

Diamond (2001) concurs, saying that an original understanding of *educere* in our modern practice has been diminished by the surging idea of education as ‘pouring things into the student’ (p. 82). Nevertheless, Diamond recovers the possibility of a primordial metaphor for the ‘educator’ that still comes to us from the Latin origin of the English word ‘educate’:

the literal meaning of *educere* ... means to *lead forth*. To lead forth, that is what we are doing when we are educating. When we remember what *educere* meant originally, we understand anew why the metaphor for education so often is the midwife; that is, to lead forth in a quite literal sense. (p. 83)

We are harkened to Socrates of ancient Greek times, interpreted as the quintessential ‘midwife of the mind’ (Diamond, 2001, p. 83). Entertaining this early allegory we might ask: how is the educator like the midwife? Lawn and Keane (2011) provide a clue. Following Gadamer, they reinterpret the story of Socrates as follows:

As midwife Socrates is not in possession of truth but is there at its birth. Like a midwife he is not the central figure but a facilitator. The real birth of truth is what happens in genuine dialogue ... Not only does Socrates facilitate truth, he facilitates dialogue ... Here Socrates is only one voice in a larger conversation where all are participants rather than disputants; he provides the conditions for the emergence of truth from the collective voice of the conversation. (pp. 31–32)

This idea of the educator as midwife resonates with van Manen (1991, p. 38), as it suggests that the educator is a person who vigilantly *leads* someone else out of a world they are in, and beckons them *into* another. This implies that the educator has already ‘gone first’ into this new horizon and thus can be trusted, for they have ‘tested the ice’ (p. 38). But we might wonder whether the person on the move, who is called upon to trust the educator, can make their migration without the educator being there to lead them.

We may also ask: if the educator is akin to the midwife who tacitly works to bring forth the unique child into the world from within the child’s bearer, then what is it precisely that the educator implicitly seeks to lead forth from within others? The early answers of Aristotle and Aquinas are stirred: ‘The aspirations and capacities for

the human good are by nature implanted (but unequally) in each breast, and that natural good is what we should be leading forth' (Diamond, 2001, p. 83).

While appreciating how this answer might be encountered today, Diamond (2001) still bids us to recognise a living pre-understanding that continues to reach us today:

[the answers of Aristotle and Aquinas] would get us into a long discussion of modern social science, relativism, positivism – is there such a thing as the good, who is to say, etc. I leave all that aside, but I point out to you that, unless what is in each is good, why should we want to bring it out? Do we not necessarily imply that what is there is good by the very fact that we want to bring it out? Could anyone seriously argue for leading forth the bad? By the very word education and by our actions we presuppose the Aristotelian or Thomistic – or one variation or another of them – ideas of the natural law impressed upon the human heart. (p. 83)

The 'educator', in a primordial sense, was seen as the person who seeks to 'bring out' something good from within others. Amidst any ongoing debate concerning the precise 'good' that the educator is called to reach for, which may shelter within people waiting to be led out, we nevertheless arrive at a prior Greek notion of the educator as the person who prepares the passageway for the arrival of something vital, assumed to be already implanted within every human being, even in randomly instilled and unequal proportions.

This story perhaps presents us with the educator who is not the central and primary figure. In the same way that childbirth has long occurred both with and without the presence and intervention of the midwife, and sometimes in spite of the misgivings we may have towards the midwife, so too might education eventuate for someone with and without the assistance of the helpful or unhelpful educator. Jaspers suggests that the existence of the student is a precondition for the existence of the educator (1960, pp. 111–112). That is, there can be no educator without the student. It is less clear whether the converse is true.

Beyond all our subjective takes on the priority of the educator, pondering this metaphor brings into focus a complexity. For example, does the educator always succeed in actually educating what they expectantly and expertly reach for? Does it bring the possibility of dissonance between what the educator projects will come to pass, by virtue of their educating, and what they are presented with in various situations, including the occasional absence of arrival? Are there occasions when – in

spite of the educator's best (and poorest) efforts and honed craft skills – that which the educator hopes to see emerge simply 'refuses to budge'?

The words of a poet come to us, illuminating the limits of the educator as midwife:

The astronomer may speak to you of his understanding of space, but he cannot give you his understanding.

The musician may sing to you of the rhythm which is in all space, but he cannot give you the ear which arrests the rhythm nor the voice that echoes it.

And he who is versed in the science of numbers can tell of the regions of weight and measure, but he cannot conduct you thither. (Gibran, 2013, p. 68)

Perhaps the educator is not the protagonist after all? In light of the idea of educator as midwife, we notice that the educator might encounter particular individuals who are unready or even unwilling to receive what the educator works to help bring forth from within them? And by contrast, are there other students who come to education pregnant and expectant of the happenings of education, but appear to be labouring in vain despite all their painstaking receptivity – unable to birth what the educator is assisting them to? What comes into view therefore is a representation of the educator that contradicts any deterministic notion of an omnipresent educator upon whose shoulders the possibility of education firmly rests. This early conception of the educator stemmed from a view where education is not primarily dependent on what the educator has to give (Ruitenbergh, 2011).

### **The educator as 'the one who knows'**

The literature shows how pre-concepts of the educator are always bound up with different background contexts of cultural practices. One unique life context in which the phenomenon of 'being an educator' has long been experienced, across different cultures, is the *university*. Given that this research focuses on how 'being an educator' is experienced today within Australian university programs that orient to the youth work profession, it is important to attend to literature that shows pre-understandings of the educator relevant to the historical context of Australian universities.

It appears universities founded throughout colonial Australia, from the mid-nineteenth century, were not formed from a 'clean break' with the mediaeval legacy of European universities (Sherington & Horne, 2010). Rather, Australian universities

were initiated upon received understandings about the university, and correspondingly on the educator-scholar in the university. The ‘founding fathers’ of Australian universities established new institutions in physical settings that were uncanny to them, oceans apart from their native British soil (Meek, 2006, p. 67). Nevertheless, after arriving, they appear to have continued to abide in historical-cultural prior biases about university education that were familiar and pre-articulated for them (Meek, 2006). Inescapably, these foresights guided how they ‘fathered’ the new university institutions, and how they estimated the worth of their own work.

This can be glimpsed in the founding story of Australia’s first university, the University of Sydney, established in 1850. The university’s first principal was John Woolley, who has been described as ‘Australia’s first professor’ (Cable, 1968). In Woolley’s 1852 inaugural oration there seem to be taken-for-granted ideas of the educator as knowledge provedore already in play. He elucidates the work of beginning the ‘first colonial University in the British Empire’ (Woolley, 1862, p. 4) by reiterating a traditional typology of the university and, by implication, the educator. He firstly appropriates the words of Sir William Hamilton for the journey that lies ahead:

The idea of a University ... is two-fold: it is first, what its name imports, a school of *liberal* and *general* knowledge; and, secondly, a collection of *special schools*, devoted to the learned professions. Of these the former is the University, properly so called; the second is complementary and ministerial. The former considers the learners as an end in and for himself, his perfection as man simply being the object of his education. The latter proposes an end out of and beyond the learner, his dexterity, namely as a professional man. (Hamilton, 1852, quoted in Woolley, 1862, p. 12)

Woolley then further elucidates what such a prior idea might mean for the horizon of the freshly unveiled university:

[Few] modern Universities preserve unimpaired the *two-fold type of their origin*; in some the special schools have well nigh superseded the general; in others they gave practically disappeared themselves. While either neglect is deeply to be regretted ... we may yet derive an instructive lesson from the comparative fortunes of those Universities in which special or general teaching has prevailed. Both have come short of their appointed purpose, but not both equally. In the former, knowledge, however technically and professionally accurate, has *failed to preserve to the graduates that estimation which a degree originally claimed*, and, in course of time; their narrow and partial requirements have been lowered to a continually decreasing standard. The graduates of the latter, although unhappily compelled to seek their professional education beyond the precincts of the mother University, have yet secured almost a monopoly of credit and success. The soundest lawyers *come forth* from schools in which law is

never taught; the most accomplished physicians are *nurtured* where medicine is but a name. Neither of these examples will, we hope, be followed by the University of Sydney. (1862, pp. 12–13, emphases added)

In this text a specific notion of the university-situated educator can be noted, derived from the European university tradition. The educator is seen as the deliverer of both *general* and *specialised* knowledge to higher education students. However, within this binary of related meanings the former is privileged and the latter is downplayed as a secondary priority.

This is not to say that the university's essential task was not upheld as producing good professionals, in serviceability of the public world. Rather, *general knowledge*, related to what we now describe as liberal arts or humanistic education, was seen as paramount to the nurturing of 'sound' professionals. This is emphasised by Woolley's assertion that it is better for graduates to need to supplement their proper university education with specialised vocational education from a non-university institute than it is for them to commence their vocation after receiving a deficient university education. Does this imply that the primary task of the university educator exceeds the mere production of specific professionals?

Woolley here is taking up the debate of the day, voicing at one point his disappointment with the 'failure of Mechanics' Institutes and People's Colleges' (1862, p. 13). He advocates sustaining original university education that leads forth *successful* and *creditable* professionals by providing liberal education. He warns of the impediments to the 'advance of science' that mount with an increasing societal demand for university education to attend to 'utilitarianism' and the 'diffusion of information, with its desultory superficialism' (p. 10). Here we perhaps encounter an implicit view of the university educator as one who must be the custodian of an ancient tradition of mediaeval and English universities, of which Woolley proudly stands as 'the representative' (1862, p. 4).

The educator's true calling is seen in the light of the British mould of universities, like Oxford and Cambridge, which had long concentrated on the intellectual emancipation, enlightenment and character formation of the individual through the teaching of the liberal arts (Ross, 1976, p. 7; Woolley, 1862, pp. 4–7). Prior to any professional education, the 'higher purpose' of university education (Woolley, 1862,

p.17) is thought to conform primarily with traditional disciplinary courses of study that graft together the ‘classic languages, with logic and mental philosophy on the one hand, and on the other, mathematics and the elements of physical science’ (Woolley, 1862, p. 15). Woolley articulates a prior canon of knowledge that orbits around the liberal arts, seeking to ‘induce’ in undergraduates

a habit of patient, connected, vigorous, independent thinking, and [afford] a general prospect of the most important objects of thought, the world within us, and the world without, both in our relation to our fellow-men, and the constitution of the physical creation. (p. 16)

With this text the image of the educator as midwife perhaps resurfaces.

After establishing this first order, Woolley (1862) then concedes, almost as a pragmatic afterthought:

And from this central teaching, too, will spring forth, we trust, [before] long schools of applied and professional science, which shall distribute over the surface of society more than their direct and immediate benefits. From these walls, we will dare to hope, will go forth, statesman, not merely of prescription or expediency, but believing that the practice of life may be regulated by fixed and eternal principles; lawyers, not merely indexes of a statutory code, physicians, whose knowledge is not confined to the constitution of the body and the phenomena of disease, scholars, finally, who will neither neglect nor abuse their sacred gift which they have received; received not for their own pleasure or improvement, but for the enlightening and instruction of all. (p. 22)

Woolley’s oration stops short of implicating the university educator as aiming towards, in Hamilton’s words, ‘learners as an end in and for himself’ with learners’ ‘perfection as man simply being the object’ of the educator’s educating.

Nevertheless, in chorus with Hamilton’s ideation, the educator is an initiator of the student’s higher learning as a person before and beyond an attendant to the student’s preparedness as a ‘professional’ person. Australia’s first university is grounded upon such a notion: that the professional education of undergraduates is ‘complementary’; ‘ministerial’; a natural by-product of resolute professorship to the liberal arts, the study of classic texts, and controlled debate – activities guided by the mediaeval idea of higher education (Barnett, 1990, p. 19).

Woolley’s (1862) oration passionately invokes a primal image of the educator as nurturer:

a University is ... *the nursing mother* of literature; her office is not to teach only, but to regulate and guide, sometimes encouraging that which is unduly

depreciated, restraining within limits that which is valued beyond worth. (p. 10)

Thereby, embedded within the Australian university context from its very commencement is a discursive binary tension between the university educator as teacher of general arts and specialist professional knowledges. Underlying Woolley's subjective ideal about the priority of the former (within the twofold charter of university education), there appears to be a core assumption that the educator situated in the university must steadfastly focus on teaching the 'eternal' liberal arts, rather than emphasise the practical in preparation for the worldly professions. For such an erosion of universality and tradition is taken to reduce a university degree to superficiality, no longer worth the paper on which it is bestowed.

Exploration of historical literature reveals that such a binary did not begin at the advent of Australian universities that came with the expanding of the British Empire. Instead, it proceeded from a discourse embedded in the universities of the Middle Ages. We can pick up this early discourse in the work of an influential historian of the universities of the Middle Ages, Hastings Rashdall (2010):

We have been told that the great business of a University was considered to be liberal as distinct from professional education: we have seen that many Universities were almost exclusively occupied with professional education. (pp. 712–713)

While the first Italian universities arose in response to the emergence of new societal demands for professional lawyers, physicians and theologians, Paris, Oxford and Cambridge universities took a different path, becoming dominated by doctors of theology who taught the seven liberal arts (Ross, 1976, pp. 5–7). Correspondingly, the educator within the university context has long been seen as preoccupied either with the academic world *or* practical world of professional education (Minogue, 1973).

It appears that such historical understandings of the university educator continue to live on today, defying our ordinary concepts of chronological time. For example, one recent text by Associate Professor Ruth Barcan (2013), who is based at the University of Sydney today, shows how traditional pre-understandings give us a sense today of what it means to be an educator in the university:

When I am at work, silent, sinister faces glare down at me. Perhaps many people know the feeling, but these scary workplace presences are in my case

a sign of privilege – part of an honoured iconography. For the grotesque faces are sandstone gargoyles, chimeras and dragons perched on the roof of a university quadrangle. A piece of colonial mimicry, they are part of an architectural iconography that ties my Australian university to the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, and beyond that to the abbeys and monasteries of medieval Europe. In so doing, they tie it to a particular *idea* of the university. (p. 1)

Carried in this text is perhaps a sense of ties to implicit ideas of the university educator, belonging to the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. Deeply grafted within such roots are contemporary ways of understanding being a university educator that are not as ‘new’ as they might seem. The literature reveals that the educator in the university context continues to be seen as the transmitter (and imparter) of structured knowledge content, and information, to students (Åkerlind, 2004; Knight, 2002).

While there are different historical notions of ‘knowledge’, the pre-understanding of the university educator as imparter of knowledge seems to gesture to the Greek *gnostikos*, meaning ‘one who knows’:

The notion is related to ‘mind, judgment; maxim and opinion.’ In the second century, gnosticism emerged as the sectarian belief that reason is the proper device to teach and practice religion. In its extreme forms gnosticism involved the mystical revelation of supernatural knowledge for an elite of knowers and saviours. In our age, at the more secular level, the gnostic attitude in [the sciences] also proceeds on the principle that the process of [education] is approached and defined in terms of rationalistic factors. (van Manen, 1999, p. 24)

With increasing pressure for university educators to be esoteric, technical specialist knowers (Said, 1994), the often unspoken and undying expectation is that being an educator means having the relevant answers ready to hand; always being the one ‘in the know’ in their area of expertise; and reliable as the central ‘fountain’ of knowledge. Thus a recent work by Huston (2009), written for university educators, alludes that ‘teaching what you don’t know’ destabilises a taken-for-granted understanding of being a university educator. Whereby, the following kind of scenario is assumed to threaten people expected to teach in the university:

Your graduate work was on bacterial evolution, but now you’re lecturing to 200 freshmen on primate social life. You’ve taught Kant for twenty years, but now you’re team-teaching a new course on ‘Ethics and the Internet.’ The personality theorist retired and wasn’t replaced, so now you, the neuroscientist, have to teach the ‘Sexual Identity’ course.

Everyone in academia knows it and no one likes to admit it: faculty often have to teach courses in areas they don’t know very well. The challenges are

even greater when students don't share your cultural background, lifestyle, or assumptions about how to behave in a classroom. (back cover)

### **The educator as awakener**

Even if a person is teaching what they *do* know (with the understanding that as educators their job is to transfer already-known knowledge to students), we might still ponder how different individuals might care about their work in varying ways. For example, one shoemaker might lovingly handcraft shoes for people with a deep sense of artistry and vocation, while for another manufacturing shoes might be 'just a job' (Wrathall, 2005a, p. 102). But what about educators – how might *educating* matter and not matter to different individuals?

It appears possible that some, even after years of educating in the university, may become less assured as to the true meaning of their mode of being in the world as an educator; of what they are doing; and how it matters to them and others.

Having taught for half a century [in higher education], I have found myself increasingly uncertain as to the ... underlying truths of this 'profession' ... The profession of the [university educator] spans every conceivable nuance from making a routine, disenchanted living to an exalted sense of vocation ... Immersed as we are in almost innumerable forms of teaching ... we rarely step back to consider the wonders of transmission, the resources of falsehood, what I would call ... the *mystery* of the thing. What empowers a man or woman to teach another human being[?]. (Steiner, 2003, p. 1)

In pausing to reflect on this question, we might doubt whether the empowerment of a person to enter a 'vocation' is even possible in today's age of modern technology. In a neoliberal world where we expect 'education' to be quickly manufactured and instantly available, is it still possible to educate today with a deep sense of worth and vocation (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Giles, 2010; Giroux, 2014; Raoul, 2012)? Are educators able to withstand the voices of pragmatism and economic rationalisation? If an educator aspires and labours towards the realisation of exalted meanings, are they doing so in vain?

One voice that touches on this tension, and the question of human longing, comes not from a scholarly or philosophical text, but an Australian novel published in 2012. An informal exchange between a professor and her reluctant protégée emerges from an unexpected source:

‘Every teacher becomes foolish because of a dream; perhaps the same dream: that one day a student will come along who connects with what you say, more than that, whose life can start over again because of what you say, their potential which had been imprisoned till then can shoot up like a fountain into their life, the way it was meant to.’

She shot her hands up in the air and we both followed the imaginary sparkle of water thrusting up to the ceiling, which I noticed was stained and peeling from neglected leaks in the roof, as if she wasn’t important to the university, after all.

‘That’s a teacher’s hope, that what has inspired you might inspire someone else, your knowledge will become theirs, and the way you share this precious thing will waken them like—’

She laughed wryly, her lips twisting at one end, and she paused, searching for an analogy.

‘Like the prince kissing the sleeping beauty?’ I asked.

She laughed again ...

‘No. Yes. All right. Yes, I’ll admit it; I wanted to be the prince. Your prince’, she said. (Woolfe, 2012, pp. 22–23)

Perhaps there are times when the university-based educator feels like intrinsic meanings of ‘being an educator’ are peeling from neglect in a university world that has been marketised (John & Fanghanel, in press; Molesworth, Scullion & Nixon, 2011). The superseding of pedagogical priorities befools educators who dream of imparting sacred and canonical wisdom to others (Steiner, 2003, p. 3).

### **The educator as dependent on educable students**

In the introduction of Woolley’s oration at the inauguration of the University of Sydney in 1852, he reflects that he anticipates ‘the glow of satisfaction or the recoil of disappointment with which we shall in time to come look back upon these proceedings’ (1862, p. 4). Woolley would not live long enough to partake in the proceedings of the jubilee celebrations of the University of Sydney, held in 1902. On this occasion, it was left for others to ‘look back’.

The record of the jubilee celebrations features addresses made at the Reception of Delegates in 1902. The Chancellor opened the proceedings, before inviting formal addresses from visiting delegates. Following these, Alexander Oliver, one of the earliest students of the university gave a ‘short speech of a less formal nature than those delivered by the preceding speakers’ (University of Sydney, 1903, p. 24).

Oliver recalled his experiences from the early 1850s, drawing upon his ‘store of whimsical reminiscences’ (p. 29). His recollection of his own experiences, as one of Australia’s first university students, discloses another pre-understanding of the character of the university educator in colonial Australia:

They were true and earnest University missionaries, those first three Professors, Dr. John Woolley, Morris Birkbeck Pell, and Dr. John Smith; but oh! what sort of material and place did we offer them for the exercise of their educational powers! The average of our ages would be about 16 or 17; the average of our knowledge about that of an indifferent fourth-form boy in (say) the present Sydney Grammar School. Very soon those Professors discovered, to their dismay, that their functions would be something between a private coach for a boy whose education had been neglected, and the tutor of a small English University Hall. The University lecturer was for the future.

I can well remember, for I happened to sit next to him, on a form facing, our first Professor of Classics, when, rather unexpectedly, my neighbor was put on to construe a passage in the first book of Livy. The words were, ‘*Caput obnubito – infelici arbori reste suspendito!*’ ‘Cut off his head,’ said the translator, ‘to an unhappy tree hang up the rest of him.’ The Doctor glared sorrowfully at my friend, and, as was his habit at lectures, opened and shut the blade of his penknife very ominously, but was too staggered to do anything more than give forth a long and deep-drawn sigh. (University of Sydney, 1903, pp. 31–32)

We cannot say what Woolley and his colleagues made of their personal experiences as Australia’s first professors. But this text shows an assumption that the fully fledged university professors were in possession of special ‘educational powers’. The orator of this text, in a comparative manner, suggests that their deficient capacity as students prevented their educators from engaging in the kind of educational play that they were assumed to be capable of. An image stirs of the elite sportsperson, whose restrained mode of mimetic play with little children is different to how they play when matched against their rivals in a highly competitive sporting fixture. It was perhaps implicitly understood that the professor, by virtue of their possession of higher learning, can only come into their own as an educator with suitable students who are up to the task. Necessarily, students were assumed to require a certain level of prior schooling before they were able to access and do justice to the masterful university educator. This pre-understanding is articulated by Jaspers:

All of university [education] depends upon the nature of the people participating in it ... Every university [education] is dependent upon the kind of persons it can attract. The truest idea of [university education is] all in vain if the people who could realize it are not available.

University life is no less dependent on students than on [educators]. The best professors flounder helplessly at a school where the student body is unfit. Hence, it is all up to the young people who are supposedly entitled to study. They must show themselves worthy of this privilege to the best of their ability. Admission to the university must be determined through some process of selection. For admission some preparatory schooling is necessarily required; without this, study at the university would be futile. Further, the person seeking admission must be educable, that is, he must have the capacities, talents and characteristics which can be developed through study at the university. (1960, p. 112)

An idea becomes clear: for the learned person to realise their potentiality as a university educator, students with an endowed competency are a precondition. That is, the educator was seen as only as good as the student's ability to 'be educated' allows. The educator must be matched with students befitting the educator's superior knowledge and powers of intellect, rhetoric and logic. But perhaps this is a traditional cultural expectation that cuts both ways? Does a call upon students to be worthy of the professor's dexterity simultaneously heap weighty assumptions upon the educator: to show oneself *more* intellectually powerful and knowledgeable than the student, and worthy of the students' toil and price for admission?

### **The educator as intellectual exile**

The exploration of literature also reveals another early pre-concept of the educator in the university: as a kind of social and cultural exile. Such a view possibly stretches right back to the advent of mediaeval universities.

Soon after their earliest beginnings, the universities were seen to warrant an independence from the rest of society. Each university was permitted by its ecclesiastical masters to become a *universitas*, with its members forming, literally, a self-governing community of scholars. (Barnett, 1990, p. 19)

Implicitly, were the educators belonging to such autonomous communities seen as somehow independent from the rest of society? Altbach (2000) seems to think so:

While the professoriate necessarily works within contemporary realities and within institutional and national settings, it is tied to universal historical traditions ... Most universities have common roots in the mediaeval University of Paris and other European universities of the period ... Centuries-old ideas about the autonomy of teaching and research ... and the role of the academic profession in society have salience. Academics have always seen themselves as somehow standing apart from society, with special privileges and responsibilities – as reflected in the ideas of the academic profession as calling. (p. 12)

As Niblett (1974) gives us further insight into this feature of mediaeval universities, an implicit assumption about the educator is echoed:

The job of the mediaeval university in Europe was to produce a number of the professionals which contemporary society needed: to be lawyers, clergy, doctors, civil servants, scholars. Most of the ablest students who graduated from it went out into the world: the material rewards for staying on to teach in the university itself were certainly lower. The universities played no part in the world of work – which was largely agricultural or domestic and manual – and had little to do with the teaching of technical ‘experts’. Their function was to study and teach: it was an intellectual function. (p. 16)

This text presents the educator in the university as somehow engaged in an intellectual kind of work that sets them fundamentally apart from the ‘outside’ public world of work, to which their graduates are destined to migrate. Hence, the educator was perhaps seen as an outsider. In light of this pre-understanding, it is easy to appreciate how the word ‘academic’ today is often synonymous with ‘irrelevant’ in everyday conversation (Grant & Sherrington, 2006, p. 1).

Minogue (1973) offers an apologetic of the historical division between the ‘academic’ and the ‘practical’ worlds. In a positive sense, the academic educator is reiterated as the vital guardian of a different mode of being than that practised by the rest of society. Minogue argues that something valuable would indeed be lost should the intellectual life of the academic’s world ever be fully eclipsed by the demands of the practical world that falls beyond the bounds of the academy.

The usage of universities is ... a ‘Room’ or ‘world’ of its own, logically as well as institutionally distinct from other kinds of thought. Academic inquiry is a manner of seeking to understand anything at all, a manner distinguished no doubt by its motives and preoccupations, but distinguished above all by a quite different logic from that of practice. This means that there is a consistent difference in the *kind* of meaning that is found in academic discourse, by contrast with that found in the world at large. To ignore [or forget] this difference, and to treat universities simply as institutions which provide educational services for society is like treating a Ming vase as a cut glass flower bowl: plausible, but crass. There is an important and neglected sense in which the belief that universities are ivory towers – an image seldom invoked these days without sneer or repudiation – is precisely true. (1973, p. 76)

It follows that to treat the university world as a precious vehicle for academic inquiry is implicitly to treat the educator as being in and of another world of their own, in the same fashion. Whereby, even ascribing a utilitarian view is to preordain the educator to a socially constructed exterior world.

How, according to this text, might we recognise someone who belongs to this esteemed ‘ivory tower’? Essentially, the educator is seen as distinguishable by their

kind of academic discourse, thinking and inquiry. Said (1994) says that, even today, the university educator is recognisable as the person who lives differently, meaning that their experience will often alienate them as a prophetic outsider. This is thought to involve, for the university-based intellectual, resisting modern pressures to become

buttoned-up, impossible to understand classroom technicians, hired by committee, anxious to please various patrons and agencies, bristling with academic credentials and a social authority that does not promote debate but establishes reputations and intimidates nonexperts. (p. 54)

Beyond avoiding such pressures, Said (1994) suggests that the university educator can become a true intellectual today by upholding a tradition of living in dialectical relationship with their society.

The intellectual does not represent a statue-like icon, but an individual vocation, an energy, a stubborn force engaging as a committed and recognizable voice in language and in society with a whole slew of issues, all of them having to do with a combination of enlightenment and emancipation and freedom. (p. 55)

Thus, a possible pre-understanding of the university educator is that they are able to be a public intellectual. As such, this means being primarily attuned to the ‘world outside the classroom’, and therein sensing that their own work is ‘meant for social change’ (Said, 1994, p. 53).

This idea presents ‘being an educator’ as a particular embodied comportment, or way of being in the world, which, when taken up seriously by the university educator, inevitably inclines the resolute individual towards the same kind of fate other public intellectuals have known in past hermeneutic situations. Such a pathway leads the individual into a state of metaphorical exile, a condition of existential ‘not-at-homeness’. If the following passage is read alongside his memoir (Said, 1999), it seems that Said may have drawn this understanding from his own situated experiences as an academic, educator and committed public intellectual:

The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider, which I believe is the right role for today’s intellectual, is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives (so to speak), tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation and national wellbeing. Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You can’t go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation. (Said, 1994, p. 39)

### **Listening to Indigenous Australian voices**

Prior to the founding of British-modelled universities throughout colonial Australia, the phenomenon of being a higher educator had long occurred in the context of Australian Indigenous communities. Again, the ‘historical’ understandings discoverable in relation to Aboriginal cultural practices are not dead and buried in the past, but continue to be renewed by Indigenous people in Australia today.

This can be heard in the story told by Makinti Minutjukur, Director of the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC):

When I was a child, I would go out together with my parents and learnt by watching them. They taught me to hunt, gather bush foods, build shelters and be safe in the bush so that I didn't get bitten by snakes or burnt by fire or lost in the bush. They taught me how to recognise a healthy fat animal from a skinny one and to gather bush fruits when they were ripe and not ripe. I learned the names of my grandfather's and grandmother's country. It's not written on paper, it's in my heart. These are the things that I learned about and that *I teach to my children*. (Minutjukur, in Lester, Minutjukur, Osborne, & Tjitayi, 2013, p. 9)

In the Pitjantjatjara version of this text, which accompanies the English translation above, *nintilpai* is spoken in place of ‘teach’. Pitjantjatjara linguist and translator Paul Eckert says that the verb *nintilpai* means to ‘teach/show’, and ‘is not just a verbal cerebral transfer of facts but an experiential showing and conveying, not only of knowledge, but skill as well’ (personal communication, 31 March 2015). While this pre-understanding cannot speak for all Indigenous notions of the educator relative to their unique living cultures, it gestures to the possibilities of a phenomenon that cannot be monopolised by Western knowledge systems and colonial institutions. What becomes clear is a way of understanding the educator beyond the university-specific notions of the educator as conveyor of ‘knowledge’, whether general or specific.

### **Critical concepts**

More critical pre-understandings of the educator also emerge from the literature. Firstly, some notable examples arise from post-structuralist perspectives. Ruitenberg (2011) uses Derrida's ‘ethic of hospitality’ to offer a de-centred understanding of the educator as *host*, wherein the student is reinstated as the primary subject of the pedagogical encounter. In a similar approach, Bingham (2001) applies Derrida's

notion of the ‘supplement’ to identify an underlying expectation of the ‘authoritative’ educator that is in play in the university world, that is, to be the ‘missing pages of the texts’ that they assign and teach.

#### *The educator as powerful priest*

Mann (2001) provides another noteworthy critical understanding. Adopting the later Foucault, Mann explores the possibility that the educator is immersed within the field of the university in such a way that they are drawn into invisible dynamics of power that constantly pervade ordinary, everyday social practices and relationships. Relating Foucault’s ideas to the modern university context, Mann voices an understanding that the socially assigned power of the educator is expressed, even unwittingly, through technologies of student assessment and examination processes.

This critique is conveyed using the analogy of the religious practice of formal church confession, which occurs in the conversational encounter of ‘a speaker (the learner) and an Other who listens, judges, has the power to forgive, and who crucially requires the confession in the first place’ (Mann, 2001, p. 14). Within this picture, things like ‘learning contracts’ are seen as mundane examples of practices that are challenged as educational technologies that are imbued with a ‘power of confession’ (p. 14). According to this argument, the educator within the university context seems to be represented as a kind of intellectual priest, one who is called upon to perform unquestioned forms of power and judgement over students, who are presumed to frequently ‘miss the mark’ and to need the corrective-intercessory interventions of the righteous educator, which belong to the institutions of higher education. Other writers echo this theoretical application of a Foucauldian perspective to contemporary higher education. Ball (2013, p. 6), for example, suggests that these power-infused practices shape and alter what it means to be an educator and to be educated.

#### *The educator as lecturer*

Not unlike the Foucauldian views, Goffman (1981) also articulates a critical sociological understanding that stresses the performativity of the educator as a *lecturer*. Goffman invokes an understanding of the lecturer that is consistent with his notion of the multiple and dramaturgical self (Friesen, 2011, p. 99). According to Goffman (1981), the lecturer’s selves arise in responding to a pre-intelligible social

situation, namely, the social event known as the lecture. Amongst the different selves that Goffman says can be involved in the lecture is the *self-as-animator*: the person that can be ‘identified as the talking machine, the thing that sound comes out of’ (Goffman, 1981, p. 167). This articulates the self which is intimately responsible for performing the lecture. This particular manifestation of the self clearly goes beyond the texts that the lecturer teaches, for example

in remarks offered as asides or in the context of openings and closings. The self-as-animator, in these instances, takes over from the textual self and is itself the source of its own speech or content. (Friesen, 2011, p. 99)

Drawing on this dramaturgical perspective from sociology, which presents the educator as the lecturer, ‘talking machine’ or *performer*, some researchers have even examined the lecturer’s experience of ‘stage fright’ (e.g. Scott, 2007).

#### *The educator as a naive accomplice*

Of particular relevance to this study is a reflective pre-understanding that is implicit within a critical sociological explanation of the human service *professions*.

According to Wallace and Abbott (1990), any distinct vocation that lays claim to being a ‘caring profession’, such as youth work, is presupposed by the historical notion of a ‘profession’ (pp. 1–2). The Western idea of a ‘profession’ can be traced back to the mediaeval universities, which

served to create the professions of law, medicine and the clergy. These three professions still tend to be seen as the ones against which other claims to professional status are measured. They are all characterized by the monopolization of particular forms of expertise, the erection of social boundaries around them through entrance qualifications and extended training, and an ideology of public service and altruism – that is, they claim to serve higher goals than economic self interest. (Wallace & Abbott, 1990, p. 2)

Guided by this analysis, neo-Marxist critical theorist Ivan Illich (1977) has argued that professions, including those professing to enable and help vulnerable people groups in society, are essentially *disabling*.

The radical logic that Illich (1977) puts forward seems to run as follows: the professions, including teaching, social work and medicine, are basically contemptuous because they have a serious disempowering effect on individuals and communities. Specifically, beyond discursive justifications, they essentially rob individuals of their ability to care for themselves independently, thereby rendering

them dependent on expert interventions (Bessant, 2004b, p. 27; Wallace & Abbott, 1990, p. 3). According to this viewpoint, professionals are not impartial providers of vital social services that people facing adversity *need*. On the contrary, professionals are deeply submerged in capitalism, and embody unspoken social-economic concerns of their own that supersede any authentic interest for those they ‘service’ (Bessant, 2004b, p. 27; Pemberton & Borehan, 1976, p. 29).

Consistent with this analysis, Jamrozik and Nocella (1998) argue that, amidst the context of contemporary free-market societies like Australia, helping professions such as youth work function on a political level to ‘convert’ pathological conditions (‘social problems’ like youth homelessness, youth unemployment, youth crime and so on) into the personal problem of the affected population (i.e. ‘youth’).

The critical assumption underpinning this analysis is that these socially constructed ‘problems’ are normal negative human ‘residue’ that come with the societal pursuit of ‘dominant values, interests and corresponding goals’ (Jamrozik & Nocella, 1998, p. 5). Government interventions, the argument runs, have not historically been about addressing the structural factors that oppress young people (Bessant et al. 1998; Nilan, Julian & Germov, 2007; Irving, Maunders & Sherington, 1995; White & Wyn, 2013). Rather, the helping professions have been sanctioned to

ostensibly remedy or alleviate the given [‘social problem’] ... [which serves] to legitimise the situation and at the same time alleviate public consciousness by demonstrating that the government cares and aims to remedy the situation. (Jamrozik, 2001, pp. 271–272)

In the Australian context, Bessant (2004b) has applied this provocative critical sociological view to the ongoing debate concerning the *professionalisation* of youth work in Australia, a process still perceived as incomplete compared with other caring professions which have been long regulated in Australia (Cooper, 2013; Emslie, 2012, 2013; Sercombe, 2010).

In considering the arguments *against* the development of a distinct youth work profession, Bessant (2004b) presents the following two challenging arguments informed by Illich: 1) Paradoxically, ‘helping professions’ like youth work might create and escalate the number and severity of youth problems due to the ‘disabling effect’ of professionals who undermine communities’ capacity to care for their own young; 2) Professionals generate and worsen problems which they self-assert they

have the exclusive knowledge and skills to solve, leading to scientific rationales and discourses for responses to youth problems that were not really problems until the relevant experts described them as such (p. 29).

In paying attention to this critique, what becomes apparent is a certain pre-understanding of the educator who teaches future professionals within the university context. The ‘professional educator’ who aims to prepare and develop *professionals*, like pre-service youth workers, is implicated in this story. That is, if caring professions, like youth work, are reasoned to be paradoxically *disabling* for the very people whom workers seek to work with and help, then it follows that the educator who leads forth professional youth workers by preparing them for practice must be, in effect, an *enabler of disabling professionals*. Seen in such light, the professional educator is likened to a kind of accomplice in the perpetuation of crippling modes of intervention and activity in people’s lives.

#### *The university educator as needlessly privileged*

Even if we reject the notion that the existence of the university educator who helps to produce youth workers, in critical realist terms, potentially sustains and exasperates the detrimental effect of the caring professions in contemporary society, the literature still discloses other critical ideas that challenge any assumption that youth workers can only be properly induced from *inside* the university context and can only be ‘delivered’ by a suitably credentialed university educator. Such a bias is akin to the conventional, yet still controversial, privileging of hospital births as the safest and most responsible site for childbirth.

Roholt and Baizerman (2012) add their thoughts to new flames of uncertainty:

Two hundred years ago, those who taught practitioners in the crafts ... were master craftspeople, mentors ... Those who wanted to learn the crafts apprenticed themselves to masters ... Over the last two hundred years and into the present, much that was considered learning out of school in informal and non-formal learning spaces moved into formal learning settings, i.e., schools, institutes, colleges and universities ...

Where youth studies and youth work are to be learned ... It is not inherent in the subject that ... the teachers be college/university faculty and the professoriate be college/university employees ... Indeed, are institutions of higher learning the best site and are faculty the best people to prepare teachers and other masters in youth studies and youth work? (pp. 128–129)

New questions arise, undermining any taken-for-granted positive discrimination that assigns the university educator as the ‘trump card’ in professional youth work education. For example, we might ask: is the sanctioned university educator the only effective educator trustworthy of initiating a student into a specific profession? Can reliable professional education, such as in youth work, only happen within the sacramental boundaries of an accredited university ‘program’? Or is education a phenomenon that happens with or without the university educator, and beyond the walls of the academy?

### ***Pre-understandings of the educator in professional youth work***

I also reviewed literature that relates to ‘being an educator’ in the particular university context of professional youth work education. It became clear that the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ in the specialised field of youth work has been experienced in many countries and cultures (Anderson-Nathe, 2010; Belton & Frost, 2010; Brooker, 2014; Fusco, 2012; Heathfield, 2012; Mann-Feder & Litner, 2004; Roholt & Baizerman, 2012; Smith & Morgaine, 2004; Stuart & Hare, 2004; Watkins, 2012; Williamson, 2012). Furthermore, my review revealed that the experience of educating student youth workers is not limited to the university scene, with tertiary and further education (TAFE) colleges being another key provider of youth work-specific education and training in Australia (Bessant, 2007, 2012; Corney, 2004a, 2004b; Corney & Broadbent, 2007; Smith & Grace, 2011; Wojecki, 2007). Nevertheless, given this research primarily draws on the stories of lecturers from within Australian universities, it was important to privilege literature concerning the Australian experience of UYWE (Bessant & Emslie, 2014, p. 137).

I discovered that the literature written by specialists in UYWE does not address the meaning of educating pre-service youth workers in the university, that is, of ‘being’ this kind of professional educator (van Manen, 1990, p. 47). Instead, this specific body of literature tends to speak towards the following kind of questions concerning Australian UYWE: *what* to teach (specific curriculum and course content); *how* to teach it (specific pedagogical approaches); and *why* the university expression of youth work education matters (specific guiding rationales and educational values). The following table summarises and interpretively organises the literature reviewed according to tendencies towards the what, how and why questions concerning Australian UYWE.

**Table 1:** Australian university-based youth work education

<b>Author/s</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Question/s addressed</b>
Cooper, Bessant, Broadbent, Couch, Edwards, Jarvis & Ferguson	2014	Australian youth work education: Curriculum renewal and a model for sustainability for niche professions	The what The how The why
Bessant & Emslie	2014	Why university education matters: Youth work and the Australian experience	The why
Maunder & Corney	2014	Professional Education for Youth Work: An Expanding Field	The what The how
Brooker	2014	Current issues in youth Work training in the major English-speaking countries	The what The why
Bessant, Emslie & Watts	2013	When things go wrong: A reflection on students as youth researchers	The what The how
Emslie	2013	Toward a youth work profession	The why
Bessant	2012	Australian youth work and education	The what The why
Emslie	2012	'It's time': A case for the professionalisation of youth work	The why
Moustakim	2011	Critical pedagogy in youth work education	The how
Daughtry	2012	The benefits of an integrated sacred–secular approach to youth worker training	The what The why
Sercombe	2010	Youth work ethics	The what The why
Emslie	2009a	Researching reflective practice: A case study of youth work education	The how
Emslie	2009b	'Practise what you teach': Researching youth work education: Teaching participatory casework practice	The what The how The why
Bessant	2009	Educating youth workers as public advocates	The what
Ord	2008	A curriculum for youth work: The experience of the English	The what

		youth service	The why
Bessant	2007	The politics of education: Why stand-alone youth work degrees matter	The why
Westoby & Ingamells	2007	Youth work: A deconstructive approach for those who work with young refugees	The why
Cooper, Simons, Hall, Porteus & Hacket	2007	Youth work students mentoring young people at risk of homelessness: A partnership between a youth work degree program and a local youth agency	The what
Corney & Broadbent	2007	Youth work training package review: More of the same or radical rationalisation?	The why
Bowie	2005	Youthwork education: A view from down under	The what The how
Bessant	2005	Why employ qualified youth workers?	The what The why
Bowie	2004	Youth work: Has it reached its use-by date?	The what
Bessant	2004a	'Up periscope': The future for youth work in Australia.	The what The why
Bessant	2004b	Youth work: The Loch Ness monster and professionalism	The why
Corney	2004a	Youth work: The problem of values	The why
Corney	2004b	Values versus competencies: Implications for the future of professional youth work education	The why
Cooper	1999	Portfolio assessment: A guide for lecturers, teachers and course designers	The how
Bessant	1998a	IT: Educating for youth work practice in a network society	The what The how
Bessant	1998b	Establishing a youth studies program	The what The why
Bessant & Evans	1997	En-gendering change in tertiary youth work curricula	The what
Cooper	1997a	Using portfolios to assess first year student placements	The how
Cooper	1997b	Using portfolios to assess practicum	The how
Bessant &	1996	Gendering the youth work curricula in Australia: A case	The what

Evans		study	The why
Irving, Maunder & Sherington	1995	Youth in Australia: Policy, administration and politics: A history since World War II	The what The why
Ewen	1981	The education and training of youth workers in Australia: A discussion paper	The what The why
Hamilton- Smith & Brownell	1973	Youth workers and their education	The what The why

After analysing these texts individually and as a whole, I came to see the following words of Palmer (1998) as a fitting summary of this cluster of literature:

The question we most commonly ask is the ‘what’ question – what subjects shall we teach?

When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the ‘how’ question – what methods and techniques are required to teach well?

Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the ‘why’ question – for what purposes and to what ends do we teach?

But seldom, if ever, do we ask the ‘who’ question – who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form – or deform – the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes? (p. 4)

Initially, I found the literature concerning Australian UYWE compelling and useful for reflective educators and leaders within tertiary youth work programs. However, through the experience of returning to re-read what I had already read, what became clear was that the meanings of educating pre-service youth workers most often ‘go without saying’ in the texts. In other words, while many voices can be heard in the literature (some of them louder than others) speaking from-and-towards a shared concern for the sustainability, advancement and progressive delivery of UYWE, the understandings of ‘being an educator’ seemed to be predominantly taken for granted.

Henceforth, a concern emerged: the texts that explicitly address the priority and practice of UYWE seem to conceal, rather than disclose, the essential nature of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE. Nevertheless, I used an interpretive approach to reveal covered-up pre-understandings of the educator that seemed to be in play, albeit implicitly, within relevant texts speaking towards the practice and place of UYWE. Namely, the educator was implicitly seen to be a person who: 1) is guided

by particular value-based rationales – the ‘why’; 2) enacts specific kinds of pedagogy – the ‘how’; and 3) develops and delivers tailored curriculum content – the ‘what’ – believed to induct students into specific ways of ‘knowing’, ‘acting’ and ‘being’ in the public world as a professional youth worker (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Cooper et al. 2014).

The literature therefore was primarily attuned to a shared assumption that there was a social demand to nurture a particular kind of caring professional, called a ‘youth worker’, requiring a person to complete a specific university education that enables them to make ethical decisions that constitute their future vocational lives (Bessant, 2012; Bessant & Emslie, 2014).

### ***In summary***

I glimpsed many other interesting pre-understandings through the literature review process, all of them vying for consideration, such as the university educator as *artist* (Axelrod, 1973), as *shower* (Steiner, 2003), as *learner* (McNiff, 1993), as *trickster* on the learner’s journey (Davis & Weeden, 2009), and as *reproducer* of dominant cultural ideologies (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), to name but a few. And yet there would not be enough pages in this thesis to explore them all.

Despite the limits of this review, what has emerged most clearly through the process is an appreciation that there are many different ways, some contradictory, that the educator has already been understood and theorised across different cultural contexts. It seems that education, and the human educator who is implicated in the process, has come to be talked and thought about today in habitual ways. This perhaps means that deeper understandings of the contingent experience of ‘being an educator’ are routinely covered up by mundane superficiality (van Manen, 1990, p. 47). Thus, through reviewing literature, certainty and clarity has not emerged, but rather, we have been led to ponder the mysterious and context-sensitive nature of being an educator with others.

### ***An ontological-phenomenological question emerges***

The final part of the chapter considers the contribution that phenomenological research might offer towards a deeper understanding of a mode of ‘being’ human in the world (ontology), described in this study as ‘being an educator’ in university-

based youth work education. The review process raises a question, drawing the research forward, about essential meanings of the phenomenon ‘being an educator’ as it is lived in a particular context.

This literature review began by drifting to the word ‘educator’, allowing it to speak. Suddenly, a turn of thought comes. What might happen if we consider the phrase ‘being an educator’ in a different way – from ‘being an *educator*’ to ‘*being* an educator’? How does this altered stress help to voice something previously unheard (Caputo, 1986, p. 87)?

Such a change perhaps allows ‘educator’ to be heard less as a thing (noun), or ideal, and more as something that a person is *being* (verb) as they are confronted by the personal and social demands of being an educator (Blattner, 2006, p. 88). This means that ‘*being* an educator’ is something that a person lives out amidst the world with others – that *happens* (King, 2001, p. 48). Different questions surface of a less theoretical nature: How do educators experience, feel and think about what happens to them? How do these happenings stay with them? Are there living moments that remain hidden, un-thought, untold?

Considered in this way, the meaning of ‘*being* an educator’ is no longer something determinable, straightforward. Indeed, a new possibility springs – perhaps the living out of ‘being an educator’ does not always play out the way it is intended, desired, planned, expected, willed and toiled to? What is it to *live out* the meaning of ‘being an educator’ through the feeling, experiencing and thinking that happens along the way? Maybe ‘being an educator’ does not always come easily? Are there times when the goodness that the educator is implicitly reaching for does not appear to come? When the nurturer suddenly becomes nurtured? And other times when education seems to transpire all on its own, leaving the educator wondering if they even needed to be there to ‘help’ at all, or if they even impede its coming? Thus, an arising concern, as expressed by Gadamer, comes ‘thudding out of the night’, drawing this research forward: ‘My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and beyond our wanting and doing’ (2013, pp. xxv–xxvi).

What begins to become clear is the elusiveness and complexity of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE as a *lived phenomenon*. ‘Being an educator’ is a mysterious, indefinable phenomenon that happens to people amidst their everyday vocational lives. It exceeds our simple answers and idealistic expectations. The appearing of this elusiveness is what begins to draw this inquiry forward: towards gathering people’s stories of lived experience that show what it is to *be* an educator in the context of degree-level youth work courses in Australia.

This research is directed towards uncovering possible ontological meanings of ‘*being* an educator’ through interpreting stories of lived experience derived and crafted from the transcribed conversations with lecturers who have been involved in Australian UYWE. This approach is called hermeneutic (or interpretive) phenomenology, and is guided by hermeneutic philosophers, particularly Martin Heidegger [1889–1976].

The next chapter presents some core philosophical understandings that opened a phenomenological-hermeneutic pathway that I followed in this ontological inquiry (Dreyfus, 1991; Smythe, 2011). Especially informative was Heidegger’s (1962) philosophical approach to an easily overlooked question of ‘being’. His bold ontological inquiry into the primordial nature of our everyday experiences of ‘being in the world’ not only grounds and instructs my research approach, but also provides an interpretive lens to illuminate vital understandings of ‘being an educator’ concealed in the participants’ experiential narratives.

## Chapter 4: A philosophical path opens

We need to learn to distinguish  
Between *path* and *method*.

In philosophy,  
There are only paths.

In the sciences, on the contrary,  
There are only methods –  
Modes of procedure.

Thus understood,  
*Phenomenology is a path* –  
A path that leads away to come before ...  
(Adapted from Heidegger, 2012a, p. 80).

What came into view in the previous chapter was a complexity related to the meanings of ‘being an educator’. I also explored literature by specialists in UYWE. I gradually noticed how this particular cluster of texts focused on curriculum content, pedagogy, and educational values and rationales. What appeared to be absent was a questioning of the meanings of ‘being an educator’ (van Manen, 1990, p. 47). That is, to be a person who educates in youth work seems implicitly considered to be about the ‘what’, the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of UYWE. To look beyond these ‘already-there understandings’ (Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 16) and uncover deeper understandings of the everyday experience of being an educator in UYWE, I followed a research path known as Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology.

As the name suggests, this way of research arises from the philosophical insights of Martin Heidegger [1889–1976]. In my encounter with Heidegger’s key ideas, I not only discovered a research path that deeply resonated with my own fore-understandings of people and our relationship with the world, but a unique way of illuminating vital meanings of *being* human in a specific world of practice (Healy, 2011; Smythe, 2011; van Manen, 1990). To guide my way, I strove to make sense of the philosophical underpinnings of Heidegger’s work. This was often an intense and baffling musing on his writings, especially his magnum opus *Being and Time* (1962), but well worth the labour.

I will begin this chapter by discussing how I came to be following in a ‘Heideggerian way’ of enacting hermeneutic phenomenological research (Smythe, 2011, p. 40;

Smythe et al. 2008, p. 1389). I then reflect on some initial impressions of Heidegger and his legacy, before briefly sketching his biography. Attention is given to formative events in Heidegger's early life that appear to have opened a path to *Being and Time*. After this, I offer an overview of some core understandings that shaped this research and drew it forward. I give priority to the key ideas expressed in the introduction of *Being and Time* that instructed the research path and my hermeneutic approach, namely, the question of being, ontological difference, Dasein, phenomenology and the hermeneutic circle.



**Figure 1: A clear trail in the forest**

(Photo: J. Spier, 22 May 2014)

### ***My path to Heidegger***

Prior to this research I had never heard of Martin Heidegger. During my first meeting with Professor David Giles, when I was entertaining the possibility of starting a PhD, he mentioned Heidegger and how his philosophy had guided his doctorate research.

For David, this research path had ‘clicked’ with his way of being as a researcher, an educator and as a person.

David, as a practitioner researcher, was involved in the education of others in teacher education. Although it was not the original research path he was on, he discovered Heideggerian phenomenology, and immediately resolved to apply it as a vehicle to interpret the stories of ‘lived experience’ as a way of renewing his understanding of his phenomenon of interest (the teacher–student relationship). Importantly for David, powerful phenomenological (experiential) meanings (van Manen, 2014) emerged for him from the philosophical writings of Heidegger, Gadamer and other existential philosophers. Three years on, I have come to appreciate that David’s passion and understanding of Heideggerian research has been the making of my research.

At the end of our first meeting, I was beckoned to find out more about this enigmatic Heidegger and a way of research that bears his name. David pointed me to the philosophical foundations and method chapters of his thesis (Giles, 2008). In this time of considering whether to take up this opportunity to work with David, he said to me: ‘It is most important that you are comfortable with the method’. So I set out to see how the philosophy of Heidegger might offer me a comfortable dwelling place for my research journey.

From this first meeting with David, I firstly wanted to ascertain an overall sense of the life, times and philosophy of the man Martin Heidegger. Three broad impressions emerged.

(1) Heidegger is widely regarded as one of the greatest and most influential existential philosophers of the twentieth century (Critchley, 2009; Farin, 2015; Palmer, 1969; van Manen, 2014; Wrathall, 2005a).

(2) Despite his far-reaching legacy, many people seem either to reject Heidegger’s work outright, or treat it with acute suspicion due to the prevailing idea that he was an ‘unrepentant ex-Nazi’ (Wrathall, 2005a, p. 1). Smythe (2011, p. 38) advises researchers considering the possibility of drawing on the writings of Heidegger to come to grips with the question of Heidegger’s affiliation with the Nazi party before settling on their decision to choose hermeneutic phenomenology. From reading

various commentaries, I began to see the equivocal nature of this aspect of Heidegger's life. Nevertheless, arising from his political involvement with an anti-Semitic regime in 1933, Heidegger continues to stir controversy and heated misunderstandings (Critchley, 2009). Clearly, this political issue is an important yet irresolvable matter.<sup>4</sup> And yet, perhaps to close the door hastily on Heidegger's philosophy is to deny oneself something special? Critchley (2009) argues that Heidegger's politics only become *philosophically* pertinent when one has openly allowed the persuasive power of what occurs through his written work to touch them. Blattner (2006) concurs, suggesting reading *Being and Time* with openness is worth doing because the ideas expressed therein are so powerful and luminary.

(3) Surface impressions revealed that Heidegger's philosophical writings, especially *Being and Time*, are notoriously hard to read and grasp. Many are critical of his congested texts, finding them obscure at best, and at worst sheer self-indulgence. But there are others who have chosen to place themselves in the gale of Heidegger's thinking (Heidegger, 1968, p. 17). Many philosophers, practitioners and researchers today recognise a vitality that makes reading *Being and Time*, and researching in its light, a worthwhile endeavour (Dreyfus, 1991; Giles, 2008; Healy, 2011; Smythe, 2011; van Manen, 1990; Wrathall, 2005a).

After initially grappling with these misgivings about Heidegger, I resolved it was worth settling into the possibility of Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. I decided to engage with, and draw insight from, a critical reading of Heidegger without trying to make excuses for the man and his decisions (Blattner, 2006, p. 7). Hence I moved towards an understanding of Heidegger's key ideas. Through the course of this research, Heidegger's challenging insights have illuminated covered-up meanings concealed within stories of lived experience, bringing to life my phenomenon of interest.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, fresh cries can still be heard ringing out in the press and across philosophical circles regarding the recent publication of Heidegger's (2014b) 'Black Notebooks' (edited by Trawny). Some reviewers conclude that the notebooks prove, once and for all, that anti-Semitism does indeed lie at the core of Heidegger's philosophy (e.g. Oltermann, 2014). But other scholars are not so sure. Some scholars (with whom I have come to agree) are more inclined to claim that what the notebooks reveal for us is that Heidegger's legacy is split between the best and the worst of thinking – blurred somewhere between ecstasy and catastrophe (Krell, 2015).

Placing Heidegger's work in his own context helped his written ideas to become more readily available to me. To this end, I delved more deeply into key events in his early life, which have been recognised as opening up his path towards *Being and Time*.

### **Heidegger's path to *Being and Time***

The chosen path,  
In retrospect and in prospect,  
Appears at every juncture in a different light,  
With a different tone,  
And stimulates different interpretations  
(Heidegger, 2010a, p. 21)

Martin Heidegger was born on 26 September 1889 in Messkirch, southern Germany. He died on 26 May 1976. In 1907, a 'fatherly friend' and rector from Heidegger's hometown, Conrad Gröber, gave a young Heidegger a book by Franz von Brentano, *On the manifold meaning of being according to Aristotle* (1862) (Blattner, 2006; Harman, 2007, p. 6; Heidegger, 2010a, p. 21; Richardson, 1963). This life-altering event set Heidegger on a path towards *Being and Time*.

Firstly, this gift set Heidegger on a path toward Brentano's student Edmund Husserl, the founder of the movement known as phenomenology, which Heidegger would later adopt and radicalise (Harman, 2007, p. 6). But more deeply, this gift sparked Heidegger's lifelong interest in the question of being (ontological inquiry) (Harman, 2007; Healy, 2011; Heidegger, 1963, p. x; Heidegger, 2010a, p. 21). Throughout the twists and turns of Heidegger's journey of thinking, the basic question remained the one he first encountered in Brentano: *the question of being* (Harman, 2007, p. 6; Steiner, 1978; Wolin, 2001, p. 232). Brentano's resistance to the modern dismissal of Aristotle drew Heidegger to review the history of philosophy and to a deep engagement with Aristotle (Dahlstrom, 2012, p. 50; Healy, 2011). He would later rethink, rather than critique, Aristotle's work as the first metaphysician (Brogan, 2005, p. 4).

This re-calling of early Greek thinking was the origin of Heidegger's disillusionment with the *kind of knowledge* that modern thought had become obsessed with generating. While Aristotle's mentor Plato maintained a rationalist belief in disconnected knowledge, assuming that our experience is useless in revealing truth,

Aristotle argued that truth and experience are related (Gadamer, 2013; Healy, 2011). Reading Brentano led Heidegger to approach Aristotle's texts with a question about the human being who experiences and interprets being (Brogan, 2005, p. 13). Reading Aristotle provoked Heidegger to ponder the various 'categories' that constitute our relationship with the nature of things in the world. Many of the sections of *Being and Time* came out of Heidegger's reinterpretation of Aristotle.

In 1909, Heidegger began university studies in philosophy and theology (Harman, 2007, p. 6). Here his ongoing engagement with Brentano's philosophy drew him to a life-changing masterpiece: Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (2001). Around the same time he discovered the poetry of Hölderlin and Rilke, and the existentialism of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 245). While seemingly divergent in their thinking, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche shared a rejection of the philosophical tradition that preceded them, regarding it as misdirected towards the cognitive achievements of human subjects. With this, Heidegger saw that modern philosophy contributes little philosophical insight that can touch the everyday lives of human beings, and started thinking about the meanings that become imbued with people's everyday experiences and practices (Blattner, 2006, p. 4; Dreyfus, 1991). In turn, an important thought germinated: the way everyday human life was embedded with meaning called for a method of interpretation. Around this time Heidegger found such a method through his ventures into hermeneutics (Blattner, 2006, p. 4). While Heidegger encountered biblical hermeneutics through his theological studies (Heidegger, 1982, p. 9), he came into modern hermeneutics through the writings of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. The potency of hermeneutics as a vehicle for exploring the meaning of being was dawning on him.

Heidegger received his doctorate in 1913 before World War I broke out. Heidegger, along with the rest of his generation, was called to serve (Harman, 2007, pp. 6–7). In the aftermath of the war he married Elfride Petri (in 1917), with whom Heidegger would raise two sons. Meanwhile, the newest professor of philosophy in Freiburg was none other than Husserl himself (Harman, 2007, p. 7; Steiner, 2003). After failed attempts to work closely with Husserl in 1917–18, the older thinker finally agreed to take on Heidegger as his assistant (Harman, 2007; Steiner, 2003).<sup>5</sup> Husserl later

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<sup>5</sup> Husserl was initially concerned that Heidegger's religious upbringing might prevent him from being able to become a pure 'unclouded' phenomenologist (Harman, 2007, p. 7).

anointed his talented apprentice as his intellectual heir to carry the torch of his phenomenology (Harman, 2007, p. 7; Steiner, 2003, p. 81). But from the early 1920s their relationship soured as Heidegger came into his own as a radical thinker (Harman, 2007; Steiner, 2003). Heidegger eventually debunked his master's project. Their fallout came to a sad climax a decade later when Heidegger aligned with the Nazis, while at the same time Husserl, of Jewish origin, was exiled by the Nazi authorities from the university in which he was an emeritus professor (Harman, 2007, p. 7; Steiner, 2003, p. 83).

By the early 1920s Heidegger had become known as a brilliant lecturer who gave fresh interpretations of Aristotle.<sup>6</sup> From 1923 to 1928 Heidegger took on an associate professorship at the University of Marburg (Harman, 2007, p. 8).<sup>7</sup> Semester by semester, Heidegger's lectures broke new ground until in 1927 he was finally appointed a full professor (Harman, 2007). It was the same year that *Being and Time* was published, immediately enticing students from around the world to work with Husserl's successor (Harman, 2007, p. 9). In 1928, Heidegger was promoted to the chair of philosophy at the University of Freiburg (Harman, 2007; Wrathall 2005a).<sup>8</sup> Heidegger's so-called later philosophy explores themes such as our changing relationship with technology, and poetic language as a vehicle to reveal being. Since then, Heidegger's writings have continued to provoke an international movement of philosophical thinking and research. Sheehan (2010) summarises Heidegger's life and work this way:

His thought, for all its breadth and complexity, was quite simple: the meaning of Being as disclosure. His life was almost as simple – that of a German professor – except for a brief but significant period in which he supported the Nazi regime. While that misguided [departure] from

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<sup>6</sup> At one point, prior to the breakdown of his relationship with Heidegger, Husserl noted that his own students were drifting away in order to attend his star assistant's classes (Steiner, 2003, p. 82).

<sup>7</sup> During this time, a deep love affair flared between Heidegger and one of his students, a young Hannah Arendt, later a brilliant political philosopher.

<sup>8</sup> In 1933, Heidegger offered his services to the Nazi Party. After the Second World War, Heidegger was subjected to a formal investigation into his involvement with the Nazi party, with no firm conclusions reached as to the scope of his liaisons. However, Steiner (2003) suggests that 'There was much he simply chose not to take in', meaning that the Nazi authorities, after being optimistic about how Heidegger could service their cause, realised that his intellectual racism was 'petty' rather than the kind that helps mobilise mass genocide. Thus, they dismissed Heidegger as a 'private Nazi', useless to the oppressive regime (p. 84). Despite inconclusive evidence, the de-nazification committee banned Heidegger from lecturing, publishing and attending conferences. There are hints in his later writings that suggest being barred from an activity that was so essential to Heidegger afflicted him with a 'burning pain' (2010b, p. 142). Though he continued to write, he suffered a nervous breakdown in 1946 and retreated into the seclusion of his beloved hut in the Black Forest (McGrath, 2008, p. 25). Through his forced retirement, he continued to teach his philosophy but only in private seminars until the ban was lifted in 1951 (Healy, 2011).

philosophy continues to haunt his name and work, the question seems to be whether his thought from 1912 to 1976 can be measured by the yardstick of his politics from May, 1933, through February, 1934. (p. v)

Having described my path to Heidegger, and glimpsed Heidegger's path to *Being and Time*, the following section describes ideas drawn from this foundational work, and how they opened up a path through this research.

### ***Overviewing some path-clearing ideas***

We must try to clarify the question more exactly.  
In this manner we direct our thinking dialogue into a definite direction,  
Thereby bringing it into a kind of path –  
A path that allows us to pose and answer the question ...  
The question itself is a path.  
(Adapted from Heidegger, 1956, pp. 19, 21, 41 & Heidegger, 1982, p. 31)

What drew me to Heidegger's work was my interest in exploring the ontological nature of *being* an educator in UYWE as my research project. The philosophical insights of Heidegger are the dwelling site for enacting and reading this study. I seek to show how key understandings, drawn from *Being and Time* (1962), have oriented this ontological-phenomenological study. The following notions are pivotal to the movement of this research.

### **What does 'to be' mean?**

What does 'being' mean? (Heidegger, 2003a, p. 70)

When I ask a question about the 'meaning of being' (an educator in UYWE), I am asking a question that arises from an understanding of Heidegger's 'question of being' (1962, pp. 2–15). In seeking the meaning of 'being', Heidegger resumes an old quest of early Greek thinkers Plato and Aristotle (1962, pp. 2, 63). Heidegger begins *Being and Time* by telling his readers that it is necessary to return to this question because modern 'metaphysics' has 'forgotten' this vital question (p. 2). But what might this mean?

According to Heidegger, traditional ontological inquiries are concerned with studying existence, 'what there is', in terms of physical reality or conscious thought (Dahlstrom, 2010; Harman, 2007). More precisely, prior to Heidegger, ontology had been reduced to a mere procedure for telling different concrete things (specific entities) apart from each other: sorting them into different categories (Dahlstrom,

2010; Steiner, 1978). For example, an inquiry into the philosophical problem of music might ask: *Is what I am hearing really 'music' or merely some other kind of noise? How do we know?* These kinds of questions presuppose that we already know what 'music' means. That is, they take for granted what the 'is' of music is. As seen in this example, we typically overlook our presuppositions about 'being'. But Heidegger does not, which is why he starts *Being and Time* by returning us to this more fundamental question: what does 'to be' mean? Heidegger seeks to question the self-evidential nature of being, even though such a subject has been marginalised from rigorous interrogation (1962, pp. 21-22). This is one way of asking what Heidegger calls the question of the 'meaning of being', and the whole of *Being and Time* is an investigation into that question (Mulhall, 2013; Wheeler, 2014).

Despite the habitual forgetting of being, Heidegger embarks on the task of showing that 'being' can be recalled. Indeed, we already use hidden understandings about what 'is' whenever we think and speak about things, although the meaning of being mostly remains hidden from us (Heidegger, 1962, p. 26, 1988, p. 14). Whenever we think or speak of something at all (e.g. 'I love this song!'), even ourselves (e.g. 'I am a lecturer'), we are already working, albeit tacitly, within taken-for-granted prior understandings about the meaning of the 'is' we are thinking, talking and living towards (Heidegger, 1962, p. 23). We typically do not think about the primordial meaning of being as we go about our everyday activities, such as educating with others. The educator in the flow of educating, performing various tasks, is rarely called to think explicitly about what 'education' or 'being an educator' means, or what their trusty laptop 'is' that they are using in order to educate (unless it shows up as needing updating, repairing, etc.). Nevertheless, Heidegger claims that it is still possible for us to muse on the essential nature of what something *is* in its own genuine being. So Heidegger's ontological path opens by asking what being 'is', *as it is*, in its own essence. 'What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature' (Heidegger, 2001, p. 17). In the light of this understanding, the path of this study began with a question about what it *is* to be an educator in UYWE *as it is* experienced by lecturers.

As I came into a sensibility about the art of questioning the meaning of 'being', I began to wonder about the hidden 'is' of being an educator in UYWE. What is the essential 'being' which makes possible the 'is' of being this kind of educator in the

university? Before any word, thought or idea about what ‘*ought* to be’ (Heidegger, 2014a, p. 220) concerning their everyday practice is formed, I wondered how educators communally use forgotten meanings of ‘being’ in their thinking, talking and experiences. This means that in this research I did not ask ‘why’; nor did I seek to problem solve, explain or seek to control (Smythe, 2011, p. 38; van Manen, 2014, p. 43). I recognised that the taken-for-granted being (meaning) of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE is elusive, mysterious and inexhaustible by words. It was this understanding of ‘being’ that began to open a journey of ‘drawing something forgotten into visibility’ (Harman, 2007, p. 92). By way of my encounter with Heidegger’s questioning of the meaning of being, my research topic came to address me (Moules, Field, McCaffrey & Laing, 2014), and I was able to discern my topic of inquiry more clearly.

The research question in the hermeneutic interpretive approach is very simple. There are five words that tend to feature: ‘how’, ‘lived’, ‘experience’, ‘being’, and ‘meaning’. ‘How’ seeks to uncover ‘the way’ of something, how it ‘is’ in the living of it. (Smythe, 2011, p. 38)

### **What is the difference between ‘being’ and ‘beings’?**

Even though we can recall the meaning of being, fundamental being always remains elusive. It is a *no-thing* (Heidegger, 2011a). Being differs from factual, objective entities. Being is not the same as a specific *some-thing*. For example, the being of ‘music’ (what music essentially means, *is*, as music) differs from music-things (e.g. a particular song) (Steiner, 1978). Voiced another way: being-as-such (e.g. the being of music) is distinct from the such-and-suchness of beings (e.g. entities that plainly show up to us as music) (Heidegger, 2015, p. 49).

On this point, Heidegger distinguishes between beings (specific entities) and the *being* of beings (the ‘ontological difference’). In coming to understand Heidegger’s notion of being (1962), it was vital to grasp this difference (Steiner, 1978, p. 37). Heidegger distinguishes an *ontic* world of particular beings from his more primordial *ontological* question about the being of beings (1962, p. 31). This means he asks how it might be *already* possible to have any experience of ‘such and such’ beings (Heidegger, 1962, p. 31). This ontological dimension allows us to say of any thing, ‘there is’, and by virtue of this ontological understanding of the world, the world allows (*worlds*), graciously, things to come ‘to be’ for us (Lucy, 2004, p. 8). What are the taken-for-granted ontological understandings that allow us to speak, or even

squabble about, any thing to do with youth work education, and educating, amidst the UYWE scene?

For Heidegger, a long inertia of ontological difference means that inquiries in the positive sciences, across all disciplines, are typically *ontical*. That is, they ask about this or that specific being (1962, p. 31). By implication, this means that being is treated as a simple, obvious, boring kind of presence – as either an objective presence for subjective human consciousness, or a physical presence within the universe (Harman, 2007, p. 45). Ontical inquiries approach the question of being as a simple yes/no question: ‘either a thing exists or not: end of story’ (Harman, 2007, p. 45). Such an approach is distinct from the more primordial ontological approach that Heidegger opens up because it overlooks the fact that being is never a yes/no question (1962, p. 31). ‘To be’ always means to be in a highly context-specific way, different for each thing that exists: ‘It always entails a partial absence from view rather than a simple lucid presence (“yes”) or failure to be present (“no”)’ (Harman, 2007, p. 45).<sup>9</sup>

In light of understanding the difference between being (ontological meaning) and beings (ontic meaning), I realised that I wanted my research to ask about the former, even though I saw how, for the most part, it is ontic knowledge that is prioritised in research today, including educational research. But Heidegger’s understandings helped me to see that, before the ‘whatness’ of educating in UYWE, I could explore what ‘being’ an educator *means* – even where, most especially where, there is no way to explain this meaning in terms of causal relations, to dissect it in any alternative way, or to understand it by binding (comparing) it with something else (Heidegger, 1962, p. 56, 2015, p. 49; Steiner, 1978; van Manen, 2014, p. 231).

Amidst the university-situated educator’s busywork, perhaps what matters most – *what has to matter most before anything else can matter* – has been covered up. The basic assumption here is that the educator’s constant work stream is never ‘empty busywork’, but always organised, and pre-impregnated, by how their work is *already tacitly understood* to matter to them (Heidegger, 1968, p. 15). This research therefore

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<sup>9</sup> As a musician, my encounter with a wonderful passage by George Steiner helped to give me a ‘way in’ to *Being and Time* and Heidegger’s notion of ‘being’, while also leading me into a clearer sensibility of the nature of his ontological inquiry (see Steiner, 1978, pp. 46–47).

begins as a process of digging down to root experiential meanings that are essential to 'being an educator' in UYWE.

### **What is 'Dasein'?**

For Heidegger, there is a worn path that he carefully avoids taking his fundamental ontology down. He is looking to generate fresh accounts of the meaning of being that do not succumb to the snares of traditional philosophical approaches. For Heidegger, where modern philosophy has gone astray is that it habitually thinks of a person as a conscious subject (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 13). Thereby, traditional inquiries proceed from a dualistic thinking, where the *inner* subjectivity of people is set in causal relation against the *outer* objective world (Blattner, 2006; Dreyfus, 1991). Heidegger wakes up to this language of inner–outer that dominates modern philosophy, from Descartes through Kant to Husserl (Blattner, 2006, p. 10). A fresh encounter with the question of being, as he sees it, must entail opening up a fresh approach to our human relationship with the world. Hence, not only is there a traditional forgetfulness of the question of being, but also of the human being who is able to ask that question as the inquirer. It is this twofold relation that emerges as the real focus of Heidegger's inquiry (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 222). To recall the kind of being for which there is a question of being, Heidegger introduces the notion of *Dasein*. An understanding of *Dasein* plays an important role in this study.

As a means to uncover the forgotten meaning of being *in general*, Heidegger orients his inquiry towards a particular kind of being: *human being*, which he names *Dasein*. Heidegger first mentions *Dasein* as followed:

Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it – all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of *Being* for those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves. Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being ... This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term '*Dasein*'. (1962, pp. 26–27)

Thus, a sense arises that the human being is firstly an 'I am' before an 'I think' (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 222). Through such a notion of *Dasein*, the traditional subject–object dichotomy is overthrown, and we find a re-viewing of the human being. In the light of this idea, I became aware that the educator is absorbed by their world, not cut off from it in some sort of 'mind', or what Heidegger calls 'the "cabinet" of consciousness' (1962, p. 89).

Self and world belong together in the single entity, the Dasein. Self and world are not two beings, like subject and object, or like I and thou, but self and world are the basic determination of the Dasein itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world. (Heidegger, 1988, p. 297)

In German, Dasein literally translates as ‘there-being’ (or ‘being-there’) (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 164; Heidegger, 1962, p. 27). While the notion of Dasein can be interpreted variously, the basic idea appears to be that as human beings we are not isolated subjects, cut off from a realm of objects and people that we encounter in our everyday existence. Rather, we are first and foremost beings who are always-already in a world from which we do not typically distinguish ourselves (Critchley, 2009). Thus, Dasein can be simply understood as the *situated meaning* of a human in the world (Heidegger, 1962, p. 346; Lavery, 2003).

Dreyfus (1991, p. 14) says that the best way to understand what Heidegger basically means by Dasein is to think about our term ‘human being’, which can speak to a way of being that is characteristic of all people or to a specific person – a human being. Heidegger is interested in the human *way of being* and different ways the human acts – the ‘how’ of the being that *we* ourselves are as human beings. Heidegger’s naming of Dasein can be described as *existential* since he is not looking to show what it means to be a human being in specific cultures or historical periods, but rather to contribute some basic shared themes that bind us together in our common experience of everyday life (Blattner, 2006; Dreyfus, 1991; van Manen, 1990). At the same time, Heidegger seeks to reverse the Cartesian tradition by showing that the ‘is’ of a person is always complexly intertwined with a shared world of background social practices (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 14; Heidegger, 2014a, p. 204).

Heidegger develops the meaning of ‘being there’ with a helpful metaphor: the way each of us always exists in our own ‘there’ is akin to being a *clearing* within a dense forest (1962, p. 171). The clearing refers to the way we are always in the ‘there’ of a shared situation, not a general situation, but a practical situation that calls us to act in this or that way (Dreyfus, 2005, p. 146). Before we are ‘here and there’ in a spatial sense, we are primarily alive to our specific shared situation and what practical demands it appears to be making of us. It is our situated-ness that tacitly organises our own everyday activities (Heidegger, 1962, p. 346). Dasein opens a clearing because we care about our own being, how our own lives unfold before us (pp. 401–402). And yet, as each of us go about caring about our own lives and activities, what

opens up is a shared clearing (shared situation; shared ‘there’ that is communally cared about). ‘Think of a group of people all working together to clear a field in the forest. There is a plurality of activities of clearing, but all this activity results only in one cleared field’ (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 165).

Our shared situation differs for each of us; nevertheless, we move about in a common world of activity (Heidegger, 1988, p. 164). Henceforth, in this research I am not trying to understand how different individuals experience and take action in the shared situation of teaching youth work in the university world. Instead, my focus is on illuminating how the situation of educating amidst UYWE, by its very nature, can be tacitly shared (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 165).

In light of this understanding, I proceed not primarily with an interest in the subjective or biographical experiences of my so-called participants; towards reporting on how my phenomenon is seen from their particular view, perspective or vantage point (van Manen, 1990, p. 62). Instead, the deeper goal, which gives this research its thrust, remains oriented to asking the question of what is the nature of the phenomenon (educating in UYWE) as an essentially human experience (p. 62). It is this focus that sets my research approach apart from other forms of qualitative inquiry. Beyond how any particular educator makes sense of their educational work, what I want to know is: Is this what it is like to teach student youth workers in the university situation? Is this what it means experientially to be an educator in the everyday world of UYWE (van Manen, 1990, p. 63)? Such a research approach is often called (hermeneutic) ‘phenomenology’, and has been previously used in educational studies to research lived experiences as they reveal themselves to us, rather than as we rationally reduce them to theory and explanation (Dall’Alba, 2009a; Friesen, Henriksson & Saevi, 2012; Giles, 2008; van Manen, 1990, 2014; Willis, Smith & Collins, 2000).

### **Heidegger on the human condition**

Heidegger’s understanding of the human condition takes its bearings from his foundational notion of *Dasein*, discussed above. Heidegger’s investigation in *Being and Time*, which seeks to attest to the forgotten nature of our common everyday existence as human beings, does not proceed from the classical conceptions of human nature. Prior to Heidegger, traditional ideas on the human being tended either

to emphasise essentialist accounts or to exalt the supreme agency of the human being (Critchley, 2005, p. 8). Heidegger (2011b) opposes both sides of this dominant dichotomy, while also challenging any other existential notion (e.g., Sartre's) that implies we can withdraw into our own subjectivity, or ascribe our own meaning to things, our lives, even ourselves as we see fit within an otherwise nihilistic and absurd human existence. Such a view, insists Heidegger (2011b), overlooks how Dasein is always-already a 'shepherd of being' – whether this dynamic is preserved or forgotten by modern philosophy and Western thought. This means that, as human beings, what gives us our shared mark of fundamental *difference* – what sets us apart from every animal and other every other kind of thing – is that we are the unique kind of being that finds ourselves in a relation with the question of 'being'. Within this relation, 'being' comes prior to any thought that we may give it, even if we mistakenly assume that it is us who call the meaning of beings into being, and lose sight of the fact that it is always the other way around (Critchley, 2005, p. 10).

The radical claim here is that, as the 'shepherd of being' (Heidegger, 2011b), our shared vocation as human beings is not to self-determine and fashion the meaning of beings according to our free-floating human wills, but rather, it is to live our lives in tacit response and testimony to being – to the historical meaning of beings that we ourselves do not make (Heidegger, 2011b). In the same way that the nature of language and our life experience are not of our own making (because we have been *thrown* into a pre-existing world of shared background cultural practices that we have not had any control over), we do not choose the true *meaning of beings* but it first chooses us, whether we are conscious of this or not (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1982; Polt, 1999).

Coming to understand Heidegger's view on the human condition helped me to appreciate that by undertaking a phenomenological study I would not be interested in understanding how the individual participants graft their own subjective meanings to the meaning of 'being an educator' in the field of UYWE; nor how they consciously assign their own meaning to their personal experiences of educating and working in the university world. Instead, my focus was on re-calling the forgotten primordial meaning-aspects of 'being an educator' that exceed and come prior to subjective or inter-subjective meanings that any individual or group of individuals, who find themselves thrown into this specific world, may be able to articulate.

### **Phenomenology as method path**

Heidegger's inquiry undertakes an original analysis of the being of human being (named Dasein). But what methodological path does he think is most fitting for such a task? This was an important consideration given that I was drawn to understand the fundamental ontology of *being* an educator in UYWE.

Heidegger wants to reveal taken-for-granted presuppositions about the very nature of being. But he claims *scientific studies* overlook the being of beings when formulating their research questions and problems. Because scientific methods are oblivious to the fundamental question of being, Heidegger sees that, obviously, he must follow a different path (1962, pp. 49–50). At any rate, he is not interested in contributing scientific-theoretical knowledge about the question of being (1962, p. 50). He is seeking primordial understandings of what it always-already means 'to be', especially our everyday experience of being alive as human beings (Blattner, 2006, p. 9; Powell, 2007, p. 39). In the same way, this study seeks more primordial understandings of what it means to be an educator in UYWE, rather than aiming at contributing explanations or theoretical knowledge about the practice of educators in this ontological region.

It follows that the question Heidegger (1962) is asking is one that can only be dealt with 'phenomenologically' (p. 50). At this point, Heidegger cites Husserl's familiar motto of phenomenology: '*To the things themselves!*' (p. 50). Here, he gestures to a path that has already been beaten: the traditional method of phenomenology opened up by his former mentor and friend, Edmund Husserl, to whom *Being and Time* is dedicated (Heidegger, 1962, p. 62). Here, a broad methodological path opens, one that was only vaguely clear for me prior to this research. I set forth to explore what it might mean to use phenomenology as a vehicle for exploring the nature of being an educator in UYWE.

Broadly speaking, phenomenology is the name for the major philosophical orientation in continental Europe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (van Manen & van Manen, 2014, p. 610). This movement is unlike substantive disciplines, such as psychology, biology or sociology, because instead of aiming at explaining something phenomenology aims to describe and interpret 'how'

something is in our pre-reflective, pre-conceptualised ‘lived experience’ (Smythe, 2011, p. 38; van Manen, 2014, p. 43, 1990). In this sense, phenomenology is primarily a method (van Manen & van Manen, 2014, p. 610).

In laying out his phenomenological method, Heidegger returns to the etymology of the word phenomenology. Phenomenology comes from the word ‘phenomenon’. ‘Phenomenon’ goes back to the Greek expression *phainomenon*, which Heidegger traces back to the verb *phainesthai*, ‘to show itself’ (1962, p. 51). So, originally the notion of phenomenon means ‘that which shows itself’ (p. 51). The verb *phainesthai* (‘to show itself’) is related to the Greek *phaino* – the act of ‘bringing something to light’ (p. 51). Thus, in beginning to disclose his method of investigation, Heidegger tells his readers that we must ‘keep in mind’ that the expression ‘phenomenon’ means ‘that which shows itself in *itself*, the manifest. Accordingly, [phenomena] are the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to the light – what the Greeks sometimes identified simply [as entities]’ (1962, p. 51). From this, what is brought into view is that phenomena relate to beings (or entities/things). In this research, I have named the phenomenon as ‘being an educator’ in UYWE.

But if we stop there, it might sound like phenomena are simply hiding from us, as if all we need to do to see them is flick on a light switch. Yet, seeing phenomena in their ‘showing as they are’, on their own terms, is a tricky path to follow. To embark on it, a phenomenologist must first come to grips with the difference between phenomena and *appearances*. Otherwise, they will unwittingly fall into the trap of studying mere appearances, which is not true phenomenology (Blattner, 1999, pp. 10–12). So it was vital for me to grasp how Heidegger differentiates *appearances* and *phenomena*.

Phenomena are *never* appearances, yet every appearance depends upon phenomena. That is, appearance always relies on having phenomena to point to (1962, p. 53). While phenomena come before appearances, nothing comes before phenomena. Crucially for this study, Heidegger warns that it is possible for something to *seem-to-be* that which *in itself* it is not really (*mere semblance*) (1962, p. 51). For example, a person can fake being an experienced lecturer in order to seek employment by writing bogus qualifications and work history on their CV. The appearance of these

fabrications on a person's CV 'announces' the existence of something that is not really true of the person (1962, p. 53).

Furthermore, it is possible for something to announce something that does not show itself (*appearance*). For example, systemic social problems may announce themselves in symptoms like high 'youth' unemployment and crime rates and so on (1962, p. 52). Here, appearance can sometimes point to the presence of an unseen phenomenon. Or, appearance can sometimes occur as something that is a signpost to that which does not appear in any manifest form (e.g. rotten fruit in a bowl announces the passing of time, which does not exist as a phenomenon that we can see in itself) (Munday, 2009).<sup>10</sup> While phenomena essentially *differ* from appearances, paradoxically we can only ever glimpse what invisible phenomena are essentially, in themselves, by the light of their appearance (Heidegger, 1998, p. 212, 2011c, p. 319). Being is thus inseparable from its coming to light for us.

What does this mean for this research? This research seeks to interpret lecturers' stories of lived experience in order to show 'being an educator' as an invisible phenomenon in the everyday context of UYWE (N. Diekelmann & J. Diekelmann, 2009). My phenomenon of interest is the heartbeat of this phenomenological study (Smythe, 2011, p. 39; van Manen, 1990). And what draws it forward is the challenge

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<sup>10</sup> To reiterate: Heidegger distinguishes between (1) phenomena that show themselves (e.g. a phenomenon can sometimes reveal itself to us in a straightforward way, like this coffee cup I am sipping from as I write this); (2) appearances that announce something they are not, such as symbols, metaphors, symptoms, illusions and indicators (1962, p. 52); and (3) another kind of appearance that does not constitute the real being of what it brings forth, but rather is an emanation of what it announces, and keeps this very thing that it announces constantly veiled (p. 53). When talking about this third special form of appearance, Heidegger refers to a traditional way of thinking about 'phenomena' based on the work of Immanuel Kant [1724–1804] (1962, pp. 53–54). According to Kant, what he calls 'things in themselves' (or 'noumena') cause what he names as 'appearances' or 'phenomena' (van Manen, 2014, p. 80). Kant thus creates a dualism between noumena and phenomena, arguing that the former, such as God and time, are unknowable things-in-themselves and as such we cannot directly experience them. Kant's thinking is that the things-in-themselves 'merely appear' by way of what he calls 'appearances'. Kant's metaphysics therefore rejects ontology. According to him, philosophy and ontological inquiries, like this research

have no hope of discussing the way things are in themselves, since human beings only gain access to the world in a limited human way: for instance, we cannot know whether time and space exist independently of us, but can only say that they are conditions of possibility of all human experience. Humans will never know what lies outside the structure of human experience. (Harman, 2007, p. 3)

While Heidegger broadly follows the Kantian tradition, he rejects the notion of 'noumena' and thereby throws out the language of noumena–phenomena (and along with it, other related dichotomies of internal–external, inner–outer that still dominate modern philosophy) (Blattner, 2006; Braver, 2007, p. 184). This means that he refrains from focusing on causal relationships (e.g. my thoughts are inner reflections caused by outer noumena) (Blattner, 2006, p. 10; Harman, 2007, p. 3).

of showing an ‘in-apparent’ phenomenon that never shows a complete picture of itself (Heidegger, 2012a, p. 80, 1962; Smythe, 2011, p. 39). Heidegger’s preliminary insights into the nature of phenomena, and their slippery relations with appearances, helped me to hold my questioning open: to be careful not to be fooled by what may momentarily appear, or seem, to show up as a vital meaning of the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’.

But here another question emerges. If Heidegger is right, and Kant and Husserl are wrong, then it is possible (albeit difficult) for phenomena to come into appearance for us. But how is this appearing assumed to eventuate? An answer is found in Heidegger’s turn to the part of ‘phenomen-ology’ that has its roots in the Greek ‘logos’ (1962, p. 55). Etymologically, *logos* means word, language or study (van Manen, 2014, p. 27). Heidegger also traces logos back to the notion of ‘discourse’ (1962, p. 55), but immediately clarifies that our modern understandings cloud the primordial nature of linguistic communication. In a primal sense, the original nature of language does not relate to the act of speaking or to empirical language, but to the basic way we come to ‘mutually access’ what it *is* that we are talking about by virtue of our discoursing (1962, p. 56).<sup>11</sup> Heidegger harks back to the ancient Greek understanding of logos as ‘showing something’, and to Aristotle’s notion of truth (*aletheia*) as uncovering, as illumination of a thing’s hidden being (1962, p. 59).

Guided by this idea, I saw that the renewed understandings I was seeking would only come through the lived process of language (logos) with others: through participating in conversation with the participants; through hearing, crafting and dwelling with their stories derived from the transcripts; through participating in interpretive dialogue with my supervisors; through writing in order to understand; through being illuminated by the lamp of philosophical writings. Inquirer and reader can only come

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<sup>11</sup> In later writings, Heidegger reiterates the primordial relation of logos and ‘beings’ (1998, pp. 213-214). It is crucial for Heidegger, in opening up phenomenology properly, that we first grasp the right concept of language. What conceals from us the primary nature of language, as logos, is the prevailing modern view that

language is held to be a kind of communication. It serves for verbal exchange and agreement, and in general for communicating. But language is not only and not primarily an audible and written expression of what is to be communicated. It not only puts forth in words and statements what is overtly or covertly intended to be communicated; language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time. Where there is no language, as in the being of stone, plant, and animal, there is also no openness of what is, and consequently no openness either of that which is not and of the empty. (Heidegger, 2001, p. 71)

to glimpse the primordial nature of the phenomenon through a mutual access that language lets happen (1962, p. 57). As detailed in the following chapter, the ‘story’ (accounts of ‘lived experience’) is the form of language that is privileged in granting us mutual access to the showing of the phenomenon.

Bringing this together, phenomenology is essentially a pathway of language. This path leads us away in order to come before a tentative showing of an ‘inapparent’ phenomenon *as it truly is in its own genuine being* (Heidegger, 2012a, p. 80). Indeed, after recovering the Greek notions of ‘phenomenon’ and ‘logos’, Heidegger mixes a strange brew, carefully formulating the original meaning of ‘phenomenology’ as the audacious art of ‘[letting] that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way it shows itself from itself’ (1962, p. 58). Heidegger’s phenomenology opened a path for this research to follow. Phenomenology allows the lived nature of my phenomenon to be glimpsed in the crafted stories of lived experience, together with the corresponding interpretive writings presented in the discussion chapters of this thesis.

### **Phenomenology as ontology**

For Heidegger, phenomenology is ontology – is the way *into* ontology. More precisely, only as phenomenology is ontology possible (1962, p. 60). For Heidegger, the lived experience of being human (of Dasein) is *already* a phenomenon, regardless of whether philosophy forgets or remembers to attend to it. The phenomenon of being an educator in UYWE is already a phenomenon whether or not this research ever gets off the ground.

Heidegger’s phenomenology of Dasein brings him to his starting point on the path towards uncovering *being*, back to the shadowy primordial understandings of what it means to be alive that we all already possess (Crotty, 1998, p. 97). In this sense, uncovering the meaning of being is unlike reaching an unknown destination at the end of a forest trail, but rather, it is reaching a pre-understanding that we already have a vague sense of. In this way, the existential understandings that Heidegger journeys to reach are *already a phenomenology* (Crotty, 1998, p. 97). What he is seeking to understand (various modes of our common human being in the world) is already a universal phenomenon that we have all pre-reflectively experienced, including Heidegger himself as the inquirer (1962, p. 27).

Grasping phenomenology as ontology helped me to see that, beyond the boundaries of my research, my phenomenon of interest is already a phenomenon that people have lived. The claim here is that we who stand in a shared clearing, in terms of a kindred experience of the phenomenon of interest, already know in advance what it is that I am journeying to clarify. We already share a knowing about what it fundamentally *is* to be an educator in UYWE – but only in a vague, partially revealed way, and not yet as the rigorous clarification that I seek through this research (Harman, 2007, p. 58). The nature of this journey has already been sketched in the introduction chapter of this thesis. Before starting out on my research journey, before the research topic had clearly addressed me, I had already tacitly understood my prior experiences of a particular mode of being a human in the world, which I came to ask about. My pre-understandings of this region of my own being human were already known, albeit waiting to be drawn out and disclosed to me as the researcher and to others. Here I am reminded that to carry my prior experiences and pre-understandings with me on my research path announces that it is only possible as phenomenology – that it is *already a phenomenology*, whether the deeper understanding I am seeking is drawn into the light of day or not (Crotty, 1998).

### **Phenomenology as hermeneutics**

So far, Heidegger has returned to the Greek roots of the words ‘phenomenon’ and ‘logos’ to reunite phenomenology as the act of allowing phenomena to be glimpsed as what they are. Already, a sense emerges that it is not really us who designate the original lived meaning of a phenomenon, but rather a phenomenon reveals itself to us, albeit never fully. Thereby, I came to see phenomenology as a journey of being led by my phenomenon to its lived meanings through a ‘way of access’ belonging to the experience itself, rather than a way that is grounded in my *consciousness* of the phenomenon as I encounter it in my research or elsewhere (Palmer, 1969, p. 128). It is for this reason that Heidegger cannot follow in Husserl’s phenomenological path, which guides the inquirer to think about some thing in fresh ways by *bracketing out* (laying aside) the worldly assumptions that colour how they think about that thing when they ordinarily encounter it in the context of their everyday lives (Blattner, 2006, p. 27; Dreyfus, 1991, pp. 48, 73; Harman, 2007, p. 23; Stevenson, 2005, p. 252). Such an approach is underpinned by a philosophy of subjectivity and consciousness. The subject matter of Husserl’s method is *intentionality* (how

phenomena show up in our consciousness) (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 48; Harman, 2007, p. 41). But Heidegger is looking to shift from consciousness to *being*, especially the everyday being of Dasein (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 33). Husserl's path cannot be followed because the being of beings beckons us in our transparent lived experience of them, rather than in our pure mental awareness of them (without reference to the world in which it meaningfully belongs).

If Husserl's way of access cannot be followed, what is Heidegger's way towards understanding being, without reducing ontology to scientific terms? In other words, how can ontological inquiry, such as this research, be led by the nature of the phenomenon under investigation? Addressing this question, Heidegger invokes the word 'hermeneutics':

Our investigation itself will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in *interpretation* [laying open]. The *logos* of the phenomenology of Dasein has the character of *hermēneúein* [to interpret] through which the authentic meaning of being, and all those basic structures of being which Dasein itself possesses, are *made known* to Dasein's [pre-conscious, ontological] understanding of being. The phenomenology of Dasein is a *hermeneutic* in the [original meaning] of the word. (1962, pp. 61–62, original emphasis)

The word hermeneutics means 'to interpret' and 'to say' (Crotty, 1998; Moules, 2002; Palmer, 1969). 'Hermeneutic' derives from the Greek verb *hermēneúein* (Heidegger, 1982, p. 29). This verb relates to the noun *hermeneus*, which gestures to the name of the trickster god *Hermes* (Crotty, 1998; Heidegger, 1982; Moules, 2002; Palmer, 1969). Evoked through this association is a 'playful thinking that is more compelling than the rigor of science' (Heidegger, 1982, p. 29). Hermes is the divine messenger, revealing hermeneutics as that elucidation which can only emerge in language because it has already heard a message that has been said earlier (1982, p. 29). And yet, it became clear that Heidegger's hermeneutic way of access means more than simply interpreting and mediating messages that can easily go astray between people in the interplay of linguistic and non-linguistic human communication. That is, for Heidegger, hermeneutics is not just the problem of how to represent the fragile meaning of a text as the person who articulated it originally intended. Rather, the thrust of Heidegger's hermeneutics is to draw out the *covered up* ontological understandings of being that make it possible for phenomena to be 'open to' any interpretation, or assertion, that we may happen to express towards them (1962, p. 59). Without our already-there tacit understandings of being, it would

be impossible even to recognise the need for interpretation in the first place (Sembera, 2007, p. 90).

Why hermeneutics is foundational for Heidegger can be seen in the light of *Being and Time* as a whole text. As he shows in his later analysis of Dasein, our interpretative acts are always rooted in our tacit fore-understandings, and not the other way around (1962, p. 188). As we are swept along in everyday happenings and shared practices, we do not have to be thinking about something or someone explicitly for them to be already meaningful to us. Consider the everyday example of a thing we commonly call a 'table'. How do we access the true being of this thing? Husserl's approach might have us contemplate this thing abstractly, away from the practical situation of our own communal lives and shared background activities. But for Heidegger, his hermeneutics starts with the assumption that we already carry with us our own veiled situated understandings of being, for example the being of a table. We are constantly drawing on the hidden meaning of being (i.e. being this or that, even ourselves) as we go about our everyday lives, whether we are conscious of this happening or not. Hence, we never just see an abstract table, but the *meaning* of a particular table as we use it to do things within a broader web of significance (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1962, p. 114; Polt, 2013, p. 64; van Manen, 2014).

Thus, I never firstly experience our family dining table as a series of appearances that stream through my consciousness, but the warm evening meal that my wife is serving for us on the table; the aftermath of dishes that need doing; my children using the table for craft; my good friends gathered around the table to catch up over coffee (Heidegger, 1962, p. 207, 1999, p. 69, 2001, p. 25). It is not 'I the pure consciousness' who encounters our dining table in my familial world, but rather, 'I the husband, father, son, friend' and so on who is swept up in doing my familiar everyday life *with* my family and friends (Harman, 2007, p. 43).

As a way to illustrate this hermeneutic way of thinking in action, a young Heidegger (1999) gives a personal insight into the lived, situated meaning of a table. Unveiling the true being of a familiar table in his own home, Heidegger does not yield to scientific, abstract or factual description, but seeks to appreciate what this table has already come essentially to *mean for him* by opening us up to the world of his own communal experiences, to which the lived meaning of the table belongs:

Here and there [the table] shows lines –  
the boys like to busy themselves at the table.  
These lines are not just interruptions in the paint,  
but rather: it was the boys and it still is.  
This side is not the east side,  
and this narrow side so many [centimetres] shorter than the other,  
but rather the one at which my wife sits in the evening  
when she wants to stay up and read,  
there at the table we had such and such a discussion that time,  
there that decision was made with a friend that time,  
there that work written that time,  
there that holiday celebrated that time ...  
That is the table –  
as such is it there in the temporality of everydayness ...  
(Heidegger, 1999, p. 69)



**Figure 2: Sharing an evening meal**

(Photo: J. Spier, 27 May 2015)

As seen in this example, it is difficult to hold the focus of the phenomenon of one's inquiry because of the highly context-specific way we encounter phenomena in our everyday lives. We can never encounter a table outside of the human context we find ourselves thrown in. In the same way, a person always experiences the phenomenon of 'being an educator' in the midst of being *thrown into* a concrete situation that they are constantly dealing with and responding to: that lecture to prepare, that essay to grade, that meeting to attend, that curriculum to develop, that research to publish,

and so it goes. Within this hectic situation, the deep layers of what it essentially means to educate in one's field becomes embedded within one's activity, layers that are not completely *hidden*, but not fully explicit either (Heidegger, 1962, p. 59; Harman, 2007, p. 42). Heidegger suggests the original being of a phenomenon becomes 'buried over' (1962, p. 60), meaning he rejects Husserl's method because it never asks about being (Harman, 2007, p. 42).

This insight showed me that, in the research process, it was vital for me to remain attentive to what may be taken for granted and covered up. Am I inclining my thinking towards meanings that appear self-evident? What veiled meaning is yet to be illuminated that tacitly informs the educators' everyday busywork? How does 'being an educator' show in stories which are not explicitly about the meaning of the educator – when the being of 'being an educator' blends and bleeds into the background of what is happening for the educator? How is the meaning of 'being an educator' glimpsed in moments when something goes wrong or breaks down for an educator? I was shown that I needed to make sure that I vigilantly dwell in the everyday experiences of educators, their practice and events. To hang the irreplaceable meaning of 'being an educator' abstractly 'out to dry', in isolation from the specific background context, is to disallow the experience to show as it really is in a person's living of it.

By invoking Heidegger's understanding of 'hermeneutics' (1962, p. 62), it was important to remember that this way of access to the covered-up meanings of my phenomenon is essentially through a playful-meditative way of thinking (1982, p. 9). This thinking toward ontological understandings occurs through a process of hermeneutic (interpretive) writing, which opens up a listening beyond words (Diekelmann, 2001; Ironside, 2012; Moules, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Lived experience is 'not really meaningful until it has found a home in language' (Madison, 1988, p. 165). For Heidegger, this special textual home can only be built because *Dasein* always-already abides in primordial language as the 'house of being' (Heidegger, 2011b, p. 147). Rather than any office workspace, it is this research text that truly grants the hermeneutic researcher their existential dwelling place for the duration of their research journey and beyond. This kind of dwelling place opens up new 'horizons of understanding' in the pathway-making movement of language, regardless of wherever the researcher happens to be physically placed as they make

their way (Gadamer, 2013; Heidegger, 1962, 1982, p. 103). This language gathers through the researcher's writing and re-writing, reading and re-reading, toward new wonderings (Heidegger, 2001).

Thus, in hermeneutical phenomenological research, understanding and thinking are brewed as the researcher continually writes to understand: interpretive writing is seen as an 'in order to' for Dasein's inquiry into the question of being (Heidegger, 1962). It is in the hermeneutic researcher's lived experience of writing that the researcher meditatively is led to appreciate essential understandings and meanings of their phenomenon (Giles, 2008). Indeed, 'one does not write primarily for being understood; one writes for having understood being' (van Manen, 2006, p. 721). The task of playful hermeneutic writing is to tend to the ripening of thoughts about what the situated mode of 'being an educator' already means – in people's communal living of it – in a manner of thinking that is not enslaved to the manner of metaphysics (1982, p. 30). Tending to the ripening meaning of being through writing is founded upon a deep silence, which is the very essence of language (Polt, 2013). For me, this mysterious way of relating with the question of being, in primordial language, is sensed in the following lines from Rilke's (1994) poem 'Entrance':

And you have made the world. And it is huge  
and like a word which grows ripe in silence.  
And as your will seizes on its meaning,  
tenderly your eyes let it go ... (p. 5)

Through such a journey of thinking, of seizing and letting go, the aim is for the essential nature of being, as it is pre-reflectively experienced, to shine in its essential relationship with language (1982, p. 30). 'To understand phenomenology as possibility can mean to enact the return to things themselves, not along the way of reflection but rather along that of hermeneutics' (von Herrmann, 2013, p. 145).

### **How does language 'play' in the delicate task of uncovering the meaning of being?**

An utmost and enduring concern for Heidegger, in *Being and Time* and beyond, is finding a language that best lends itself to meditating and uncovering the complexity and elusiveness of our primary relation to being (Allen, 2007, p. 37). As Heidegger's journey of thinking unfolded, he increasingly found the language of philosophy to be essentially unsuitable for his lifelong project. That is, philosophy came to be recognised as having limited usefulness as a language for un-concealing primordial

being and, ironically, traditional philosophy came to be seen as further obscuring from view that which he sought to uncover (Allen, 2007; Rogers, 2002). Indeed, post *Being and Time*, he even distanced himself from the traditional terminology of ‘hermeneutics’ and ‘phenomenology’ in describing his philosophical approach (Heidegger, 1982).

Instead, Heidegger was drawn to appreciate poetic language as best equipped to deal with the task of pondering and uncovering the meaning of being (Polt, 1999; Rogers, 2002; Steiner, 1978). It is through the practice of poetic thought that the inquirer can gratefully be reacquainted with the mystery of being (Allen, 2007; Henriksson & Saevi, 2012; Mugerauer, 2008; Steiner, 1978; van Manen, 1990). Even more than the philosophical thinker, Heidegger came to celebrate the great artist and the poet as the ones who are closer to being the ‘true celebrants’ of the veiled meaning of being, even without knowing it (Steiner, 1978, p. 126).

As a musician, this idea deeply resonated with me. It instructed me to see that undertaking phenomenological reflection often involves finding oneself ‘poeticising’ as a way of holding open, in writing and reading poetry, meanings that are at play within the shadows of a research text (Giles, 2008). Resonating with this idea, Gadamer notes, when looking back on his intellectual life, that he developed his own playful style of writing that enabled him to ‘develop the melody’ of his own thoughts and to hear the ‘living voice’ behind the words of a given text (1992, p. 66). Guided by this insight, hermeneutic research became the process of finding the melody of my own thoughts as they ripened in relation to my phenomenon in question.

Hence, in this study, I have been led to a greater appreciation of the limits of ordinary academic, and even philosophical language, in evoking fresh ontological understandings of the meaning of being (an educator) (Giles, 2008; Willis, 2004). Words in sentences felt, at times, inadequate to illuminate vital meanings that I had overlooked. The challenge for the hermeneutical phenomenological researcher is to maintain attunement to the phenomenon’s ‘unconcealment’ by dwelling in the research ‘poetically’ (Heidegger, 2001, 2009a). It is through such discipline that the researcher holds one’s ongoing interpretations open for further thinking and provocation. It was important to remember that poetry and music are able to evoke a

deeper understanding of the meanings of our lived experiences (as educators) in ways that exceed what can be expressed in ordinary forms of talk (Giles, 2008).

### **The path is circular**

For as you began, so you will remain. (Hölderlin, quoted in Heidegger, 1982, p. 7)

Heidegger claims that we must already know vaguely about the veiled meaning of being, otherwise we would not recognise it when we uncover it (Harman, 2007, p. 58). However, we do not yet see it clearly, and this presence of absence draws us forward. This understanding guided my research approach. I embarked on this research with a shadowy background sense of what ‘being an educator’ in UYWE already means. I was drawn by this vague sense to press ahead to seek a more rigorous understanding. In this sense, this whole research process is a remembering, or re-calling, of what I already understood without knowing it. Heidegger calls this the ‘hermeneutic circle’, or circle of interpretation (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 36; Harman, 2007, p. 58).<sup>12</sup> My understanding deepened as I went round the circle again and again. At the heart of the circular path was my phenomenon of interest; it was the heart of my quest, the touchstone that provoked my thinking, questioning, listening, reading, writing and dialogue with my supervisors and fellow educators (Smythe, 2011). The challenge was to stay with the phenomenon as I listened to the voice of the stories and what they were telling me about my phenomenon.

My understanding of essential meanings of my phenomenon never stands still. My sense of what it is to educate, amidst the shared situation of UYWE, constantly draws me and withdraws from me. I came to see that this research is ultimately about allowing my pre-understandings to be challenged and renewed through my hermeneutic encounters with the experiential accounts, as voiced by the participants in this research (Heidegger, 1992a). My encounters with the stories expand and revise my ‘horizon of understanding’ in relation to my phenomenon (Gadamer, 2013, p. 413). For both Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (2013), the hermeneutic circle is a manner of thinking, of questioning, of reading, of dialogue and of writing. There is

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<sup>12</sup> This research began with a vague sense of the veiled meaning of ‘being an educator in UYWE’ (the interrogated) that was already given to me in order to discover something new (that which is to be found out) (Harman, 2007, p. 57; Heidegger, 1962, p. 24). This temporal process called me first to draw out my tacit pre-understandings (as discussed in Chapter 1) so that they might be challenged through the research journey.

no logical, linear process that moves from start to finish (Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 21).

Heidegger suggests that all questioning and interpretation moves in a circle from part to whole and back, from beginning to end and back (Dahlstrom, 2013a, p. 93). We therefore uncover the answers we are seeking in the light of what we already know. This might seem akin to being stuck in circular maze with no way out, or in a labyrinth with no centre that can ever be reached – what is the point of looking for new understandings if we can only grasp them in terms of what we already know? As Heidegger says in relation to his quest:

Is there not, however, a manifest circularity in such an undertaking? If we must first define an entity *in its Being*, and if we want to formulate the question of Being only on this basis, what is this but going in a circle? In working out the question, have we not ‘presupposed’ something which only the answer can bring? (1962, p. 27)

But Heidegger (1962) reassures us that the circle is not closed as a ‘vicious circle’ (p. 195), in the fashion of circular reasoning, but rather opens as a ‘*virtuous* circle’ (p. 194) – a path of thinking that draws us into a playful *back-and-forth* movement with our research question (1962, p. 28).

This means that our questioning is a kind of light which casts a certain pattern on the phenomenon, while also confounding our expectations in a way that allows us to formulate further questions, and thus to expand our understanding (Moran, 2000, p. 237). Thus, encountering the experiences of another educator in her or his stories expands my own understandings, which I take to the experiential accounts of other educators, to ongoing conversation with my supervisors, to my reading and re-reading of continental philosophical writings, to my interpretive writing and re-writing, and around again. Through such immersion, my own meditative mode of thinking brings me to new possibilities (Heidegger, 1982). Listening to the same interview audio again, or re-reading the same story, can draw forward key insights overlooked in earlier encounters.

In light of Heidegger’s notion of the hermeneutic circle, I saw that the core purpose of my hermeneutic research project is to challenge my initial understandings of my phenomenon through encountering a ‘resistance’ when interrogating what the participants’ stories are telling me about the lived experience (Finlay, 2011, p. 53).

Through staying with the process, what gradually emerged for me was a re-vision of my own pre-understandings about the meaning of being an educator in UYWE.

This research thus was learning to dwell in the hermeneutic circle; a playful way of thinking; that constantly moves to-and-fro between question and answer; presence and absence; between my implicit pre-understandings and explicit understandings; between the reciprocal relationship between my interpretative work and me as interpretive researcher; between understanding parts and the whole; between parts and the whole (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 36; Finlay, 2011, p. 53).

In a pragmatic sense, the circular relationship between the parts and the whole meant that the distinct stories, which emerged forth from within each whole interview conversation, constituted each participant's whole story. Moreover, the stories derived across all the conversations were taken together to form 'the whole' of the research text. My circular thinking that moved back and forth from part to whole opened through questions that came in the light of interpretive writing about each participant's stories and through engaging in regular dialogues with my supervisors. The main thrust was to question how my phenomenon appeared to be showing – in its common threads of lived meaning across the stories taken as a whole text. At the end of the day, it was the elusiveness of the lived nature of 'being an educator' in UYWE that drew me to enter a circular path.

We are compelled to follow the circle.  
This is neither a makeshift or a defect.  
To enter upon the path is the strength of thought,  
To continue on it is the feast of thought,  
Assuming thinking is a craft.  
(Heidegger, 2001, p. 18)

### ***What is being?***

This chapter has shown how the introductory sections of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (pp. 2–64) instructed the nature and philosophical approach of this study. That is, the focus has been on how Heidegger approaches his own ambitious historical quest, which sought to uncover the forgotten meaning of 'being'. To this end, he proceeds to disclose what 'being' essentially means by contributing a fresh hermeneutic phenomenology of what it fundamentally is 'to be' a particular being that he calls Dasein (human existence). As such, he aims to offer a powerful

reminder of different ‘modes of being’, or ontological understandings, of our everyday lives in the world.

Having laid out the kind of philosophical inquiry he is aiming to carry out in the introductory sections, most of what follows in divisions I and II of *Being and Time* is devoted to contemplating the mysterious being of Dasein (Blattner, 2006). The force of thought that gathers through the course of this work is a radical ontological and hermeneutic illumination of the phenomenon of being human in everyday life. While it is not possible to sketch the development of Heidegger’s key insights here, there are four basic themes, or core understandings, of the existential nature of being human that emerge in *Being and Time* that lay the groundwork for my interpretive meditations on the meaning of ‘being an educator’ as experienced in UYWE (as presented in the discussion chapters of this thesis; chapters 6–8). I will now offer a flavour of these foundational ideas.

#### **‘Care’ as an essential meaning of being human**

What becomes clear for Heidegger (1962, p. 84) is that to be human means to exist as ‘care’ in the world. He describes our human existence as care (*Sorge*) because we are the only kind of being for which the questionability of being, and our own being, is an issue (1962, p. 236). Heidegger’s notion of care reminds us that we do not primarily exist in the world as a physical entity, as spirit, as a ‘cabinet of consciousness’, or ‘in’ measurable time and objective space (1962, p. 89). Rather, unlike objects like stones, animals and artificial intelligence, the peculiarity of ‘how we are’ as human is that we primordially exist ‘in’ the world as care (1962, p. 235). Bluntly put, we are the only kind of being that does and does not ‘give a damn’ about various things, events, other people and our own lives (Haugeland, 1998, p. 47). That which we encounter in our own lives along the way are shown to ‘*matter* to us, they *concern* us, even when they matter *by* being negligible or irrelevant’ (Blattner, 2006, p. 37).

In relation to the questionability of our own existence, as we press ahead into our everyday life as care, we are constantly confronted with the question of ‘Who am I?’ (Blattner, 2006, p. 37). And for the most part, we do not confront this question consciously, but simply in tacitly comporting ourselves and our ordinary activities towards what already matters to us (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 94; Heidegger, 1962, p. 237).

This insight helped me to attend to ways that educators are firstly present in the ‘there’ of what happens to be concerning them, wherever they happen to be in terms of spatiality; whether geographically ‘in the university’ or in some other place (Heidegger, 1962, p. 79).

### **‘Being with’ as an essential meaning of being human**

For Heidegger, our existence in the world does not start from a ‘sphere of ownness’, but all the various modes that we can be together and distant from one another are always-already presupposed by a primordial ‘withness’ of Dasein (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 142; Heidegger, 1962, p. 149). That is, the questionability of ‘who I am’ can only arise from a communal context where we are always-already delivered over (thrown) with other people into a particular shared world of shared historical-cultural meaning and practices (Dreyfus, 1990; Heidegger, 1962, p. 150).

To be the kind of being that inescapably exists with others, even when we appear to be ‘on our own’, means that we invariably *care* about other humans in different ways than we care about other types of entities. Indeed, Heidegger (1962) distinguishes our comportment<sup>13</sup> towards the useful equipment (*Besorgen*) that we use, from our comportment towards other people (*Fürsorge*) (1962, pp. 83, 157). The German verb *Fürsorge* literally translates as ‘for-concern’, meaning concernfulness for, or caring for, others (Sembera, 2007, p. 234). Heidegger uses this word to evoke ‘welfare work’: an everyday sense of providing organised care for others in need (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158; Sembera 2007, p. 234). Macquarie and Robinson translate Heidegger’s usage of *Fürsorge* as ‘solicitude’ (Heidegger, 1962, p. 157).

Heidegger’s notion of solicitude refers to the recognition that others are not things we need to take care of, or care over. Rather, other people exist as we do: as beings who comport to their own possibilities and projects of concern that lie beyond themselves (Anton, 2001, p. 157). Thus, solicitude does not refer to an emotional state, theoretical attitude or cognitive awareness of others, but to the inescapable ways that others always-already matter to us (Blattner, 2006; Heidegger, 1962). Our capacity to attune differently and indifferently towards other people as we encounter them in various situations, even the way we often pass one another by as not

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<sup>13</sup> Heidegger’s notion of comportment refers to our directed activity as the basic ground of being human; a ‘towards that’ which grounds our own self-understanding and tacitly informs our everyday activities (Brook, 2009; Dreyfus, 1991).

‘mattering’, is only made possible by primordial solicitude (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158). Indeed, our self-understanding is suffused with the questionability of who others are in relation to ourselves (Blattner, 2006, p. 39). This insight helped me to attune to how educators are first and foremost present in the hidden and moveable ‘there’ of their relational concerns that arise from their own practical undertakings with others within and beyond the university community, whether consciously or not.

### **Time as the primary meaning of being**

For Heidegger, the claim that the meaning of being human is care is grounded in an ontological understanding of time or temporality (Greaves, 2010, p. 49). As the title of his magnum opus reflects, this is the single greatest insight that Heidegger leads us to in *Being and Time*: being *is* time (Critchley, 2009; Harman, 2007; Mulhall, 2013). As the kind of being that we ourselves are as Dasein, we do not primarily exist as ‘sheer presence’, but as care, which only opens up from a temporality that ‘*stretches along* between birth and death’ (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 48, 426). Heidegger recognises temporalisation as the fundamental event that opens up a horizon of possibilities for us (Greaves, 2010, p. 101).

This does not mean that care takes place ‘in time’, in terms of a traditional concept of time as a linear succession of uniform ‘nows’ (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 370, 377). Instead, we care for what is to come and are always ‘ahead-of-ourselves’ (future); are thrown into a world as already-being-in (past as ‘having been’); and are alongside things in the world as ‘being-alongside’ (present) (Heidegger, 1962, p. 375). The world opens up for us in each of these modes, not in a chronological sequence, but as we experience a unity of the three ‘ecstases’ of temporality: the past, present and future (Greaves, 2010, pp. 100–101; Heidegger, 1962, p. 377). This means that we always experience time as standing ‘outside of itself’ and simultaneously directed toward *our* past and future (Harman, 2007, p. 59; Heidegger, 1962, p. 377). This occurs as each of the three ‘ecstases’ of time infuse into one another (Greaves, 2010, p. 100).

For Heidegger, only Dasein is temporal: rocks and mountains can be themed as merely present-at-hand physical objects, but in the case of human beings there is always an interplay of shadow and light, veiling and unveiling – ‘the interplay

known as time' (Harman, 2007, p. 3). Coming to understand Heidegger's ideas on our *lived experience* of time allowed me to recognise how an educator's past and future are always coming to meet them, gathering together, allowing them to move forward into their everyday life as an educator. In particular, Heidegger's understanding of time provides the philosophical grounding for my interpretations offered in chapters 7 and 8.

### **Discourse as essential to the everyday existence of Dasein**

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes language (*Sprache*) from discourse (*Rede*) (1962, p. 203). In Heidegger's vocabulary, discourse is an ontological dimension of Dasein. That is, an essential meaning of our worldly human existence is partially disclosed in and through our discursiveness (p. 203). To say that we always-already exist as discursive beings is to say that

in and through our discursiveness, the meaning of being (i.e., being this or that, including ourselves) discloses itself to us, no less fundamentally than it does in the ways we find ourselves emotionally disposed in the world and in the ways we understand (project and work on) possibilities in our everyday lives. (Dahlstrom, 2013b, p. 14)

Indeed, Heidegger characterises discourse, which Wrathall (2011) translates as 'conversation' (p. 96), as a basic existential characteristic that, in part, underlies and inflects the experiential nature of being-in-the-world in its fullness, including its specific ways of practical comportment (Dahlstrom, 2013b, p. 14). For Heidegger (1962, p. 208), language is ontologically presupposed by discourse, and as such, silence is privileged as the authentic, or primordial, mode of discourse that grounds any possible language or speech act.<sup>14</sup>

The practical implication here is that everyday language is something that is readily available for use, as a kind of 'equipment' that we transparently draw upon in 'articulating' (telling) things apart; and for making what is being talked about clear (linguistically and non-linguistically) to a speaker, or speakers who are talking with one another (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 55–56, 204). The difference between encountering language as ready-to-hand and present-at-hand is perhaps best illustrated by the difference between reading a poem (as 'ready-to-hand') and analysing the language of the poem (as 'present-at-hand') (Dahlstrom, 2013b, p. 15). Hence, language is

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<sup>14</sup> In his later work, Heidegger comes to see speech and discourse themselves as founded on a deep silence in which the world is disclosed (Polt, 2013, p. 63).

defined as ‘the way in which discourse gets expressed’ (Heidegger, 1962, p. 204). This insight helped me to listen to the ‘saying’ of what was both spoken and unspoken in the educators’ stories and experiences (N. Diekelmann & J. Diekelmann, 2009, p. ivi). For ‘what is spoken is never, and in no language, what is said’ (Heidegger, 2001, p. 11). Moreover, my interpretations in Chapter 7 take their bearings from Heidegger’s ontological understanding of our discourse or conversation.

### ***Concluding remarks***

This chapter, and indeed this research, opens from my exegesis of the introductory sections of Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (pp. 2–64). In these passages, Heidegger elucidates that the question he is setting out to interrogate is a fundamental question that he claims philosophy, since Plato and Aristotle, has forgotten to ask. And yet, from a young age, this question addressed Heidegger, seriously provoking his thinking: *What is the meaning of ‘being’?* Resolute that the veiled meaning of phenomena *can be* brought into the light of language, Heidegger sets himself upon a phenomenological path towards fresh insights about the original nature of being. He was particularly focused on analysing the primordial modes of human being (Dasein) – the common situated themes of being a human in everyday life. It was through my encounter with the design of Heidegger’s treatise that a question about the meaning of ‘being’ an educator in UYWE seriously addressed me.

Heidegger recognises that the way to unlock the (always-already) phenomenological nature of Dasein is not through scientific theory, or Husserl’s reduction, but through *hermeneutics*. For Heidegger, hermeneutics is not merely some new procedure to subvert Husserl’s epistemological approach to phenomenological inquiry. But rather, in Heidegger’s hermeneutics, we find a circular manner of thinking that beckons the inquirer into a relational to-and-fro interplay with the phenomenological question they are seeking to interrogate. The inquirer is able to proceed because they already care and vaguely know about the particular experience/mode of being that they are researching. As the inquirer makes their way through the research, hermeneutics does not call them to move ‘outside the circle’ of their pre-understandings, nor away from the specific world of practice that shelters the meaning of their phenomenon. Instead, the hermeneutic researcher is called to come into a *virtuous* circle in the right manner (1962, pp. 194–195).

In coming into an understanding of Heidegger's hermeneutical approach I was drawn into a path of thinking about the covered-up nature of educating amidst the everyday situation of UYWE. I became aware that, as educators thrown into this field, we already tacitly know about what this research seeks to understand, but not in a rigorous and clear way (Harman, 2007). Hence, I wondered what stories of lived experience – my own and those yet to be voiced by other educators in our common field – might reveal about the meaning of my phenomenon. I moved forward, open to how my interpretive encounters with the experiences of others might challenge, expand and renew my own 'horizon of understanding' (Gadamer, 2013). From my engagement with foundational philosophical literature, I came to see that this circular heuristic lies at the very heart of hermeneutic research. In a positive sense, the recognition of my prejudiced projected understandings, related to my phenomenon, gave my hermeneutic research its real thrust (Gadamer, 2013, p. 283).

The following chapter moves from hermeneutic philosophy to hermeneutic method. I will describe how the ideas presented in this chapter were brought to life in the challenge of doing this research (Smythe, 2011). Chapter 5, 'Retracing footsteps', shows how I applied Heidegger's and Gadamer's insights to this hermeneutic inquiry, aiming to let the essential meaning of 'being an educator' (in UYWE) come into view as it is lived.

### **Departing**

*Beyond the 'actuality' of being  
Stands possibility.*

*A clear path  
Opens before me  
Winds me through its forest  
Leading me away  
To bring me back unto  
Flickering possibility.*

*Possible meanings  
Stream across my clear way  
Dancing with their shadows  
Finding me there waiting  
To welcome them in.*

*What is to be given  
Is no report  
Speaking of a blatant thing  
But an awkward reprise  
Of the meaning of being*

(J. Spier)

A poetic mediation on Heidegger's 'point of departure' (1962, pp. 61–63)

## Chapter 5: Retracing footsteps

Wayfarer, your footsteps are the way,  
there is no other ...  
The way is created as you walk it ...

Wayfarer, there is no way -  
only foam trails on the sea.  
(adapted from Antonio Machado, 2007, p. 149)

This chapter shows how the philosophical ideas discussed in the previous chapter shaped the unfolding of my research journey. The purpose is to hold open the research process for viewing and questioning by others. An important focus is showing the lived experience of stepping out on a unique path that opens from the philosophical insights of Heidegger and Gadamer, a student of Heidegger's.<sup>15</sup>

The life of this project will inevitably draw to a kind of closure. But in a deeper sense, hermeneutic ontology never really ends because the mysterious nature of 'being' is inexhaustible, and can never be fully disclosed (Harman, 2007; Heidegger, 1962; Ironside, 2012; Marcel, 1950). Thus, it is not possible for hermeneutic research, nor any other path of inquiry, to lead me to voice an absolute 'yes' or 'no' answer amidst my findings (Harman, 2007; Heidegger, 2012a; Smythe et al. 2008). Rather, hermeneutic phenomenology moves me toward a tentative seeing and naming of context-specific suggestions, hints of possibilities and more questions to 'wonder' (Smythe et al. 2008, p. 1391). In this way, a hermeneutic project reaches beyond any definitive deadline (Ironside, 2012). Such a quest lets the meaning of a mode of 'being alive' (being an educator in youth work), which resides deeper than its surface qualities and presence in our consciousness, be shown amidst the ebb and flow of our everyday lives, in such a manner that the very showing evokes more questions (Harman, 2007; Smythe et al. 2008, 2011; van Manen, 2014).

This chapter reveals how the pathway opened through stepping in a 'way' of inquiry that places the phenomenon as the keystone of all activities (Smythe, 2011; van Manen, 1990; Wright-St Clair, 2015). The core challenge was to let my phenomenon in question hold my interest as I contemplatively stayed with it over the temporal distance of my journey of thinking (Heidegger, 1968; Smythe, 2011; Smythe et al.

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<sup>15</sup> Gadamer's work picks up and expands Heidegger's hermeneutic ideas (on understanding, interpretation and the hermeneutic circle) where he left them in *Being and Time* (Giles, 2008; Heidegger, 1982; Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2014; Smythe, 2012, p. 7).

2008; van Manen, 1990; Wright-St Clair, 2015). By showing the steps I have taken, I do not mean to indicate that the pathway was sequential, linear or under my reins. Rather, I retrace my steps in order to disclose the contemplative and scholarly dealings with the happenings of this interpretive study (Smythe, 1998; Galvin & Todres, 2012). Some sections describe procedural issues and others offer musings on how it was to be ‘in the play’ of thinking along the path (Gadamer, 2013; Heidegger, 1982; Smythe et al. 2008; Wright St-Clair, 2015). The chapter moves through the following sections: ‘Beginning footsteps’, ‘Uncovering meaning through stories of lived experience’, ‘Working with the stories’ and ‘Challenges encountered along the way’. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the trustworthiness and rigour of my research quest.

So quiet has the green summer grown  
And through the silvery night there rings  
The footfall of the stranger.  
Would that the blue wild game were to recall his paths,  
The music of his ghostly years!  
(Trakl, quoted in Heidegger, 1982, pp. 164–165)

### ***Beginning footsteps***

A significant inspiration at the outset of this inquiry was the broader hermeneutic phenomenological research community. Being a novice researcher in the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition, it was illuminating to hear the stories of other researchers, and how their personal experiences as practitioners opened the dynamic movement of their phenomenological inquiries (Ironsides, 2005; Smythe, 2011; Smythe et al. 2008; van Manen, 2014). In particular, pondering and reading along with educational researchers as they told their transformative research experiences spurred me to take my own first steps (Giles, 2008; Dall’Alba, 2009a; Diekelmann, 2003; Friesen, Henriksson & Saevi, 2012; Scown, 2003; van Manen, 1990, 2014; Willis, 2002b).

My attendance at the international institutes for hermeneutic phenomenology and Heideggerian hermeneutical methodologies, held at Indiana University (USA), helped me to find my way. In the seminars led by Professor Pamela Ironside, I was shown how stories of lived experience can be gathered through a unique style of interviewing, and how these stories can become a rich text for interpretative analysis in hermeneutic phenomenological research. Professor Ironside shared powerful

phenomenological texts and their accompanying layers of interpretive writings extracted from exemplary studies that she had helped to steer. I was also guided to try my own hands at the craft of interpretive writing, and was given opportunities to practise engaging in dialogue on key themes with a community of co-learners. This experience became a touchstone for my in-progress interpretive writing, and honed my goal of the revelation of ontological understandings of the phenomenon under investigation.

At a local level, I actively sought conversation with other doctoral candidates who were further along the path of their hermeneutic phenomenological research. Other scholars from divergent disciplines, together with particular family members, friends and colleagues who showed genuine interest in educators' experiences in the university, have also played an integral part in shaping how this research unfolded (van Manen, 1990, p. 5). Especially vital, I was able to draw my bearings from the two senior scholars who supervised this research and brought with them their own experiences of completing phenomenological doctorates, as well as having supervised other research projects with this research persuasion.

The initial topic for this inquiry was worded in ways like: 'the art of contemplative pedagogy in higher education' and the 'university educator's practice of being present'. This theme reflected my initial concern about deficit approaches to teaching care practitioners within higher education. However, discussions with members of my research community challenged the nature of these early projections. I was led to see that my initial topics were primarily concerned with the theoretical application of specific pedagogical approaches. Through these discussions, I came to understand that phenomenological inquiry is not concerned with 'what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing' (Gadamer, 2013, pp. xxv–xxvi). Hearing these echoes within my new community, I began to understand that phenomenology considers variable experiences that people have undergone in a specific world of everyday practice. Such experiences are seen as already infused with meaning, regardless of whether these experiences have been brought to reflective awareness and tangible expression or not (Heidegger, 1982; van Manen, 1990, 2014). It was through journaling, dialogue with my supervisors, and learning to dwell in uncertainty that I was drawn to ponder the possibility of researching 'lived experience'. Philosophically, I was reoriented to think about

ontology, or being, of a hidden phenomenon that manifests itself in ‘lived experience’ (*Erlebnis*) (Gadamer, 2013, p. 60).

I started to see that I had come to my own research habitually thinking that meaning lies in the theories, beliefs and protocols about what ‘should’ happen in my practice situation, which meant that I had overlooked the question about the concealed meaning of people’s experiences of what ‘does’ happen (Smythe, 2003, p. 197). A simple and powerful line from a T.S. Eliot poem began to claim me: ‘We had the experience but missed the meaning’ (1963, p. 194). Hence, my pre-assumption faded that my doctorate research needed to develop exotic pedagogical tools, to analyse uncommon events critically, or to improve practice (van Manen, 2014). Instead, I was enlivened to understand shared tacit meanings of a common primordial experience that was ‘closer to home’ than words themselves (Spence & Smythe, 2008, p. 244). Hence, the inquiry was drawn forward to elicit the experiential stories that arise from everyday existence as an educator.

### **Beginning to understand the challenging nature of the quest**

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a quest of rigorous ‘meditative thinking’, and not a research method as such (Gadamer, 2013; Giles, 2008; Heidegger, 1962, 1966, 1968, 2012a; Smythe, 2005; Smythe et al. 2008). I did not yet understand this when I first set out on my venture. I looked for pre-set recipes with normative step-by-step directions that could give me a ‘calculative’ understanding of how to ‘get through’ my research to reach its sure destination (Heidegger, 1966). But to my initial dismay, I did not find any such formulas related to doing research informed by Heidegger and Gadamer. And yet, the voices of others assured me that a real understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology would brew by actively doing it (Giles, 2008; van Manen, 1990). I was called to accumulate the kind of practical knowledge of hermeneutic phenomenology, as a craft of thinking, which could not be taught by theoretical transmission or gleaned from a book, but could only be acquired through enduring experience, akin to an ‘on the job’ apprenticeship (Gadamer, 2013, p. 326; Heidegger, 1968). Thus, rather than settle for a *techne* (know how) that pre-defines a ‘way’, I came to recognise that a ‘lived *phronesis*’ is the predominant mode of ‘doing’ Heideggerian hermeneutical research, involving the constant discernment of a ‘wisdom-in-action that knows in the moment, and finds the way day by day’ (Smythe et al. 2008, p. 1390).

Embracing this notion of research as *phronesis* meant accepting that hermeneutic philosophy cannot be pinned down, or reduced to a set of steps, and must be enacted uniquely by each one of us (Smythe et al. 2008). I discovered there is no single right pathway to take. And yet, my research bears the mark of a common quest. I was not left to my own devices to draw any wild interpretation that I fancied without being held accountable to standards of trustworthiness, rigour and ethics as discerned by the phenomenological research community (Smythe et al. 2008; van Manen, 2014, p. 26; Wright-St Clair, 2015). In light of this traditional wisdom and the support of my companions who graciously shared with me ‘their way’, I ventured out trusting that my pathway, as a way of thinking, questioning, writing, and of being a researcher, would show itself to me as I went along (Smythe, 2011; Wright-St Clair, 2015).

### **Journaling from the beginning**

From the beginning of this research project, I was encouraged to keep a journal of conversations with my supervisors, reflections from my practice as a lecturer, sayings that sparked my thinking from unexpected texts (including song lyrics, television shows, novels, the children’s books that I read with my children, amongst other rich text), and interactions with others that arose from everyday life related to the phenomenon under inquiry. This journal did not have daily entries but chronicled and dated thoughts that crossed my path along the way. At times, journaling was a way to muse on my own experiences as a lecturer and father, in the nature of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1961).

On other occasions, the journal process was the ‘write way’ to: 1) understand new philosophical notions, and 2) work with language to ponder layers of meaning within a particular story (Pigza, 2005; van Manen, 2002a). In this way, the journal left a trail of thinking and insights gleaned, and generated a text that was useful for ongoing phenomenological reflection (van Manen, 1990). My journal text became a crucial tool that allowed me to recognise how my pre-understandings were being moved and enriched through my encounter with the research text (stories) and philosophical writings of Heidegger and others. I have re-read various entries within my journal text for this chapter as a way of re-viewing various challenges and moments of vision that came with living this doctoral research journey.

New questions percolated through journaling. How does the meaning of being an educator conceal itself from a person as they are swept along in the everyday busywork of educating (Heidegger, 1968)? How does the meaning of being an educator withdraw from view and become taken for granted? As I journaled and engaged in dialogue with my research community, I saw that my phenomenon was not something that could easily be grasped. One of my early journal entries (J. Spier, 7 June 2012) underscores something that my primary supervisor said to me: ‘If I can grab it (phenomenon), it’s not taken-for-granted’. For Heidegger, if my research was to be a hermeneutic phenomenological study, then I was called to seek to reveal an invisible phenomenon ‘that has been taken-for-granted’ (J. Spier, 30 March 2012).

### *Uncovering meanings through stories of lived experience*

The purpose of this study is to uncover the meaning of ‘being an educator’ as experienced by lecturers in pre-service UYWE programs. As elucidated in the previous chapter, the Heideggerian way of inquiry is closely aligned with, but different from, a Husserlian approach (Smythe, 2011, 2012). Husserlian phenomenology sets an inquirer on a path to contribute descriptive stories (‘texts’) that evoke the reader’s understanding of what an experience is ‘really like’ (Todres, 1998; van Manen, 1997, 1990, p. 42; Willis, 2004). By contrast, *hermeneutics* seeks to go beyond the task of contributing a text that describes a phenomenon as it is lived, toward contributing a fresh play on the integral *meaning* of the lived experience of phenomenon (Smythe, 2011, pp. 38–39; Wright-St Clair, 2015, p. 53).

This is not to say that the task of producing a rich phenomenological text was not pivotal for this project, but that the real thrust for doing so was to allow the text of lived experiences to enable me and the reader to see my phenomenon afresh. Hence, the essence of a hermeneutic inquiry lies in my patient relational encounter with the phenomenological research text (Giles, 2008; van Manen, 1990).

The important point here is that what makes this research a *hermeneutic* phenomenological inquiry is my unfolding relationship with the research text. It is only by this focused movement of thinking, writing and expressive language that the path is made (Giles, 2008; Heidegger, 1982, 2012a; Smythe, 2011; Wright-St Clair, 2015). Indeed, the core challenge of this kind of research relates to the complexity of working with the text of lived experiences that holds hidden layers of meaning

(Smythe et al., 2008; van Manen, 1990). Having understood the vitality of my relationship with the research text, it was crucial that I clarified what counted as a text suitable for phenomenological inquiry of a hermeneutic nature.

### **What kind of text calls for hermeneutic thinking about the meaning of ‘being’?**

What addresses me, as researcher, is a need for the interpretation of people’s experiential encounters with the phenomenon of interest because the reverberating meanings of lived experience retreats (van Manen, 2014). It is covered over in the busy world of everyday university education. Of course educators know about educating in their discipline area. Yet, when they are invited to tell what it is to be an educator in their respective context, the words are slow to emerge (Spence & Smythe, 2008, p. 245; van Manen, 1990, p. 42). The educator already knows what it is. And yet, bringing this tacit knowing into language and conversation is incredibly difficult.

To someone who is thrown into the demanding situation of UYWE as an educator, existential questions like, ‘What does it mean to be an educator?’ may seem silly, unnecessary or even a task that requires surplus time, a luxury that the modern educator simply does not have (van Manen, 1990, p. 42). Even though we may rarely give this kind of question serious thought, inescapably it continues to touch implicitly us amidst the interplay of our everyday *experiences*, our lived moments, with others (Heidegger, 1982, p. 59; van Manen 2014). Thus, in this study I aimed to gather the sort of text that most powerfully speaks to the heart of our everyday practices – one that does not serve to heap more theoretical and scientific explanations, information and advice on us (van Manen, 1990, 2014). It became clear to me that the text that moves us is the one that allows language to tell of a common experience in terms of an event that has happened to a person (Friesen, 2012). This is not the kind of text that presents us with experience as some kind of object for scientific analysis (Harman, 2007; Heidegger in Friesen, 2012, p. 44). Rather, we are referring to the sort of lyrical and narrative text that we feel draws us in and addresses us as we read it – a text that appeals to our non-cognitive sensibilities (Henriksson & Saevi, 2012; van Manen, 1990). Clarifying this distinction drew me forward. But I wondered: how can I produce such a text? How can I enable educators to express a story that provokes re-thinking regarding my fore-understandings of the phenomenon under investigation (Heidegger, 1968, p. 4)?

It was important to be grounded by van Manen, McClelland and Plihal's (2007) caution: sometimes it may appear that a researcher has generated a phenomenological text comprised of people's experiential accounts, but instead, what has really been gathered are the opinions, perceptions, views and explanations voiced by the participants – not accounts of the experiences themselves (p. 88). Therefore, it was important that I was able to recognise the kind of text that I was after – one that could let the meaning of my phenomenon show itself *as it is lived*. I found it helpful to familiarise myself with existing text about ordinary happenings that resonated with me as a lecturer. Most notable are those shared by Giles (2008) and van Manen et al. (2007) that provided students' and lecturers' accounts of specific incidents from the inside out, and voiced events as participants lived through them.

I discovered that different terminology has been used to describe the kind of phenomenological text I was being guided to elicit from people who had lived through the experience I was investigating. I heard van Manen speak about 'anecdotes' (1990, p. 67); Caelli (2001, p. 278) speak about 'narratives of experience', and Benner (1994, pp. 108-110) speak about 'narrative accounts'. Regardless of the words used to refer to a phenomenological text, what these researchers seemed to have in common was they were talking about a text that narrates relevant 'anecdotes, stories, experiences, incidents, etc.' (van Manen, 1990, p. 67). The nature of phenomenological text is to recall a person's detailed descriptions of 'experience as it is immediately lived' (p. 67). I found it helpful to draw on van Manen's suggestion that a text of lived experience is a person's detailed description and reliving of a past experience; avoids causal explanations, generalisations or abstract interpretations; is a description of the experience from the inside, almost like a state of mind, the feelings, the mood, the lingering effects of the event, etc.; relates to one particular event or incident related to the phenomenon of interest, a specific event, a happening, a particular experience; and is told in conversational and accessible language rather than fancy phrases or academic terminology (van Manen, 1990; van Manen et al. 2007).

Understanding this idea was informative. Before working out how I could enable such a text to arise, I wondered what to call it when talking and writing about my

research data/text. I was encouraged by my research companions to draw on the word 'story' to signal a powerful mode of language that could speak my phenomenon *as it is lived* (amidst UYWE) (Giles, 2008; Heidegger, 2001, 1962; Spence & Smythe, 2008; van Manen, 1990).

### **Gathering a text composed of educators' stories**

Having come to appreciate the nature of a text that could propel my hermeneutic inquiry, I was then confronted with the problem of how to gather it from others in a sensitive manner. Although there are different context-sensitive ways that phenomenological researchers gather their research text (van Manen, 1990), I gradually came to understand that the interview was the most fitting vehicle to obtain educators' stories of lived experience for this project (Benner, 1994; Caelli, 2001; Giles, 2008; Smythe et al. 2008; Wood & Giddings, 2005; Wright-St Clair, 2015).

Gadamer's (2013) and Heidegger's (1962) insights about human discourse (*Rede*) were important here. For them, discourse (communal conversation) is an essential way that the meaning of being (i.e., being this or that, including ourselves) is able to be mutually accessible for us as Dasein (Dahlstrom, 2013a, p. 61, 2013b, p. 14; Polt, 2013, pp. 64-65; Wrathall, 2011, pp. 95-117). I agreed that it is in the unpredictable 'play' of conversation that shared understanding about human experience eventuates (Gadamer, 2013). Henceforth, my research design fell into place: I aimed to gather a unique phenomenological text (experiential 'data') by inviting other educators to tell and relive their personal life stories of being an educator in the kindred situation of UYWE. My way of gathering these stories would be through conversational interviews. I envisioned that these would enable my fellow participants to voice specific happenings, rather than their opinions, theories, values, philosophies, analyses and explanations of their vocational selfhood (Benner, 1994; van Manen, 1990; van Manen et al. 2007).

### **Gaining approval to gather educators' stories of lived experience**

After clarifying the nature of the text that I wanted to bring to life by way of the interview, my supervisors supported me to develop my research proposal and to seek ethics clearance to move forward. My draft research proposal for this doctoral research, entitled 'A hermeneutic interpretation of the experiences of youth work educators', was submitted to two independent researchers from within the Flinders

University School of Education for review and comment. Upon receiving their encouraging go-ahead, I presented my research proposal before a Proposal Committee who endorsed my proposed research design on 5 April 2013. The Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University then granted ethics approval for the study on 2 May 2013 (Project number 6012, see Appendix 1). The research question approved for this study was ‘What is the lived experience of being an educator in higher education youth work programs?’

### **The hermeneutic researcher goes first**

As discussed in Chapter 1, guided by the methodological tradition of Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, it was important that my hidden pre-understandings of the phenomenon were brought out into the light prior to any gathering and interrogation of the experiential stories of others (Giles, 2008; Heidegger, 1962; Smythe, 2011). Such a process allowed the hidden yet already-formed tacit presuppositions I carried with me into this study (related to my phenomenon) to come into a ‘clearing’ (Heidegger, 1962). Only by first drawing my prejudices into the light could they be openly challenged and enriched through a contemplative dialogical encounter with the participants’ textual stories.

Guided by those who have gone before me in my research community, a pre-understandings interview was held, in which my primary supervisor played the interviewer and I the interviewee. In this way, I am the first participant in this research. Prior to this event, I provided my supervisor with my pilot interview questions I had written in preparation for my upcoming interviews with consenting participants. In the recorded interview my supervisor used these questions lightly to open and guide our conversation. He asked me about my own past experiences of being a lecturer in a tertiary youth work program. This event allowed me to experience the nature of a phenomenological interview conversation. Particularly noticeable was the way our open conversation had a life of its own. My primary supervisor ‘led it’ in a way that was open to where the conversation might ‘lead us’ (Gadamer, 2013). In turn, this experience as a participant shaped how I guided the interviews when it was my turn to be the interviewer.

In the subsequent weeks, I transcribed our conversation and then crafted parts of the whole verbatim transcript into segregated yet joint stories. These stories voiced

distinct incidents. I spent two weeks pondering these stories – both individually and as a whole. This process was a ‘reading between the lines’ to draw out my hidden and implicit biases, assumptions, presuppositions, stance, affective disposition, tonality of thinking and my prior conceptualisations pertaining to the meaning of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE (Finlay, 2012, p. 21; Ziarek, 2013, p. 102). In a series of dialogue meetings with my primary supervisor, I began to notice some powerful influences to which I had been oblivious that seemed to be propelling me towards my choice of topic and question, and influencing ‘*how I was* towards the phenomenon’ at the initial stages of this research (Giles, 2008, p. 85).

Having become more reflexively aware of my presuppositions and how these had been informed by my previous experiences, I was better placed to be vigilant about oncoming moments when my pre-understandings were being churned and expanded as I encountered the stories of others (Gadamer, 2013; Smythe et al. 2008; Smythe & Spence, 2012). Before I had even experienced my first interview with a fellow educator, the tone had been set. My journey was primarily attuned to my living encounter with experiential stories, allowing my thinking to play along with what they might reveal. Through this process, the challenge was letting them rework my own pre-understandings and prejudices about my phenomenon in question (Gadamer, 2013; Giles, 2008; Heidegger, 1982; Smythe, 2011). From this point, Heideggerian phenomenology began to show itself as a way of ‘living my [research] question’ (Rilke, 2014) through an essential relation with my research text.

### **Locating and inviting the storytellers**

The participants in this study were lecturers from five different providers of ‘youth work’-specific undergraduate degrees within Australia. Participants were selected from those who had recently (since 2010) undergone the experience of educating in university-based youth work education programs as a lecturer (Smythe, 2011). As a lecturer already practising in the field of youth work, a niche field of professional education in Australia (Cooper et al. 2014), I was already aware of the small number of higher education institutions across Australia that offered a bachelor program specialising in youth work. The details of course coordinators and potential lecturers were readily available on the public websites of these institutions. In consultation with my supervisors and colleagues, I sent individual emails to a first round of potential participants to invite them to participate personally. After interviewing

these first participants, I asked them if they could refer me to other educators who might be interested in contributing. This process of recruitment is often called the snowballing approach (Wright-St Clair, 2015). As I received the details of further potential participants, I emailed them to outline the research project and scope of their possible involvement.

By the end, eleven participants participated in this study. They are a representation of lecturers who educate student youth workers in bachelor-level programs across five Australian higher education institutions. Participants in this study are a heterogeneous group, but can be considered in two loose groups reflective of the diverse pathways of professional educators in the university sector. One group is made up of people who are primarily educators who hold postgraduate educational qualifications in support of their academic roles. Another group hold qualifications in the community sector (e.g. as youth workers) and have either foregone or combined their professional practice with work as an educator in the university scene (Gerzina & Foster, 2013). Moreover, the participant group are perhaps also reflective of the society from which they are drawn, where new hybrid forms of academic identity have emerged largely as a result of a broadening disciplinary base and increasing permeability between higher education and external work situations (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010).

In terms of the system of academic positions in Australia, two of the participants held the title of professor, two held the title of associate professor, three held the position of senior lecturer, one held the title of lecturer and possessed a doctorate, and three held the title of lecturer and did not hold a doctorate but had extensive industry experience relevant to professional youth work education.

The participants are drawn from bachelor course programs specialising in professional youth work education and accredited by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency in Australia. Eight participants were employed by a higher education provider recognised as a *university* which self-accredits its courses, and three participants were employed by a particular *non-university higher education provider* which does not self-accredit its courses.

Three of the participants were course coordinators of their employing institution's undergraduate youth work degree, and one was a former course coordinator. One participant was a head of school who continued to teach in the youth work program. Two of the participants were coordinators of student youth work field placements. Two of the participants were adjunct lecturers. Six of the participants were female. The participants were aged between 30 and 65 years. The participants all taught youth work-specific units<sup>16</sup> or other specific units that were integral to the youth work degree, like sociology, social policy, professional ethics, community development and social research (Bessant, 2012; Cooper et al. 2014). All the participants appeared to have been involved in the development of the curriculum that they teach within their native youth work program.

The initial contact with potential participants was made by emailing an invitation to take part in this study. This letter of invitation outlined the purpose of the research and the nature and scope of participation. Attached to this email was the Letter of Introduction (see Appendix 2), an Information Sheet (see Appendix 3), which provided more detail about being involved in the project, and the Consent Form (see Appendix 4). Care was taken to clarify that any information contributed by participants in this study would be treated in the strictest confidence, and confidentiality would be maintained in this resulting thesis and any other publications. However it was important to say that, due to the small participant sample size and niche field, it was not possible to guarantee participant anonymity.

I informed potential participants that they were entirely free to discontinue their participation at any time, or to decline to answer particular questions during the interview. I also noted that participants were not being invited to represent their employing institution, and that their employer would not be identified in this study. Finally, I informed the participants that, following the interview event and transcription, they would be asked to review the stories derived from the transcript and make any changes before giving their final approval for me to use their stories.

With an initial consent given by reply to my emailed invitation, a one-off interview conversation exploring the person's relevant experiences was scheduled at a time and

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<sup>16</sup> In Australia, the words 'unit', 'subject' or 'module' normally refer to an academic 'course' as it is referred to in North America, while the word 'course' typically refers to the entire program of studies required to complete a university degree.

venue of their choosing. I anticipated that the interview would take between 45 and 60 minutes. Prior to each interview, I obtained written consent from each participant (as per Appendix 4) to record the interview, to use the recording and transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, and to make the recording available to a professional transcriber on condition that the transcriber signs a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix 5).

During the audio recording of an interview, it was left to the participants to use real names or fictional names of others in their stories. Regardless, all names used by the participants to refer to other people were removed from the transcript and pseudonyms applied. When the stories were returned to the participants for member checking, the list of pseudonyms was attached for the participant's review. The participants were asked to review the information, delete or edit their stories, and to return these with tracked changes via email giving their final permission for me to use their stories in this study (see Appendix 6). Only minor edits were made by a few participants. These edits mostly related to minor wording changes. One participant removed one of their stories because they thought it needed more unpacking.

Akin to Caelli's (2001, p. 278) experience of the member checking step, I was heartened when one participant told me, when returning their approved stories, how special it had been to re-read them and to become aware of pivotal moments in their lived storyline. While their stories had been a gift to this study (van Manen, 1990, p. 53), it appeared that for some people the gift receiving had been mutual.

On a few occasions during the transcription and analysis stages, I emailed a few participants to clarify a word, acronym or expression that I was not sure I had heard or understood correctly (Caelli, 2001, p. 278). For example, I emailed one participant to clarify what they meant by their use of the expression 'sniff a life' when telling a story about a resilient young person they had worked with.

The audio files of the interviews, digital data, transcripts, stories, the list of pseudonyms and all correspondence with the participants were password protected. The signed consent forms and transcripts were read only by me and my research supervisors, and will continue to be stored as per the conditions specified in the ethics approval received for this project.

### **Guiding the conversation to draw out stories**

The purpose of the interview conversation was to accommodate the naturalistic telling of the educator's stories of lived experience. For the most part, holding the interviews at the participant's venue of choice worked well as most participants chose settings conducive to the uninterrupted exploration of their personal experiences through one-on-one conversation. Many took place in the educator's private office at their employing education institution, which seemed to help place the participant's stories in context. However, there were a few occasions where giving the participant full control over the choice of venue inhibited open talk about the nature of the participant's lived experience (van Manen, 1990; Walker, 2011).<sup>17</sup> I learnt from these experiences that, while respecting the wishes of the participants, I could be more assertive about the importance of an environment that lends itself to the phenomenological interview (Walker, 2011, p. 22).

The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. While I was open to the possibility of asking participants to resume our conversation in a second interview if required, after reviewing each interview transcript with my primary supervisor, this step was deemed unnecessary. The sense of clarity that came in the one-off conversations seemed to provide plenty of material to provoke hermeneutic thinking and writing.

I began the interview events by drawing attention to the phenomenon in question. I told the participant that I was interested to hear about their experiences as a lecturer in their everyday world of practice. I firstly shared that my own experiences of the phenomenon in question that had led me to the research. It was also important at the outset to clarify that the participant's stories would be derived and crafted from the transcript before being emailed to them for final review and approval. I also shared with them my hope that their stories would contribute to the understandings gained about the lived experience of lecturing and working within university-based youth work education.

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<sup>17</sup> For example, in the case of several interviews, my desire to follow the participant's lead with respect to venue meant that we ended up in noisy public locations where our conversation was constantly interrupted (including a busy café, an airport lounge and a shared usage space in a public library).

From there, we inevitably fell into a conversation (Gadamer, 2013) about our respective vocational pathways and teaching interests within a kindred field. Finding a mutual background helped the conversation to strike up from a naturalistic tone. The participants appeared keen and grateful for the opportunity to tell their previously untold personal stories of educating in the situation of UYWE. Indeed, I recall some participants were somewhat taken aback by their experience of this opportunity, expressing afterwards that it had helped them to see something of their own experiential storyline that had not previously come to light. One participant emotionally noted that it was the first time anyone had ever showed serious interest to hear about this aspect of their lives, even though they had been involved for years.

Arising out of my reflection on the initial two interviews, I realised that the data gathered was theoretical in nature. It became clear that I needed to adjust my approach. I sought to be more explicit upfront with the remaining participants about my need to gather concrete stories of their actual experiences of educating for my inquiry. The voices of Benner (1994), Giles (2008), Freisen (2012), Smythe (2012) and van Manen (1990) collectively provided me with practical on-the-job coaching in the tact of guiding conversation away from theory and explanation, toward descriptions of experience in terms of personal life stories (specific anecdotes, stories, experiences, incidents, etc.).

To begin to encourage participants to retrieve and tell particular stories focusing on their lives as educators, I asked open-ended questions in ordinary language (see Appendix 7), being careful not to take a formal approach that closed off the kind of playful conversation that could lead us in unexpected directions (Benner, 1994; Gadamer, 2013). More specifically, to invite and contextualise the conversation, my opening question for educators was: ‘How you did you come to be teaching student youth workers in the university context?’ While my original purpose was merely to use this question to open conversation, what surprisingly emerged later in my interpretive analysis was that the rich data generated by this question uncovered an integral aspect of the phenomenon under investigation (see Chapter 7).

The next interview question was informed by Heidegger’s (1962) notion that, as human beings, we live in a constant state of flux between existential modes of ‘being-at-home’ and ‘not-being-at-home’ in the world (p. 233). I asked the

participants, ‘Can you tell me about a time when you felt a sense of being “at home” as an educator in the university?’ For most of the participants, this question helped lead them immediately to a particular event that they had lived through as an educator in the university world. For a few participants, the language of ‘at home’ seemed too loaded or metaphorical. On these occasions, I revoiced the question this way: ‘Can you tell me about a time when you sensed “this is what it really means to be an educator”?’ While several participants seemed to require little further prompting to start telling a story about specific events, others seemed unsure how to proceed, perhaps expecting questions of a theoretical and ideological nature.

Occasionally, in response to a question, participants would offer a story of a specific event in curtailed form. In these instances, it was important to invite them to expand on the specific circumstances surrounding this event and what was happening for them as the event was unfolding. This meant ‘bouncing off’ what the participant was saying with probes like: ‘What were you doing at that time?’; ‘What does that mean?’; ‘What happened for you in that moment?’; ‘How do you know that?’ It was important to maintain an interested disposition throughout the conversation (Roulston, 2010). As I grew in confidence as a phenomenological interviewer, I also learnt that I could follow a less sequential and chronological pattern in my questioning. For example, I felt more able to draw links across the participant’s stories. Thus, I started saying things in the movement of conversation like: ‘Earlier you mentioned ... can you tell me a little bit more about that?’; ‘What you said before got me wondering if/how/what ...?’

I set out to support the participants to stay close to their ‘primitive contact with the world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. vii). What became clear was how easy it was for both the participant and myself to slip back into a more reflective attitude. Through the lived process of guiding eleven interview events, I acquired a practical phronesis (practical wisdom) of drawing out a person’s expanded recounting of specific, concrete events (Benner, 1994; Gadamer, 2013; Smythe et al. 2008). Particular stories flowed from approaching the interview as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with those being interviewed (van Manen, 1990, p. 66). As this relation unfolded, whole experiences were able to emerge in greater richness. As I journeyed through the interview schedule, I found that I was less reliant on ready-made questions (van Manen, 1990, p. 67).

I came to see my role as twofold. Firstly, I was invited to fall into the interplay of conversation with the participant as they retrieved past events and brought a reliving of particular stories into language (Gadamer, 2013). Secondly, my role was to ensure that the educators' stories of lived experience were as thick and rich as possible (van Manen, 1990). Most interviews eventuated as a conversation that appeared to have a 'spirit' (life) of its own (Gadamer, 2013). The participants were keen to recollect their stories. There were special moments when the participants appeared to be immersed in what they were reliving, and became forgetful that I was recording our conversation for my doctoral project (Gadamer, 2013).

For me too, recording the interview allowed me to immerse myself in the conversation in a naturalistic manner (Benner, 1994). Without needing to write everything down along the way, I was freed up to 'lose myself' in the participants' stories as they unfolded (van Manen, 1990). I was also freed up to offer an occasional comment or probe. Each conversation was unique (Smythe et al. 2008, p. 1392). These irreplaceable conversations often included shared moments of silence, of understanding that could not be conveyed in words (Heidegger, 1982, p. 59). Following the interview, I recorded some thoughts in my journal to record what lingered as already beginning to address my phenomenon. Sometimes this was a certain phrase or the mood of the conversation that was sparking my hermeneutic thinking.

Each interview was transcribed as a verbatim dialogue between the educator and an inquirer (Heidegger, 1982). I transcribed 7 interviews and hired someone to transcribe the audio recordings of the other 4 interviews. I obtained a signed Confidentiality Agreement from the professional transcriber before sending them the audio files (see Appendix 5). My experience of transcribing the audio recordings was a helpful way of returning to the conversations and staying near the experience. While I transcribed the interviews directly on to a computer, later there were times, when interpretively dwelling with a particular story or set of stories, when I would return to the original audio recording to listen again to the corresponding interview. It was in the hearing, writing and reading process of transcription that I began distinguishing parts of the text that particularly related to the experience of being an educator. Recurring words and idiomatic phrases, such as 'playing the game', were

highlighted as being a part of a shared language across a number of the interviews (van Manen, 1990).

Once each transcript was completed I grafted a process from Caelli (2001), Giles (2008) and Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker and Mulderij (1984). I began by reading the whole transcript, paying attention to elements of the text that flew up for me like sparks (Barritt et al. 1984, p. 5). During this reading, I identified individual stories of lived experience, embedded as parts forming the whole transcript text, which appeared to speak to the lived meaning of being an educator. Using the participants' words, I then reconstructed, or crafted, stories in a narrative form. I retained the words and meanings that described the experience, while omitting additional and superfluous words and details (Caelli, 2001; Giles, 2008). The goal was to craft a story that remained close to the experience. Appendix 8 offers one example of an excerpt from a whole transcript that was crafted into an individual story and then sent to my primary supervisor for his review and comments. Because each story is an entire text of lived experience, there are no quotation marks (Giles, 2008, p. 90).

Each transcript held within it several distinct stories, and to aid identification I gave each story a unique title. Most of these titles related to the theme of the story. Once I had completed this process for the last interview, I merged these stories into a single document that I named the Master Story Book. A list of the 90 story titles that constitute the whole research text can be found in Appendix 9. I then emailed each participant a letter that contained their set of crafted stories derived from the transcript for their checking, editing and approval (see Appendix 6). When the participants emailed me their final approval to use their stories along with any edits or deletions, I incorporated their changes into the final Master Story Book. Once this process was complete, my hermeneutic interpretation of this phenomenological text began in earnest.

### **Gathering sufficient stories**

Having interviewed eleven participants, gathered and crafted 90 stories related to the experience of being an educator in UYWE, and completed a description and initial interpretative writings for every story, I sensed that I had been given enough stories to work with. I knew that additional insights into the theme would not be forthcoming with further experiential material. That is, a moment came when new

stories appeared to be mostly a re-telling of variable aspects that were already emerging in previous interpretations. At this stage, in consultation with my supervisors, the gathering of stories ended so that I could begin a stage of deeper hermeneutic analysis of my research text in relation to the phenomenon in question.

### ***Working with the stories***

Having familiarised myself with my set of stories and received the approval of the participants, I worked hermeneutically in search of vital meanings of the lived experience, 'being an educator' in UYWE, that give this phenomenon its unique nature (Caelli, 2001). I entered this process by moving to and fro between individual stories and the whole transcript, and between each participant's set of stories and the Master Story Book as a whole research text. To begin my encounter with each individual crafted story, I wrote a short basic description for each of the participants' stories, ensuring that this was no more than a paragraph. An example of a descriptive statement can be found in Appendix 10. Once the description was completed, I moved on to ponder each story in a more interpretive mode.

### **Working the text: initial movement of interpretive writing**

The next move of hermeneutic analysis began with the following questions: What is the story about? What is the story telling me about the meaning of being an educator in UYWE? It was through writing that I was able to immerse myself in wondering about the play of veiling-unveiling of the phenomenon encountered in the experience showing in the story (Crotty, 1998; Harman, 2007). It was in the play of writing that new possibilities began to emerge. I was on the lookout for moments when my theoretical pre-understandings related to my chosen phenomenon would resurface. This vigilance was about allowing a textual story to show me afresh the meaning of my phenomenon. This often meant coming away from it frustrated and disappointed because what was said was not expected or desired (Porter & Robinson, 2011, p. 94). But following Gadamer (2013), such moments of resistance were a welcome consequence of submitting myself to a genuine interplay with my research text. This process did not seek to pour meaning into the story, but rather to let covered-up meanings imbued within the story begin to claim me (Karnezis, 1987).

For example, on one occasion, I gravitated to the participants' mentioning of particular pedagogical approaches (e.g. critical pedagogies) that struck a chord with

me. I wondered whether a certain pedagogical orientation was implicit in the nature of being a kind of educator who teaches youth work in the university. I carried over the position from my previous studies and teaching subjects in Freirean methodology that this specific persuasion was critical to a type of educator who directs their everyday activity towards the professional education of good youth workers (Hay, 2011; Sercombe, 2010; Wood, Westwood & Thompson, 2015). But I began to notice that, in a deeper sense, the educators shared something more than a resemblance of a common teaching approach. Indeed, upon further meditation my stubborn thinking softened. There was insufficient data to sustain this notion and neither was such a surface-level quality ontologically oriented, given the ontological nature of my hermeneutic phenomenological quest.

In the same vein, I slowly let go of my compulsion to categorise the more clearly visible aspects, in favour of creatively writing in a way that might dig down to more hidden meanings concealed within the experiential text. A hermeneutic manner of interpretative thinking came to fruition as I became increasingly attuned to other possible ways of understanding the text (Heidegger, 1982; Smythe & Spence, 2012). Guided by Caelli (2001) and Giles (2008) I resolved to dwell with the interpretation of a particular story through several versions before moving on to the next story. This meant that I worked with most stories in a playful manner of thinking for an extended period of time (Heidegger, 1982, p. 29). An example of a story, its opening description and deeper interpretation can be found in Appendix 10. It is important to point out here that in my interpretations I did not yet draw upon the existential philosophical literature, and only occasionally drew upon poetry.

The next step in my hermeneutic process of reading-thinking-writing-dialogue was to re-read the entire suite of crafted stories and interpretations for a participant and consider how they might be renewing my pre-understandings of 'being an educator' in UYWE. During the re-reading, I endeavoured to discipline myself to look out for possibilities that 'flew up like sparks' for me (Barritt et al. 1984, p. 6). These were not moments that reaffirmed my fore-understandings, but rather, moments of friction, akin to the sparks that fly up when 'iron sharpens iron' (Proverbs 27: 17).

Moments that took on this nature helped me become attuned to the way a cluster of stories was sharpening and challenging my pre-understandings. In this sense, my

experiences of becoming immersed in an interpretive encounter with my research text became parallel to getting caught up in a serious game of sport where, as player or spectator, one must subject oneself to its rules, which includes the possibility of injury and loss (Gadamer, 2013). This step in the process was enacted as a writing activity that entailed the writing-reading, re-writing-re-reading of tentative written statements that were formed in relation to the possible notions that seemed to be emerging across the suite of stories. These notions focused the movement of my deepening hermeneutic thinking about what my research text was showing me in terms of the powerful meanings of my phenomenon. One example of the articulation of notions for a particular participant's suite of stories can be found in Appendix 11. Sometimes these notions within a participant's stories were meditated in the form of a poem. An example of a poem that seeks to bring forth the notions of 'being an educator' as it is experienced by one particular participant can be found in Appendix 12.

It was critically important that I remained open to 'meditative thinking' (Heidegger, 1966) about the possible meanings arising from my encounter with the stories. It was through my experience of contemplative-interpretive writing that new possibilities were able to be seen (Heidegger, 1962). At times, I became aware that I was trying to force meanings to come, or straining to calculate what the stories meant, rather than 'waiting' for deep thoughts to find me (Heidegger, 2001, p. 6, 2010b, pp. 75-81, 97-98, 140-153). I gradually learnt in these moments to attend to other activities, enjoying time cooking for my family and friends, walking or playing my piano. It seemed that in the 'whiling' of these activities (Heidegger, 1999, pp. 109-111), I was led into an openness of non-directional thinking (Dreyfus, 1991) about the underlying meanings that were fresh and original. As van Manen (1990) attests, hermeneutically interpreting the meaning of a text or a lived experience is 'more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure-grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning (p. 79). Importantly, resting from my writing for meditative retreats lessened my tendency to generate simplistic deductions (Giles, 2008).

When the suite of stories derived from a participant's interview transcript had been hermeneutically interpreted to this depth, the suite and my initial interpretative writings became the basis of hermeneutic conversation with my supervisors prior to

beginning the process again with the next participant. During this back-and-forth activity, I opened my interpretive writings to my supervisors' challenging and validation. It was through this dialogical process that my movement of understanding was 'fused' with my supervisors' horizons of understanding, until I was no longer sure where *my* insights ended and those of *others* began (Gadamer, 2013). Moreover, possible friction points between the stories and my prejudices became an important matter of playful debate.

An example of such a 'blind spot', illuminated through this dialogical process, was my tendency to concentrate on the subjectivity of the educator. Instead, I was guided to start afresh by looking at the primacy of the 'play' of experiences in the university 'game' over the consciousness of the educator and other 'players' like students and colleagues (Gadamer, 2013, p. 109). This allowed me to notice different ways of understanding the experience as it is lived by the educator, rather than drifting towards an idealisation of certain practices and behaviours that might demonstrate the theoretical qualities of 'good educators' who teach in the UYWE context. The dialogue with my supervisors was an occasion to seek the 'phenomenological nod' (van Manen, 1990), or otherwise, and often my initial interpretations were immediately re-written. This whole process of gathering and dwelling with the experiential data stretched over an eighteen-month period. The sustained rigour of this process meant that it felt like an immersion experience in and with my research text of crafted stories.

### **Interpretive writing towards understanding existential themes**

Following the initial stage of interpretive analysis and writing, I stepped into a deeper interpretive phase of intensively drawing on the philosophic literature, particularly the writings of Heidegger and Gadamer. This next step of interpretation allowed phenomenological notions and other ideas from the literature to illuminate further possible meanings integral to the phenomenon. I re-read the crafted stories as a whole text, and my initial descriptions and interpretations. The goal was to uncover variant and invariant phenomenological themes that appeared to be shared across the whole text, rather than themes specific to each participant's stories. While re-reading the stories, I undertook a fresh process of writing that discerned possible tacit primordial aspects emerging across the stories that appeared to be speaking to my

research question. This opened a new layer of journaling and dialogue with my supervisors.

A set of emerging themes in play across the stories were brought into view. I recognised these as primary meanings of the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ as experienced in the particular context of UYWE. It was important to wait for the emergence of thematic aspects that had what van Manen (1990) describes as ‘phenomenological power’ (p. 90). van Manen (1990) clarifies that the ‘essential quality of a theme ... [is that we] discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is’ (p. 107). In this way, a good theme is one that allows the crafted stories and interpretive accompaniments to bring the researcher and reader in touch with taken-for-granted understandings that, as such, remain silent to us – just beyond words (van Manen, 1990). As Smythe et al. (2008) note, the theme is not ‘stripped out of the data’, but rather, the theme is a way to ‘show what we see or hear in a text’ (p. 1392).

The first essential meaning of ‘being an educator’ emerged in relation to an educator’s living past. Consequently, when a person enters their time of educating within the context of UYWE, their background sense of ‘who’ and ‘how’ they have already been in the world continues to matter to their practice as educators. Lecturers’ stories appeared to reveal variable ways that we live in relationship to our having-been-ness. This theme forms the basis of Chapter 7, ‘Our having-been-ness is always in play’. In so doing, this chapter draws upon Heidegger’s (1962) notion of Dasein’s ‘living past’, or ‘having-been-ness’ (*Gewesenheit*).

The second theme to emerge, initially worded as ‘Entering the game’, was refined after a further contemplation of both the stories and the philosophical literature. More than the influence of audible dialogue and empirical conversational skills, I came to see the always-already conversational nature of the lived experience of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE. Beyond conversation as something that educators are responsible for ‘making happen’, the focus turns to how moments of conversing with others happen and matter for educators amidst the everyday of their university community. This theme opened from an encounter with Gadamer’s (2013, 2006) phenomenology of different modes of conversation, and formed the basis of Chapter 6, ‘Being in conversation’.

The final theme came in an unexpected moment of dialogue with one of my supervisors. We were absorbed in conversation about possible ways of wording this theme, when my supervisor suddenly noticed the quote by Emily Dickinson ('Dwell in possibility') hanging on his office wall. In a moment of shared silent knowing, we both knew that the theme had found us. Initially, this theme was named 'Bearing witness', but through further dialogue with my research community, a question of ways educators relate to a futural 'not-yet', in relation to their own self-possibilities in the world, appeared to be provoking deeper ontological thinking (Heidegger, 1968). With this, Heidegger's notion of Dasein as 'thrown possibility' began to disclose more succinctly an essential meaning that was showing itself to me. This theme forms the basis of Chapter 8, 'Dwelling in possibility'.

Having reshaped and meditatively developed the themes for discussion, I wrote about each of these themes as separate interpretive chapters for this thesis. In writing these chapters, I wove in actual stories that best showed different shades of the integral ontological meaning-aspect of being an educator within UYWE. This writing phase involved letting the existential ideas from Heidegger and Gadamer illuminate and deepen the fresh meanings that had emerging through the previous steps of interpretive writings on the stories. In this way, I was able to move towards a constitution of fresh ontological understandings related to my phenomenon of interest.

### ***Challenges encountered along the way***

The unforeseen challenges that came as I walked in the footsteps of hermeneutic phenomenological research were numerous and complex. These challenges related to the sustained intensity of the lived experience of the research itself, the constant meditative attunement to my phenomenon, and the process of letting the research process speak and challenge my own historical situatedness and prejudices (Gadamer, 2013; Giles, 2009). In this section, I am unable to describe all the various challenges of researching the lived meaning of 'being an educator' in a Heideggerian hermeneutic way. For example, through participating in the Institute for Hermeneutic Phenomenology (IHP) at Indiana University (June, 2014), I was drawn into thinking about the serious challenges that come with the responsibility of interpreting texts that speak of other people's experiences.

What became clear through this institute is that the challenging art of interpretively working with a phenomenological research text is not something that can be easily pinned down in a rule or a standard. What emerged was an appreciation of how the ‘veiled relation of message and messenger’s course plays everywhere’ (Heidegger, 1982, p. 53). It also raised questions that I was yet to ponder with respect to important dilemmas I was already facing concerning the practice of deriving and crafting individual stories from the interview transcripts and interpretive writing on these stories. This experience helped me to hone the tonality of my interpretive writing – a challenge that exceeds the completion of this thesis.

### **The challenge of staying with my phenomenological question**

For me, a core discipline of doing hermeneutic phenomenology was holding the focus of the phenomenon in question throughout my journey, as my relationship with the research text unfolded towards an opening of fresh ontological understandings (Smythe, 2011). In the research journey, my question of the meaning of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE was always nearby me (Heidegger, 1982). It pervaded my everyday existence (van Manen, 1990, p. 43). There was nowhere I could go to flee from its address. Whether I was awake or asleep, working on my research project or attending to some other task, thinking-talking about my research data or resting from it, I was continually immersed in my meditative relationship with my research question in one way or another (Heidegger, 2001, p. 187, 1966). Being on the hermeneutic path called me to ‘live the question’ (Rilke, 2014).

The purpose of this chapter has been to reveal the way I ‘stretched’ myself along ‘temporally’ between the birth and end of this research project (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 423-425). Through doing this kind of research project, I came to appreciate the original meaning of a word that is used frequently by academics in reference to their research: ‘interest’. As Heidegger reminds us, true interest means to be ‘in the midst of things, or to be at the centre of a thing and to stay with it’ (1968, p. 5).

### ***Trustworthiness and rigour***

As a phenomenological researcher who asks about ‘being’, I appreciate that my quest needed to be trustworthy and rigorous, adhering to the standards of traditional scholarship that have been set by the philosophers who have founded this ‘way’ of

research (Smythe, 2011). Smythe et al. (2008) suggest that the trustworthiness of a Heideggerian hermeneutic study is known first by researchers themselves, who test out their thinking as it unfolds by engaging in everyday conversations with those who share a concern about or who are living the phenomenon in their own context (Giles, 2008). It is hoped that the trustworthiness of this research project can be clearly seen in how transparently the interpretive writing process has been held open for review on a regular basis with supervisors, scholars, researchers, in annual doctoral conferences in the Flinders University School of Education, research seminars and with my research community at the international Heideggerian conferences at Indiana University (2014).

Within this relational community of scholars, who share a commitment to quality and ethical research practice in the Heideggerian tradition, I have been open and responsive to the honest feedback of others. Not only this, but I have remained in a lecturing position alongside colleagues in a pre-service tertiary youth work education program, sharing the ‘pearls’ of thinking and findings that have been given to me along the way, asking them for their phenomenological nod or otherwise (van Manen, 1990, p. 27).

On many occasions along the way, the affirmation given to my tentative findings resonated deeply with my fellow practitioners’ own experience of the phenomenon. This provided a ‘hallmark of trustworthiness’ (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1396). When I attended the Institute for Hermeneutic Phenomenology at Indiana University (June, 2014) I had the opportunity to meet with hermeneutic philosophers for individual consultation. I used my conversation with Professor Sherry Sims and Professor Pamela Ironside, both experienced professional educators in a university field, to clarify the preliminary themes that were emerging from my interpretive analysis.

For example, I shared that Gadamer’s (2013, p. 111) ideas were helping me to see how the educator not only ‘plays’ and appropriates the university ‘game’ for their own subjective ends, but how being an educator is always a process of being played, not by other players, but by the game itself. This idea immediately seemed to resonate, with Professor Sims recalling that Gadamer says that the particular nature of a game prescribes the boundaries of a field of play, rather than it being the players who define the boundary lines. It was in moments like this that I received a

phenomenological nod and affirmation from others. This confirmed to me that my interpretive work was beginning to uncover an integral aspect of my phenomenon. The nod occurs when what we are saying reawakens someone to the lived quality and significance of a phenomenon in a fuller or deeper manner (van Manen, 1990, p. 10).

Sometimes when sharing my interpretive writing with my wife, she would bluntly remark, 'You've lost me'. While at other times, a phenomenological nod would come from her as I shared writing that drew her to see something about her own everyday life (e.g. as a mum of three young children) that she had missed or taken for granted. In this way, this research sought to be a 'phenomenology of practice': it is not only offered to educators who lecture within youth work programs or other university programs. Rather, my hope is that it will address and serve the practices of professional practitioners as well as the ordinary practices of everyday life (van Manen, 2014, p. 15). For example, the understanding of the contrasting aspects of the educator's experience of 'conversation' within the university world, offered in Chapter 6, may be of interest to other kinds of educators and professional practitioners as well as to anyone involved in the conversational relations of everyday living.

In addition, the way that this research project has been conducted invites the reader to 'audit the events, influences and actions of the researcher' (Koch, 1996, p. 178). The trail of decisions and the decision-making process has been shown in this chapter. Exemplars of working documents included in the appendices are offered as a way of enabling others to review and question my practice as a phenomenological researcher seeking to follow in the footsteps of the hermeneutic tradition. This research has also exhibited rigour in its careful paper trail, organised electronic storage, sustained focus on the phenomenon in question, and a transparent and disciplined hermeneutic phenomenological process. And yet, I know that 'in the end, as in all phenomenologies, it must be left to the thoughtful reader to decide on the accuracy of the phenomenological description' (Schmidt, 2006, p. 66).

### ***Concluding comments***

This chapter has sought to show the process of this particular hermeneutic phenomenological approach to my ontological inquiry into the question of the

meaning of being an educator in UYWE. My unique research path opened for me when I began walking it. I was not alone, even when working in long solitude. Many companions from my research community encouraged me as I took my next steps, even when it seemed like I was ‘writing in the dark’ to uncover a deeper understanding of the lived nature of my phenomenon (van Manen, 2002a).

I lived my research question in an essential relationship with the language of my research text. This meant carrying my research question in a to-and-fro movement to my own stories and the participant’s individual stories, and then back again, and so forth. It was in the disciplines belonging to Heideggerian hermeneutic inquiry – in the processes of interpretive writing and the play of serious dialogue and thinking – that I found a way of ‘living my question’.

In a ‘way’ of being in the research that opened before me as I went (Smythe, 2011), my lived encounter with my research text moved from descriptions and interpretations of each participant’s stories to thematic interpretations that drew upon the philosophical writings of Heidegger and Gadamer toward a revelation of deeper ontological understanding. The thrust of this movement was toward the renewing of what I pre-thought it meant ‘to be’ an educator in the particular field of UYWE.

Vital to this journey of meditative re-thinking in relation to my phenomenon (Heidegger, 1966, 1982; Smythe et al. 2008) was a resoluteness to maintain vigilance to the moments when my encounter with the stories of others became a new challenge to my own prejudices. This dawning occurred through the movement of interpretive writing, conversing and thinking. The ongoing dialogue with my supervisors and wider research community has been integral in discerning the phenomenological nod related to the understandings that were emerging for me in language. Similarly, the rigorous scholarship of traditional hermeneutic interpretation, informed by Heidegger’s philosophy, also revealed to me the limits of ordinary language. For this reason, when everyday speech showed up as inadequate, I often turned to poetry to help ‘bear witness’ to a person’s witnessing (Derrida, 2005, pp. 76-80) of ‘being an educator’ in UYWE.

As I took footsteps in this research, I was able to hear an authoritative voice of experiential text (Munby & Russell, 1994), sometimes faintly and often in silence.

This experience was akin to being a gardener who waits patiently for rich themes of meaning to ripen, akin to fruit on an unnoticed gracious branch, which is the essence of language itself (Heidegger, 1966, 1982, 2010b). As they came into fruition, these themes were lightly shaped. Through an interpretive process of reading and re-reading, writing and re-writing, viewing and re-viewing, crafting and re-crafting, and thinking and re-thinking, the themes that could show ‘what we see or hear in a text’ (Smythe et al. 2008, p. 1392) announced themselves. These essential themes form the basis of the next three chapters, and seek to illuminate a deeper appreciation of the taken-for-granted ontological-phenomenological nature of ‘being an educator’ amidst the everyday situation of UYWE. These themes relate to the conversational nature of being an educator (Chapter 6); the constancy and relational interplay of an educator’s own living past (Chapter 7); and the dynamic ways a person relates to their own possibility of being an educator in an unpredictable university world (Chapter 8).

Readers from different walks of life and histories are invited to think along with me in the next chapters – to remain open to the disclosure of situated meanings. But we know from the outset that being can never be fully shown to us. Instead, the meaning of being (an educator, in its own original nature) constantly appears and eludes us. This unfolding veiling/unveiling of being is akin to dwelling in a forest clearing and, *therein*, attuning to the play of light and shadow.

We call this openness that grants a possible letting appear and show ‘clearing’ ... The forest clearing is experienced in stark contrast to dense forest ... Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness, and let brightness play with darkness in it. (Heidegger, 2011c, p. 319)

Throughout the hermeneutic process, and beyond, my understanding of being an educator in UYWE can never be fully brought into the light of day. Rather, the meaning of being can only be gradually drawn out in the clearing amidst the play of emergence/elusion. This very thinking process will never end (Harman, 2007, p. 174).

I have come to see that I can never exhaust what I seek to understand ontologically. I will always be in a state of flux, between what I can and cannot see (Smythe et al. 2008). Just when it seems that I am grasping what essentially matters, it withdraws again from my field of awareness, back into the shadows of engulfing darkness, into the no-thing that being is. And yet, by this event of withdrawal, I am drawn to keep

waiting for what I am yet to glimpse; drawn forward by the inexhaustible elusiveness of that which I seek to understand. Even though moments of precious clarity found me, puncturing my pathway, what is still not yet named, and known, continues to reach and recoil me from any sense of certainty about what it means ‘to be’ in the living of it.

The following discussion chapters present the crafted stories and my corresponding interpretive writings. The aim is tentatively to let the essential meaning of the experience show. While individual stories are vital to the ‘showing’, it is the essential existential meanings of the phenomenon that hopefully emerge to the fore (Smythe, 2011, p. 39). The stories themselves withdraw as the existential themes manifest. My own interpretive words should disappear after they have evoked what they mean (Gadamer, 1992, p. 76). If one reads a story, the hope is that a reader will not remember what I have said about it. Indeed, interpretation is only really fulfilled in its essential being when the interpreter withdraws, and only what has emerged from the interpretation is there for the reader (p. 76).

My hope therefore is that the reader will be stirred to think about how the stories and interpretive existential themes claim them with a question about their own context-specific existence. Through the lived process of this research, I came to appreciate that the situated meaning of lived experience is both the wellspring and insatiable quest of phenomenological research (van Manen, 1990, p. 53).

An interpretation of an experience is always a withdrawal  
of all that still remains hidden, silent, unspoken.

If we can free ourselves from the noise  
that tells us all that is already known as information  
then we may find ourselves amidst the clearing,  
the open space where thoughts are free to play and roam,  
where fresh insights emerge, shyly.

In the clearing there will always be light and shadow.  
Just as the trees hedge the clearing one comes to  
on the forest path creating shadow,  
which draws back into darkness;  
so our fresh insights will find the place of withdrawal  
where ‘what we have grasped’ merges with the still-not-yet-known.  
(Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson & Spence, 2008, p. 1391)

## Chapter 6: Being in conversation

To be an educator in the everyday context of UYWE is to be constantly in the interplay of conversation. The modern educator is continually expected to innovate and regulate forms of talk within various university contexts (Arvanitakis, 2014; Fairfield, 2011; Gadamer, 2006; Goffman, 1981; Haué & Dillenbourg, 2009). But in habitually thinking about conversation in terms of charismatic or essentialist qualities, or in terms of a competency (*techne*) that educators are assumed to pick up along the way, what becomes concealed is how distinguishable modes of conversation happen and matter *to educators*. In this chapter I meditate on stories that reveal how conversation is integral to the experiential nature of being an educator in UYWE.

### *Philosophical underpinnings*

Everyday happenings of conversation arise only from the possibility of a ‘mutual sharing’ of understanding, which is grounded in Dasein’s being-with (*Mitsein*) (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 161, 197). As such, lived conversation always unfolds in the educator’s relationships with students, colleagues and oneself, both within and beyond the university walls.

In talking-with one another and ourselves about something we show our discursiveness as an essential feature of our everyday lives (Heidegger, 1962, 2009a, 2009b). This is to say that conversation is constitutive of the kind of being that we ourselves are as Dasein (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 165, 203; Powell, 2013; Wrathall, 2011). Heidegger invokes a verse by Hölderlin to suggest that ‘we – human beings – are a conversation’ (2009a, p. 121). Gadamer (2013) echoes Heidegger’s radical interpretation of the everyday existence of Dasein as conversation when he encourages us to approach ‘the mystery of language from the conversation that we ourselves are’ (p. 386). For both Heidegger and Gadamer, we are not merely the participants of a conversation but, before a word is spoken, we are already in the world *as* conversation (Wierciński, 2011a, p. 46).

This chapter attunes to something more than the interactive activity of expressing verbal language (Gadamer, 2013; Heidegger, 1982, pp. 119-120, 2001, pp. 187-192). Indeed, Heidegger (2001, p. 188) points out that it is not primarily us who speak

language, but *language speaks*. Gadamer (2013) is in harmony: ‘language speaks us, rather than we speak it’ (p. 437). Elsewhere, Heidegger (2011b) poeticises that human beings fundamentally abide within language as the ‘house of being’ (p. 145). Even when we are not aware of it, we are always-already ‘thrown’ into language (Heidegger, 2001, p. 187; Lawn & Keane, 2011, p. 88). This means that the inherited words and expressions that are ‘ready-to-hand’ for us are not of our own making (Heidegger, 1962, p. 204). And yet, Heidegger sees that, although our meaningful everyday lives in the world are orientated by way of language, this ‘first properly occurs in conversation’ (2009a, p. 121).<sup>18</sup> Hence the essence of language belongs with the phenomenon of conversation (Gadamer, 2013, p. 459, 2007, p. 107). It is in the neighbourhood of conversation that language is able to house our ‘coming together’ in mutual understanding (Heidegger, 2009a, p. 122).

Being a conversation does not mean that conversation is disclosed to us as a homogenous experience. Heidegger and Gadamer both distinguish between different modes of conversation that we undergo in the course of everyday life. Moreover, both philosophers are in chorus that what we often experience is an inauthentic kind of conversation, or something that may not even be conversation at all. Gadamer (2013) distinguishes conversation that is ‘genuine’ (p. 401), ‘authentic’ (p. 371), or ‘true’ (pp. 314, 403), from conversation that is inauthentic or not genuine. Similarly, Heidegger (1962, pp. 203-214) describes authentic and inauthentic modes of conversation (as discourse).

In drawing ontological distinctions between authentic and inauthentic modes of conversation, Heidegger (1962, pp. 211, 220) is clear that he is not providing a critical analysis. That is, distinguishing some kinds of conversation as ‘inauthentic’, Heidegger is neither conveying a negative evaluation nor privileging one mode of conversation over another. Rather, by drawing on the phrase ‘not authentic’, he means something positive in so far as it relates to his project of disclosing existential characteristics belonging to possible ways that we commonly exist with one another and ourselves in everyday life (1962, p. 219; 1988, p. 160). In light of this understanding, I do not argue a ‘discourse ethics’ (Habermas, 1990), nor do I seek causal (ontic) explanations for our contingent experiences of conversation (Dreyfus,

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<sup>18</sup> In one of his writings in the 1940s, Heidegger (2010b, pp. 36–37) repeats this idea when pondering the elusive essential nature of conversation (*Gespräch*), which is still thought to presuppose language.

1991). Instead, I seek to reveal Dasein's 'being in the movement of conversing' as an aspect that is essential to the experience of being an educator in UYWE.

This chapter focuses on 'living in conversation' (Gadamer, 2007, p. 107) as an essential phenomenological meaning of being an educator in UYWE. The first section focuses on special moments when an educator appears to experience authentic conversation. By contrast, the second section considers occasions when genuine conversation does not appear to happen. Flowing on from this, the focus turns to an educator's experience of a conversation that is 'not yet'. The final section contemplates an educator's sense that the moment of a possible conversation has passed. While there are contrasting modes of conversation that we experience everyday as educators, I argue that genuine conversation always matters to us, so much so, that by its very absence we are sometimes reminded of how essential it is to our shared lives as educators and as people.

### ***When genuine conversation happens***

Educators are always thrown into conversation in one way or another. In a broad sense, conversation can be found whenever an educator speaks with someone: every lecture, chat, discussion, debate, email or negotiation is a conversation. Yet this does not mean that every event an educator lives through that appears to be a conversation is a 'proper conversation' (Heidegger, 2010b, p. 36). Just because people have spoken *to* one another about something does not mean that those involved have genuinely conversed *with* one another (Heidegger, 1982, p. 122, 2009a, p. 122). While all players in the university game are bestowed with the capacity for conversation (Gadamer, 2006), no one knows in advance whether an authentic or deficient form of conversation will eventuate (Gadamer, 2013, p. 401).

When an educator experiences true conversation, and not a poor resemblance, it has a spirit (life) of its own (Gadamer, 2013, p. 401). Thus, genuine conversation is not something that only happens *because* of educators, but with them, to them, and in spite of them (Gadamer, 2013, pp. 129, 401; Smythe, 2003, p. 199). When it does fleetingly arise, an educator becomes caught up in an unanticipated event of shared understanding about a common subject matter (Gadamer, 2013). Thus, 'a genuine conversation is never the one we wanted to conduct' (p. 402). What makes a conversation a genuine conversation is not that it has imparted us with some new

piece of information, but that we have ‘encountered something in the other [or ourselves] that we have not encountered in the same way in our own experiences of the world’ (Gadamer, 2006, p. 355).

The following story shows how a genuine conversation happened. An educator was drawn into and fully captivated by an advent of shared meaning. Peter recalled a special moment of lived conversation with one of his students Mary. As the play of this unscheduled conversation unfolds, it leads them to a shared revelation of Mary’s readiness for a specific world of practice.

*One of my students Mary has almost finished her degree. When she was in first year, she was bright, bubbly, enthusiastic, motivated and had no idea what she was going to do. In the sense of youth work she herself would say, I don’t know. But now she’s nearly finished third year. She’s finished her placement at a city council service doing some youth work, helping to run a drop-in program. And they offered her work. Because that started network relationships, she found out about another job. So she just got a job working with Sudanese young people living in commission flats. She has grown from good intentions to now she has found a real passion for working with young people from refugee backgrounds.*

*She came and sat here the other day. We have had scheduled supervision appointments over her time at uni, but this was a spontaneous one that occurred in the ‘formal environment’ of my office. She was talking about how does she further that refugee experience in her life. And she was talking about what literacy they will or won’t have, and what language they will read and won’t read because of where they have come from ... And she stopped, and she said, Look how much I’ve grown! Mary used those very words. Like she just had this great dawning of the real understanding within her of the work she was doing and the people she was working with. I felt like, with her, the journey here at university is virtually done. She is now able to enter the field and she will keep growing like we all do. (Interview 9: Story 8)*

In this story Peter relives a positive conversation that he shared with one of his students Mary. Nearing completion of her study at university, Mary unexpectedly entered Peter’s office. What brought her there? She had perhaps been drawn beforehand by the conversation that she sought to enter (Heidegger, 1962, p. 24).

We do not know how this educator is when Mary arrived (Heidegger, 1962, p. 173). This student possibly found Peter already absorbed in another task. Whether consciously or not, Peter allowed himself to become involved in an impromptu

conversation, becoming attuned to hearing what may be said in its course (Gadamer, 2007, p. 393; Heidegger, 1962, p. 207). This educator showed a predisposition to ‘fall into’ unplanned conversation at an unscheduled time (Blattner, 2006, p. 76; Gadamer, 2013, p. 401).

Peter remembered that after Mary sat down to talk she started telling him about concerns arising out of her new work with young refugees. In the very process of talking about this, an unexpected twist occurred in where the conversation was heading. Peter attuned to a moment when Mary was struck by a sudden clearing, a watershed recognition. It immediately leapt out to her from what she heard *herself* saying in the conversation (Heidegger, 1962, p. 205).

*She was talking about ... and ... And she stopped, and she said, Look how much I've grown! Like she just had this great dawning of the real understanding within her of the work she was doing and the people she was working with.*

A surprising yet distinct meaning was harkened beyond phonetics and literality (Heidegger, 1962, p. 207, 1984, p. 65; van Manen, 2014, p. 96). Understanding took shape for Mary that went beyond her explicit ‘sounded’ words. A more hidden word reached both her and Peter, a shared meaning grafted onto what Mary had said.

Heidegger suggests that it is precisely when our conversing becomes an unthinking activity that thoughts come to us, and not the other way around (Heidegger, 1968, p. 16, 2001, p. 6). It is almost as if this student was holding a conversation, not only with Peter, but with the ‘between’ of her own past and present (Gadamer, 2013, p. 127; Heidegger, 1962, p. 426; Lawn & Keane, 2011, p. 80). The coming of this insight did not annihilate her former self-understanding, but rather blossomed out of it – both down and across an ‘ecstatic’ experience of her articulated time as a student (Heidegger, 1962, p. 377; Lawn & Keane, 2011, p. 52).

In this moment, conversation presented Peter with a mutually accessible understanding that took on special meaning for him as an educator. As Mary’s academic supervisor, he had tacitly nurtured the emergence of her knowingness ‘about youth work’. Hence, the ‘very words’ uttered to him in this moment are possibly what he latently hoped to hear from his students as they reached the end of

their studies. He recalled being fully alive to a meaning that this conversation gifted him:

*I felt like, with her, the journey here at university is virtually done.  
She is now able to enter the field and she will keep growing ...*

When Peter underwent this moment, he appeared to be totally captivated by a significant meaning that addressed and claimed him, and henceforth lasted for him (Gadamer, 2007, p. 391, 2013, pp. 128, 401, 506).

When genuine conversation touched this educator in this fleeting moment, he completely ‘lost himself in’, and was ‘overcome by’, the seriousness of what true conversation let him see and participate in (Gadamer, 2013, pp. 107–113; Heidegger, 1962, p. 56). Authentic conversation is experienced when it draws a person into being fully engrossed in an event of specific meaning (Gadamer, 2006, p. 352; Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2013, pp. xii–xiii). This is the ecstatic state of being that Gadamer describes as ‘self-forgetfulness’ (Gadamer, 2007, p. 107; 2013, pp. 127–128). Peter’s engaged watchfulness and participation in authentic conversation with Mary was an experience of being swept away and gripped by something outside of himself. Such a positive encounter with authentic conversation is not of our own making.

Being outside oneself is the positive possibility of being wholly with something else. This kind of being present is a self-forgetfulness, and to be a spectator consists in giving oneself in self-forgetfulness to what one is watching. Here self-forgetfulness is anything but a privative condition, for it arises from devoting one’s full attention to the matter at hand. (Gadamer, 2013, pp. 127–128)

This story uncovers the peculiarity and transparency of authentic conversation. The more deeply we are drawn into what a conversation is showing us, the less conscious we are about enacting conversation as such. In order for authentic conversation to be experienced, it must withdraw from us (Heidegger, 1962, p. 99). True conversation is thus a ‘deeply self-forgetful action’ that human beings live in and through (Gadamer, 2007, p. 120). The essential nature of conversation touches us precisely in the fleeting moments when, in the very midst of conversing, our subjective consciousness of living in conversation becomes suspended as we are addressed by a serious meaning that conversation leads us into (Gadamer, 2013, p. 128; Heidegger, 1982, p. 59). Hence, the experience of genuine conversation is akin to being absorbed in the play of a serious game, which is an ‘ecstatic self-forgetting that is

experienced not as a *loss* of self-possession, but as the free buoyancy of an elevation above oneself' (Gadamer, 2004, p. 55). In this story, the educator seemed to undergo a shared moment of genuine conversation when he became wholly attuned to what emerged for Mary. This kind of being present in conversation is the self-forgetfulness that Gadamer speaks of.

This educator's experience reveals that in our experience of genuine conversation it humbly withdraws from our view, allowing what is mutually concerning and emerging for us to take the lead, and to claim us (Gadamer, 2013; Heidegger, 1982, pp. 120–122). An event is truly a conversation for an educator if it leaves something behind in them that has wholly absorbed and transformed them (Gadamer, 2006, 2013).

The next two stories show how a person's distinct hearing of something amidst the genuine interplay of conversation appeared to draw them towards their own ability to be an educator. In the following story, Simon remembers a significant conversation that occurred to him when he was a new undergraduate student of the bachelor's degree he now lectures within.

*I wasn't sure what I was going to do after Year 12. I'd only just passed Year 12. I ended up doing a gap-year course at the college. I remember being in Introduction to Theology and Mark our lecturer asking, what happens when Christians die? Do they go straight to heaven to be with Christ or is the next thing the Second Coming of Jesus? I put up my hand: I think it's like if someone goes to sleep at 7pm, 9pm and 11pm but they all wake up at 5am, then they don't actually feel like there's a lot of difference between the person who went to sleep first and the person who went to sleep last. They all wake up at the same time. And he says, well done Simon – you've just summarised Martin Luther's perspective on this. It's called 'soul sleep'. In my own head I'd been thinking about it and intuited. And Mark makes this connection for me that says to me on a whole range of levels, you're not an idiot; you can participate in this space; this conversation doesn't exclude you; there's content here you understand.*

*It just involved me. It was the sense of: if I had intuited something that you would find in a theology book somewhere, what else might I have intuited? What else might I already know that I don't know that I know? So it was that invitation. And that affirmation that yeah – I could belong here – that I could contribute. Whereas I'd never really had an experience like that at school. (Interview 4: Story 4)*

This story reveals a moment when conversation mattered to both educator and student. Rather than solely being a consequence of our ability to speak with one another, this story discloses that the possibility of conversation primarily resides in our ability to ‘hear from one another’ (Heidegger, 2009a, p. 122).

In this story, Simon recounted a conversation that awakened him to a possibility of belonging in the world of UYWE. He recalled being situated within a particular introductory theology lecture about the question of life after death. With the lecture underway, Simon remembered hearing the lecturer Mark ask students a specific question about the possibility of being after one’s own death (Heidegger, 1962, p. 292): ‘What happens when we die?’ Did the lecturer show his care for conversation by asking a question? Gadamer (2013, p. 370) suggests that all conversational experience and interplay first arises out of asking questions.

For Simon, this story reveals a special significance of conversation. Upon hearing the question spoken by the lecturer, Simon immediately recognised a thought had come to him, a clear thought that spoke to what the conversing was about (Heidegger, 2001, p. 6). Hearing this thought, he gestured to the lecturer to bring forward his not-yet-spoken insight into the open of conversation for others to see (Heidegger, 1982, p. 120). Did his readiness to ‘talk to’ the question which the conversation was based upon stem from Simon’s unspoken clarity that had already found him (Heidegger, 1982, p. 120)? ‘I put up my hand ...’ Simon’s hand silently rose in transparent unison with the mutable gestures of speaking and thinking (Heidegger, 1968, p. 16). Mark noticed Simon ‘say’ something by way of his silent hand gesture (Heidegger, 1968, p. 16, 1982, p. 122). Hence, Simon’s still-unspoken elucidation was allowed to come into the view of others within the clearing of the conversation (Heidegger, 1982, p. 122). ‘I think it’s like ...’

What happens when a specific thought, which had come to Simon, gets expressed in the openness of conversation with others? It falls upon the listeners of language who are gathered in the conversation (Heidegger, 2010b), who are already attuned to a shared mood: each is gathered together to converse a ‘this-worldly’ question that already matters to them in their mutual existence towards the ‘not yet’ of death (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 207, 290–292).

Having spoken aloud his intuitive insight, how did others appear to hear what Simon had said in the talk (Heidegger, 1962, p. 205)? At this precise moment, that which had been explicitly spoken by Simon remained ‘many-sided’ (Heidegger, 1982, p. 120). Out of an original ‘ringing silence’ there can emerge multiple possibilities of ways in which what has been said can be heard (Heidegger, 1982, p. 122).

What possibility took shape for Simon out of the origin of stillness? Simon recalled hearing the lecturer – seemingly within earshot of the whole class – utter the following words: ‘Well done Simon – you’ve just summarised Martin Luther’s perspective on this. It’s called “soul sleep”.’ In turn, how did Simon *hear* the lecture’s speaking that had been directed at him? Such a question is not to ask what acoustic sounds and sensory tones Simon perceived. Nor is it to attend to what was expressed in the linguistic utterance and how this might have been intelligible to Simon (Heidegger, 1962, p. 207). Rather, this story shows that Simon had primarily heard a *distinct meaning* that the lecturer bore for him (van Manen, 2014, p. 96; Heidegger, 1962, p. 207, 2001, p. 25). Thereby, in excess of the lecturer’s actual sounded words that were heard (‘Well done Simon ...’), Simon heard an abundance of meaning in Mark’s uttered response, a unique ‘word’ that *‘said to’* him while unheard by others who were there: ‘And Mark makes this connection for me that says [something] to me ...’

Perhaps it was not merely Mark who ‘made’ this meaning for Simon through his dictum, but a *saying* that was heard and recognised by Simon in what was spoken. Indeed, for Heidegger (1982), speaking and saying are not the same thing. Simon recalled hearing a ‘word’ that appeared for him in conversation that exceeded the mere vocalisation of verbatim speech (N. Diekelmann & J. Diekelmann, 2009, p. 56; Heidegger, 1982, p. 124). This particular heard saying emerged in conversation, and said to Simon: ‘You’re not an idiot; you can participate in this space; this conversation doesn’t exclude you ...’ An intelligible affirmation seemed to appear in the open region of the conversation.

This story points to the ‘way-making movement’ of conversation (Heidegger, 1982, p. 302). It appeared to Simon that this conversation mattered in his becoming an educator. A gift was imparted – an awakening of a new projected knowing that he

was someone who was already capable of being conversant within a higher education community.

*It was that invitation. And that affirmation that yeah – I could belong here – that I could contribute. Whereas I'd never really had an experience like that at school.*

For Heidegger, conversation is only possible because we are already 'conversant' with broader practical contexts (Wrathall, 2011, p. 108). Indeed, educators already share an unspoken conversance with the social practice known as youth work. This conversance is a background readiness to act and talk in ways that make sense in the world of UYWE (Wrathall, 2011, p. 106). In saying that, educators silently act in ways that support and await the emergence of students' own conversance and readiness in relation to youth work practice. This involves routinely asking students different questions (in assignments, tutorials, etc.) about the theory and practice of youth work; questions to which educators already silently hold within them pre-thought answers. One educator recounted being in one such conversation in the following story, which unfolded when he was a student in the UYWE program in which he now teaches.

*In terms of being able to teach youth work, I had studied the degree I am now teaching in ... One lecturer in particular, Christine, I liked her style. She always encouraged people to critique and question and think about what they were thinking ... With Christine, I remember there was one assignment, I never kept a copy of it, but there was this question she asked ... I remember having done some research on this particular idea, and I remember it was great. And she was really impressed with my answer ... I seemed to write and answer questions in a way that was obviously along the line of how [pause] ... not necessarily I was writing for her, but I was writing in a way that was appropriate for her ... (Interview 8: Story 3)*

In this story, Matthew describes a particular written conversation that was opened by a question asked by one of his lecturers, Christine, for the purpose of an assigned piece of work. After a time of awaiting the students' written answers to her question, Christine encountered Matthew's answer amongst those from his fellow students. It became clear to Matthew that his answer stood out of the crowd for Christine who liked the answer that Matthew gave to her question, and his way of answering. Did Matthew's particular answer speak to an unspoken answer, or sense of knowing, that Christine already carried herself?

Gadamer (2013, p. 371) suggests that a conversation that is opened by a question to which a partner already senses the answer is not an authentic conversation. When a university educator, such as Christine in this story, is called upon to conduct conversation that aims at drawing out students' answers with questions to which the educator has already been granted insight, perhaps authentic conversation is not possible. Unlike such routine kinds of conversations, which educators are expected to spark and moderate by imparting their own background conversance, there are different occasions of conversation that are more genuine. Sometimes a more genuine form of lived conversation might break open from a question that an educator has not forecasted, and to which an answer comes as the conversation unfolds that cannot be thought ahead of its happening.

In the following story, a student initiated a warm conversation that brought Kendall a question and an answer that she did not see coming.

*One of our students came up to me before class, and she said, I just want to say thank you. She had tears in her eyes. And I said, oh, what for?*

*And she said, [the ethics class you taught last semester] just helped me immeasurably. She said, I was at work and my manager kept dumping all of this stuff on me. And she said, I couldn't do it, and I was feeling really stressed, and I was thinking I should do it, and then I remembered back to ethics and some of the things that you had taught me ... And she said, I went to see my manager and said you've given me all of this work, I've got these amounts of hours to do it in, you're not giving me any professional development, I don't think you are behaving ethically! And the manager apparently looked at her and said, you're right – I've given you too much work, we need to sit down and talk about this and we need to sit down and talk about supports.*

*And she said, if we hadn't of had that conversation in your class, I would have just thought that I wasn't good enough because I couldn't do the work on time and not everything that he gave me, but I got to see it from a different perspective, so thank you for that class, it's changed the way that I view my workplace.*

*That's when I felt really validated, and it was by a student ... I did feel a sense of belonging in the classroom with the students. And there were all those warm feelings of acceptance. And I guess I did feel that the classroom was a haven from a heartless world in that context.*  
(Interview 12: Story 8)

This story shows how an educator's experience of conversation is always played out in time. Often a form of conversation may unfold that an educator is able to foresee.

In this story however, Kendall recalled a chance conversation that occurred before her scheduled class had even begun.

Perhaps Kendall arrived at the class sensing in advance, however clearly or vaguely, the kind of conversation that she was moving to help unfold in the time that was allocated for her to talk together to and with the students. As she prepared to undertake the task of leading the class, had Kendall come with a prior sense of where she wanted the conversation to go? What was she intending the class discussion to be about? Was she already contemplating the unsaid ground that she planned to cover with the students during this looming occasion? It may be that Kendall entered this situation diligently armed with insights and ideas that were to be reached through the ensuing class activity (Gadamer, 2013, p. 403). Kendall may even have been holding unspoken questions in readiness to ask the students, to get their thinking moving. Surprisingly, it was in this lead-up, just as Kendall was perched to set the class in motion, when one student approached the educator to talk to her. How would Kendall respond to this student's approach? Would the conversation provoked by the student be welcomed or seen as an encroachment on the educator's preparation time?

Kendall already knew the student from the previous course that she had taught. It was immediately clear that the student had not approached her to speak of a trivial matter. The educator was confronted with the possibility of an unexpected conversation that a student was moving to open. What might it bring? The educator was yet to know. But Kendall noticed that this student had tears in her eyes, before any words had come to bear. When noticing this student's non-verbal comportment, did Kendall brace herself for a tricky conversation? Perhaps the student approached to reveal her struggle in completing an assignment? Or she was feeling out of her depth with what she was learning? The educator was attentive to hear what the student's words might say. Mixed in with the tears, a saying was brought to bear in the conversation for Kendall: 'thank you'. Here in this moment, perhaps Kendall was caught off guard. As this saying was shown to Kendall, suddenly, instead of the questioning that she anticipated asking of her students during the impending class, she was now drawn by this conversation into spontaneously asking a question that she had not planned to ask – a question to which she does not yet know the answer: 'Oh, what for?'

As Kendall asked this unscripted question, she became attuned to the coming of the student's answer. Gratefully, the student began to address Kendall's question concerning what the student was clearly deeply thankful for. What then came into view was an unexpected mutual understanding that mattered deeply to Kendall as an educator: 'And she said, if we hadn't of had that conversation in your class ...' She went on to reveal how the conversation that she had been part of in Kendall's previous class had helped her 'immeasurably' to be able to think through and deal with a demanding situation that she had found herself thrown into as a paid youth worker. As this awareness came out of the conversation, it claimed Kendall. This gift of knowing that conversation bears began to create a haven for Kendall from her own demanding situation that she found herself in as an educator in the university world.

This appears to be the kind of conversation that brings a revelation that continues to strengthen and compose an educator long after the conversation has 'closed'. Kendall's understanding and hearing of this student's gratitude was a veiled message that lives on, that is preserved as an ongoing safe haven. And yet, in attending to how helpful her previous class appeared to have been for this student, it would be out of place to focus on how 'well' Kendall had taught the previous unit, given the kind of claim that was made on the student (Gadamer, 2013, p. 129). The same can be said of the conversation that is shown in this story. The educator in this story cannot really be said to have created this moving conversation for herself, but it is more appropriate to say that this unexpected conversation was something that she fell into. Something came out of this conversation that transformed this educator (Gadamer, 2006). The conversation granted her a previously 'unprethinkable' thought about how her own practice had already mattered to this student (Heidegger, 2010b, p. 95).

We are not told about the class that followed this impromptu happening of conversation. But it appears that for this educator, this before-class conversation brought something into view that did not emerge from a question that she had thought ahead of the conversation. The conversation heralded a sense of acceptance for the educator that she had not seen coming. Such is the nature of true conversation that we awaits to see what it has in store for us, and not the other way around:

a conversation first waits upon reaching that of which it speaks. And the speakers of a conversation can speak in its sense only if they are prepared for something to befall them in the conversation which transforms their own essence. (Heidegger, 2010b, p. 37)

The final story of this section shows how a conversation can sometimes appear to be negative at first, but turn out to be a gift for a person who has been involved in it. Like the previous story, the following is an educator's recollection of an unplanned conversation that was initiated by a student. Further, the unfolding of conversation similarly brought another educator into a knowing that took her by surprise and deeply affected her. But unlike the previous story, the particular conversation that Emma recalled being in below occurred immediately after a class had ended that she had co-taught, rather than prior to its beginning. Moreover, this conversation did not bring Emma something that provided her with a sense of shelter, but something more disconcerting.

*I was co-teaching this week-long intensive about research methods to a group of students. It was the first day, and I was thinking how do we engage in this? A common strategy that I had experienced was marking each other's tests. The concept of the quiz was something we did in primary and high school. I hadn't thought about it since being a high school student – since I had it done to me. My fellow lecturer and I both thought let's just go with it. So we finished the day with this quiz. Then they swapped papers and marked each other's. Then I asked them for a show of hands of how well they did: who got more than 5? Who got more than 10? Afterwards, at the end of first day, we were like, see you tomorrow.*

*One student stayed behind. She said, look, just so you know, I found that quite offensive. I can't remember her exact words. But she was embarrassed about someone else seeing her mark. She was quite emotional and abrupt. My colleague and I were completely taken aback. We were incredibly apologetic in that moment, and said we are really sorry. That wasn't our intention. We were in that moment; we just wanted to collectively summarise the learnings of the day. And she basically said, look, I just didn't find it appropriate. The conversation finished.*

*We were teaching off-site. While we were collecting all of our things, the student went to our offices and told my supervisor what happened ... She said to my supervisor: I have a major issue with that, I felt very exposed, and I felt very ashamed. And she pointed to our teaching styles as being inadequate, and being completely unprofessional. She said, I don't want to come back tomorrow. It was only after a long conversation with our supervisor that she was convinced to come back.*

*So by the time we had collected all our things and actually got back to the office, my supervisor told us that she had come and put in an official complaint ... And she felt so exposed that she said I don't want to do the course anymore.*

*That night, I was devastated. That she had gone to that extreme. It was humiliating and embarrassing for me because I felt SO ashamed that I had put someone through that pain, through an experience that should have been affirming. Hopefully it was a positive environment, but she felt so uncomfortable and so frustrated that she made an official complaint and threatened not to come back. The thing is, I felt like I had presented something that was seen to be so hurtful. And I felt so ashamed because I just didn't know – I didn't know. It didn't even cross my mind that it would be an issue for these people. Because what I had done in the classroom, I was just flying by the seat of my pants, which is what I normally do.*

*We apologised to her the next morning. We continued on, and we ended having a really productive week. But it made me a little more wary about how some people may take measurement in the class context, in adult education. For the first time, I recognised there is a difference between educating adults versus educating children. There's that sense of revealing oneself to their fellow classers; that sense of shame and pride that I wasn't aware of. I was much more measured after that. And it took me a long time to recover from that experience. That was several years ago now but I still keep her in mind. (Interview 6: Story 8)*

This story reveals a past encounter with a particular student that happened to Emma through conversation. In the moments after a class conversation that Emma had just finished co-leading, it seems that her encounter with the students had ended for the day: 'See you tomorrow'. And yet, unpredictably, one student remained behind wanting to have a conversation with Emma and her colleague. This student abruptly started telling the educators about her negative experience of a certain part of the day's proceedings.

Emma and her colleague were poised to hear what this student was saying to them. The surprising conversation let this student's painful disposition become apparent to Emma and her colleague. What Emma immediately appeared to hear this student 'say' to her with words, and in a tonality and atmosphere that seemed to touch her beyond words (van Manen, 1991, p. 175), was that an improvised activity that she orchestrated had left this student with a primal sense of humiliation in the eyes of her classmates.

*She said, look, just so you know, I found that quite offensive. I can't remember her exact words. But she was embarrassed about someone else seeing her mark. She was quite emotional and abrupt.*

Beyond a case of mild offence, it became clear to Emma that such was the nature of this student's response to having been directed to reveal her quiz score to her peers that there was a possibility that this student might not be 'seen tomorrow' in class, as expected.

Something was voiced through this post-class moment of lived conversation that Emma had not seen coming. Just moments earlier, Emma seemed to have safely assumed that the first day was over and done with, and had gone smoothly enough. But now she found herself thrown into an almost catastrophic conversation, in which she was being struck by something that shocked and alarmed her. She instantaneously saw that in doing the quiz in the 'carbon copy' manner in which it had been previously 'done to her' as a school student, she had unwittingly 'done something' to this student that had hurt and publically shamed her.

How did this educator respond upon hearing this conversation's message? Her way of being was affected by this revelation before her. Emma distinctly recalled how both she and her colleague 'were completely taken aback'. In clarifying how we are always disposed towards one's situation in a certain mood, Heidegger suggests that in moments when we find ourselves being 'taken aback', we are being 'shocked' back from the 'familiarity of customary behavior and into the openness of the pressing-forth of what is self-concealing' (2012b, p. 14). Could it be that, within this conversation, something shocking arrived that was taking her back from a customary to a different way of 'going with' the same type of class activity in the future?

Crucially, from being taken aback, Emma did not continue the conversation as though it were an argument for her to win (Gadamer, 2013, p. 375). A meek explanation was offered to this student: 'We were in that moment; we just wanted to collectively summarise the learnings of the day'. However, the educators extended words of apology towards the student, rather than just apologetics for their actions. Indeed, it was the student who is allowed the last word on the matter, perhaps leaving the educators appearing to be the ones who came off worse in the conversation (Gadamer, 2013, p. 375): 'And she basically said, look, I just didn't find it appropriate. The conversation finished.'

In being taken aback by what this conversation is showing her, Emma was unable to shake this revelation off quickly. As she moved on from this event in terms of objective spatiality and time, it continued to affect how she was, disclosing that something had emerged that genuinely concerned her as an educator. The conversation was un-concealing something which had previously been self-concealed in relation to Emma's practice. A shocking realisation began to assail and befall her as a higher educator. In a similar way that the earlier quiz conversation in class time had affected this student's disposition, with a sense of shame remaining for her, Emma now found her disposition moving towards her own sense of shame: 'I felt so ashamed because I just didn't know – I didn't know'. This brief conversation then flowed into an adjoining conversation with her supervisor about this matter. Then, as she pondered this conversation later that night, what it was still revealing to Emma was 'devastating' for her.

And yet, a gift hidden within this happening slowly showed itself to her amidst the aftershocks. A kind of 'blessing in disguise' was coming to Emma that was opening from this unpleasant encounter. From the soil of devastation a new 'knowing' sprouted, which arrived to speak silently to her way of being an educator. The conversation had united her with something that she had 'not known'; had helped her to come into an understanding (Gadamer, 2013). Indeed, from this tough conversation that Emma had undergone, something meaningful and transformative appeared to come to light:

*For the first time, I recognised there is a difference between educating adults versus educating children. There's that sense of revealing oneself to their fellow classers; that sense of shame and pride that I wasn't aware of. I was much more measured after that.*

Thus, what perhaps made this conversation a true conversation was that it enabled Emma to encounter 'something in the other' that she had not encountered in the same way in her 'own experiences of the world' (Gadamer, 2006, p. 355). Indeed, Emma was led to understand that greater care is needed when dealing with normative teaching approaches that had been passed down to her. While strategies like the quiz may have previously presented to her as being harmless based on her own prior experiences of them, she was moved toward a different way of being an educator that was more tactful and relationally sensitive to different learners (Giles, 2010; van Manen, 1991).

This story shows a conversation that let someone else's painful experience be shown to the educator (Heidegger, 1982). Further brought into view, such an experience of seeing what one is being shown can sometimes be a devastating process. And yet, through this refining process, what is revealed is the transformative nature of truthful conversation:

*it made me a little more wary about how some people may take measurement in the class context ... I was much more measured after that. And it took me a long time to recover from that experience. That was several years ago now but I still keep her in mind.*

This story is perhaps revealing in terms of the happening of positive conversation. In talking about our contrasting experiences of conversation, Gadamer suggests that, in retrospect, we may say that something was a 'good conversation' or that it was 'ill fated' (2013, p. 401). At first superficial reading, it might appear that the conversation as lived and told by Emma was 'ill fated'. Indeed, it does not appear to have gifted the same kind of shelter and haven that emerged for the educator in the previous story. And yet, upon closer consideration, this conversation begins to appear 'successful' in a less obvious way. 'Where a conversation is successful, something remains for us and something remains in us that has transformed us' (Gadamer, 2006, p. 355).

The student did not retreat from conversation to conceal her own negative experiences of the quiz. She allowed her own humiliation to be shown and known to the educators, whom she perceived as responsible, through conversation. For Emma, hearing what had 'been done' for this student was more than politely permitting an 'airing' of subjective grievance. She took what was shown to her as a matter of serious concern that began to speak to her own practice. The meaning of the student's grievance befell Emma. After the conversation appeared to have 'finished', it played on for Emma, beginning to claim her with her sense of it. In light of Heidegger (2010b, p. 37), what is perhaps shown here is our openness, as Dasein, for something to 'befall us' in the movement of conversing with one another; a sense of 'falling into' an event of apparent meaning which transforms our own essential way of being an educator.

Gadamer (2006) tells us that it is ‘only in conversation’ that we can find each other and, ‘develop that kind of community in which everyone remains the same for the other because they find the other in themselves and find themselves in the other’ (p. 355). As this story takes shape, the kind of conversation that leads us to communal understanding does not always involve laughing with one another, but may at times be imbued with dis-ease (Giles, 2008) as it allows us to reach a moment of vision that challenges and renews the taken-for-granted ways that we go about our familiar activities. Such fruit that comes from this humbling process is an event of mutual understanding (Gadamer, 2013), which is perhaps what ultimately separates a fruitful conversation from an ill-fated one. For Gadamer, the happening of a ‘fruitful conversation’, especially a fruitful dispute, rests in how open the participants are to realising their own ‘unconscious prejudices’, as Emma appears to be in this story in relation to her own practice as an educator in UYWE (Gadamer, 2007, p. 416).

Even after many years have passed, whether this fruitful encounter is told or left untold, it appears that it is still ‘there’ for Emma. While Emma has lived through countless conversations as an educator, many seem superfluous and quickly fade. But others appear to instil a distinct ‘showing-saying’ that continues to speak to her beyond the limits of measurable time and space (Heidegger, 1982, pp. 103, 120). While there are several moments in this story where it appears that the conversation event has ‘finished’, in a deeper sense, it is continually underway for Emma. It is something that she hears from and draws upon, even when she is not thinking or talking about this incident as she presses ahead into her everyday practice (Gadamer, 2005, p. 62). Even though she can no longer recall the ‘exact words’ that were spoken in this conversation (van Manen, 1991, p. 175), it continues to voice something to her that matters to her way of being in the world as an educator.

The following poem speaks of the transformative nature of conversation as experienced by those who are drawn into its message.

*When we converse*  
*When conversing happens*  
*Conversation graces us with presence –*  
*Not with its own,*  
*But with a presence*

*Of what it lets us jointly see.*

*When we are drawn into  
The life that belongs to a conversation,  
It does not steal the show –  
It lets something show itself.  
It becomes less,  
So that our sense of 'we'  
Can grow.*

*When we converse  
The graciousness of conversation  
Is not of our own making.  
It comes in its own time,  
Of its own accord.*

*But when it does arrive,  
It does not always announce itself  
With laughter,  
Or make itself known  
By an easy flow  
Of spoken words.  
But it sometimes draws us  
To sit in its fire,  
Upon its silent ground.*

*A life lived 'as' conversation  
Is not always smooth,  
But it always brings something good,  
Concealing its power to transform us,  
And to gather us together  
In a shared light of understanding.*

(J. Spier, 27 July 2015)

***When genuine conversation does not appear to happen***

When does conversation show itself as genuine conversation? Perhaps it is not in the rare moments when we are caught up in a genuine conversation. Indeed, when conversation is actually happening to us – in motion and succeeding for us – we do not give it much thought. By contrast, as we go about our everyday lives, from time to time we may discover that authentic conversation has eluded us in one way or another. It is perhaps in these moments when conversation itself fleetingly touches us with its essential being (Heidegger, 1982, p. 59).

Sometimes the importance of authentic conversation may show up to an educator in moments when it does not appear to have happened. An educator in the following story, Jodi, seemed to recount one such moment when she witnessed a fellow educator struggling to make pedagogical conversation happen with her students.

*It was interesting yesterday, I had a guest lecturer. And she came, and there were only about 40 in class yesterday – there were a lot missing, but she put questions out there, and no one answered.*

*And I thought after, there was this slight assumption [in something she may have said] that it was the students. But, it was like – well – they're only first years. They probably don't feel comfortable talking still – even in [a group of] 10. Even in my tutorials, at the beginning of semester we went in, and everyone was in a small room, but in rows; and no one said anything; and then I just said – right, from every single week on, we are going to put everyone in a circle, we're going to sit in a circle. And we started off this circle process by this card exercise where everyone just picks up a random card and has to answer it. And then the next week I made everyone answer – go round and question.*

*But now, someone can do a reading and put it out there and everyone will just chat. And yesterday some student said, I really disagree with the reading and she was really cross about it, and everyone just chatted. And I'm still learning that myself. I'm still learning what works and what doesn't. And I have to really always be mindful that a lot of young people that I teach; some of them feel scared. They're only 19. Some of them experience anxiety. So, I have to really be mindful of that as an educator. (Interview 11: Story 3)*

In this story Jodi experienced an unsuccessful conversation run by a guest lecturer who had been invited to conduct a lecture conversation. While Jodi did not seem to have been directly involved, while the conversation unfolded before her, she became attuned to how none of her students were offering spoken answers to the questions that were being asked of them by the guest educator.

Jodi seemed to be concerned about the nature of the conversation with her students that was occurring. In this moment, the way her students were collectively remaining silent in the course of conversation began to say something to Jodi (Heidegger, 1982, p. 122). In undergoing this very moment, it appears that what was said and shown to her was that the common conversation was not working. Curiously, such a sensibility carried her away to think about the successful happening of genuine conversation in *her* own tutorials (Heidegger, 1982, p. 59). Indeed, immediately after the lecture event, her own brush with an unsuccessful conversation inclined her to think about

times when a more authentic form of conversation with her students appeared to transpire.

In the aftermath of this lecture class, an assumption somehow presented itself that assigned responsibility for this unsuccessful happening of conversation to students who were involved in it. Rather than accepting any notion that genuine conversation had not happened because of something her students had done, or failed to do, Jodi seems to have been claimed by a different insight, as she was led to ponder her own practice experiences. What became clear is how the possibility of authentic conversation with her students largely rests with what she does *as an educator*. For Jodi, the artistry of conversation with students appears to be essential to being an educator (Wierciński, 2011b). As such, the challenging nature of this artistry is such that it requires a constant ‘learning’ of what to do as an educator, in order to draw students into the play of genuine conversation about professional youth work. But it seems that learning practical knowledge related to the art of conversation *for oneself* is different than merely learning a conversational *technique*, where the latter can be as quickly forgotten as it is learnt (Gadamer, 2013, pp. 326–327).

What seems to come to the fore from this story is a lived *phronēsis*, or practical wisdom, of conversation. Gadamer (2013, p. 327) draws on Aristotle’s notion of *phronesis* to describe a kind of practical knowledge and capacity to see what a particular situation calls for. But more than that, a person who intuitively grasps how to deal with a given situation, in its variable uniqueness, is a person who is able to allow something good, or virtuous, to come out of the situation (Svenaeus, 2015, p. 554). Thus, ‘a person who knows how to make something good, and he knows it “for himself”, so that, where there is a possibility of doing so, he is really able to make it’ (Gadamer, 2013, p. 327). In light of this understanding, what is unveiled in this story is how an educator with a *phronesis* of conversation is able to, ‘at first sight’ (p. 327), tell when a conversation underway is not being allowed to happen in the right ways. Beyond any technical knowledge about making conversation, it is perhaps an educator’s own practical knowingness of how to turn a conversation into ‘something good’ that shows them a situation in which the right things are not being done to allow good conversation to arise. This practical knowingness might include doing things that work like inviting students to sit in circles rather than rows (Gadamer, 2013, p. 327).

Educators can also discern an appearance of inauthentic conversation from their own teaching practice.

*I remember student feedback first-year teaching, and most of them were positive, and just one thing that said 'she talked a lot ... which was good but it didn't leave us heaps of room to reflect upon what she was asking, cause she often filled in the spaces'.*

*And I remember that, because I was nervous, and I wanted to fill the space, and I didn't really trust my ability to instigate, or perhaps just to trust the process of them processing and feeding back. And I've been really wary of that. And when I do the tutorials now I'm much more likely to allow for silence and to allow for questions.*

*And if a group is talking, talking, talking, and they are going over there, I prefer to just go with them because that is where they are leading rather than feeling like I need to follow the protocol that has been set before the tutorial group.*

*So that was just from a student. It's been helpful for me. Because I know that I don't have to prove that I am smart by just keeping on talking about things. More is sometimes just more – it's not necessarily going to be better. (Interview 6: Story 5)*

Unlike the previous story, Emma, the educator in this story, did not recognise an occurrence of inauthentic conversation with students in someone else's practice, but in her own. Moreover, the arrival of students' joint silence in the conversation that eventually flowed for Emma did not mark an absence of good conversation, but its appearance.

As a novice educator, Emma experienced a form of conversation that allowed her to receive student feedback with respect to her own practice as an educator. It was not simply the positive comments that spoke to her, but the one comment that showed her something about her own practice that was previously concealed: 'she talks too much'. This student seemed to have recognised something about Emma's way of being as an educator that was not allowing a clearing for genuine shared conversation to happen. Emma did not seem to reject the appearance of this possibility, nor reassure herself that 'talking a lot' is essentially what it means to be a lecturer. Instead, this particular message was able to claim Emma with its power to shape her practice. What this student's comment showed her led her into a renewed sense of what she wanted to do as an educator. She appeared to grow discontented

with content: no longer comfortable with a way of comporting herself that filled a pedagogical encounter with the content of her talk, voice and answers. By contrast, the importance of authentic conversation began to appeal to Emma, and was heard as a call to trust the process of conversation. This educator was radically moved from being wary about silence, toward being wary about an absence of silence. Instead of seeing the pedagogical conversation as something that she was primarily responsible for leading as an educator, she was brought to see that authentic conversation is something that really happens when she is being responsive to where the conversation is leading the students (Gadamer, 2013, p. 401; Henriksson, 2012, pp. 121–123).

The experience revealed in this story perhaps not only points to authentic conversation as a process to be trusted by educators, but also that learning to trust the phenomenon of conversation is itself a process that educators are in. Indeed, Gadamer (2006) says the following in relation to the pedagogical conversation:

The conversation between teacher and student is certainly one of the most basic types of conversation experiences, and those charismatic figures of conversation ... are all masters and teachers who instruct their students or apprentices through conversations. In the case of the teacher however, there is of course the peculiar difficulty of maintaining a capacity for conversation, a difficulty that defeats most. Whoever teaches believes he has both the duty and the right to speak, and the more consistently and coherently he can speak, the better he can communicate his teachings. That is the danger of the lecturer, as we all know. (pp. 355–356)

Beyond conversation shared by educators and students, there are various other forms of conversation that arise as educators go about their everyday lives in the university world.

There are ordinary occasions when an educator experiences a conversation with various colleagues in their university community that does not appear to be authentic. In such instances, an experience of superficial conversation with others arises that does not seem to spring from a shared well of original understanding, with respect to a practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) for navigating challenging situations involving vulnerable young people. The following story appears to reveal such an experience as lived by Jane:

*Every now and then, the uni will run something collegial – and this is where my real clash is with ... Not long ago I was in a workshop with all these other people – there were people there from sociology,*

*literature, history, whatever. We were looking at, in a group, young people, young students at risk: students who come in your office and slam the door or whose lives are falling apart. And there was a big kind of map thing, and it said students at risk – how do you work with this group? You had to write your thing. So, my thought bubble was open door policy: student's upset? Take them for a cup of tea and have a chat.*

*[We then wrote feedback on one another's suggestions on the wall] ... I got canned! Absolutely! [The others there wrote] things like a pathway to suicide; how ridiculous – we can't all do this.*

*[When I read their comments] I got very teary. I felt like I was being really misunderstood. I felt really sad for the students, because with some academics there's this real thing: students are always trying to manipulate you; students always have an excuse for everything. You know, there's a real hierarchy. I left that workshop. (Interview 11: Story 4, Part A)*

In this story Jane, who teaches in the academic profession of youth work, found herself thrown into a conversation event with her fellow university educators who teach within various other disciplines. This event took the form of a professional development workshop, which drew them into a conversation with one another about a specific scenario which was close to the educator's area of academic and practical expertise: 'young people, young students at risk: students who come in your office and slam the door or whose lives are falling apart'.

The educators who had been gathered together were then directed to speak to the same scenario, which jointly concerned them in this moment. They were each asked to voice possible ways that they would deal with this difficult situation related to their mutual everyday practice of being an educator in the university. More precisely, this conversation was set in motion by an invitation to write down their own thoughts anonymously on a shared map with respect to how they would personally handle this situation. This gave Jane an opportunity to voice an intuitive practical suggestion that seemed to be based on her years of experience as an educator who specialised in exactly this kind of practice situation: 'So, my thought bubble was open door policy: 'Student's upset? Take them for a cup of tea and have a chat.'

In contributing this thought of possible action to the conversation, Jane was perhaps seeking to share her unique kind of practical wisdom with her university colleagues – drawn from her own professional experience relevant to what the collegial workshop

happened to be about (Heidegger, 1982, p. 120). Next the partners were directed to comment on the thoughts that they had each expressed. It was during the conversation that unfolded from here that Jane saw that the suggestion she had put forward for her colleagues, as a possible way of dealing with the situation in question, was not being recognised.

More than merely going unnoticed, or treated with reticence, a harsh moment of truth then came in the conversation when Jane suddenly discovered the feedback that her colleagues had written in reply to her thought. Here, she immediately experienced a careless countermove that appeared to reject and ridicule what she had said. Her thought bubble had been thoughtlessly burst.

How did Jane respond to what she encountered in this moment of conversation with her colleagues? Firstly, she was not merely concerned about what the feedback meant for herself, but lamented a shallowness of care and empathic sensibility to the students who were signified by the scenario they were addressing: 'I felt really sad for the students, because with some academics there's this real thing: students are always trying to manipulate you; students always have an excuse for everything.' For Jane, far from hearing something that could be easily shaken off, it struck as a swift blow, possibly touching a concealed essence to her life as an educator. Such was the velocity that she was temporarily forced to remove herself from the conversation, perhaps to regather herself: 'I left that workshop.'

What remained for Jane was a sense of sadness for the young people who were being represented in the scenario in question. Deeper still, what also yielded was a personal sense of having been 'really misunderstood'. But what was the nature of this felt sense of being misunderstood? Had her colleagues somehow misinterpreted the thought bubble that she had written and displayed on the map for others to make sense of? Perhaps not. Rather than an accidental incident that had to do with the weakness of all written texts, as inherently vulnerable to simple misunderstanding, the problem here seems to have run much deeper (Gadamer, 2013 p. 411). Indeed, beyond the involved participants being unable to access one another's respective standpoints on the student scenario in question, their illuminated conflicting views possibly stemmed from different *forms of understanding* related to the subject matter (*sache*) that they had been given for conversation (Gadamer, 2013, pp. 187, 314).

Critically, when Jane read what had been written in direct response to her own thought, she encountered an ordinary everyday expression of something that Heidegger might describe as ‘idle’ conversation (*Gerede*) (Heidegger, 1962, p. 211; Wrathall, 2011, p. 110). In this average mode of talking we rely on our ‘empty intending’ (Heidegger, 1992b, p. 41). Empty intending is the mode of thinking about, and recalling, something that is not fully given to our deep understandings. An example is a conversation that takes place for us about a famous bridge overseas that we ourselves have never laid eyes on, visited, walked upon or researched, but which we have vaguely heard about (Heidegger, 1992b, p. 41). Heidegger (1992b) suggests that conversation based on empty intentionality about something can be fulfilled by coming into an *intuitive* (or *original*) understanding of something, such as when we come to experience the nature of a particular bridge for ourselves that we have previously only ever understood by way of hearsay (Heidegger, 1962).

We intuitively understand something if we already have the capacity to sense the meaning of being spontaneously, that is, if we have an original understanding of a way of human life, and know how to conduct a shared background practice ‘from the inside’ (Blattner, 2006, p. 132; Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1962, p. 212; MacAvoy, 2013, p. 138). We intuitively, or primordially, understand the nature of something if we immediately (non-intentionally) apprehend it without needing to ask someone else, consult a reference text, test it out first, or apply our conscious reasoning to acquire knowledge about it (Dreyfus, 1991).<sup>19</sup>

Importantly, Heidegger claims that a large part of our everyday conversations goes on in a mode of empty intending, that is, without any intuitive fulfilment with respect

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<sup>19</sup> For example, if I want to cut a pizza that I have cooked, but cannot find the pizza cutter, I might say to my wife: ‘Do you know where the pizza cutter is?’ She may answer, ‘Try looking in the utensil drawer.’ At this point, we are talking about something that is emptily intended. But if I then follow my wife’s suggestion, open the drawer, sight, grab and start using what I immediately know ‘is’ the pizza cutter, then this same entity is given an intuition that fulfils our empty intention (MacAvoy, 2013, p. 138). The point here is that, even if it takes me a few seconds to sift the pizza cutter out from the pile of other utensils, I have an original understanding of the pizza cutter as something familiar that I already know how to use for the task of cutting pizza (Blattner, 2006; Wrathall, 2011). As someone who cuts pizzas often with this trusty tool, I do not apprehend what I roughly suspect could be the pizza cutter, and then ask my wife if I have grabbed the right utensil, nor do I try out several utensils until I discover the one that seems to work best as a cutter – but without thinking I grab what I already understand from experience is the pizza cutter. It would be a different matter should I find myself thrown into an unfamiliar practice situation, such as an operating theatre, where a surgeon is calling out to me for a piece of medical equipment that I have only ever heard spoken of in the movies.

to what we are talking about (1992b, p. 41). While our everyday navigation of the world involves an 'original' understanding of some of this world, it involves merely 'positive' understandings of most of it (Heidegger, 1962, p. 209). Indeed, we only experience a limited range of original understanding: 'there are genuinely practical limits on what we can understand originally: we do not have the time or energy to throw ourselves constructively into very many enterprises' (Blattner, 2006, p. 132). Thus, what comes to the fore in this story is that the diverse group of educators may have shared an original understanding of driving a car and writing a lecture, but they perhaps did not share an original understanding of all the represented academic disciplines. Some who were gathered may have been able to teach sociology at the university level, but not literature or history like others who were present could, and so on.

Although the workshop conversation may have seemed to be only about an average situation that related primarily to the university situation, perhaps those gathered fell into a mode of talking about this scenario that relied on their mere positive understandings, forgetting that there was an academic amongst them who came bearing a veiled gift of original understanding, or unsaid conversance, about dealing with the kind of special circumstance that was reflected in this scenario. While Jane may not have the same kind of original understanding about how to deal with a young student who arrives at one's office asking a complex question related to a sociological issue or classic literature text, yet as an university educator who has worked for years as a professional youth worker and as a lecturer specialising in the education of youth work practitioners, she did perhaps bring and voice a deeper form of intuitive understanding. Such insight might have helped to shed light on the issue that happened to be the matter that their communal conversation led towards: 'how to respond to young people – students whose lives are falling apart'.

To return to the question that opened this section: when does conversation show itself as authentic conversation? Jane's story perhaps reveals how the process of genuine conversation with others, as described by Gadamer below, sometimes shows itself precisely when it does not appear to happen – when shared understandings do not appear to eventuate from the mutual openness of those who are gathered in the language of the conversation.

Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says. (2013, p. 403)<sup>20</sup>

***When a conversation is experienced as ‘not yet’***

What is it to live in the possibility of a conversation that does not appear to have happened yet? Some conversations that are experienced as a possibility may end up eventuating for us, while others may not. Some conversations may already matter to a person before they come to pass. Moreover, when a conversation that has awaited us seems to be coming to fruition, it may not play out exactly as we had anticipated, desired or feared it might. Regardless, possibilities of conversation are not something that are merely lacking; we experience them *as* possibilities (Heidegger, 1962; Sembera, 2007, p. 152).

There are occasions when educators experience the possibility of a conversation that has yet to be seized. One such experience emerged for Jane in the following story, which flows on from the previous story.

*I felt that I should have said something then and there [in the workshop]. I didn't ...*

*But I knew who'd written these thought bubbles. So the next day, I sent an email out to everyone in the workshop. And I said, I felt that I was misunderstood. I want you all to remember that I'm trained in this area. This is what I train my students to do. I train them to work with at-risk, marginalised young people. If I can't mentor that, if I can't demonstrate that when a student comes to me, what is the point of me even being here?*

*And then quite a few people wrote back and said, yeah, we're really sorry. We actually thought about you after, Jane, and realised that your skill set is very different to ours.*

*And I thought, it's come up again, and I just keep raising the issue. We're here to produce the best youth workers we can for our sector and for young people. And, part of that is mentoring that process. So I'm not going to have a thing on my door saying, you can only see me in this time. I'm not going to operate like that. That's not how I work. (Interview 11: Story 4, Part B)*

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<sup>20</sup> On this point, Gadamer argues that how fruitful a conversation is depends on 'how' we converse with one another (see Gadamer, 2007, p. 416).

In this story Jane recognised a possibility of continuing an upsetting conversation that she had ‘left’ the previous day. She had been affected by what was said in an inauthentic instance of conversation in the workshop, leading her to withdraw herself from it.

Jane recalled that, even though she had something to say ‘then and there’ in the workshop to her colleagues about what they had written, this was left unsaid. Although at the time Jane immediately sensed that a misunderstanding had occurred, she refrained from bringing this to her colleagues’ attention and revealing how this had upset her. Instead, she left the workshop with her unspoken concern. After work, Jane moved into her evening still affected by what had happened to her, and wondering what, if anything, she could do about it. Whether consciously or not, did she wrestle with the possibility of making her unspoken feelings known to her colleagues? After this workshop had passed, it appears that Jane experienced a possibility of an unfinished conversation.

Heidegger (1982) says that ‘what is unspoken is not merely something that lacks voice, it is what remains unsaid, what is not yet shown, what has not yet reached its appearance’ (p. 122). After the workshop had been and gone, did something unsaid wait for the educator to experience the presence of a possibility of conversation? Did that which remained unsaid wait to appear in a conversation that was yet to arise? It seems that Jane was presented with the possibility of a conversation that may let her voice what remained unsaid. And yet, an experience of a conversation’s possibility does not guarantee that it will be taken up. What did Jane do when she was touched by the presence of such a possibility?

A conversation had shown itself to Jane as not yet seized: ‘So the next day, I sent an email out to everyone in the workshop. And I said ...’ When something unsaid was brought to light in the email, her colleagues were invited to continue yesterday’s conversation. Had they already sensed that Jane was upset about something? In their replies to Jane’s email, it seems that Jane had not been the only one who had experienced the possibility of a conversation following the workshop incident: ‘We actually thought about you after, Jane, and realised that your skill set is very different to ours.’ It seems that even before Jane’s group email arrived in their inboxes, unveiling something unsaid, they too had perhaps already been shown, or reminded

of, a thought that their conversation had missed the previous day when carelessly dismissing the thought that Jane had put on the map.

***When the moment for a conversation appears to have passed***

There are other times when the possibility of a particular conversation, which remains a concealed matter of concern for an educator, appears to have passed by. In these experiences, an unrealised conversation might no longer appear to be within reach. The next story appears to reveal such a situation:

*I feel quite disconnected as a youth work educator because I do come from a traditional academic environment. I recall talking to a colleague whose area of research is political theory, as mine used to be. We had been talking about a particular course. And I said to her, I really enjoyed our discussion today, and I would be really interested in talking to you about your doctoral research, which she had just completed, because I used to work in that area too. And she looked at me and she said [surprised gasp, with opened eyes!] – and she honestly did that. I have exaggerated the facial expression, but it was this look of demeaning condescension: What? You? And someone else got her attention and she walked away, and I left that thinking, what was that about?*

*I felt dismissed and slighted – oh, you are just ‘youth work’ – how can you possibly understand complex social and political theory? I am a senior lecturer, she was a recently graduated PhD, I had seniority in an academic sense, but she had automatically dismissed me as someone who she could not talk about political theory with. I felt alienated, anger at being belittled.*

*So I left very quickly. I just felt very alienated – here’s this person who is telling me, or insinuating that in fact she wasn’t going to take me seriously in understanding theory. I felt very lonely. It was as if [she] saw me as an intellectual lightweight. Her physical reaction struck me. But I am not about to go and two years later say, when we had that conversation you did this. Why was that? It’s still there.*

(Interview 12: Story 4)

In this story a conversation appeared to be going well for Kendall when it took a sharp turn. In this moment, it was the appearance of something unspoken in the conversation that said something to her, rather than something that was said with words.

The interplay of this conversation led Kendall to a point where she found herself revealing something to her colleague that seemed to catch her by surprise: ‘We come from the same academic area’, which happened to be non-specific to the field of

youth work. Here, a moment of conversation arose that has since remained with Kendall. Upon hearing Kendall's surprising revelation, her colleague followed with something 'said' in reply. And yet, this said reply was not given in an audible and intelligible utterance of words, but was given and voiced to Kendall by way of an unspoken look:

*And she looked at me and she said [surprised gasp, with opened eyes!] – and she honestly did that. I have exaggerated the facial expression, but it was this look of demeaning condescension: What? You?*

Gadamer (2007) affirms that, doubtlessly, there is indeed such a thing as 'nonlinguistic understanding' that can occur for people in conversation, and that this is still a form of language (p. 420). 'Question and answer do not always have to be in words. A look can be a question and another look can express an answer and an understanding' (Gadamer, 2007, p. 420). This story seems to illuminate such a moment, when Kendall underwent an experience of a 'look' that came in conversation, and expressed an intelligible sense of her colleague's condescending response: 'What? You? ... Oh, you are just 'youth work' – how can you possibly understand complex social and political theory?'

It seems that, immediately after this nonverbal language said something to Kendall, the conversation ended prematurely. Consequently, Kendall was unable to ask her colleague then and there what her look 'was about'. Clarification, or even an authentic dispute, could not take place. Crucially for Kendall, her question of 'what was that about?' remained unasked. Left without an answer to this question about a look from the person who made it, Kendall was left deeply affected by this unclarified look: 'I felt alienated, anger at being belittled ... I felt very lonely.' Possible answers silently swarmed to her unsaid question about what this look had been about. Dwelling in this uncertainty, the 'look' she had been given continued to *tell* her and *insinuate* something: 'Here's this person who is telling me, or insinuating that in fact she wasn't going to take me seriously in understanding theory ...'

There is an interesting moment in this story when Kendall remembered her colleague 'walking away', leaving Kendall to grapple with what this look had appeared to be about. In this moment, could Kendall have called out to her? Followed her? Could she somehow have chased up this colleague's puzzling look with a clarifying

question of her own? Or by gently telling this colleague how her look had left her feeling angered, belittled, alienated? Perhaps an email or follow-up chat could have been sent to supplement their brief conversation? In the coming moment and days after this encounter, does this educator experience the presence of a possible follow-up conversation? Unable to extend the conversation then and there, this educator remembered leaving ‘very quickly’. Even though this particular incident ‘still’ continued to matter and be ‘there’ for this educator, it had become clear to her that the moment for a possible continuation of conversation had passed. ‘But I am not about to go and two years later say, when we had that conversation you did this why was that?’ Implicit in this realisation is perhaps a bygone possibility.

### ***Concluding remarks***

This chapter has focused on conversation as an essential aspect of being an educator in UYWE. The stories in this chapter uncover what we easily overlook: firstly that lived conversation is an integral aspect of being an educator in UYWE, and secondly, that genuine conversation always matters for educators. An educator’s primordial togetherness-with-others constantly opens and occurs in and through the indeterminable process of communal conversation. What has come to light is how genuine conversation always matters. Sometimes it transparently succeeds in leaving something positive and transformative that remains for the educators. At other times, it shows up as being unable to bring shared understanding for an educator, instead leaving a hidden negative residue that continues to alienate a person. And yet, in its coming and goings, in its happenings and mishaps, whether it appears as ‘not yet’ or as a possibility that has expired, the conversation presents as something powerful that happens to educators.

In addition, the taken-for-granted importance of lived conversation has also been revealed by the educator’s art of conversing with others, and with one’s self. The elusive nature of conversation is discernable in the educator’s practical wisdom, or phronesis, of opening and laying the condition for authentic conversation to emerge in pedagogical encounters between educators and students. Such practical wisdom, or indeed an absence of such, does not manifest as specific techniques that can be tried or left untried, but rather an educator’s sensibility of the right things that need to be done in a given situation to help afford good conversation every chance of happening. An educator’s phronesis can allow them to recognise an appearance of

inauthentic pedagogical conversation, even one that relates in part to their own insufficient practical knowledge.

Once a person has entered the university world as an educator in a youth work course, she or he is always-already thrown into conversation. Ontologically, a person cannot 'be' an educator in any other way. Most often, the conversational nature of being an educator is taken for granted as educators go about their busywork with others, including students, colleagues and other participants. Such is the fundamental way that we are always thrown into conversation that we perhaps grow desensitised to the critical need to question what it means to 'live properly' with conversation (Gadamer, 2006; Heidegger, 1968, pp. 118-119). As competent and eloquent orators and wordsmiths, university educators are perhaps freestylers with words more often than they are lost for them. However, this perhaps only serves to veil how conversation is not only something that educators are 'good at making', but is an unpredictable experience that moves them and happens to them in ways that are outside their control and powers. Regardless of how educators experience the phenomenon of conversation in relationship to their practice, conversation matters and takes on deeper meanings. We experience being an educator as conversation, a movement that never closes, but is always underway.

Regardless of our habit of thinking it is we who speak and lead conversation towards our educational goals, the stories offered in this chapter elucidate that it is always conversation that speaks and draws us in surprising ways, whether we are conscious of this or not. In the contemporary university, where talk is expediently produced, exchanged and sold as capital, it may be especially true that we often overlook how we are abiding in conversation. Heidegger seems to suggest that it is easy for our everyday relation to lived conversation to fall into the perils of commonness (Heidegger, 1968, pp. 118-119). For university educators expected to perform conversation proficiently in a ruthlessly competitive linguistic marketplace, such a suggestion may unsettle us. Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves 'head-on' (Heidegger, 1982, p. 58): how do we relate with one another through the conversation that we live and share? Through the course of this chapter, it was this question that drew me to meditate on a provocative passage from an essay by Gadamer about the capacity for genuine conversation that we all share:

Strong are the demands placed on genuine conversation

in order that conversation might be brought  
into the heart of human community.

Yet the forces of modern civilization have expanded  
to prevent this from happening.

Modern information technology is perhaps still in the its infancy –  
if one can believe the prophets of technology,  
it will render obsolete books and newspapers,  
and especially real teaching,  
which can only occur through human interaction

To become always capable of conversation -  
That is, to listen to the Other -  
appears to be the true attainment of humanity.

Where language seems to be missing,  
understanding can succeed,  
through patience,  
through sensitivity,  
through sympathy  
and tolerance.

We experience constantly  
that even between persons  
of differing temperaments  
or differing political viewpoints  
conversation is possible.

An 'incapacity for conversation'  
looks more like an accusation  
that one makes against someone  
who does not want to follow  
one's own train of thought,  
rather than any real deficiency  
on the part of the other..

(Adapted from Gadamer, 2006, pp. 358-359)

## Chapter 7: Our having-been-ness is always in play

To be an educator in UYWE is always to exist as an ‘I-have-been’ (Heidegger, 1962, p. 373). An educator’s own ‘having-been-ness’ never passes away, never dies, but continues to play in how they *are* (Heidegger, 1988, p. 265). In this chapter the participants’ stories are interpreted to reveal that an ontological interplay, in relation to an educator’s own having-been-ness, is taken for granted. Educators swept up in the everyday flow of UYWE are always relating themselves in some way to what they themselves already have been, whether consciously or not (Heidegger, 1988, p. 265). How an educator’s own having-been-ness matters to them inheres in the experiences of an interplay between the veiling and unveiling of their past as meaningful in some way to their present and future possibilities (Harman, 2007, p. 3).

### *Philosophical underpinnings*

Unlike an item of clothing that we can simply discard, our living past is not something we can get rid of any more than we can escape our own death (Heidegger, 1988, p. 265). Regardless of whether we remember or fail to remember some specific detail from our past, our primordial sense of being a person who has been remains intact (Heidegger, 1962, p. 387; Heidegger, 1988, 265).<sup>21</sup>

Heidegger’s notion of having-been-ness (*Gewesenheit*) does not mean that we are somehow bound by what has happened to us in our past situated lives, but that each of us is the kind of being for whom our own having-been-ness constantly informs our sense of who we are and are able to be (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 32–33, 1966, p. 265). Moreover, as *Dasein*, the very issue of our own having-been-ness can show up differently in different lights as we go about our everyday lives (Leonard, 1994, p. 54; Thomson, 2011, p. 83).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> When considering this ontological theme, it is important to remember that our having-been-ness cannot be isolated from the threefold horizon of lived time to which it belongs. Indeed, every moment of our existence is simultaneously orientated to a sense of who we are able to be, who we have been and who we are (Blattner, 2006; Gibbs, 2011; Heidegger, 1962, 1995). In this chapter, as I contemplate how educators experience the play in relation to their own having-been, it is critical to bear in mind that this dimension is ontologically inseparable from the unified ‘threefold horizon of [lived] time’ (Heidegger, 1995, p. 145; van Manen, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> For example, when I go to watch my children perform in a school concert, my sense that I have been a cricketer is not likely to show up for me, or to others with whom I am involved in this occasion, as mattering (unless perhaps there happens to be a cricket-related song). And yet, this aspect

According to this insight, *the meaning* of our own having-been-ness is never set in stone, but is constantly coming to meet us in fresh ways (Dahlstrom, 2013a, p. 149; Schalow & Denker, 2010). Our having-been is therefore a ‘process’ that is always eventuating and in motion (Heidegger, 1962, p. 374). As such, when immersed in everyday activities, the significance of our own having-been-ness might ordinarily be veiled, in the sense of withdrawing from our view into a shadowy background (Harman, 2007, p. 1). But occasionally, a situation may unfold that brings our own having-been-ness out into the light. Further, there may be instances where our having-been-ness may appear to emerge as a matter of concern for others. In these kinds of ways, Dasein is always open to the interplay of veiling and unveiling of its own lived having-been-ness (Harman, 2007, p. 3). Such interplay of shadow and light possibly moves in relativity to the pressing projects and concerns we become absorbed in with others (Heidegger, 1962).<sup>23</sup>

The first section of this chapter shows how an educator’s own having-been-ness may ordinarily be veiled in the everyday of being an educator in the university world. In the second section, attention is given to educators’ recalling of how what they have been prior to being an educator continues to imbue their everyday practice of educating with background meaning. Subsequently, I will consider how educators can sometimes experience moments of being drawn forward by a re-viewing of their own way of having been as an educator. The focus will then turn to times when an educator’s own having-been-ness is recognised by someone else as mattering. This leads into the final section, which will feature an occasion when an educator senses that something she has *not been* appears as a matter of concern for others. The ways that the interplay of our having-been-ness is integral to the lived meaning of being an educator is the central focus of this chapter.

### ***When our own having-been-ness does not appear to matter***

When educators are immersed in their everyday activity, their own having-been-ness may not appear to matter. In such moments the continuing significance of an

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of my having-been-ness may indeed be in play, whether explicitly or not, when I go to join my friends for a game of cricket.

<sup>23</sup> For example, a new father who is thrown into the fresh situation of caring for his newborn might find his having been something else (e.g. a musician) temporarily withdrawing from him, whereas prior to the birth event of his child, his having been a musician was tacitly informing how he was pressing ahead into his future possibilities (Blattner, 2006; Dreyfus, 1991).

educator's own past is veiled from view, as illustrated by the following story. As Matthias became involved in a group orientation activity, his concern was directed towards his way of relating with one new student:

*From the moment I meet them, I do think about the journey of the students and their relationship with me ... There was a youth work student who I remember meeting during orientation. It was run through the whole social science [school] and they ask staff to come along. And I remember sitting with her in that group doing an orientation activity, and just wanting to be welcoming. And we had discussion. (Interview 8: Story 6)*

During a school-wide orientation event, Matthias found himself sitting with a group of new students. At one point, he became involved with them in a group activity. Matthias did not retell exactly what this group activity entailed. And yet, through the process of being involved, he recalled meeting one student in the group who was beginning her university education as a youth worker. As a lecturer in the youth work program, Matthias' concern immediately turned to this particular student.

Interspersed with the orientation activity, or possibly flowing on from its conclusion, the educator and this student 'have discussion'. The educator did not remember the specifics of what was discussed between them, but related that he 'just want[ed] to be welcoming'. Here, this educator's concern for welcoming this student is a form of what Heidegger (1962, pp. 157–158) describes as 'solicitude', which refers to possible modes of care that Dasein has for others. As this educator's relationship with this student was born, caring for her took priority rather than his own having-been-ness (1962, p. 158).

As educators become absorbed in the various activities that are constantly arising for them in their university community, perhaps their own having-been-ness is most often withdrawn from being a matter of explicit concern. In such moments, an educator's own living past may not appear to matter. But even when an educator's own having-been-ness is veiled as they become engrossed in the everyday activity of educating, does it cease to 'be' and to matter?

### ***When we recognise our prior having-been-ness as mattering***

Throughout the research conversations, it became apparent that educators were drawn to recall certain experiences in their past that deeply matter to their present

lives as educators. Their personal stories of being an educator were often traced back to beginnings prior to being an educator. During the interview events, some educators also seemed to experience a moment of recognising that ‘what I am’ and ‘what I have been’ belong together, as illustrated by the following stories.

During the early years of Trish’s career, she had worked as a youth worker, running a youth drop-in centre for young people experiencing difficult life situations. She noticed the continual meaningfulness of this past experience as follows:

*Why I am at university is connected to right at the beginning because I started off in youth work ... I was running the youth centre. We would take these young people, mostly who had failed at school. They had been in institutional care by the time I came across them (aged 14 or 15 when I met them). They had either been in children’s homes, foster care, detention centres or in the juvenile mental health facilities – lockups basically. They were all brutalised.*

*A lot of what I was doing with the drop-in centre was the conversations and where you took those, and that depended on the skill of the worker. One of the things I’d always stressed with the young people was, just be honest: if you break something just let us know.*

*One young woman had been wearing high heel shoes, she stood on a vinyl chair and her heel went through the chair. And she came and said, Look, I’m really sorry, I’ve just stood on this chair; it’s got a hole in it now. And I said, I’m really glad you told me. She hadn’t done it deliberately. But you can get things fixed if you know about it.*

*The youth officer who was working with me was furious that she had damaged the chair and thought that I should have reprimanded her because of the damage. From my point of view, if you want to build an honest relationship, honesty starts with little things. It’s how you show that you respect the young people. It’s about how you make little steps. If people can see those learning opportunities wherever they are, it means seeing things differently from the people who are around them in coercive environments. (Interview 5: Story 1)*

In this story, Trish remembered having been a youth worker in a youth drop-in centre. During her time running this centre, she was called to care for young people who had been brutalised. One aspect of this work seems to have involved anticipating equipment breakages. Rather than assuming a punitive stance towards the young people who used the equipment, Trish recalled communicating pre-emptively with the young people: ‘just be honest’.

Inevitably, there came a particular occasion when one young person accidentally damaged a chair in the centre. The responsible young woman was confronted with a dilemma about what to do next. She responded by seeking out Trish to own up and apologise. Another relational moment opened for Trish and the young woman.

Trish expressed gratitude towards the young person that she had chosen to bring a 'little thing' like a broken chair to her attention. The damage was seen as paling in significance to the opportunity it opened for the young person to take up her responsibility for having broken it. Trish was receptive to her honest act, despite seeing it as a 'little step' in the totality of the young person's journey of learning. This relational moment left Trish feeling 'gladdened'.

By contrast, Trish's response in this story was different from that of her co-worker, who responded with 'fury' towards the young person for having broken the chair. Both youth workers were jointly there in this situation in order to provide care for this young person, with whom they were both working. And yet, on this particular occasion, the nature of the care that the two workers expressed in relationship with this young person appeared to differ.

For Heidegger, to be human is to care about other humans in a different way than we care about things, like chairs. Heidegger (1962, p. 157) distinguishes our comportment towards equipment (*Besorgen*) from our comportment towards other people (*Fürsorge*). The German verb *Fürsorge* evokes a sense of being 'concerned for' and 'caring for' others (Sembera, 2007, p. 234). Heidegger uses this word to evoke 'welfare work': an everyday sense of providing organised care for those in need (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158; Sembera 2007, p. 234). Heidegger's usage of *Fürsorge* can be translated as 'solicitude', which refers to different ways others can show up to us as mattering and not mattering (Heidegger, 1962, p. 157). Heidegger (1962, p. 159) suggests that possible modes of solicitude are guided by various ways of 'seeing' others. These ways of seeing can range from holding someone with blatant disregard through to ways of inspecting and 'checking out' someone in a perfunctory or objectifying manner (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 159–160). In this instance, perhaps Trish's colleague exhibited an indifferent form of solicitude in caring more about the damaged property than the young woman, for whose sake both the chairs and workers were placed.

Trish on the other hand embodied a different form of solicitude for the young person. She intuitively and skilfully seized upon this moment as an occasion to begin building an honest and open relationship with a young person. van Manen (2002b) says, ‘the big things are always in the small ones’ (p. 46). And yet these small everyday opportunities can so easily pass by unseen. Is the tactful ‘way of being as the worker’ found in the capacity to turn any mishap, whatever magnitude, into a significant ‘learning opportunity’? Like the director who stages a play, Trish’s way of having been a youth worker is seen in ‘being able to make use of the occasion’ (Gadamer, 2013, p. 147). She exhibited an attentive propensity to make use of the occasion to work *with* the young person in a respectful manner.

In this occasion, Trish’s way of working discloses a readiness to seize upon a teachable moment, with a movement towards ‘opening’ a ‘relationship’ with the young person. What appears to be retained as essential for Trish is not simply that she has been a specific type of worker, but that she has been one in her own way, which has been characterised as caring for young people in affirming ways (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 158, 389). This story appears to unveil how a person’s prior way of having been in the world, with others they have cared about, can continue to matter ontologically to being an educator. The importance of this event exceeds the passing by of this event in terms of measurable, sequential time.

In the next story, it occurred to Peter that his own having-been a mentor to a young person, prior to being an educator, continues to speak to him today as it did then.

*I am a youth worker. I am a graduate of this course here at [the university]. Before I did the degree, I was an assistant manager in a supermarket, and I knew that wasn’t going to be my future because I wasn’t happy. So I moved to [the city] ...*

*When I came down here I re-connected with some of the people I had known who had moved to [the city], and a lot of them were involved with running a lot of post-school, social justice programs. So I got involved as a participant in my spare time when I was down here. I started volunteering as a ‘big brother’ to an eleven-year-old boy who came from a very dysfunctional family. I was the big brother to Jimmy and I saw him weekly for three years. After nearly three years [we] could talk about anything.*

*We used to just love driving. I remember one night we were going for a drive and he started quizzing me. He knew I had a girlfriend. He wanted to know what I would do if I got my girlfriend pregnant. He drilled me! We stopped at a shopping centre and sat in the car park and had McDonalds, just chatting away. After a while, he had carefully got me to the position of what I would do if my girlfriend got pregnant if I hadn't planned for it. That's when he said to me that his girlfriend was pregnant. He wanted to make the decision about what they were going to do.*

*I felt really in that space in that time, that he had carefully made sure I wasn't going to judge him or tell him off, but he wanted to know where he stood so he could share with me, which he did. They actually made a decision that they were not going to keep the baby, which was in conflict with what I said I would have done. But he had still valued my perspective. His girlfriend lost the baby naturally about a week later. So they didn't end up having to make the decision.*

*You could almost call it a sacred moment when you are able to meet them at a level that you can both acknowledge that this is important stuff and we are respecting each other at this time. And you work towards making a decision or coming to a new understanding of whatever is going on.*

*It was my relationship with Jimmy that said to me I want to do something working with young people. So I came to university and did my [youth work] degree. Left, and I was a youth worker for the next twelve years ...*

*And then a few years ago, Judy who is my colleague here at [the university] sent me an email saying would I like to do some sessional teaching. I was a graduate of this course who they kept inviting back to be on panels and selection committees, so as an industry rep when they employed [lecturers in the youth work program] for a few years after I graduated ... So I got invited to do sessional teaching and I did ... At the end of that year they advertised the lecturing role that I now hold. I wanted to teach youth work because I discovered I really had a passion for it, and I felt like I was a youth worker teaching youth work. (Interview 9: Story 1)*

This story offers a glimpse into how Peter's living past as a volunteer mentor continually imbues his own practice as an educator with deep meaning. In this story, Peter recalled a particular night of having been with his mentee Jimmy. They met as people who had already acquired an easy knack of talking with one another. The night began like any other as they partook in familiar rituals. However, as the night unfolded, it soon became apparent to Peter that something out of the ordinary was brewing. He experienced a sense of being 'quizzed' by his mentee. Peter did not

resist the young person's inquisitiveness. Rather, he allowed Jimmy's quizzing to play out.

Jimmy came to this meeting carrying a heavy burden. He was experiencing uncertainty about what to do as he confronted a decision with his girlfriend about whether or not to continue their unplanned pregnancy. At first, the young man hid his burden from his older mentor. Was he inwardly deliberating over another decision, about whether to tell Peter or withhold? He did not risk telling Peter straight away. Instead, he quizzed Peter, not for his advice but to test 'carefully' whether it was safe to share his pressing concern without 'being judged'. The young man steered the conversation onward, mining for what Peter *would do* in a situation that he had riddled.

As the to-and-fro play of the quiz unfolded, the young person prudently discerned Peter's 'standing'. At a point when he sensed he was safe, he took the plunge. He shared with Peter what was going on. Jimmy's news was greeted with a simple 'acknowledgement' of the bigness of the situation. Peter then allowed the young person to 'work towards' his own decision.

In a sense, Peter seemed to indulge his young mentee. Heidegger (1962, p. 159) says that solicitude is guided by forbearance (*nachsicht*), which Haugeland (2013, p. 126) translates as indulgence. The notion of indulging someone may evoke a negative sense. (The parent who complaisantly indulges their infant's every whim is surely to be frowned upon.) And yet, the origin of the verb 'to indulge' means to treat someone with an *abundant kindness* of being. (Like the parent who patiently, and with gentle humour, allows their child to help with the cooking even when their involvement means the process will take longer, create more mess, and jeopardise the quality of the meal in the end.) Peter responded with an authentic indulgence that did not condescend, but played along with the seriousness of the quiz, allowing the young person his own timely approach towards being able to 'open up'.

This story uncovers a particular way in which Peter has been with a young person facing a burdensome situation. Heidegger (1962) distinguishes 'caring for' a person from 'caring about' a person (Knowlden & Kavanagh, 2004, p. 6). Heidegger calls modes of caring for someone 'leaping in', which is to act instead of the other, hence

taking away the other's care (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158). In this form, for better or worse, the other becomes dominated by or dependent upon the person who has leapt in for him or her (Gordon, 2001, p. 16).

In contrast to forms of leaping in, solicitude can take more authentic forms of *leaping ahead* of the other (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158). This form of solicitude 'helps the Other to become transparent to [him/herself] in [her/his] care and to become free for it' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 159). This kind of solicitude does not seek to relieve, or unburden, the other from his or her own responsibility, but rather leaps ahead of the other so as to 'free the other for his or her responsibility' (Raffoul, 2002, p. 217). In this story, rather than leaping in with certain answers for the mentee to follow, Peter understood that this young person's burdensome decision was ultimately not his to bear. He did not respond in imparting wise 'judgement', but in respectfully turning the mentee back towards his judgement.

When Peter looked back on this moment from his living past, prior to becoming an educator, he used the word 'sacred' to set it apart. By way of a special relationship perhaps Peter was turning towards a possible way of relating to, and being with, other 'Jimmys' (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 161–162). By the time Peter's involvement in Jimmy's life drew to an end, his involvement in something called 'youth work' had only just begun.

In hindsight, Peter had come to distinguish his historical relationship with Jimmy as a 'way-making' (*Be-wëgun*) experience, one that transported him towards a 'propriated' way of being (Heidegger, 1989, pp. 129-131). Former occasions of relating to Jimmy are now *retained* and *made present*, meaning that this past relational experience is still open (Heidegger, 1962, p. 473). This past experience has come to be preserved for having 'said' something specific to him; a 'word' that motioned him towards a possible 'to be': 'I want to do something working with young people'. Does this story reveal the way that some experiences in our past continue to speak to us, towards clear possibilities?

In the next story, what came into view for Simon is a continuity between 'what he was' (as a youth worker) and 'what he is' (as an educator).

*I was mentoring young cadets. So there was this element of my life that was already doing youth work. I didn't have a name for it at the time.*

*I was invited to be an instructor on one camp. One situation that stands out to me ... I was walking, found this [person] by himself [on his own], just crying. I went over to him and asked, what's wrong? He told me his Grandad had died. I sat down, and I asked him, tell me a bit about your Grandad. And he did. He cried, told me stories. I just listened.*

*Part of my drive around doing anything is building connection with people. The educator role was for me just an extension of that.*  
(Interview 4: Story 3)

In this story, a young man involved in a camp was informed of the death of a family member he cared about. On hearing this news, he withdrew from the camp activities. Once he had removed himself, he was gripped by a grief that was unknowable to his fellow campers. Simon found him in this state and immediately saw something was not 'right'. In this moment, Simon did not turn away, but moved to be with this young man, who seemed upset. He approached him, asking: what is wrong?

The young man revealed to Simon that he had just found out that his 'Grandad' had died. At hearing this, Simon 'found' this young man in a different sense. No longer encountering a troubled young person, Simon found a suffering grandson. Affected, Simon made another move towards connecting with this young man, this time by 'sitting down' with him. The worker then invited the grandson: 'tell me a bit about your Grandad'. This appeared to create an opening for an encounter that was filled with concern.

The young person started to tell Simon about his Grandad. Tears streamed down his face. Simon attended with silence, 'just listening' to the young man's 'stories'. Here the worker did not engage in what Heidegger (1962, p. 211) calls 'idle talk'. This mode of talk is heard every day when we say the 'appropriate' things to people more out of habit than genuine care and respect for them (Hyde, 2001, p. 37). In this story, instead of 'saying the right thing', genuine solicitude was manifested by engaging in a more authentic mode of dialogue.

Heidegger's idea of authentic discourse is found in the notion of reticence (*Verschwiegen*). Reticence does not simply mean someone who is silent. Rather,

someone is reticent towards another person insofar as he or she *could* speak, but does not (Wrathall, 2005b, p. 342). The worker expressed care by 'just listening'. This means to remain speechless even though one is capable of speaking (Wrathall, 2005b, p. 342). And yet, in refraining from speaking, one is far from saying nothing, but perhaps knows that one is extending care. 'A man may speak, speak endlessly, and all the time say nothing. Another man may remain silent, not speak at all and yet, without speaking, say a great deal' (Heidegger, 1982, p. 122).

We may often tend to alleviate and talk one another back from the brink of our own struggles, back towards the tranquilising chatter of the everyday world. But this story reveals a worker's reticent attentiveness towards a bereaved young man *as a form of genuine care*. Heidegger (1962) says: 'Keeping silent authentically is possible only in genuine discoursing' (p. 208). This expression of care perhaps enabled the young man to begin to let his grief be what it was, to run its own course (Heidegger, 1962, p. 115). In sitting with this young person in attentive silence, a door was held ajar for a man to enter his experience of the death of a loved elder he clearly cared about.

Crucially, this story reveals that, for Simon, what brings his having-been-ness (as a youth worker) together with his being (as an educator), is his resolute desire to connect with, and to express genuine care for, others. 'Part of my drive around doing anything is building connection with people. The educator role was for me just an extension of that.'

In the next story, it seemed clear for Kendall that a past encounter opened up a way for her to be the kind of educator that she is today.

*I think a lot of people come to teaching youth work either because they have worked as some sort of youth work professional, or they've got their own kids. My journey was very different. I was coming from the background of a political scientist. I got a postdoc project looking at young people's electoral participation. I hadn't at that point done research on youth. I took it on in a very detached sense as a researcher.*

*I was at a school interviewing students for the project. I had the students in a room where there is a table and a few chairs. I was interviewing them for the project. We had this wonderful open discussion, about the disconnect that these young people were feeling with politics and about democracy, their alienation; that students felt their voices weren't being heard, that politicians put down young*

*people. I had a young person say to me, I believe in a more direct democracy such as what they had in ancient Athens. I found what young people were saying incredibly interesting. These young people, with politics, were feeling their voices weren't being heard.*

*And at the end of it, after I had turned the recorder off, one of them turned to me and said, this is the first time that I have ever felt taken seriously about anything, and that my views have been taken seriously.*

*I had these young people around the table saying, where do you work? I want to know more about university; how I can study this stuff. I felt a real connection with those young people. I felt a real desire at that point as a researcher/academic to run with their voices and put their own narratives out there in the public sphere. I felt a feeling of warmth in being trusted. (Interview 12: Story 2)*

Kendall saw that her own having-been-ness differs from the kind of past that has commonly drawn her fellow educators who teach youth workers in the university. Rather than having been a specific type of worker in her past, she seemed to carry forward a sense that her having been a researcher with a particular group of students paved a way for her to be an educator in the context of UYWE.

While Kendall was working as a researcher, she met with and interviewed a group of high school students about their political participation. As this event unfolded, one student voiced something that Kendall herself found 'incredibly interesting'. More particularly, in the student's belief in an original form of democracy (*dēmokratía*: ordinary people running their own society), perhaps Kendall was challenged by an unfamiliar image of young people being more fully involved in the running of a modern democratic society. Did the remarkable nature of this student's insight surprise Kendall into a revelation of the already-there capabilities of young people? Akin to Plato's allegory of the cave, perhaps she suddenly realised that what she had previously thought about the role of young people in society was a mere shadow of what they are truly capable of, in their own nature (Heidegger, 2013; McLean, 2012).

After the formal interview time had ended, Kendall and the students lingered together. Within the warmth of their newly kindled affinity, one student commented that the interview was the first time that they had ever felt taken seriously 'about anything'. At hearing this, it appears that Kendall may not have been the only person who experienced surprise in this story. Had this student been surprised by Kendall's

carefulness during the interview, which showed up as different to an anticipated way adult professionals customarily relate to them? When others care about and relate with us indifferently, it can seem that they are not taking us seriously, or that we do not really matter to them (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158).

Having started in a 'detached' manner, Kendall's way of relating discloses a more authentic way of caring (solicitude) for the students. Heidegger (1962) suggests that different forms of solicitude are guided by two ways of 'seeing' (*sicht*) others: considerateness (*rück-sicht*) and forbearance (*nach-sicht*) (p. 159). One mode of the former is a *considerate respect* for someone (Heidegger, 1962, p. 186; McNeill, 1999, p. 109). Amidst this event, Kendall began seriously to *consider* what the students were saying, as she discovered them to be intelligent and articulate people in and of their own nature.

At the end of the interview, Kendall experienced a moment of 'real connection' with the students. This incident engendered a flash of desire for Kendall: 'To run with their voices and put their own narratives out there in the public sphere'. Did this spontaneous momentum reveal for Kendall a renewed sense of her future possibilities? She began to project herself in a different light, towards being a kind of curator of the students' narratives that she had been entrusted with, so that others in the public realm might also hear them.

Heidegger's notion of forbearance signals a way of seeing/understanding the other that looks brightly towards his or her own possibilities and potentiality *to be* (King, 2001, p. 78). This way of seeing others informs the 'leaping ahead' mode of caring for others, which helps others to move into a position where the question of their own existence ('Who am I to be?') is clearly revealed for us as mattering (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 158–159; King, 2001, p. 78; Vogel, 1994, p. 77). Kendall looks towards young people's potential to be fully involved in society as adult participants and as able to take part in governing in a way that refrains from leaping in for them, as dependents, such as when a dictator vicariously acts for their subjects (Gordon, 2001, p. 16). The encounter has nudged her towards persuading her fellow citizens to leave behind the mere shadows of 'young people' and to relate to 'youth' as they are in themselves (McLean, 2012).

Kendall's moment of resoluteness discloses a momentous moment of self-discovery. Heidegger calls a critical moment of self-discovery an *Augenblick* (a moment of vision, transformation, resolution) (Blattner, 2006, pp. 166-167; Dreyfus, 1991, p. x; Heidegger, 1962, p. 376). Her experience of an *Augenblick* made it clear to her what matters, and what she desired to do for young people as she moved ahead into her future work (Blattner, 2006; Dreyfus, 1991). Her research work became a form of genuine solicitude (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158); a way of breaking an everyday 'culture of silence' in which students are submerged within their polity (Freire, 1985; van Manen, 1990).

Kendall came to teach youth work in the university by way of a track that appeared to her as unbeaten. As such, this story points to a special encounter that opens what Heidegger (2002) might metaphorically call a *Holzweg*, that is, a path through the woods originally made by foresters to gather firewood. For hikers who later stumble onto this kind of path, it may lead them to an apparent dead end, and thus is commonly seen as 'a path to *nowhere*' (Thomson, 2011, p. 83). However, a *Holzweg* can also be appreciated as a kind of 'clearing' (*Lichtung*), one leading to an unexpected epiphany, as if from nowhere (Heidegger, 2011, p. 319; Thomson, 2011, p. 83). As this educator reconsidered young people with a new sense of clarity, she was granted momentum towards being a kind of educator who seeks to listen authentically to and concern herself with the interests of young people in society, in terms of who they already *are*, rather than in terms of a 'not-yet'.

### ***Interlude***

Stories in this section have revealed how educators can experience an unveiled essence of what they have been *prior* to their being an educator. The next section shows how educators can also experience moments of being reunited with their own way of having been *as an educator*. This aspect of the phenomenon has emerged in the light of a further insight from Heidegger (1962) with respect to the ways Dasein lives towards its own having-been-ness.

According to Heidegger (1962), as we go about our everyday practices, we are able to engage with our own past in different modes. For the most part, 'having forgotten' (*Vergessenheit*) is an 'inauthentic way' educators (as Dasein) may commonly experience their own having-been-ness (1962, p. 389). This way of living towards

one's own having-been-ness is not negative, nor is it just a failure to bring to mind specific details of past happenings (1962, p. 388). Rather, in an ontological sense, to engage inauthentically with our past means to lose sight of how our own having-been-ness is inseparable from our present and future existence (as educators); to experience a veiling of how our living past is constantly imbuing our everyday practice with deep significance (Panza & Gale, 2008, pp. 197–198). As such, educators may experience this mode as a 'backing away' from an aspect of their living past when presented with their *own* distinctive manner of having been something in the world in relationship with others (Heidegger, 1962, p. 388).

In a vital sense, this ordinary forgetful mode of having been is the basis, or precondition, for more authentic ways of engaging with our having-been-ness, which Heidegger (1962) distinguishes as 'repetition' (*Wiederholung*) (p. 388). In moments of experiencing one's own having been in a way of repetition, an educator may experience a sense of 'coming back understandingly to' (remembering) their own retained way of having been something in their past (1962, pp. 373, 389). Crucially, this movement of 'coming back' to one's own having-been-ness may enable educators to press ahead resolutely to tackle difficult situations as they arise (1962, p. 373), as illustrated in the next section.

### ***When our own having-been-ness 'comes back' to us***

There are occasions when an educator's understanding of their own way of having been returns to them. In these moments, an educator is presented with a way they have been with others, a way they seek to reclaim and repeat as they move into their future practice.

In the following story, Sophie experienced a reappearance of her own having-been-ness as an educator, following its temporary disappearance.

*Nearly two years ago now, my godson committed suicide at 17 [years of age]. I had already finished the semester. The next time I had to stand in front of a class was the next year. I didn't have the emotional energy to put anything into the class, so there were lots of slides, lots of reading off slides. I didn't care. I yelled at someone in the class. I was rude. Students wrote to me and said, you know, Sophie I need help with my essay – and it would be the day before it was due – and I sent them back an email going, well, you might have wanted to start reading three weeks ago ... I turned into a monster.*

*I've always had really good unit evaluations, but for this one semester, I got really terrible unit evaluations from students in that class. I got some really good ones from the students who are very loyal and know me (laugh). And, I know who they are because they were saying Sophie's always blah blah blah. But from students who I hadn't had before, and there were quite a number of them in that class: she thinks she's the Queen! (laugh). And, it really threw me.*

*I was really upset, and I talked to lots of my colleagues about it and they just said, oh it's students, you know, blah blah blah. And, I thought, no! While some of it may have been one or two disgruntled students, and unit evaluations are always flawed – but I really took that on. And, I thought, OK, what's happened to make me go from high satisfaction to she's a bitch basically? Because I had such profound grief I felt that I was just very exposed standing in front of the classroom, and I felt that I just wasn't able to give ...*

*Teaching can be quite intimate – you're opening yourself up. And I just felt that semester that I couldn't do that; that if I opened myself up like that I'd just be crying – I'd just be a bubbling mess. So that was my really big clunky moment – that I thought, OK Sophie, you know how to do this. You know what it is in the past that has made you a good teacher. You know what students love, and what that is, is just bringing your humanness into the classroom.*

*I always take a lot of myself into the classroom, so we always begin by talking about, how was your week? And, people go, how's your son going? Or how did he go in discus, or whatever. And we all have a big chat and laugh. So we bring our shared humanity and all our baggage into the classroom and it enables us to talk about complex things – deep things – and it makes for a really rich learning environment. And, yeah – most recently that was my moment that I've thought – yeah! (Interview 11: Story 5)*

In this story, Sophie was brought face to face with many things that she had been with others. In some moments, she saw herself as having been a godmother, while in others as having been 'rude', a 'monster', and even a 'bitch' in how she had related with some of her students. However, as this story unfolds, Sophie circled back to her own way of having been a 'good teacher', a way that she seemingly looked to repeat in the oncoming semester.

At the end of a semester of teaching, the educator in this story unexpectedly faced the tragic death of her godson. When the next academic year arrived, Sophie returned to her work of teaching student youth workers. But as this semester got underway, she began to notice that her way of relating with students was different to what it had been in the past.

Still struggling with the death of her godson, she sensed a shortage of ‘energy’ required to be the educator she once was. Consequently, she caught herself doing ‘lots’ of things that in her past she did sparingly. ‘There were lots of slides, lots of reading off slides’. But the change in Sophie’s way of educating went beyond an increased reliance on teaching aids.

As the weeks rolled by, she began to sense that her prior ‘care’ in being an educator was giving way to another more pressing care that belonged to her godson, whose ‘being-no-longer-in-the-world’ still *is* for her (Heidegger, 1962, p. 281). Grieving her stricken loved one, she found herself *not caring* about being an educator. In a sense, this indifference emerged in the light of how she *had* cared before this semester, and thus really meant that she ‘no-longer-cared’ in a way she had previously. For Sophie, her diminished care about her being an educator was disclosed by how she was relating to her students:

*I yelled at someone in the class. I was rude. Students wrote to me and said, you know Sophie I need help with my essay – and it would be the day before it was due – and I sent them back an email going, well, you might have wanted to start reading three weeks ago ... I turned into a monster.*

The educator was not being with her students in a way that she had been with students in previous classes (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158).

Was there a ‘moment of seeing’ something that she had temporarily lost sight of, that is, her own way of ‘*being-as-having-been*’ with students (1962, pp. 387, 396)? Such a moment possibly did not occur for her until she reached the semester’s end; when the time had come for students to offer their anonymous appraisals of the unit that Sophie had taught and how they experienced her way of teaching it.

When all the evaluations came in, Sophie began to sift through them, separating the ‘good’ from the ‘terrible’. She was somehow able to tell apart the warmer feedback offered from the ‘loyal’ students whom she was already known by. And yet, unlike the teaching evaluations that she was more accustomed to getting – that she had ‘always had’ up until now – this one presented her with some ‘terrible’ feedback from other students who had not been in her past classes. She was confronted with a

kind of commentary directed towards her that she was unaccustomed to receiving: ‘She thinks she’s the Queen!’ How did Sophie respond when these derogatory comments come to light? Did she continue to ‘not care’? Did she laugh them off?

On the contrary, the ‘terrible’ evaluations appear to have influenced her disposition: ‘It really threw me. I was really upset.’ Heidegger (2014a) relates the notion of ‘terrible’ (*furchtbar*) with the ‘uncanny’; as that which violently ‘throws [us] out of the “canny”’, that is, what is ‘homely’ and ‘accustomed’ for us (pp. 167–168). Here, Sophie experienced this feedback as terrible in so far as it drove her beyond what was homely for her (Heidegger, 2014a, p. 169).

Her feeling of being thrown moved Sophie to initiate conversation with her fellow educators about this issue. Upon hearing her concern, her colleagues treated it lightly, suggesting that any negative feedback spoke more to the nature of the student evaluators, or to a flawed evaluation process, than it did to any real issue on her part requiring attention. But this interpretation did not satisfy Sophie. After this conversation with her colleagues had ended, she entered another. This time, Sophie had a conversation with herself, one that ‘fervently sought’ to understand a ‘turn’ in her uncanny way of being an educator (Gadamer, 2007, p. 31). What emerged for her was a word of resistance to what her colleagues had just said: ‘No!’ Here, she declined any possibility of turning away from the negative feedback. Instead, it moved her back towards an unveiled way she had been in the past – a having-been-ness that she sought to repeat in her future as an educator (Heidegger, 1962).

She allowed herself to ‘take on’ the terrible evaluations, and asked a tough question of herself:

*What’s happened to make me go from high satisfaction to ‘she’s a bitch’ basically?*

Sophie began to muse back over the preceding semester. As she pondered what had happened to her, an answer to her own question became clear:

*Because I had such profound grief I felt that I was just very exposed standing in front of the classroom, and I felt that I just wasn’t able to give ...*

She perhaps realised that each week, when she had brought her class underway, she had been unable to *bring herself* to tell her students about what was happening in her life, particularly her ongoing struggle with the death of her godson. She realised that she was unable to give of herself in the way that she *had been* able to in her past. Despite coming up against an unforeseen limit, she remembered that her own way of having been an educator was to bring her ‘humanness’ into the classroom (Heidegger, 1962, p. 389). Prior to this semester, this meant beginning classes by speaking openly with students about what was happening in her personal and family life. She recognised that the tragic circumstances she had been thrown into, relating to her godson, had brought her up against a limit. Consequently, as far as she can see, she had been temporarily unable to repeat her prior way of having been an educator. ‘I just felt that semester that I couldn’t do that; that if I opened myself up like that I’d just be crying – I’d just be a bubbling mess.’

Unveiling for Sophie were possibly echoes of the ‘chatting’ and ‘laughter’ that she had invited and enjoyed with her students in past classes. Here, arising from the oncoming semester already upon her, she appeared to come back to a way of having been with her students in the past, an ‘openness’ that had closed while she was coping with the loss of her godson (Heidegger, 1962, p. 373). Sophie experienced a moment of ‘coming *back*’ to her own way of having been with students, with an implicit sense that she was moving to repeat it, to bring it once again with her into the upcoming semester of teaching (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 373, 388):

*I thought, OK Sophie, you know how to do this. You know what it is in the past that has made you a good teacher. You know what students love, and what that is, is just bringing your humanness into the classroom.*

This story seems to uncover how an experience of coming back to our own having-been-ness is not always easy. Being brought face to face with an unveiled way we once were, in the light of how we find ourselves to be now, is not always a comforting experience. Indeed, our current being may somehow appear to betray our own true having-been-ness (Heidegger, 1962, p. 373). Indeed, it can sometimes be ‘clunky’. And yet, such a moment can deliver us back to something that is essential for us, as shown in this story when an educator returned to what had made her a good educator in her past, which she looked to repeat as she pressed ahead into her life as an educator.

***When our having-been-ness is seen by someone else as mattering***

Stories already offered in this chapter reveal that there are times when an educator may notice the significance of their own having-been-ness *for themselves*. Yet on other occasions, the meaning of a person's living past might be seen and held in some way by *someone else*, as revealed by the stories presented in this section.

The following story was told by Ruby, who has been educating student youth workers in the university sector for many years. She now coordinates her university's youth work-related bachelor degrees, which involves providing leadership for a team of lecturers.

*I still introduce myself as a youth worker by trade, whatever I'm presenting. Because if you've looked at any of my work, you will see that all of it is primarily around young people and youth services. So, my title and seniority in the university really only matters here, quite frankly ...*

*I want to be known for good graduates, that I've been a good youth work educator. I still teach because I want to connect with my first years ... I still love to excite young people about the [bachelor's degree in youth work] they're in, and that they're going to make a difference ... And, people with experience can do that. I've never changed. I'm a storyteller and good youth work educators are narrators; they tell stories ...*

*You always have a risk of making sure that you let [lecturers] loose – and that's about giving new people the licence of saying, tell the practitioner story – infuse it. I have good relationships in the student body, I'll hear if [someone's] not. And, often it's staff who think they should be filling in with content and have somehow missed the message. And in fact, now I talk about [lecturers] being a narrator in a sessional staff handbook ...*

*I've had one new lecturer recently, and she's a bit younger. She's a graduate of mine. And in her anxiety to do well, she felt she needed to fill classes with more content. So, the first time around she needed a bit of practice, and we stuck by it, saying I've employed you because you're an experienced practitioner – tell students about it, that's what they want to hear. I talk about lecturers being a narrator – how important it is that students are here because they're practitioners, so tell the practitioner story. [Students] need both: the theory and practice. Now, second time around, she's been fabulous, and I've got people outside of my world asking to be in her class. (Interview 3: Story 2)*

Through relating with one of her new lecturers, Ruby noticed that this person was anxious about her practice as a lecturer. For Heidegger (1962, p. 393), anxiety is one of several possible affective states that can assail us as we go about our everyday lives in the world (p. 393). Like other moods, anxiety can *disclose* how things matter to us (1962, pp. 171–173). What did the new lecturer reveal to Ruby?

This young lecturer's anxiety seemed to tell Ruby that 'doing well' as a lecturer mattered to her. Ruby also sensed that this lecturer's anxiety sprang from a concealed pre-assumption that lecturing 'well' means ensuring one's classes are brimming with 'theoretical content'. This new team member's way of being as a lecturer was possibly tacitly guided by a popular historical idea, that the key to being a 'proper lecturer' is to 'have a larger store of information' than one's students, and to 'have it always ready' (Heidegger, 1968, p. 15).

Perhaps Ruby could sense that this background idea was obscuring from the new lecturer what 'doing well' as a lecturer really involves in UYWE. Upon noticing that this newcomer had somehow 'missed the message' that she was primarily called to 'be a narrator' for students, how did Ruby respond as the course coordinator?

In this story, Ruby exhibited a prior knowingness that learning the difficult craft of teaching youth work in the university requires practice. Perhaps this learning process is a kind of apprenticeship, akin to a cabinetmaker's apprentice who is helped by the master cabinetmaker to learn the essence of cabinetmaking (Heidegger, 1968). What is the essence of being a true lecturer that Ruby sought to reveal to her novice?

In a similar way to how an apprentice cabinetmaker is shown by their master that they must make himself 'answer and respond above all to the ... shapes slumbering within the wood' (Heidegger, 1968, p. 14), Ruby appeared to teach her apprentice that as a lecturer, above any theoretical knowledge that can be imparted, she must learn to reveal her stories of having been a practitioner, which already lie slumbering within her. Ruby voiced to her apprentice that an educator's own practitioner past matters to the preparation of future youth workers. For Ruby, this deep understanding appeared to have been initially overlooked by her apprentice 'the first time around'. Indeed, what was clear for Ruby is that this new lecturer needed to begin to see an essential relatedness between what she had done as a 'practitioner'

and what she was now doing as a lecturer in UYWE: ‘I’ve employed you because you’re an experienced practitioner – tell students about it, that’s what they want to hear.’

Coming to light here is perhaps a way that Ruby was implicitly *hoping* for something. Did she hope that those she recruited to be lecturers in the youth work program, like her former graduate in this story, would quickly grasp that having their own past in the present is vital to the work of being an educator?

For Heidegger (1962), while we might think hope is founded upon the future, our ‘hoping for something’ is existentially grounded upon our own having been (pp. 395–396). Ruby, who hoped for something in relation to someone else, took herself along *with* her into her hope (p. 396). Ruby had somehow already arrived at something herself (p. 396). Ruby’s hope that the new lecturer’s understanding would come was related to her own ‘*being-as-having-been*’ (pp. 395–396). Ruby’s recognition that her apprentice’s *having-been-ness* mattered was founded in an awareness of her own ‘*being-as-having-been*’ an educator. That is, the possibility that ‘I’ve been a good youth [worker] educator’. For Ruby, such a self-possibility is constituted by a never-changing ‘*I-am-as-having-been*’ something, namely, ‘a storyteller’ (1962, p. 373). She took ‘good youth work educators’ to essentially be ‘narrators’ who ‘tell stories’.

While the new lecturer may have initially experienced her own having been in a mode of veiling, Ruby helped to lift the veil for her. Ruby hoped to help her apprentice appreciate her having been as something vital that she could freely bring out in the play of learning with students.

Much to the delight of Ruby, her apprentice started allowing her classes to flow with stories that exuded her own ‘historicality’ as a practitioner (Heidegger, 1962, p. 41). ‘Now, second time around, she’s been fabulous, and I’ve got people outside of my world asking to be in her class.’ These stories, which this lecturer embodied and carried forward with her, were now free to delineate a possible way of being an educator as she pressed into her future. As this way opened, this lecturer’s anxiety perhaps dissipated, as she noticed the way that students were drawn to practice stories that spoke of her own having-been-ness, as something that struck a chord with

their own future practice lives. Could it be that the educator's phronesis (practical wisdom) of telling her own practice stories powerfully helps students to 'let learn' what it means to be a professional (Dall'Alba, 2009b, 2009c; Heidegger, 1968; McDrury & Alterio, 2003)? What this story perhaps brings into view is how a new educator's anxiety is alleviated when another educator helps them let their having-been-ness enrich the education process freely.

The previous story disclosed an affirming experience, when the enduring significance of an educator's own past was seen and pointed at by someone else. By contrast, the following story reveals a more threatening experience. When an educator resigned himself to something else his colleague appeared to have been, his sense of anxiety did not alleviate but increased, as he was faced with the possibility of losing something that mattered more to him than he had previously realised.

*I just had a meeting a few days ago, a 5-minute, unplanned team meeting. Our head of school, Preston, calls us in and says we need to put some names next to subjects for next year, nothing's set in stone. And one of them not set in stone was this course I taught last semester, that I re-wrote, re-wrote. I am trying to get the unit ready to teach again this next semester.*

*Since inheriting the topic last year, a young academic, Krystal, has joined the team as a lecturer. She has a PhD in the relevant field to this course. My background is in a different area, and I haven't completed my PhD yet. In the meeting, Preston asked, what do you reckon Krystal? She said, oh yeah, I would be keen to do that.*

*At the time, my head went, well yeah, she's got her doctorate in the relevant area, that's not my specialty. I didn't feel able to just say, well, I've put a lot into this, and I feel really excited about teaching this so ... It was never spoken about until this meeting, but I guess they thought it was inevitable that this subject would end up with her next year. So we all agreed it makes sense for her to teach it into the future.*

*What happened next was I went away, and simmered on this. I am trying to get the course ready for next semester. I just thought well, I'll just stand back. I thought it will give me more time to focus on my doctorate study. I walked away, and said to my wife later, oh, it's really good, I've cleared my plate a little bit.*

*But then I stopped, and I thought, oh, I'm feeling threatened, disappointed and grieving. Because for me, something got taken off me that I had designed – that was embedded within me ... Having it taken away changes how I feel in my own self. I felt aggrieved that I'm giving this over to Krystal! What if she changes it completely? It had*

*become part of me. I'd done so much reading and thinking. I was getting really excited about the journey, and really clear about the learning. And then, take that away, it's like being a parent without your kids. (Interview 1: Story 4)*

Jamie, recalled finding himself involved in an impromptu meeting. While meeting with Preston, the head of school, and his fellow educators, the conversation turned to the task of designating responsibility for teaching various courses next year. A question was raised about the future responsibility for a particular course Jamie had been teaching. This was not only something that Jamie had taught in past semesters, but he came to this meeting preparing to repeat this course. But as they entertained thoughts of possible horizons, did this course continue to fall to Jamie to teach?

Preston asked Krystal about the possibility of her taking over this course. As she expressed interest, Jamie listened on. Here, a moment seemed to open for Jamie to say something. Everyone was aware that Jamie was the one who had been teaching this course, and yet, something seemed to hold him back from seizing this moment, from 'putting his own name' next to this subject. What was holding him back?

In this moment, Jamie seemed to recognise a certain having-been-ness belonging to his new colleague, as something that appeared to matter to the future offering of this course. He already knew something about this colleague's background and, crucially, it emerged for him as befitting the horizon that opened before them in their conversation: 'She has a PhD in the relevant field to this topic. My background is in a different area ...'

While we may tend to assume that our having-been-ness arises primarily from the past, Heidegger (1962) challenges this prevalent idea, suggesting that 'the character of "having been" arises, in a certain way, from the future' (p. 373). For example, as this story reveals, the mattering of a certain aspect of an educator's having been arose from talking about future possibilities of 'next year', which, in an ontological sense, are versions of the future that are already 'there' and present to them in their concern. Whereby, if their talk had turned elsewhere, perhaps to talking about what they wanted to order and share for their upcoming lunch, the significance of Krystal's background field of expertise might have remained concealed.

Upon being brought face to face with something Krystal has been, Jamie did not appear able to resist what appeared to be its foregone conclusion. That is, he did not dismiss the appearance that Krystal had been educated at a higher level than he, and in a discipline more relevant to the course than his. Such was the sway of what had gone unspoken that he ‘did not feel able to’ speak up then and there; to say the words that perhaps came to him only after this meeting had passed: ‘well, I’ve put a lot into this and I feel really excited about teaching this so ...’ Thus, Jamie experienced the presence of something that he had left unsaid. Instead, given the ‘logical possibility’ that he immediately derived from recalling Krystal’s having-been-ness, Jamie somehow ‘agreed’ with an unspoken idea that ‘it made sense’ for Krystal to teach this course next year (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183).

However, the ripples of this event for Jamie did not stop there. Following this meeting, it emerged for him that ‘how he is’ had been affected by having been in this meeting (Heidegger, 1962, p. 173). What had occurred appeared to affect his very existence as an educator. Beyond any calculative logic in handing over the course to Krystal next year (given her apparent having been), he started to notice that he was left feeling that something essential had been torn from him.

*But then I stopped, and I thought, oh, I’m feeling threatened, disappointed and grieving. Because for me, something got taken off me that I had designed – that was embedded within me.*

Being faced with the possible loss of this course he had been ‘in’ began to feel detrimental to his own continuing possibilities of being an educator. Perhaps this occasion of being stopped in his tracks revealed how something integral to his being an educator, previously taken for granted as ready to hand, suddenly stood out to him in a mode of being present at hand (Heidegger, 1962, p. 184).

In the wake of the impromptu meeting, what began to unravel for Jamie was a realisation that he ‘stood back’ in the meeting, allowing Krystal’s name to be pencilled in alongside the course in question for the following year. By so doing, had he allowed a possibility of something to be taken from him, something within which he had been unconsciously ‘embedding’ *himself*? As such, an anxious thought came to him: ‘What if she changes it completely?’ He also seemed to sense a loss of what *might have been*: ‘I’d done so much reading and thinking. I was getting really excited about the journey, and really clear about the learning.’

This educator's sense of being 'threatened' by this experience was perhaps constituted by a future that coincided with his past burden of teaching this unit (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 391–396). That is, as he was faced with a future possibility of being an educator without this course, uncertainty arose about how it would be *possible* for him to be what he is as an educator without this course, which he had been thrown into teaching (1962, p. 393). 'Take that away, it's like being a parent without your kids.'

This story leaves us with a sense that this is a current situation, one which is yet to be resolved. How will Jamie confront this threat as he presses ahead into his future? Will he choose to tell Preston how he truly feels about the possibility of having to give away the course? Or perhaps he will let the unsaid be unsaid. Will he continue to 'stand back', to keep 'backing away' from his own having-been-ness (1962, p. 220)? This story does not say. As this situation unfolds from here, I wonder what course of action might play out for Jamie in relationship with Krystal and Preston.

#### ***When what we have 'not been' matters to others***

There are occasions when something an educator 'has not been' can emerge as a matter of concern for others. The educator who told the following story, Kylie, appears to have had this experience.

*I feel that quite often colleagues don't take me seriously because I have never been a youth worker, and therefore I don't understand this magical, mystical thing that youth work actually is, but which no one can actually explain to me ... I feel my peers within the youth work educators community use my lack of runs on the board as a youth worker as a form of power over me ...*

*I am involved in a research project at the moment, and I was reading a report from that project. And for some reason, one of the things that was highlighted in the report was that every youth work educator who was part of the project, or who had been interviewed, had a youth work background 'except for one'. They didn't actually name me, but why point that out? Why is that important? (Interview 12: Story 6)*

In this story Kylie sensed that her 'having never been' a specific kind of worker was a concern for her fellow educators. In caring about what Kylie has *not* been, the implication here seemed to be that this group of her colleagues cared little about what she *had* been, her own living past that always flows with abundant experiences

of relevance. For Kylie, what appeared to matter instead to her colleagues was their own credentials, their own living pasts as youth workers, and their maintenance of power over other educators who seem to relate to a different kind of having-been-ness.

When Kylie was reading a research report that she had contributed to, she suddenly noticed that her co-authors had deliberately noted the ‘exceptional’ absence of one author’s having been a youth worker. While Kylie saw that she was not ‘actually’ named as the single co-author who bore this not-having-been, she knew she was the person they were referring to and singling out to the readers of the report.

Upon seeing that this detail regarding her own background had been highlighted, Kylie remembers being puzzled by the way that her own not-having-been something continued to matter to her colleagues. She seemed to be steeped in frustration. Why did they need to point that out? Why was it important for the readers of the report to know that? Why was it important to them that she had never been a youth worker? Why must they continue to relate to her past in this way? Why must the experience of relating to her own kind be so difficult?

In situations like the one revealed by this story, there seems to be a lack of care for the gifts inhering in different living pasts, which educators from diverse backgrounds *do* bring along with them to the learning context into which they are thrown. Educators who are seen in terms of an ontic ‘not-having-been’ may seem to others to hold a peculiar past, which somehow separates them from the pack, from *having* and *belonging* to a *co*-having-been-ness, which in turn excludes them from existing towards a shared destiny (Heidegger, 1962, p. 436). This is seen in Kylie’s story, in the character of how her colleagues relate to her and *historicise* her own past in negative terms (1962, p. 436). Such a way of appropriating and speaking for this educator’s own past could be described as not caring for her (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158).

### ***Concluding thoughts***

This chapter illuminates some of the ways that our having-been-ness, that having a living past, is essential to the everyday experience of being an educator. The first section showed how a person, through conversing with others and oneself, is able to

recognise how their own having-been-ness matters to their present and future lives as educators. Whether consciously or not, as people thrown into a specific world to educate, our living past is always relaying forward to meet us in fresh ways. Furthermore, the stories contemplated in this chapter point to different ways that the temporal interplay can be experienced; between the veiling and unveiling in relation to an educator's own having-been-ness (Harman, 2007, p. 3).

While an educator's having-been-ness constantly matters, amidst the busy workflow of educating it might ordinarily go unrecognised. How an educator has been in the world perhaps 'remains hidden from Dasein', withdrawn, and can go unrecognised and unheard despite being constitutive of our everyday lives (Heidegger, 1962, p. 42). Nevertheless, an educator's deep sense of their own having-been-ness never stands still, and is never lost to measurable, sequential time that marches on with or without them. Instead, an educator's own having-been-ness, as fundamental to their temporal existence in the world, constantly stretches to meet them as they press ahead. While not always seen in the same light, in every sense and in every case, 'everything that we have been' continues tacitly to inform how we press into who we are as educators and people (Heidegger, 1988, p. 265).

Regardless of whether the importance of our own having-been-ness is noticed or not, it constantly maintains our sense of who we *are* and are able *to be* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 425). An educator's ways of having been in the world with others are not merely gone by, 'back there' in measurable chronological time (p. 425). Rather, the character of having-been-ness is often experienced in contrasting modes of *having forgotten* and *coming back*, where the latter can disclose a way for us to tackle specific situations as they arise (1962, pp. 373, 389). In occasionally being reunited with an aspect of our already-meaningful past, our everyday existence is given its taken-for-granted ground that allows us to orient ourselves amidst the torrent of demands that flow towards us within the context of higher education.

There are still other moments when an educator's own having-been-ness is explicitly recognised as mattering by someone else. Such experiences include times when something an educator has '*not been*' may appear to be an issue for others. From this realisation, what emerges is a concern about the possible ways that we render, or 'historicise', someone else's past that is not our own (1962, p. 436). Perhaps an

educator's past can be carefully embraced or carelessly kept from taking its place in a *shared* having-been-ness, which in Heidegger's terms arises from an academic community's ongoing struggle towards a shared *destiny* (co-historicising) (p. 436).

Ah, not to be cut off. (Rainer Maria Rilke, 1996, p .219)

## Chapter 8: Dwelling in possibility

I dwell in possibility. (Emily Dickinson, 1929, p. 430)

To be an educator in UYWE means to be always-already thrown into a definite possibility for being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). As such, educators are always-already being attuned to the fluid ways their own being-possible as an educator matters to them (Blattner, 2006, p. 89).<sup>24</sup> Educators are never indifferent towards their own possibility to be an educator in UYWE, which they are already ‘in the way’ of being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). As educators go about their everyday practice, they are constantly experiencing a hidden ontological struggle between their existential *possibility* and their *thrownness*, wherein the latter entangles their own ability-to-be amidst the demanding world of the university.

### *Philosophical underpinnings*

For Heidegger (1962), Dasein primarily exists as ‘openness’ in relation to the meaning of being (Heidegger, 1995, pp. 344–346, 2012a, p. 47). We encounter things and people as an open region or ‘clearing’, and as integral to our shared world of background practices (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 190; Heidegger, 1962, pp. 171, 176). We are constantly open, and attuned, to how a possible way of being we are already caught up in being matters to us (Heidegger, 1962, p. 67). But it is only because we primarily exist as openness (*Erschlossenheit*) that we can understand ourselves in particular ways (Heidegger, 1962, p. 272). As we go about our everyday lives, we are kept back from seeing how we primarily exist as ‘beings of openness’ to the unveiling and veiling of the fluid meanings of our own situated possibilities in the world (Diekelmann, 2005; N. Diekelmann & J. Diekelmann, 2009; Wrathall, 2011).

According to Heidegger (1962, p. 183), possibility (*Seinkönnen*) emerges as essential for Dasein’s existence as openness. As long as we live, we have understood ourselves, and always will understand ourselves, in the light of possibilities that we

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<sup>24</sup> Blattner (2006) illustrates:

I am able to be a father ... as I confront the existential demands of being a father, those demands already have a grip on me. Getting to the school by 3:20 to pick up my son is urgent; attending to my other son’s soccer game is exciting. These differential ways in which courses of action matter to me reflect my already being disposed, already being attuned to the ways things matter to me as a father. This is to say, simply put, that I am a father, and as a father I press forward into the courses of action and projects to which being father assigns me. (pp. 88–89)

are already seizing upon and living out in the world (1962, pp. 69, 183, 185). Our already-open possibilities, upon which the movement and fabric of our lives are tacitly based, are neither moral nor cognitive, but primarily practical (Blattner, 2006, p. 37; Heidegger, 1962, p. 185, 1988, pp. 275–276). Our own possibilities are related to something that we *know* we can capably *be*, rather than merely something we can do (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 190; Heidegger, 1962, p. 184; Käufer & Chemero, 2015, p. 69).<sup>25</sup> We are always already ‘projecting’ ourselves upon possible ways that we ‘can be’ human in the world (1962, pp. 183, 185).<sup>26</sup>

Beyond the question of what specific existential possibilities are deeply informing our everyday practices, ontologically speaking, we are always tacitly ‘pressing forward’ into our own possibilities, as abilities-to-be, which are already ways of being human that are open for us in our given historical-cultural context (Blattner, 2006, p. 86; Dreyfus, 1991, p. 95; Heidegger, 1962, p. 184). Further, because every Dasein always exists as ‘care’<sup>27</sup>, we are the kind of being for whom our ‘ownmost’ possibility-for-being ‘is an issue for itself’ (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 65, 182–183). As such, ontological questions relating to our own ‘to be’ are bound up with how our everyday practices *matter* to us in differential ways (Blattner, 2006, p. 88; Heidegger, 1962, p. 67).

According to Heidegger, we not only primordially exist as possibility, but as ‘thrown possibility’ (1962, p. 183). We are always ‘thrown’ into a particular historical-

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<sup>25</sup> Heidegger’s ontological notion of possibility refers to what we sense we ‘can be’: the ways of being human that we understand ourselves as being ‘able to be’ in the world, rather than a role or skill we can do (1962, p. 183; Blattner, 2006, p. 91; Dreyfus, 1991, p. 95). For example, a person may understand that she is capable of being, or able ‘to be’, a lecturer in sociology, but not in hydraulic engineering (Blattner, 2006, p. 88). Heidegger offers another helpful illustration of a worker in her workshop using a hammer to do something. Her hammering is already existentially grounded by, and moving towards, a deep taken-for-granted possibility that she is being despite what she happens to be explicitly thinking or talking about while she is hammering:

[With a] hammer there is an involvement in hammering, with hammering an involvement with in making something fast; with making something fast, there is an involvement in protection against bad weather; and this protection ‘is’ for the sake of proving shelter for Dasein – that is to say, *for the sake of a possibility of Dasein’s Being*. (1962, p. 116, emphasis added)

<sup>26</sup> Consider the example of an Australian football player who finds herself ‘thrown’ into the situation of a live match. As this particular match unfolds, should she begin to struggle, perhaps with an injury, there are many ‘live options’ immediately clear to her (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 190; James, 1897, p. 3). She might choose to play through the injury, or to go off the field, and so on. Yet in this situation there are other ways that are not open, which do not make sense for her to do, such as beginning to act in the game as an Aikido sensei (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 190).

<sup>27</sup> Refer to the section in Chapter 4: ‘Care’ as an essential meaning of being human

cultural situation, and this thrownness ensnares our possibilities, always limiting and opening possible ways in which we are free *to be* in a given practice context (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 189; Harman, 2007, p. 68; Heidegger, 1962, p. 187). How we choose to respond in a given situation is always constrained by some antecedent conditions that are not of our own making (Gadamer, 2013, pp. 111–112). Hence, those existential possibilities that we find ourselves being today have always already been (Gadamer, 2013, p. 264). Our own being is constantly being drawn into an invisible, tense and equivocal struggle between our thrownness and possibility (Collins & Selina, 2012, p. 72).

This chapter uncovers different ways a person may experience their own ‘being-possible’, as someone who is thrown into a situation of teaching student youth workers in the university world. In this chapter, I offer stories describing particular events, and contemplate what these stories reveal about different ways educators experience the interplay of their own existential possibility as an educator amidst the everyday of UYWE.

### ***When we are able-to-be***

When educators are immersed in their practice, their own ability-to-be withdraws from them. In the following story, Tony’s own existential possibility as an educator became concealed when he discussed a different kind of possibility with his students.

*I moved across from working as a youth worker (running a drop-in centre with young people who were homeless) and started teaching in the [university youth work] course.*

*I had done some sessional lecturing before then, so I had an idea – a bit of experience of what it was like ... The first time running the social action course myself, it was very practical. My background had been in community development and I had been involved with social activism in the community sector as a youth worker, so I just brought those experiences into the course. I saw youth work as community development work with young people, and so that is what I brought to the teaching – that commitment.*

*I inherited a curriculum. I basically rewrote it. I took some of the stuff that was useful, but having done a Master’s degree in community development, I used those core texts. The students had to choose a particular social action campaign to develop or participate in a social action. They had to go down to the student union and say, well what campaigns have you got on? They had to go and look at organisations that they were interested in – activist organisations, environmental,*

*social, political, unions, whatever. So students for their assessment; they had to work out how they were going to be involved in that social action – how they were actually going to participate in organising and so on – not just turn up and march.*

*Basically I was rewriting this course, but doing it with the students. Saying, what do we want to do with the assessment? It was about saying – well this is what the university says we have got to do – here is the frame ... We've got to write an essay, how can we do the assessment within that frame and make it as relevant to you as possible? And in your view, what do you want to get out of this, and where do you want to take it? But, I guess it was a bit different, because some students would go, just tell me what I have to do and I'll do it. The students said, what do you mean, a social action campaign? I said, what are you passionate about, what do you think is unjust?*

*Not all of the student projects worked as well as they could have, but that's part of the learning. Some of those were hit and miss but some of them were good. Most really engaged. They loved it. They just took it on, like wow! And, I got really positive feedback. (Interview 2: Story 3)*

In this story, Tony recalled his experience of taking over the responsibility for a particular course of study. Prior to this experience, he had done some sessional lecturing while working as a youth worker. However, in this story he recounted the first time that he ran a course on his own as an educator.

After 'inheriting' an already existing curriculum for an oncoming course, Tony seemed to be presented with a possibility of 'rewriting' it. Rather than letting the curriculum be what it had been, he began revising it in the light of his own concealed possibility.

On one level, Tony seemed to rewrite this course deliberately to reflect a certain way that he had come to 'see' something to which the course was related (youth work as community development). In his planning for the future of the course, he recalled bringing his already clear 'take' (foresight) on youth work to his anticipated teaching practice (Heidegger, 1962, p. 191; Polt, 1999, p. 71). On the surface, this educator recognised how his 'already-there' view (on youth work) influenced his hand in re-writing and sculpting the given curriculum (Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 16). Indeed, before teaching it, Tony recalled thinking about what 'stuff' he could possibly 'take' (and alternatively, leave behind) from his inheritance. And yet on a deeper level, was a more unseen kind of possibility already in play?

Having finished reworking the curriculum, the time came for Tony to put his well-thought-out plan into action. As the new class gathered, he revealed to them his plan for their shared journey ahead. Instead of following a norm where the lecturer predetermines the specific constraints for student assignments, Tony presented students with an ability to choose something for themselves: ‘the students had to choose a particular social action campaign to develop or participate in a social action’. And yet, upon making this direction known to the class, Tony became attuned that, for some students, this news was not a welcome surprise, perhaps disrupting their ‘everyday familiarity’ in the university world where choices were normally pre-made for them (Heidegger, 1962, p. 233). He heard some students, in a sense, wanting to give back the possibility he had just handed them: ‘just tell me what I have to do and I’ll do it’.

As the group discussion unfolded, Tony was asked to elaborate – exactly what kind of possibilities was he opening for them by this ‘social action campaign’ project? Seeking to clarify, he told his students that he was asking them to choose a particular social issue that was already a matter of ‘passionate’ concern for them: one that they could tackle with their future project. The ‘not yet’ of possible social action projects was not something up ahead of them in measurable time, but was already drawing them forward (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 184, 288).

Once Tony’s invitation became clearer for the students, specific possibilities began to emerge. At this point the class was perhaps bustling with discussion about what campaigns the students might do. As they entertained ideas, they were aware of how their common ‘*thrownness*’ into the ‘there’ of the university situation was already limiting their possibilities (Heidegger, 1962, p. 174): ‘this is what the university says we have got to do ... how can we do the assessment within that ...?’ Having recognised their bounded ‘leeway’, Tony and his students began to engage in dialogue about different possibilities for their future projects (1962, p. 185).

Tony became absorbed in this process of thinking and talking about possibilities with the students; about the particular campaigns they *might* each opt to do. In this moment of conversation, he was explicitly directing his attention to the ideas and

possibilities that students were voicing, and dealing with their arising concerns and questions about this projected course of shared action.

Yet here, the kind of possibilities that Tony and his students were beginning to cognitively concern (and ‘comport’) themselves towards were different to the kind of possibility that Heidegger says that we always-already *are* as Dasein (1962, p. 185). What is the nature of the more existential sense of possibility that was implicitly in play for the educator in this story?

At the very outset of Heidegger’s inquiry into the meaning of being, we find an early signpost towards the primary importance that possibility (*Möglichkeit*) has in our everyday lives as Dasein: ‘Higher than actuality stands *possibility*’ (1962, p. 63). As his analysis develops, Heidegger elaborates that we are not primarily *in* the world as sheer objective presence, but as ‘being-possible’ (1962, p. 183). Possibility is shown to be a primordial, ontological characterisation of the kind of being that each of us is as long as we live (1962, pp. 183–185). ‘Dasein’, Heidegger writes, ‘is the possibility of being free *for* its ownmost potentiality of being’ (1962, p. 183). But in the context of this story, what does he mean by speaking of Dasein as ‘possibility’, and as ‘being-possible’?

We may often speak of ‘possibility’ in ontic ways, including times when we say the word to signify something that is ‘*not yet actual*’ (1962, p. 183). In this story, for example, when Tony was immersed in discussing his plan with students, it was *not yet* clear *if*, or *how*, the students’ projects would *actually work*. It also remained to be seen how the students would *actually engage* in their projects: would they enjoy the process, would their applied learning ‘come to pass’ according to the purpose for which Tony had sculpted the curriculum (1962, p. 183)? Would they see their projects through to fruition (1962, p. 287)? As Tony found himself caught up in this early discussion, his present was ‘pregnant with futural possibilities’ that were already made present to him in his concern (Macann, 1993, p. 102).

In another sense, we sometimes also speak of possibility to refer to what is ‘*merely possible*’: something that may or may not come to actuality (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). For some students in this story, for example, it was logically possible for them to choose from a number of campaigns that interested them, in the same way that it

would be hypothetically possible for them to withdraw from the course, or leave town before they began (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 190). Whether or not these kind of specific possibilities actually eventuate for us, they are never ‘at any time *necessary*’ for Dasein’s being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183).

By contrast, Heidegger voices an ontological form of possibility, which he sees as necessary for the way our everyday lives hang together for us. For him, this more primordial kind of possibility refers to our *self-understanding* in relation to what we ‘*can be*’: the ways of being human that we sense ourselves as being ‘able-to-be’ in the world, rather than merely something we can *do* (Blattner, 2006, p. 91; Heidegger, 1962, p. 183).

Thus, when he was engaged in class discussion with students, Tony did not merely comport himself towards the curriculum plan that he had previously ‘thought out’ for the course (Heidegger, 1962, p. 185). Rather, in a deeper sense, as he worked to design the curriculum, and later project possible projects in dialogue with students, he was comporting himself towards his ‘*own possibility*’ as an educator (1962, p. 184). Heidegger says that this kind of existential possibility is ‘*futural*’, but not in the sense of something that Tony had actually ‘not yet become’, or something that he saw that he ‘*will be*’ for the first time (1962, p. 373).

Instead, was the possibility of his being an educator a way that Tony had already grasped (1962, p. 185)? Prior to this ‘first time’ of running a course ‘himself’, not only had Tony already done some lecturing and had a background sense that lecturing was something he was able to handle, perhaps he had already come into a self-understanding that the possibility of *being* a university lecturer was something that he himself was able to be? The kind of existential possibility, which Heidegger calls an ability-to-be (*Seinkönnen*), is not the same as attaining a possible social status that is bestowed upon a person in virtue of occupying a certain station, role, career or occupation in life (Blattner, 2005, p. 314). Rather, an existential possibility is a way we understand ourselves, which draws us forward into activity (Heidegger, 1962, p. 184). Tony’s possibility-for-being an educator, as an ability-to-be, was futural in relation to what he found himself doing in the ‘now’ of this class discussion (Blattner, 2005, p. 314).

To help elucidate this point, Polt (1999) illustrates Heidegger's existential notion of possibility this way:

consider our everyday experience of getting to know someone by asking what she does. She answers, 'I am a sculptor'. What does this mean? At this moment, she is not sculpting, so the statement does not refer to her present characteristic. She has sculpted in the past, but she has also done millions of others things that she may or may not do again. The statement 'I'm a sculptor' means (if it is a truly revealing statement) that the *possibility* of sculpting is an important possibility for her. She understands herself and her world largely in terms of it. She approaches things as someone who *can sculpt*. This is more fundamental than any particular plans she may make or pictures she may form of her future self. Such plans and pictures are just particular manifestations of her basic 'sculptorly' approach to existing. Her very identity is formed by her ability to sculpt. (p. 69)

Unlike this illustration, Tony's story reveals how he experienced his own being as an ability-to-be when he was engaged in a moment of 'sculpting'. Perhaps when we are caught up in the everyday flow and *doing* of our own *being* (Patočka, 1998, p. 103) – like in the instance when Tony was talking with his students about what they might want to do for their upcoming projects – *our own existential possibility, as an ability-to-be, must withdraw from us*.

What emerges here is a possibility that when educators are immersed in their everyday practice of being 'thus or thus' possibility, that purposive possibility that they are in the process of being is not something that they are cognitively comporting towards, in the sense of something that they are grasping thematically (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 184–185). Hence, the clearing of possibilities related to our very own being

only works as a clearing when it is not uncovered – when it is not something toward which we can [consciously] comport. Thus, the clearing does not only keep back other possibilities, but it keeps back that it is keeping back other possibilities. The clearing conceals the possibility of other understandings of beings. (Wrathall, 2005b, p. 356)<sup>28</sup>

Thus when Heidegger suggests that for the most part we 'fail to recognise' the possibilities that we ourselves are already pressing into, he does not mean this in a moralistic sense (1962, p. 184). Rather, he is revealing the taken-for-grantedness of the way we are always seizing upon our own possibilities; how the possibilities we

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<sup>28</sup> The clearing of possibilities, that we ourselves are as Dasein, is not 'the mere clearing of presence, but the clearing of presence concealing itself, the clearing of a self-concealing sheltering' (Heidegger, 2011c, p. 324). As Dasein, this 'self-concealing' clearing is always granting us the possibilities by which we are already living out our lives. This clearing is also always holding back from us other existential possibilities that we are not being; not assigning to our own being (Heidegger, 1962, p. 187).

already see ourselves *as being* (for example, *being* a father, *being* a student, and so forth) are constantly colouring our everyday lives, interactions and activity with implicit meaning. Simultaneously, as we go about our everyday lives, what also becomes concealed from us is how, as Dasein, we are continually letting other possibilities-for-being pass us by (1962, p. 183).

Contemplating this story opens an appreciation of a way we ordinarily experience our own 'being-possible' as educators. When we are practising and pressing into one of our own existential possibilities, our sense of being able-to-be an educator is not experienced transparently (1962, p. 183). But even though we most commonly practically comport towards our own possibilities in a tacit mode, our own activities implicitly matter to us in virtue of our deep self-understandings of them. Indeed, Heidegger (2009a, p. 120) suggests that, as humans, we are always inadvertently 'bearing witness' to what we are, to our own existence, to those possibilities that we already grasp ourselves as being.

### ***When our own ability-to-be appears to be limited***

As a person goes about their everyday practice they may occasionally find themselves thrown into a 'limit situation'. When these moments arise, a boundary is recognised to what they are able, and unable, to *be* for others as an educator in a university world. The educator in the next story, Edward, appears to have experienced one such occasion.

*I had a situation with a student not too long ago where I felt she was disclosing too much, and she was a little bit emotional ... I started to feel unsafe, because there weren't too many other staff members around. Although the door was open – we were talking – I just didn't feel right about that conversation. I felt she was sharing things that were too personal and not relevant to the topic that we needed to be talking about.*

*As soon as I thought I could graciously do so, I wrapped up the conversation. I suggested that I could walk her down to the car park. That was really just a way to get her out of the office and into a more public space, and to assist her in moving on from that situation that I thought was not being a fruitful place to be in. Fortunately, she went along with that. (Interview 7: Story 3)*

Edward found himself engaging in a private conversation with one of his students. For him, the specific topic that first opened the door to this conversation seemed

relevant to their pedagogical relationship. But as this event unfolded, Edward sensed himself being caught up in a different undercurrent, being swept out towards unsafe waters.

Edward seemed already alert to the kind of situation he found himself being thrown into with this student, and how it had appeared to differ from the more public circumstances under which he might ordinarily converse with students in his care. As this conversation set sail, he was attuned to his own uneasiness. ‘Although the door was open – we were talking – I just didn’t feel right about that conversation.’

As the conversation started, Edward carefully trod its waters, restricting himself to the relevant ‘need’ that had called it to life. But he sensed that, as an educator, he was unable to engage in the personal kind of conversation that the student appeared to be seeking with him. While he was relieved that the door to the room was open, he was concerned about the way the student herself was opening up to him. It seemed that this educator was already standing in a clearing in relation to what he was able and unable to discuss with students. ‘I felt she was sharing things that were too personal and not relevant to the topic that we needed to be talking about.’

In a situation in which a student was sensed to be crossing the borders of the ‘relevant’, Edward was presented with an inability to *hold himself open* to what she was revealing to him (Heidegger, 1962, p. 355). While it was not yet definite to him where this new channel of conversing might have ended up carrying them, he was perhaps confronted with a ‘limit situation’ to what he was able to *be* for her as he pressed ahead into his definite possibility that he had already got himself into (Blattner, 1999, p. 120; Heidegger, 1962, pp. 183, 356).

When presented with this limitedness to his ability to be there in this situation as an educator, he tactfully placed one of his own hands upon the helm of the conversation and, without commandeering it, he gently steered it outside in order to bring it back *inside* the clear parameters of where he already knew he was able to go safely with this student (Heidegger, 2009b, p. 51).

*I suggested that I could walk her down to the car park. That was really just a way to get her out of the office and into a more public space, and to assist her in moving on from that situation that I thought*

*was not being a fruitful place to be in. Fortunately, she went along with that.*

In attuning to the limitedness of his ability-to-be in this way, this educator showed a *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, in immediately grasping what was required in the situation in which he found himself (Brogan, 2005, p. 174). This (non-cognitive) stroke of practical knowledge came to him by the light of how he already understood himself as being, in relationship with students like the one in this story (Blattner, 1999, p. 34; Dreyfus, 1991, p. 190).

It was *logically* possible for this educator to step back and consciously weigh up all his options, for example, to allow the dangerous conversation to run its course. However it pre-reflectively made sense for him to tackle this tricky situation in a particular way ('a way to get her out of the office'). But his 'being-possible' which he was existentially in this situation, as an educator, 'is to be sharply distinguished both from empty logical possibility and from the contingency of something occurrent' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183).

His background understanding of the limited range of possible ways that he was able, and unable, to respond in this situation were based upon his understanding of his own possibility that he already saw himself as being (Blattner, 1999; Dreyfus, 1991). Hence, this educator seemed to enter this event already grasping his own contextual ability-to-be as an educator, and how this possibility differed from other possibilities in his cultural world, say, from ways of *being* with this student as a counsellor, pastor, father, friend or lover.

While a limit was unveiled for him in relation to what he was able to be for this student, what perhaps withdrew from him was a way that, as he pressed into his own possibility-for-being an educator, he was implicitly letting go of other possible ways of being that he was not self-evidently grasping himself to be in the context of this relational encounter (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). As he continually projected himself upon a possibility-for-being as an educator, he was non-cognitively limiting his very own being and relating to that which he grasped himself to be (Dreyfus, 1991, pp. 91–96, 189–191). This clearing of possibilities graciously held back from him various other existential possibilities that might have been available for him in his

cultural context, and the differing ways of relating and practically responding to this situation that opened from them (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183).

***When it appears that we are unable-to-be***

What I have explored so far in this chapter is how an educator's own possibility-for-being, as an educator, may be ordinarily experienced in a mode of concealment. Emerging is an understanding that, when we are immersed in our everyday practice, our own existential possibility tends to withdraw from us rather than remain something that we transparently 'have in mind' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 185). This is the case even in moments when we are presented with a limit to our own ability-to-be a particular kind of educator in a university world.

But when might our own possibility-for-being (by which we tacitly understand ourselves as already being) reveal itself as an existential possibility? Perhaps, curiously enough, when we are momentarily confronted with a possibility that we are no longer able to be in the university world as an educator (Heidegger, 1982, p. 59).

Stories in this section show contrasting ways educators may occasionally experience an unveiling of their own ability-to-be. In such moments a person may recognise a possibility of being unable to be there continually in higher education as an educator in youth work. One educator told the following story:

*While I was [studying the youth work degree] I landed a job in youth work as a Lead Tenant. So my first paid youth work job was living in a house where young people came and lived with me. And I had young people come live with me. It was great ...*

*I got to the end of my degree of youth work, and I was asked to come into the educator role full-time within the same degree program for just under a year ... More money than I'd ever earned before.*

*Six months in, and I'd just got married, and I said to my wife, I can't do this. I can't stay in it full-time. I love the lecturing, but to do that I've given up regular space to connect with young people. My ideal outcome from that was to go back to part-time lecturing and part-time youth work. Unfortunately, there just wasn't a part-time role in youth work that I could find. Actually, I resigned before I had anything to go to.*

*There was the fact that I love youth work. And I just felt like I wanted to keep doing youth work. Not just because it would better my education role. In fact, really it would have been less about that and*

*more about the fact that I just missed it. So I gave up a full-time permanent educator role. I was being drawn back to that sector that I was talking about, but wanted to be in. (Interview 4: Story 6)*

In this story, Simon fondly recalled his first paid experience as a youth worker. This stint occurred while he was still in the process of completing his bachelor's degree in youth work. Later, when his time as a student youth worker had come to an end, he was invited to re-enter the program from which had just graduated, this time as a full-time educator. Seizing upon this opening, Simon assigned himself to living out this possible way of being as an educator. In order to take on this full-time work, he simultaneously let go of another possibility-for-being that was already open for him, that of being a youth worker.

As a novice educator, Simon soon found himself living out an existential possibility that he 'loved'. Being newly married, his first full-time salary was perhaps a welcome change. But only six months into his new life as an educator, he was unexpectedly presented with a clear self-realisation, one that went against the flow of what conventional wisdom might say to him: 'I can't do this'. It became clear to him that it was not possible for him to continue to work full-time as a youth worker. What was it that Simon was tuning into, in relation to his own existential possibilities?

Unveiling for Simon was a sense that working exclusively as an educator meant 'waiving' another possibility for his own being [as a youth worker] – another 'can be' which mattered to him (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). 'I love the lecturing, but to do that I've given up regular space to connect with young people.' Once a possibility of impossibility emerged for him, he was faced with the question of what he might possibly do about his state of impossibility.

At this point, Simon idealised a specific 'logical possibility' (1962, p. 183): 'My ideal outcome from that was to go back to part-time lecturing and part-time youth work.' Yet, as he looked to make this hypothetical, or 'empty', not yet an actuality, he came up against a limit to a situation he was thrown into (1962, p. 183): 'Unfortunately, there just wasn't a part-time role in youth work that I could find.'

When faced with an absence of an available way to move forward into different existential possibilities that Simon already understood himself as able-to-be, did he sense that he must choose one over the other? Did he opt to take the safe, more financially secure route, by continuing to work as an educator in his present situation? On the contrary, he resolved to seize upon another ability-to-be that was open for him – his possibility-for-being as a youth worker – even if it meant relinquishing his possibility of being an educator.

Revealingly, Simon resigned before he found a job that would allow him to live out his possibility as a youth worker. This move perhaps reveals that even before he tendered his resignation as an educator, he had already attended to, and resigned himself towards, another possibility-for-his-own-being as a youth worker in the world. In an ontological sense, it was impossible for him to keep letting his possibility-for-being a youth worker pass him by, and so he exited the academic stage as an educator prior to knowing exactly what youth worker role might eventuate for him, but with a clear sense that he had to step back into being as a youth worker.

This story reveals how we never choose among our own (already-understood) possibilities-for-being indifferently (Blattner, 2006, p. 89; Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). We ‘already stand within one possibility, that is, within one self-understanding, rather than another’ (Blattner, 2015, p. 117). And yet, it may not always be clear (transparent) to us why one of our self-understandings already matters more to us than another (Heidegger, 1962, p. 182). *We are always experiencing a temporal interplay in relation to the differential mattering of our own possibilities-for-being, between the veiled and unveiled mattering of our possibilities that we already tacitly understand ourselves as being.* This is perhaps shown in the way that Simon did not immediately recognise that, in a sense, he was making a hidden kind of ‘mistake’ so long as he allowed his other possibility to pass him by (1962, p. 183). Although abstractly speaking, Simon was free to choose between his existential possibilities, what unveiled for him, in relation to his own being, was how he was already disposed towards one of his significant possibilities rather than the other (1962, p. 183).

Even during the initial six months when he was exclusively being-possible as an educator, he was constantly more than what he factually was (1962, p. 185).

Accordingly, he continued to understand himself in the light of his own ability-to-be as a youth worker, and this definite self-understanding he had already gotten himself into emerged for him as more essential *to him* than his possibility as an educator (1962, p. 183).

Thus, Simon began to bear a burden of what was at stake for him in continuing to work full-time as an educator. He expressed this burden to his wife: 'I can't do this'. Beyond a matter of full- or part-time involvement, it came to light for this educator that he was relinquishing (waiving) a possibility-for-his-own-being that he constantly deeply cared about being; an available way of being-in-the-world that he already grasped himself as being able-to-be. And as such, he recalled being 'drawn' forward to reclaim his own possibility for '*being* a youth worker' (1962, p. 331). He entered into a clear sight that he was unable to be there in higher education as a full-time educator because of another more pressing ability-to-be (Blattner, 1999, p. 120). Consequently, the educator in this story rearranged his life in accordance with the possibility that he saw he was already *essentially disposed* to being, and not the other way around (Heidegger, 1962, p. 185).

This section has so far shown a person's openness to a disclosure of a possibility of *no-longer-being-able-to-be-there* in a particular situation as an educator (Heidegger, 1962, p. 294). Accordingly, he freely relinquished and removed himself from a live possibility that he was in the process of enacting, and was drawn forward by another disclosed possibility that mattered to him (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). 'I was being drawn back to that sector that I was talking about, but wanted to be in.'

In the next story, by contrast, Jasmine did not release herself from her own possibility-for-being as an educator. Rather, it appeared that someone else was forcing her to relinquish it against her own volition.

*We were going very well. I had been recruited to [the university] and asked to redevelop the undergraduate program. And then moved on to develop a postgraduate program. It took me about eighteen months to develop the postgrad program: to get the curriculum design up; to get it through public and sector consultation; and get it through the university approval processes, which was an arduous task.*

*And so it took three or four years to get the undergraduate program up, and then the postgrad one up, and then consolidate a team. I got it all through, and it was pretty good, I thought. And we were about to start, so we were just about to roll it out.*

*And then, we got a new boss [Head of School]. And to that point, I had ticked all the boxes in terms of being a good teacher ... And then this guy came ... He did not have a very good attitude towards youth work or youth studies. He was very dictatorial, and would instruct me on what to do all the time. And I found that really disrespectful. So almost straight away, he cut the new postgrad program that we just got up. He said, no, not doing it. He told me after he had done it ... He said, oh, it's not going to make money ...*

*Just before Christmas [one year], I came back from leave, and he sent me an email. It just said: I'm standing you down as the discipline leader for the youth work program. No consultation or anything. Which was out of the blue. I didn't know it was coming. I was shocked. I fainted and had an injury. (Interview 10: Story 3)*

In the beginning of this story Jasmine was absorbed in a familiar process of living out her own ability to be an educator. She capably concerned herself with the intensive toil of preparing and consolidating particular university degrees for the future. The various aspects involved in this process seemed strenuous. And yet, the moment finally arrived when it appeared that the 'not-yet' she had had in her sights, towards which she had been working so hard, was about to become an actuality.

Standing on the threshold of this project, Jasmine was confident that she had 'ticked all the boxes', and that her team was poised to tackle the oncoming challenge. And, in a deeper way, it seemed that she was also expectant and quietly hopeful that something 'pretty good' was about to happen. Jasmine recalled a 'past future' (Sartre, 1992, pp. 185–186), that is, a time when it appeared to her that the actual *fruition* of her labour was imminent (Heidegger, 1962, p. 288). What was the nature of Jasmine's hope?

Although hope is often understood as the expectation of a coming good (*bonum futurum*), Heidegger suggests that our everyday experience of hope has less to do with the 'futural' character of some specific thing towards which our hope is related (say, the new education programs in this story), and more to do with the 'existential meaning of hoping itself' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 396; King, 2001, p. 242).

Seen in this existential light hope is a kind of mood, or possible mode of attunement, in which we can sometimes find ourselves (Heidegger, 1962, p. 395). Hence, the ontological nature of our everyday experience of hoping for some specific thing lies primarily in hoping for something for ourselves (1962, p. 396). When we hope, therefore, we are unconsciously taking ourselves along with us into our hope and bringing ourselves up against what we are hoping for (1962, p. 396). Hence we only find ourselves caring about some possible future eventuation in the light of some existential possibility which we have already arrived at for ourselves and which continually matters to us (1962, p. 396).<sup>29</sup>

As Jasmine found herself hoping for something ‘good’ – something that she had laboured so long and so hard to make possible and to bring-into-being in the university situation – was she tacitly *bringing herself* (her underlying, implicit self-understanding) with her into her hope (McManus, 2015, p. 176)? Her hope was presupposed by how she already tacitly understood *herself* ‘in terms of being a good teacher’. For Jasmine, the curriculum that she designed and hoped for ‘is’ for the sake of providing education for student youth workers – that is to say, for the sake of her own possibility of being a good educator, rather than for the sake of her own possibility of being a curriculum designer (Blattner, 2006, p. 88; Dreyfus, 1991, p. 92; Heidegger, 1962, p. 116). She was only able to hope for something good for herself because she had already *arrived at herself*, meaning she had already come to her own understanding of what she was *being* when assigning herself to everyday tasks like curriculum design (Heidegger, 1962, p. 396).

While everything appeared to be going according to Jasmine’s anticipatory sense of the future, perhaps the way her own possibility-for-being as an educator mattered to her was concealed from her. Indeed, the deep significance of her own existential possibility seemed to emerge suddenly when she was told by her new boss that he had decided (for her) that she would be unable to continue on as an educator in her

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<sup>29</sup> At the time of writing this (October 2015), a friend of mine died after many years of being sick with cancer. He has three young daughters who are similar in age to my own children. In the years and months leading up to his death, I had hoped and prayed for him to get better, along with many other friends and family members. In the end, he was not healed in the way that we had hoped for. Yet, in a taken-for-granted way, I had not merely hoped for him to recover for his sake, or the sake of others, particularly his wife and daughters. I unconsciously took myself with me into my hope. My friend mattered to me; he was inseparable from my own having-been-ness and ability-to-be. That which I was hoping for came in the light of my own possibility that I have been, I am, and will always be, as his friend.

current context: ‘He sent me an email. It just said: I’m standing you down as the discipline leader for the youth work program ...’ In this moment of being presented with a distinct possibility of ‘no-longer-being-able-to-be-there’ in the university world as an educator, what way of responding to this situation opened for Jasmine (Heidegger, 1962, p. 294)?

Upon being confronted with this unforeseen ‘possibility of impossibility’, Jasmine was immediately inflicted by a ‘now’ which had not yet become actual (Heidegger, 1962, p. 373). Although this apparent end to her time as the program leader was not immediately effective, this educator was nonetheless ‘already *thrown* into this possibility’ of being unable to live out her ‘ownmost’ possibility-for-being as an educator – a vital possibility that continually grounded her everyday existence (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 184, 295).

What is it to be in one moment standing in an existential possibility upon which one’s own everyday existence is grounded, and then in the next, for it to appear that that very possibility is being pulled out right from under one’s feet?

*I didn’t know it was coming.*

*I was shocked.*

*I fainted ...*

At a time when Jasmine was hoping for an imminent good in relation to her own future as an educator (*bonum futurum*), she was floored instead by an unforeseen revelation of a coming threat (*malum futurum*) to her own possibility-for-being as an educator in her present context (Heidegger, 1962, p. 395). Perhaps we are kept from seeing the deep significance of an existential possibility, which we have already gotten ourselves into as a way of being, until we are confronted with a concrete possibility of no-longer-being-able to carry on living in the light of this way (1962, p. 183).

Another question also emerges here in relation to the way that Jasmine was immediately and seriously affected when informed of a possible inability for her to continue to be something that she had long *been* and was immersed in the process of being. More preciously, perhaps this manager’s authoritarian way of handing down

his decree for her to relinquish her own possibility, without so much as an opening for genuine conversation, spoke to an absence of authentic care?

*No consultation or anything.*

In light of such absence, perhaps we are being reminded here of the kind of care that must be taken when discussing with one another matters that may cut close to a person's own possibility-for-being – a possible way that that person implicitly takes themselves to be resolutely *being* in their given practice community.

### ***When we are uncertain of our own ability-to-be***

This section reveals a person's experience of being uncertain with respect to her own possibility-for-being as an educator. This story proceeds from the previous story. When Jasmine decided to fight for a program she cared about, she waited in vain for her own neighbourhood of educators to offer their support. She described how this experience came to affect the way she saw her own future as an educator in her community of practice.

*I still continue to have a very strong interest in the area of young people, but when the program was in trouble, what I would have expected, and what I would have done had another [youth work] program [at another university] been in trouble, I would have provided support for that program and the staff and the students in that program. Like, is there anything we can do? Can we write letters? Can we turn up? Can we assist with teaching? Can we do something?*

*There was no collective action, no sense of, oh look one of the programs, or one of the staff is in trouble, we better do something to try to work together to try and fix it, because if one gets in trouble the others are likely to get into strife too.*

*The opposite happened ... We had [youth work academics] from another university turn up and be part of a review to erode the program. Because the way in which higher education works at the moment, especially in relation to smaller programs, is that it's competitive ... People saw it as an opportunity to get an edge. And I found that very disheartening. So it was very divisive and it's left deep scars ... So I think, oh my god, I'm not sure if I want to have anything to do with that anymore. Maybe I can make a contribution in an allied field.*

*It was very good learning experience in terms of what I see as the future ... And it made me think, I've already given a lot to the sector*

*and I'm not sure that I've got the emotional energy to deal with that kind of stuff anymore. (Interview 10: Story 4)*

The educator in this story, Jasmine, was facing uncertainty in relation to her own future as an educator. Concealed beneath the skin of her uncertainty resided a deep wound that was still open from an event in her past. This event related to a time when the program in Jasmine's care was 'in trouble', as revealed in the previous section. While caught up in this strife, it appears that she did not receive offers of practical support from her own kind. The care she expected from her fellow (youth worker) educators from neighbouring universities did not arrive.

Given her circumstances, she had perhaps anticipated that they would temporarily suspend the competition they were normally forced to play against one another for the sake of a common cause that ran to the heart of their shared practice of preparing students to support and care for vulnerable young people. Instead, emerging from the 'telling silence' that Jasmine encountered was a sense of uncertainty about her own possibilities as an educator in a university world (Polt, 2006).

After this event occurred, it continued to affect her. In light of this absence of care, Jasmine recognised that she was no longer 'sure', or certain, whether she was able to carry on serving her particular practice community as an educator. When she found herself thrown into a crisis regarding the future of the program she was responsible for, she *expected* to receive offers of practical help from her colleagues, with whom she thought she shared an unspoken commitment towards the university education of a particular kind of helping professional. She remembered anticipating and waiting, in vain, for the provision of their voluntary care.

Heidegger (1988) suggests that we can only wait for the arrival of something that matters to us because we are already tacitly 'expectant' and attuned to our own 'can-be' (p. 289).<sup>30</sup> Thus, Jasmine's experience of waiting to see 'whether and when and how' her colleagues' support actually came (Heidegger, 1962, p. 306) was only possible because she grasped herself in relation to an already-unveiled '*sphere* from which' their support could be awaited (Heidegger, 1988, p. 289). Waiting for her

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<sup>30</sup> For example, it was only because I was already expectant of my own 'can be' as a father that I could eagerly await the arrival of my children; whereby, I already implicitly understood my own ability-to-be as a father 'as coming from' my children that I waited for, cared for, and attended to (Heidegger, 1988, p. 289).

colleagues' support was grounded in an existential expecting, in this case, an unconscious 'looking-forward-to' her own possibility for being-there in a shared university world of practice as a particular kind of educator (p. 289).

When it became clear to her that the support she waited for was not forthcoming, she lost heart. For Jasmine, in her publicised hour of need, it seemed that her fellow educators failed to support her in ways that she expected she would support them, should they ever fall upon similar circumstances. Contradictory in nature to the forms of support that Jasmine had been waiting for, some of her colleagues were seen to join forces with her internal attackers. 'The opposite happened ... We had [youth work academics] from another university turn up and be part of a review to erode the program.' How is it that her counterparts entered into this political situation as foes rather than as friends (Nixon, 2015)?

Rather than leaping to the program's defence as allies, or 'leaping in' to care for Jasmine and the other staff and students involved in her program, she saw their erosive involvement as intrinsic to a competition that they were already engaged in within a shared world of higher education (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158). Did being in this competition mean that her colleagues had come to see others like Jasmine as a threat, rather than as a person who mutually works towards a common purpose? 'Because the way in which higher education works at the moment, especially in relation to smaller programs, is that it's competitive ... People saw it as an opportunity to get an edge.'

Hence, Jasmine was presented with an absence of genuine care. There was an apparent lack of support from her known counterparts to help keep her program afloat. But what else was at stake beneath the surface of this more obvious struggle? In a deeper sense, did this absence of care play a part in Jasmine's hidden struggle regarding her possibility-for-being as an educator for whom youth worker education and young people essentially matter? Was there another kind of fight occurring within the fight for the program itself; an existential fight for her very own possibility-for-being as an educator in a moment when it was under sustained attack; when the true vulnerability of her own possibility as an educator was unveiling within her (Blattner, 2006, pp. 160–161)?

When it appeared for Jasmine that her kindred educators were working to ‘erode’ a program she had worked so long and hard to design and safeguard, was her certainty about continuing-to-be an educator who belongs to this community also eroded? This story reveals how the absence of care uncovered a deeper question relating to her future possibility as an educator. ‘It was a very good learning experience in terms of what I see as the future ...’

What was unveiling for Jasmine regarding her own thrown possibility as an educator? Did she see that she definitely wanted ‘out’ of a thrown possibility that she had resolutely let herself be? Perhaps the disheartening nature of *having-been-not-cared-for-by-others* engendered a clear limit situation, where she knew that her own ability-to-be had been exhausted to the extent that she was *definite* about no-longer-being-able-to-be-there in a hostile world she had been thrown into. On the contrary, attending to the words Jasmine spoke in this story, more than once in regards to her own future she revealed: ‘I’m not sure ...’ Another way of voicing this might be to say that, existing as an ‘open region’, a sense of uncertainty was able to ‘arrive’ in relation to her future in this shared field of practice (Diekelmann, 2005, p. 14).

For Heidegger (1962, p. 300), *certainty* primarily means to hold something as true. We hold, we keep, something as true when we can hold ourselves to it – when we do not ‘vacillate and tumble about in this truth’ the way we do in a ‘baseless opinion’, for the thing is uncovered for us in such a way that it binds us to itself (King, 2001, pp. 155–156). This story reveals how an educator experienced an erosion of this kind of certainty, of her own *conviction*, related to a ‘truth’ that she had long held herself to with respect to her very own possibility-for-being as an educator (Heidegger, 1962, p. 300). Where beforehand she carried a sense of being sure, her ability-to-be became shrouded in uncertainty (1962, p. 301). ‘I’m not sure if I want to have anything to do with that anymore.’

Perhaps the same could be said in relation to her sureness about *not* wanting to be out of this possibility? Indeed, the question arising here is, what is it that held her back from letting go of, or relinquishing, a possibility that she had long held herself to?

Perhaps it was the constancy of Jasmine’s ‘very strong interest’ in young people that formed her implicit uncertainty about whether she had encountered an endpoint of

her ability-to-be. In a sense, she seemed to be caught in between two unveiled possibilities, both of which were in tension: a possibility of being-able and a possibility of no-longer-being-able to be there within the given context she had been thrown into (Heidegger, 1962, p. 294). She was open to the disclosure of a ‘quiet force of the possible’ (1962, pp. 445–446). Such was the force of her ontological possibility that she stood in – of being an educator for whom the possibilities of young people were a constant matter of concern – that her own being-possible could withstand attacking forces aiming to erode and subvert it from within her own community.

The ‘deep scars’ this experience left within this educator serve as a reminder of a dynamic of our togetherness within a shared world of practice. Without receiving the genuine care of others, an educator’s conviction ‘in the truth’ of her being-there for others diminishes (Heidegger, 1962, p. 300).

***The possibilities of others are always bound up with our own***

This section shows how the possibilities of others remain fundamentally important to us as we live out our own, whether explicitly or not. The following story is told by Ruby, a coordinator of a bachelor of youth work. She recalled talking with new students about the possibilities of a particular young person she had worked with.

*I still teach because I want to connect with my first years. I still love to excite young people about the course they’re in and that they’re going to make a difference. Youth workers make a difference in the world every day of the week, and I want them to be excited about that. Most young students that are here, they rarely understand why they’re here completely. Particularly in first semester, but they do want to make a difference. They’re drawn to it.*

*I engage students in the learning through stories. I’ve kept working in the sector as a youth worker. So, I use a story in class about this young woman [Frankie] who landed on my doorstep. I’ve never seen such resilience, coupled with such deprivation and abuse. This is me as a youth worker, and through a set of circumstances she landed on my doorstep. And I had to collectively work every part of the service system. This is a young woman who had never been to the doctor. Never been to the dentist. [Frankie had] done 11-13 residences and 11-13 schools. She’d witnessed a whole heap of stuff that she still won’t speak about. She didn’t know what a vegetable was. She didn’t know how to set the table; had no income. Had no housing. Had mental health issues. Had no nutritional value whatsoever – [Frankie] was sick. So her white*

*blood count for example was very low, and I knew that because one of the things I did was send her to the doctors and get blood tests run. So [Frankie] was ill, and her nutritional status was so poor. I've never seen anything like it. Now that young woman, against all of her family's wishes and against the abuser's wishes, had finished Year 12 with [a high score]. Now that's impressive.*

*I talked about the fact that I can't get her to go to counselling even though I think she should. She understands the choice completely, and I respect it. There's nothing I can do. I can't take her kicking and screaming there. So, we've discussed the choice at length, because I actually think it will be a barrier for her future relationships. She's not ready to do it. But, she completely understands because she's smart. She understands the choice, she's just not prepared to exercise it. It's up to her. (Interview 3: Story 1)*

Ruby shares how she 'still loves to teach' students who are drawn to being a professional youth worker. In this story, she recalled a time when she chose herself to be the one to talk to a class of students who were new to the program she coordinates. She sought 'to excite' them about taking up their own possibilities of being a kind of worker who makes a difference in the everyday lives of young people. 'To excite' (*excitare*) originally means to set in motion, to call, to invite, to get something on the road in a gentle manner (Heidegger, 1968, p. 117).

In this story Ruby showed a practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in being able to 'use' and narrate her own story of having been there to care for Frankie (Ricoeur, 2005, p. 99). In this way, Ruby's being-possible as an educator was composed of her own having-been-ness. Her past was not dead, but was invoked in her teaching praxis.

And yet, there was another temporal dynamic that ran even deeper to the heart of how Ruby was being in this moment. In telling her story about Frankie, in order to excite students about their own possibilities, the past, present and future belonging to Frankie 'exploded into one another' (Greaves, 2010, p. 100). Like Ruby and her students, Frankie primarily exists as time (Heidegger, 1992b, p. 197). As such, Ruby saw Frankie's temporal existence as 'torn open into present, past and future' (Heidegger, 2009a, p. 122). Ruby's being as an educator is primarily steeped in caring about the lived past, present and future of Frankie. While Frankie's living past may have already been 'deprived' of the care that many of us take for granted, Ruby refused to accept that this meant that Frankie's own future time was bound to be destitute.

In the narrative that Ruby shared with her students, Frankie's 'not yet' was a matter of concern that informed how Ruby supported her. Ruby related to Frankie hopefully, as having an open future, as having a large part of her 'whole' life still ahead of her (Heidegger, 1962, p. 280). Ruby did not understand Frankie as something fixed, but as someone futural. She essentially related to Frankie as having many more tomorrows left in her own future than yesterdays remained in her past (Wright-St Clair's, 2008, p. 205). Hence, Ruby cared for Frankie's own future in a distinct way: she dealt with another person's future 'now' that had not yet become actual (Heidegger, 1962, p. 373).

In speaking to her new students about her past experience of working with Frankie, the emphasis was not on how Ruby herself had seen Frankie's future as mattering, but how Ruby had sought to help this young person to recall her own futural existence as being significant (Heidegger, 1962, p. 159). Ruby spoke to her new students about her own little acts, like sending Frankie to the doctor, accompanying her to the dentist, educating her about vegetables, and talking to her about counseling. In telling this story, was Ruby hoping that her students might sense the way that youth workers seek for young people to see that their own future lives are mattering? 'I talked about the fact that I can't get her to go to counselling even though I think she should ... we've discussed the choice at length, because I actually think it will be a barrier for her future relationships.'

As Ruby's story reveals, an educator's own temporal existence is always entangled with other people's unique temporal lives. This story discloses that being an educator (in youth work) perhaps means to converse with students about their own possibilities-for-being that are already before them, and to speak with them in such a way that these learners, in hearing, might follow a living tradition of genuinely caring about the possibilities and futural lives of vulnerable people in the world, such as Frankie.

After all, according to its sense teaching means: speaking to another, approaching another in the mode of communicating. The genuine being of one who teaches is to stand before another, and speak to him in such a way that the other, in hearing, goes along with him. (Heidegger, 2009b, p. 221)

### *Concluding comments*

The stories in this chapter have shown contrasting ways a person's own possibility-for-being as an educator is always in play, whether this is recognised or not. For the most part, a person's own possibility-for-being (as an educator) is covered up as they are absorbed in the everydayness of living out this very existential possibility that they are already tacitly in the way, in the truth, and in the light of being with others. A person's own ability-to-be may also remain hidden when a limit situation arises that presents them with a transparent limit to what they are able, and unable, to be for others as an educator in a university world.

But it appears that a person may not always be kept from seeing their own possibility-for-being. That is, occasionally a person's taken-for-granted existential possibility-for-being may be unveiled for them through the emergence of a possibility that they are no-longer-able-to-be-there in the university world (of youth worker education) as an educator. On this point, what came into view is a concern about how we go about conversing with educators on issues that encompass their own ability-to-be as an educator in a university world. Indeed, an existential possibility that a person is already in the process of living out may deeply matter to them in ways that others, or the person themselves, may not be able to see. And hence, a call has emerged for university leaders to take serious care, to create spaces for genuine conversation, when deliberating over decisions that may affect an existential possibility that is not their own to surrender, but instead belongs to a person who has implicitly given themselves to a kind of possibility-for-being an educator who builds a university education of aspiring helping professionals amongst niche fields like youth work.

These insights do not allow us to reach a simple conclusion: that educators merely oscillate between a possibility of being-able-to-be-there on one hand, and on the other, a possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there. Rather, this chapter has also revealed how educators also experience times of *being uncertain* about their own possibility-for-being as an educator. Regarding this differing aspect, a concern has come to light about the kind of care and tangible support that is extended and available to educators who find themselves thrown into a situation which stretches their own ability to keep being in the university world as an educator.

Through contemplating Ruby's story in the final section, I am left wondering about what our societies stand to lose when educators like Ruby are no longer able to keep being in an often careless culture that permeates the university sector. I argue that by rendering university worlds increasingly inhumane and impossible for educators to cope with, we are inadvertently pushing out the kind of practitioner who does not primarily educate for the sake of their own possibilities, but for the sake of preparing youth workers for whom the futures and possibilities of young people, like Frankie, are upheld as a primary project of concern.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion: In the life stream of being

*Dwelling with the research text has been like ...*

*Sitting down in front of a campfire  
with friends  
on a cold night.*

*Slowly, our conversation flickers out  
until we are held by a silent watchfulness  
of what the fire is showing us.*

*At first, I am drawn to notice the strong flames,  
dancing boldly  
up into the night sky.*

*But gradually,  
I begin to attend to the small sparks  
initially overlooked,  
how they are playing in between  
the twisting sheets of meaning flames.*

*When the moment comes  
when I can no longer keep my eyes open,  
my time of watching is brought to rest.*

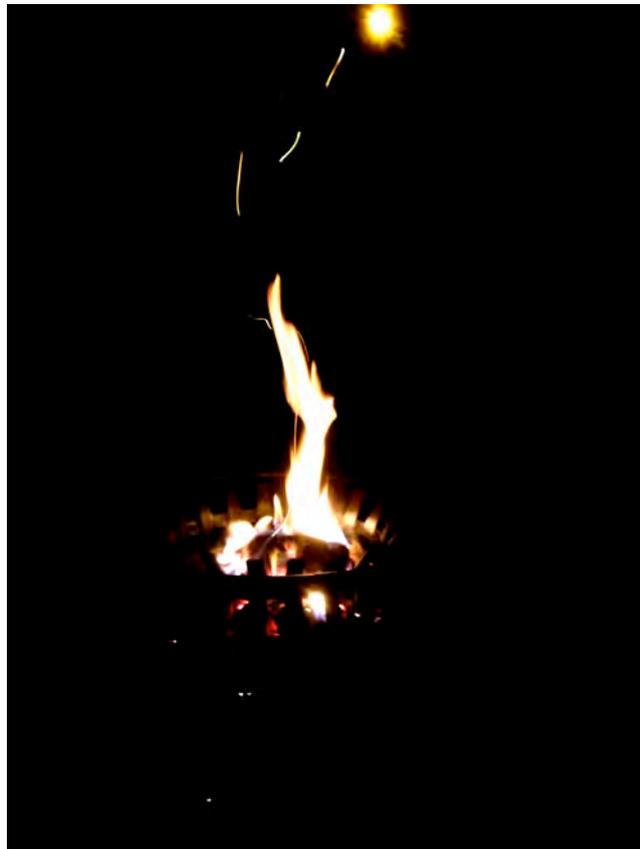
*A deep sleep falls on me.  
And yet,  
sparks continue to fly up into the night,  
tirelessly watching over me  
while I sleep.*

(J. Spier, 19 November 2015)

In this thesis I have lingered watchfully at storied moments of *being*, as lived and described by twelve people. Over a span of two and a half years, I have dwelt conversationally in a to-and-fro play with the given research text, between its parts and its whole. Gradually, small sparks between the flames have emanated taken-for-granted understandings of how ‘being an educator’ is experienced. I have lost myself in a meditative journey of thinking, seeking to let the research text remind me of forgotten meanings of the phenomena that are concealed within and between the words. Such a hermeneutic process has come upon me, and it is not one I can ever overcome. The restless unfolding of this research has been a deeply transformative experience for me. As an educator, a parent, a doctoral student, and a person, I have

‘lived the question’ in all its simplicity and complexity (Rilke, 2014): how is it to be an educator in university youth worker education? Essentially, my inquiry has been a temporal journey of wondering, of questioning, of writing and of being-in-the-play of hermeneutic conversation about an existential possibility that I had already grasped myself as being.

In this chapter of the thesis, I gather together some sparks that I have seen, knowing there are many that I have not. I also point to a thesis that is flying up for me from the thesis. I listen for how the findings of this study might resonate with other research. I offer some recommendations for shared worlds of practice. I name some limitations of this study, and present possibilities for further conversation, wondering and research. I circle back to my own pre-understandings (contemplated in the first chapter) to see how they have been regenerated upon the pathway. To conclude this thesis, I am summoned by an appeal: to tend continually to the still, small voice of being amidst the deafening roar and quickening tempo of our own everyday existence in the world.



**Figure 3: Campfire in our front yard**

(Photo: J. Spier)

### ***Gathering sparks***

Let me gather some insights together that seem to be growing within the discussion chapters and research text.

During my interview conversations, several educators spoke the word ‘game’, and the phrase ‘playing the game’, in reference to their everyday university world of practice. People spoke of having to ‘follow the rules’, of having to ‘go along with’ the ‘fixed process’ of ‘performance management’, ‘form filling’, ‘power battles’, and ‘staff cuts despite expanding student numbers’. One educator confessed: ‘Many times in one sense I felt like I can’t keep doing this’. One educator described the nature of this game as ‘ruthless’. This word fits with a telling portrayal – emerging from the previous three discussion chapters – of ‘how it is’ being there as an educator in a university world.

For example, do you remember Jasmine’s story in the previous chapter? One moment, things were going well for her in the play of being an educator. She was finally on the verge of ‘rolling out’ something good. And then, ‘whack’, without forewarning, something happened against the flow of play. Something happened that she ‘did not see coming’: outside her field of vision another player ran up from behind her and cut down something before it had a chance to grow and offer fruit for tomorrow’s youth workers. Suddenly, the world stood to lose something ripe with promise. Something was cut short, without so much as a sniff of conversation. ‘He said, oh, it’s not going to make money ...’

I am left wondering: what holds us in the ‘spell’ of such a hostile game (Gadamer, 2013, p. 111)? How are our dealings with this fiery world tided over?

Perhaps it is the unfixed nature of the play that continually draws us in. Do you remember stories in Chapter 6 that reveal how moments of live conversing can sometimes catch educators off guard? Remember Mary popping in unannounced to Peter’s office for an impromptu chat? When she showed up, Peter was probably trying to reach the summit of a mountain of jobs that can never be reached. But suddenly, a moment later, there they were, just chatting. And then, an unexpected recognition arrived for them in the play: ‘Look how much I’ve grown!’

Remember what happened to Kendall? There she was, about to ‘hit play’ on another class, probably gathering her pre-prepared questions for the scheduled class discussion. Then one of her students was suddenly at her side. What did she want? Maybe an extension for her overdue essay. But something unforeseen arose. With tears in her eyes, this student softly said: ‘I just want to say thank you’. And with this, Kendall was graced with a surprising moment that would live on for her. She was fleetingly warmed in the midst of an often cold, ‘heartless’ game.

And then there are other unexpected happenings that do not originate in the game but continue to burn from a person’s practice life *before* they came to be educators in a youth work program. Remember the alive moment from Peter’s past, when he was going for a drive one night with Jimmy (in Chapter 7)? At first this occasion probably unfolded as Peter had anticipated. Then suddenly, amidst the live play of their conversation, something leapt out at him like a rock exploding in a campfire: *Jimmy’s girlfriend is pregnant*. What was it like to be there with them in this moment? Following this twist, Peter steered clear of diving in with his own ideas on what Jimmy and his girlfriend should do. Rather, he let Jimmy find his way, sensing a decision that was not his own to bear. It is moments like these, of being there with Jimmy, that continually stoke Peter’s own possibilities of being a university educator with aspiring youth workers.

Once a person is thrown into a game to teach, other sorts of moments can also emerge in the play. Equally out of the blue, these moments may be less warmly received when they first hit us. Some may throw educators ‘off their game’ rather than steeling them to stay in it. Do you recall Emma’s engulfing shame (in Chapter 6)? Her sense of being ‘SO ashamed’ swallowed her when she saw how something she had improvised in the play had put a student ‘through pain’. Equally surprising was what happened next. She did not anticipate a new sensibility that grew out of this painful happening, like the shoots of new growth covering burnt trees following a bushfire.

I could have missed the pain  
But I’d have had to miss the dance.  
(‘The Dance’, song lyrics by Arata, 1989)

Do you recall another educator's moment, as recalled in Chapter 7, when she was startled by something unforeseen while mundanely reading a report. Three little words jumped out to her – 'except for one' – that immediately gripped her with a sense that her colleagues did not take her seriously. It emerged that something she had 'not been' was an issue for her colleagues.

Remember Sophie's experience of suddenly being confronted with the tragic death of her young godson (in Chapter 7)? This event was like an arson attack in the night. No part of her life lay outside the path of the fire, including her experience as an educator. As Sophie journeyed through the semester, she brought her unspoken grief along with her. She could not leave it at the door. Slowly, she noticed how she was *not* being present with her students in the way she *had been* in her past. 'How she was' as a grieving godmother influenced her way of relating with students and their learning experiences. A 'big clunky moment' arrived as she fell into a serious chat with herself: 'OK Sophie, you know how to do this'. And with this, she was ready to get back to a way she had been as she pressed ahead.

On this note, I am brought back to my own life as an educator in the play of undergraduate youth worker education, beginning over seven years ago. After all, it was my experiences that originally lit my trail of wonder. One particular story, lived and voiced by a fellow educator whom I deeply respect, reminds me of a special vitality and quality that some, but not all, moments of my experience still hold for me.

*We were talking about [a hotly debated social issue] ... And I posed a question to the students ... And this room full of students kind of paused ... And they looked at me, and they were like ... [dramatic pause], whaaaaaat? And I repeated the question again ... And they all paused, and were looking at me like I was screwing with them. And it was a wonderful moment of joy. (Interview 6: Story 6)*

This story shows 'how it is' sometimes to be there as an educator in the play of youth worker education. When I read this story, I am filled with a sense of knowing: Yes! I have been there too! Yes, I have my own store of a few precious moments like this one, which come of their own volition and timing, irrespective of how hard I push to make them happen. Yes, I have partaken in shared moments like these that are not snuffed out, but are able to remind me that the countless other times, when it seems I am labouring in vain, are still worth living.

Distinct moments that happen for us when we are in the everyday play – both those that announce themselves as being ‘joyful’ and other kinds – are not slices of clock time that all slip away from us into the past. Rather, a person’s life as an educator is punctuated with *my* ‘living nows’ that continue to burn for me, whether or not they are ever recalled (Harman, 2007, p. 43; van Manen, 2014, p. 34).

As educators, as human beings of openness, significant moments that remain intact from our living past can be relived, rekindled, replayed and re-torn open for us. We never exist primarily in the ‘here and now’. And yet, the greatest tragedy of the game is that, most often, we are forced to ‘move on’ while our own stories are left unfathomed and dwindling inside us.<sup>31</sup>

### *A thesis flying up from the thesis*

‘Being an educator’ is an uncontainable phenomenon that happens to us amidst our living universe of shared practice. When we are immersed in the everyday life stream of being an educator, we are always open to how distinct moments in the play appear to matter (and not matter) to us and to others.

Many of the everyday happenings that arise for us in the play of our busywork are experienced as commonplace. Their significance quickly dissolves. And yet, we cannot always ‘read’ ahead of time what the life stream will bring us, and how the arrival of some happenings will move and transform us. Occasionally, we find ourselves thrown into being there in a flared-up moment that we immediately experience as ‘tautly strung’ (Heidegger, in a letter to Elisabeth Blochmann, quoted in Crowe, 2006, p. 171). Some of these moments seem suddenly to lift us up on the shoulders of our everyday existence, while others tear us down, amongst other possibilities. The differing significance and quality of these moments, which stand outside of themselves, continue to burn for us beyond the limits of measurable time and space, regardless of whether we are ever able to put our fingers or words on them.

‘Being an educator’, therefore, is always a life lived in the *suspense of being*, whether this is recognised or not. Constantly immersed in pre-planned and unplanned

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<sup>31</sup> I am playing here with a quotation that is commonly attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes: ‘Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside us’.

conversational events with others, even a ‘dull moment’ of play can suddenly jolt to life with deep meaning, as if out of nowhere. Regardless of how long we have been ‘playing the game’, and how tactfully we may be able to ‘read’ where the temporal play is taking us, we are continually surprised by what our experiences bring. The taken-for-granted indeterminable – and occasionally intense – nature of an educator’s own experiences is what continues to captivate them in the fascination of being there in a university game, a world often devoid of humane care and fraught with recklessness (Gadamer, 2013, p. 111).

It has been further uncovered that, when a person enters a game as an educator, they also bring with them vital life moments that have happened to them prior to being an educator. Such is the intensity of certain past stand-out moments that they continue to fire their vehement ways of being an educator today, as they press forward into their own possibilities.

In light of this emerging insight, it is critically important that we do not let significant moments that happen to university educators in the game ‘slip away’, beneath the ordinary flow of their workaday existence (Crowe, 2006, p. 171). In enabling educators to recall moments that still smoulder for them, the purpose is not merely to rehash them for their own aesthetic sake, by basking in their joy or blistering in their sorrow, whatever each case may be. Rather, the thrust of wondering at the interruptive and interpretive nature of these small life moments, both times of shadow and light, is to help us to see and seize upon possibilities and futural directions for our ‘own life’ as an educator.

Each university educator, both within youth work and other academic fields, needs to take up their own responsibility to tend to the fire of their own shared experiences. Educational leaders need to take seriously their responsibility to cultivate the conditions that will promote the growth of this process. Otherwise, we collectively run the risk that a historical ‘vehement life’ unique to being a university educator, still essential in drawing people into being and remaining in such a way of life, will be withdrawn (Heidegger, quoted in Crowe, 2006, p. 171).

It is a rationalistic misjudgement  
of the essence of the personal stream of life,

if one intends and demands  
that it vibrate in the same broad and sonorous amplitudes  
that well up in graced moments.  
Such claims grow out of a defect in inner humility  
before the mystery and grace-character of all life.  
We must be able to wait  
for the tautly strung intensities of meaningful life –  
and we must remain in continuity with these moments –  
no so much to enjoy them as to mold them into life –  
in the continuing course of life,  
they are taken along  
and incorporated into  
the rhythm of all futural life.  
(Heidegger, in an early letter to his friend Elisabeth Blochmann, quoted in  
Crowe, 2006, p. 171).

### ***Resonance with other research***

This phenomenological research shares kindred findings with other phenomenological research.

I notice resounding links with Scown's (2003) study of the lived experience of 'being an academic'. His study was based on interviews with fifteen academics from varying disciplines situated in a large, established university in a metropolitan capital in Australia. Informed by van Manen's (1990) framework for hermeneutical phenomenology, a standout finding for me is this: 'being an academic is experienced as relating within a community of learners' (Scown, 2003, p. 184).

Essential to this theme, Scown discovers that 'conversation' touches 'the heart' of the everyday experiences of many academics in their lived relationships with others in their community of practice (p. 187). This finding affirms and evokes the stories and themes discussed in Chapter 6 of my thesis ('Being in conversation').

From these glimpses arriving in Scown's study, Scown makes recommendations for the theory and practice of higher education. This work rallies towards a series of challenges, which my study seems to be serving as a reminder of:

- A challenge for each academic: *listen to your experience*
- A challenge for all academics: *listen to one another*
- A challenge for academic leaders: *listen to the voice of academic experience*

- A challenge for policy makers: *create a climate of listening* (pp. 247–251).

Being attuned to university educators' experiences, and nurturing the narrating and interpretive listening of their stories, runs to the heart of Scown's challenges, and strongly resonates with the findings of this thesis.

Where Scown articulated the purposive directions (the 'what fors') that he sees as imbuing academic work with its unique significance, my work assigns more emphasis on the concealed significance of what uniquely happens for a person in particular moments of practice – be that a specific encounter with a student, a manager or a colleague – and the personal significance that continues to grip them in the wake of these lived moments.

In addition, there is a link between the ontological findings of my inquiry and a recent project conducted by the leaders of undergraduate youth work education in Australia. This watershed project entailed collaboration between the heads of all youth work-specific degrees in Australian public universities (Cooper et al., 2014).

The thrust of this project was to co-create a unified curriculum and pedagogy to sustain the niche academic profession of youth work into the future. One of the deliverables of the project is particularly relevant to this research: a clear commitment to develop an international youth work educator's network, including establishing a forum for educators in this field to 'discuss pedagogy and youth work' (Cooper et al., 2014, p. 4). While recognising the importance of dialogue about the 'what', 'how' and 'why' we teach as youth work educators, my research has attended to the shared meanings of 'being an educator' in this context.

This direction also corresponds with a project reported by Harper (1996), which established a *community of conversation* to facilitate a process of self-reflection among teacher scholars. This space was provided for faculty to look at their own practice and to reflect on it in conversations with a group of peers over the course of an entire academic year (p. 251). Again, the impetus seems to have been becoming attuned to educators' pedagogical practice, rather than asking ontological questions related to the nature of situated happenings and modes of 'being' as an educator.

By contrast, a call to listen to our stories of practice with greater ontological sensibilities can be found in Spence and Smythe's (2008) Heideggerian hermeneutic study on the 'essential meaning of *being* a nurse'. The findings of my work seem to be raising a similar call for university educators as Spence and Smythe make for nurses: to question the meaning of 'being a nurse' continually amid a complex and increasingly technological world. They call upon their own profession to take up the endless task of questioning unfixed meanings that lie in the everyday experience of all nursing. Spence and Smythe gently invite nurses to stir from the slumber of 'everydayness', of routine practice, to connect again with what it already means to be a nurse (p. 251). According to these co-authors, such a quest can have transformative repercussions for nurses' practice lives and the people they serve.

Notably, rather than abstracting a theoretical model for nurses to follow, they trust nurses to tread their own ways towards '[listening] to their lives, to be wakeful to how experience speaks as mood and embodied action, and to learn from the aftermath of feelings that speak of authentic nursing' (Spence & Smythe, 2008, p. 251). I hear a strong message that exceeds the worlds of nursing praxis. Other kinds of practitioners, including university educators in youth work and other fields, may be animated by this same kind of ontological quest in an equally complex and technocratic world.

Related approaches from adult and higher education are found in the practices of university educators Peter Willis (Australia) and Parker Palmer (US). Palmer (2004) describes his practice of working with groups of educators in a manner that I see as joining the power of poetic and narrative texts and applied hermeneutic reflexivity. He gives informative examples from his own practice, where he elaborates how he works with educators to question the meaning of their own practice lives as educators (see chapter 6 'The Truth Told Slant: The Power of Metaphor' in Palmer, 2004).

Striking a chord, Willis' (2013) study examines how members of an informal learning group exchange practice stories about events of *convivial* life expressions drawn from their everyday lives. The emphasis was on creating an informal and collaborative learning forum where practices of convivial forms of 'backyard

civilisation' could be illuminated and cultivated. Like Palmer, Willis invokes the words of Emily Dickenson to describe his shared practice (of 'story exchanging') as a quest to 'tell the truth but tell it slant' (p. 57). For Willis and friends, conviviality is a countermove to the obsessiveness with productivity in society. I see a similar story emerging from my research in the context of higher education.

Finally, there is resonance between the findings of this research and the ontological insights and phenomenological sensibilities of Åkerlind (2004), Gazza (2009), Giles (2008), Henriksson (2012), Kingston (2008), Poorman and Mastorovich (2014), and van Manen (1990), amongst others. Each of these inquiries, in their own way, seeks to understand the contextual meanings and experiences of educators in light of existential and philosophical wondering, rather than causal, evidence-based and explanatory theories.

### ***Implications for practice***

In this section I improvise with Scown's (2003) series of challenges (articulated in the previous section) to interweave several invitations that I see emerging from my research. I see it as a struggle belonging to each educator and community of practice to find their own ways of taking over these invitations within their own context.

### **An invitation for educators: listen and work with your life stories**

As university educators, can we hear a call to cultivate our own 'ontological education' *as educators* – through listening and working with our own stories of lived experience?

In some corners of higher education, a critical call can already be heard telling us that the normative privileging of ways of 'knowing' and 'acting' in professional learning is no longer sufficient when it comes to the university-hosted formation of professional youth workers (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Dall'Alba, 2009b, 2009c; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Thomson, 2001). Welcomingly, such a call is voiced by the leaders of Australian university youth work education, who push for the reshaping of the curriculum for Australian youth work professional education to address the 'central importance of the domain of being' (Cooper et al., 2014, p. 16). This movement spurs university educators to become more attuned to how the personal process of ontological formation is unfolding within learners, regarding

possible ‘ways of being’ characteristic of their chosen profession. But an invitation arising here for educators *themselves* is this: How are you tending to the fire of your own ontological formation in being a university educator?

Everything depends on the education of the university instructors – *they as primary educators must educate themselves first and find a secure and stable form of it*. Otherwise, the whole thing could suffocate from sheer organization. (Heidegger, 1991, p. 574, my emphasis)

### **Another invitation for educators: listen to one another’s stories**

Emanating from the educators’ stories in this thesis is a summons to an important yet stifled art: *listen to one another’s stories*. It seems that it is common for educators, especially in niche academic fields like youth work, to carry within them a sense of being misunderstood. This may come from conversational events that occur between an educator and educators from other academic ‘silos’ within their community of practice. However, a person may also carry a hidden sense of being misunderstood by fellow educators within their own discipline. To this situation, Gadamer’s words point us in a hopeful direction:

In the end it is a communal listening. There is no last, definitive word. That is given to no one. If the other misunderstands me, then I must speak different until she understands me. We are always only underway. (2005, p. 62)

At the heart of this invitation is a call to ‘give way’ to the communal discipline of telling and hearing one another’s life stories as educators. For example, imagine a cross-disciplinary academic conference, or retreat, where instead of gathering to feed on our research output, we narrated and listened to our own life stories and experiences as educators and people.

To become always capable of conversation – that is, to listen to the Other – appears to me to be the true attainment of humanity. (Gadamer, 2006, p. 358)

### **An invitation for leaders: listen to educators’ stories**

Critically important is the need for all higher education leaders and decision makers to relate and converse with university educators in a more humane manner, and to listen to and nurture the ongoing life stories of university educators. In particular, conversations about a possible ‘not-yet’ that implicates an educator must be handled with care. For example, when leaders converse with educators about a future that has

already been decided, then this event does not fall within the realm of true conversation. And yet, it is only through genuine conversation processes that any (university) world of practice is rendered humane and truly democratic for its dwellers (Derrida, 1997; Nixon, 2015).

### **Another invitation for leaders: support educators to work with their stories**

Reform is needed to ensure educators have the free space, particularly temporal, to be able to narrate their own moments of practice (Gadamer, 1992, p. 59; Harper, 1996; Ricoeur, 2005). Building on the first invitation in this section, the following question is offered for educational leaders: How can university educators be supported to work with their own stories?

As I begin to ponder ways in which university educators can be supported to work with the texts of their own experiential stories of practice, I note Willis' (2015) reservations about group work dynamics in the Australian context:

*Reserved people in need of healing may not be attracted by Palmer's espousal of the public and delicate arena of circles of trust and prefer the more private services of a therapist. (p. 3)*

The sentence in italics provokes some thoughts ... I am heartened to note the Center for Courage & Renewal (C&R), founded by Parker Palmer, is now operational in Australasia. The local extensions of this work seem to be focused on utilising Palmer's methodology in various group work events, particularly retreats. This work has great merit. Yet, taking the lead of Willis' insights, I wonder how this kind of work might be expanded to help educators work with the texts of their own practice stories in more confidential settings, possibly one-on-one with humanist-existential therapists specialising in the formation of educators and educational leaders.

For example, nurses sometimes take up an existential therapy approach when talking with a patient about what the patient's own experiences mean to them. When nurses and patients openly explore these meanings together, they glimpse possibilities that may help a patient to confront what is happening for them, in their past, present and future lives (Slevin, 2003, p. 553). Could some university educators desire and benefit from such opportunities to converse about the existential meanings of their own in-motion stories, should they be available?

I am struck by the realisation that, as professionals, we are able to seek out readily available cognitive therapists who instruct us to make sense of our own experiences and struggles in terms of psychological theory. Beyond these limits, I wonder about possible ways of making the rich gifts of humanistic and existential philosophy available for educators, and other practitioners, in therapeutic modes that empower them to question and interpret the meaning of texts that speak of their own lived experience in the vein of existential-hermeneutic analysis.

But this question – of *how* we can enable educators to work with their stories – needs to be put to educators: How do *they* want to be engaged in this kind of ‘open work’; of reading significant events and moments that arise for them in the course of being an educator, both within and beyond pedagogical situations (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 326)? University educators need to be supported to own the process of narrating and interpreting the meaning of how ‘being an educator’ matters to them. For example, imagine academic sabbaticals where a university educator is released to work with their own stories, rather than sent away to keep producing in another ‘paddock’?

### **An invitation for policy makers: create a culture of listening**

As Scown (2003, p. 251) points out, there is a limit to each university educator’s capacity to shape his or her broader historical-cultural situation at a macro level (as for vice-chancellors, academic managers, higher education workers and students). However, each of these players in the game has a voice that can join the play of policy making. The challenge then for policy designers and decision makers is to allow policies and strategies to be informed by the voices and experiential narratives of diverse players within higher education. What I am broadly advocating here is a more phenomenological approach to policy-making processes – not only appreciating the experiences of the makers (Eisenberg, 2011, p. 101), but the lives of those whom the policy reaches.

### ***Limitations***

I now turn to recognise the finite nature of this research, which manifests itself in a myriad of ways. In this section I comment on just three: the limits of my pathway, the limits of hermeneutics and the participants.

## **A finite pathway**

Whatever goal we have set ourselves for inquiry, we can only ever choose one of many pathways that lie within the forest (Steiner, 1978, p. 20). Whatever pathway of language we may carefully tread, there is a limit to what language is able to accomplish for us, in terms of the un-concealment of the nature of being. Language kindly gives us glimpses, but never the full show. For example, my chosen pathway can never do justice to the lived moments of ‘living conversation’ presented in this thesis – as lived by educators *with* other human beings: ‘the tone of voice, the cadence, the melody of the sentences, the rhythm, and so on’ (Heidegger, 2010c, p. 82). The artistic forms of hermeneutic commentary and poetry may attend to lived moments with greater dignity than scientific discourses, but they can never be a supplement for being there (Heidegger, 1962).

Indeed, before the first word of any inquiry is spoken, including hermeneutic ontological-phenomenological inquiries like mine, they are finite and paradoxical in nature because they are, in essence, seeking to speak the unspeakable, describe the indescribable, touch on the untouchable, and glimpse what can never be fully revealed: the abundant meaning of being.

A moment in an interview with Gadamer hits home this important limitation of my pathway:

*JG*: If I understand you correctly, you are emphasizing with this assertion the limits of language, while one gets the impression from *Truth and Method* that the universe of language is boundless.

*HGG*: No, no! I have never thought and never ever said that everything is language. Being that can be understood, in so far as it can be understood, is language. This contains a limitation. What cannot be understood can pose an endless task of at least finding a word that comes a little closer to the matter [*die Sache*]. (Gadamer, 2007, p. 417)

## **The finite nature of hermeneutics**

Taken together, the previous three interpretive chapters constitute the heart of this thesis. They are my curated mosaic of practitioners’ stories of practice. While my research companions have guided me in this process every step of the way, I take responsibility for the way the stories have been crafted, selected and interpreted. If another person were given the same research text to interpret, our interpretations

would differ. Even my own readings are bound to shift should I ever revisit this text in my future. There is always more that can be glimpsed.

As my research process is brought to its resting place, my interpretive work said and done, I arrive at a place of non-finality. A hermeneutic process can never really rest. My ongoing quest has not allowed me to reach any ‘hard and fast’ answers to speak of. Instead, I can only point to the inexhaustible mystery of what ‘is’, and all that is still not yet known (Smythe, 2011, p. 51). Our wondering never ceases. Such is the paradoxical nature of this way of inquiry, in all its inherent limitedness and limitlessness.

I know the hermeneutic process has helped me to see things I had missed. But when we bring ourselves before the voice of any given text, there is always more to be glimpsed; more to be said about what hangs in the gallery; more stories in the research text that were held back (Gadamer, 1992, p. 76).

Crucially, I am also limited from seeing how other guests in the ‘gallery’ may hear the stories speak to them. During my many hermeneutic dialogues with my supervisors, after sharing some glimpses that had arrived for me from pondering a particular story for weeks, they would often point out something obvious I had somehow been oblivious to. Similarly, I know that different and unforeseeable insights will emerge for different readers, in terms of how the text resonates with their own situated experiences of being. Moreover, I cannot know as a novice hermeneutic phenomenologist whether my interpretive work will succeed in being eclipsed by the understandings that my interpretations are seeking to bring to light (Gadamer, 2013, p. 401).

### **The range of participants**

The participants for this research were twelve lecturers drawn from five higher education institutions across Australia. This group reflects a diversity of academic ranks, seniority and pathways, practice backgrounds, and strongly held views on both youth work and university education for aspiring youth workers. And yet, I noticed during the recruitment phase, when using the snowballing technique, that participants sometimes seemed to refer me to the ‘key players’ who are well known and versed in the field, rather than to the more junior, part-time, adjunct or sessional educators

involved in a youth work education program. Likewise, it later came to my attention that there are several recently retired educators who are key pioneers in university youth worker education. An opportunity might have been lost through the absence of the voices and stories of younger and emeritus educators in the field.

In addition, while I was initially interested to give this research an international rather than national flavour, through dialogue with my supervisors, the decision was made to limit this project to the Australian experience. And yet, while this study was bounded in this way, it is worth remembering that many people in other countries, from diverse walks of life, have experienced the phenomenon of ‘being an educator’ in a university-hosted youth work education program. What might their stories reveal?

Finally, a fundamental limitation relates to the absence of students’ participation in my research. Yet each educator’s story is ontologically bound up with the stories of particular students with whom the dance of education has been shared.

Also in play in the participants’ stories – both in the foreground and background – are the appearances of the behaviour and voices of other players, including colleagues from other disciplines and universities, managers, vice chancellors, family members, and so on. Thus the stories told in this thesis can only ever speak to the tellers’ own personal experiences, rather than to ‘what really happened’, or ‘how it was’ for the other players involved or implicated, and are therefore limited in this essential way.

Finally, the way we respond to a single past event we have undergone, or are undergoing, is never static. For example, we may often come to see the significance of a particular incident that has occurred to us in different lights as we press forward into our futures. We also tend to retell the same story in different ways each time we rekindle it in words.

### ***Possibilities for further research***

I see a number of possible directions for further inquiries. I am only able to give a small sample of them here, akin to a crossroad sign in a forest that points us in different directions.

## **Possibilities for further phenomenological research related to:**

### **1. The experience of educators from other fields**

- How do university educators from other academic fields, especially other niche and marginal disciplines, experience the phenomenon in their own contexts? How does the experience of 'being an educator' in UYWE resonate and differ from the experience of other sorts of educators?

### **2. The 'ontological education' of university educators**

- How can we pursue and support ontological education for university educators from various fields?
- How can we create and nurture life-giving opportunities for university educators to narrate and work hermeneutically with the stories derived from their own moments of practice?
- What is already happening, and working, in terms of 'communities of conversation' that enable educators to draw affirmation and meaning from exchanging practice stories?
- Are there ways to integrate humanistic-existential inquiry (related to the holistic experience of *being* a university educator) into postgraduate education qualifications, and professional development programs, being provided for university teachers?
- How might existential therapy, as an applied philosophical practice, be offered to university educators? What might educators' experiences of such experiments be? How might such endeavours shape a person's way of being and relating in their community of practice?
- How might 'narrative pedagogy' be useful as a way for university educators not only to teach, but to listen to their own experiences (Diekelmann, 2003; N. Diekelmann & J. Diekelmann, 2009; Ironside, 2006)?
- More specific to the journeys of university youth work educators, can the international forum, noted earlier, envisioned by Cooper and colleagues (2014) be expanded as a space for dialogue and reflection about the lived and ontological nature of being an educator in youth work?

### **3. The everyday experience of youth work practice**

- Youth work is often described and understood in terms of ‘experience’ – from both a practitioner’s and young person’s perspective. Yet there is a lack of phenomenological studies that seek to understand the experiential nature of *being* a youth worker. One notable exception is Anderson-Nathe’s (2010) way-making hermeneutic phenomenological study on how youth workers experience moments of ‘not knowing’. Possibilities for further phenomenological research include: how is care actually experienced in everyday organisational contexts (Noddings, 2002; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015)? What is the meaning of the youth worker–young person relationship across various practice situations (Giles, 2008)?
- These kinds of inquiries may seek to reveal the meaning of youth work praxis that lies not in the theories and protocols of what *should* happen, but in the experience of what *does* happen in everyday human practice encounters (Smythe, 2003, p. 197). This kind of knowledge may also provide a rich text for professional learning in university youth worker education contexts and beyond.

### **4. The development of university leaders and managers**

- How can university leaders, decision makers and managers be helped to enact more ethical, relational, humane and authentic forms of conversation in their operational dealings with others, including university educators? How might the phenomenological and humanistic insights on discourse provided by Gadamer, Heidegger, Arendt, Habermas, Freire, Derrida and Buber help to encourage leaders to comport themselves in more open-ended ways in their conversation encounters with educators and staff?

### **5. The experience of university youth work education**

- How do student youth workers experience university educators’ ways of being and teaching within their learning community? While educators may aspire to be authentic, and to foster authentic dialogical forms of education

with students, what might the stories of students tell us about how they experience the process of university education?

- How do educators in youth work experience the phenomenon in other historical-cultural contexts – including other countries where specialised university education is also offered for youth workers? What lessons can we learn from joining our stories?

***‘Look how much I’ve grown!’***

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, I entered my research on being an educator in youth work with a lifetime of experiences that shaped my already-there understandings. Being in the ‘way’ of hermeneutic phenomenology, informed by Heidegger and Gadamer, means my own temporal horizon of understanding as the researcher is central to the story.

How the phenomenon already mattered for me in the beginning – enough for me to start this process and see it through – remains intact. And yet, my way of thinking will never be the same. I can glimpse ways it has been regenerated. Words fall short in conveying the far-reaching influence that this research has had on my way of thinking and being in the world, as a tertiary educator and as a person. Nonetheless, let me offer some poetic reflections to give a glimpse into my renewed way of thinking (what I have come to see) as rising out of the ashes of my pre-understandings (what I once saw).<sup>32</sup>

***Being at the crossroads***

*I thought being an educator means  
Trying to be something we are not-yet ...  
But now I see  
We are always being what we already are.*

*I thought being an educator means  
Imparting to students  
The knowing that we already have ...  
But now I see  
In the play of conversing  
We are always unknowing  
Of what is waiting for us,*

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<sup>32</sup> The form of my poetic reflection is inspired by my attendance at Carolyn Young’s presentation (‘Poetry within hermeneutic research’) at the 2014 Institute for Hermeneutic Phenomenology (IHP), Indiana University.

*Hiding around the corner.*

*I thought the meaning of being an educator  
Begins in the moments  
When we take our first steps  
Of teaching others ...  
But now I see  
From the moment  
We gulp down our first breaths  
As thrown into the world  
The educator in us  
Is born*

*I thought being what we are  
As an educator in youth work  
Stems from something outside of us  
Which we either are  
Or are not...  
But being an educator in youth work  
Always stems  
From our own story  
Of being in a world  
Where young people matter.*

*I thought being an educator means  
Being present  
In the here and now ...  
But wherever we are  
And whenever we may clock in  
And clock out  
There we are –  
An educator.*

*I thought the business of being an educator  
Who prepares people  
For a complex relationship  
With young people  
Is always serious ...  
A matter of life and death.  
This, I still think.*

*But being an educator  
Can be full  
Of moments of joy  
That surprise us in the play.*

### ***Concluding comments***

Even after a person has exited the academic stage as an educator, the unquenchable meanings of their own lived experience of being there continue to be in play, both for them and for others. Our embodied stories hold secret possibilities for our own ways

of being in the world as educators, as people. However, a tragedy is that dust is often left to settle on our stories as ‘unread signs’ (Hölderlin, quoted in Heidegger, 1968, p. 11). Can we take up the call to brush them off, to let them be for us the pointers they are?

In this concluding chapter I have been advocating, in essence, the critical importance of narrating and hearing one another’s stories of lived experience amidst our university universes of practice. But given the current trends relating to self-reflective practice, it might be helpful to say something about what I am suggesting we listen *for*.

Not every moment that occurs to a person amidst the conversational and temporal flow of being an educator is set ablaze with enduring significance. Nor is everything that happens to us in the course of our everyday experiences as educators a ‘lemon’ that we must suck the meaning out of. Rather, some moments that come to us in the unpredictable play spontaneously erupt and ‘flare up’ for us with unquenchable life. The elusive phenomenon has a spirit (life) of its own (Gadamer, 2013, p. 401). This is just how it is to be an educator in the game, to be human in the world.

With this realisation, we are liberated from a burgeoning call for educators to become more consciously present, or alive, to the moment – to whatever may be happening for us in the ‘here and now’ (as some advocates for ‘mindfulness’ practices in higher education might suggest). That is, we are not called to make or fashion meaning out of our lives, but to uncover the already ripe, yet hidden, meaningfulness of our everyday experiences. In doing so, we are reoriented to possible ways of being.

But this cannot happen if we cannot find the temporal ‘free space’ that allows this fire to breathe (Gadamer, 1992, p. 60; Harper, 1996, p. 264). Little free space can be found as long as the life of a university continues to run at a loss – as a business that fails to cover its costs in humanistic terms, irrespective of the ‘bottom line’ in terms of monetary values (Gadamer, 1992, p. 59; Heidegger, 1962 p. 336). Indeed, there is a spreading forest fire, fuelled by a Faustian spirit, that rages unnoticed by those who are immersed in the business and busyness of university life among the trees (Davis, cited in Heidegger, 2010b, p. xvii).

The tragedy is that so many educators are enslaved to reductionist and instrumental thinking that blinds us to the importance of allowing educators the temporal ‘free space’ to narrate and engage in playful conversation about moments in the game that simmer for us below the surface. Can we create ways for people to wait watchfully, for unforeseen possibilities to fly up for them in terms of their shared lives as educators?

To play with the poetics of T.S. Eliot: ‘We had *our own* experiences of the phenomenon of being an educator, but missed the meaning’. As long as we deny educators the temporal breathing space to gather together, to narrate, dialogue and wonder at their own ‘living nows’ that smoulder beneath the surface – rather than obsessing over ways we can help them to ‘be more effective’ and productive – we are blinding ourselves from seeing what truly draws and holds an educator in an often thankless grind of university education.

*It is because of wonder  
That we both now  
And originally  
Began to philosophize ...*

*And the lover of stories is  
A lover of wisdom,  
Since a story is composed of wonders.*

(Adapted from Aristotle, 1998, p. 9)

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# Appendices

## *Appendix 1: Ethics approval*

**From:** Human Research Ethics human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au  
**Subject:** 6012 SBREC - Final approval (2 May 2013)  
**Date:** 6 May 2013 10:16 am  
**To:** Joshua Spier joshua.spier@flinders.edu.au, Carolyn Palmer carolyn.palmer@flinders.edu.au, David Giles david.giles@flinders.edu.au, Leigh Burrows leigh.burrows@flinders.edu.au



Dear Joshua,

The Chair of the [Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee \(SBREC\)](#) at Flinders University considered your response to conditional approval out of session and your project has now been granted final ethics approval. Your ethics final approval notice can be found below.

### FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.: **6012**

Project Title: 'Being at home' in higher education: a hermeneutic interpretation of the experiences of youth work educators

Principal Researcher: Mr Joshua Spier

Email: [joshua.spier@flinders.edu.au](mailto:joshua.spier@flinders.edu.au)

Address: School of Education

Approval Date: 2 May 2013      Ethics Approval Expiry Date: **12 March 2015**

From: **Human Research Ethics** human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au  
Subject: 6012- SBREC Modification Approval no.1 (3 July 2013)  
Date: 3 July 2013 4:03 pm  
To: **Joshua Spier** joshua.spier@flinders.edu.au, **Carolyn Palmer** carolyn.palmer@flinders.edu.au, **David Giles** david.giles@flinders.edu.au, peter.willis@unisa.edu.au



Dear Joshua

The Chairperson of the [Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee \(SBREC\)](#) at Flinders University has reviewed and approved the modification request that was submitted for project 6012. A modification ethics approval notice can be found below.

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## MODIFICATION (No.1) APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	6012		
Project Title:	What is the lived experience of being a youth work educator in higher education Youth Work programs?		
Principal Researcher:	Mr Joshua Spier		
Email:	<a href="mailto:joshua.spier@flinders.edu.au">joshua.spier@flinders.edu.au</a>		
Address:	School of Education		
Modification Approval Date:	3 July 2013	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	12 March 2015

## *Appendix 2: Letter of introduction to participants*

### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam/Name

This letter is to introduce Joshua Spier who is a PhD student in the School of Education at Flinders University. He will produce his student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of *being a youth work educator in higher education*. Josh is interested in the experiences of lecturers who are teaching in higher education youth work programs.

I would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project, by granting an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic. No more than one hour on one occasion would be required. The interview would be conducted in person at a pre-arranged time and place that is convenient for you.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and participation will be anonymous in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. However, due to the small participant sample size it may not be possible to guarantee participant anonymity and/or confidentiality. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions. Please note that you are not being invited to represent your employing institution, nor will your employer be identified in the study.

Since he intends to make a digital recording of the interview, he will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed.

Josh has attached an information sheet and consent form which provide more details about being involved in the project. Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on 08 8201 3379, fax (08 8201 3184) or e-mail ([Carolyn.Palmer@flinders.edu.au](mailto:Carolyn.Palmer@flinders.edu.au)).

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Palmer PhD  
Associate Professor of Education  
Principal Supervisor

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 6012). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Secretary of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 5962, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)*

## INFORMATION SHEET

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**Title:** *What is the lived experience of being an educator in higher education youth work programs?*

**Investigator:**

Mr Joshua Spier (PhD student)  
School of Education  
Flinders University  
Ph: 08 8201 2441, 0434 203 008

**Description of the study:**

The purpose of the study is to explore youth work educators' experiences in higher education. My experiences of having been a youth worker, and a youth work lecturer, provide the impetus for this research. Stories are being gathered from the experiences of youth work lecturers from within higher education institutions that offer undergraduate youth work degrees. Participants' stories will be interpreted for essential understandings of being a youth work educator. These understandings may be of interest to higher education teachers, both within and beyond the field of youth work, and of relevance to educational leaders within higher education. This project is supported by the Flinders University School of Education.

**Purpose of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to explore youth work educators' lived experiences in the context of bachelor-level youth work programs.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You are invited to take part in a one-on-one interview conversation with the principal researcher who will ask you questions about your experiences as a youth work educator. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes. The interview is voluntary. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to help with looking at the results. Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed (typed-up) and stored as a computer file and then destroyed once the results have been finalised. Following the interview and transcription, you will be asked to review the transcript and make any changes before returning a signed copy.

**What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?**

The sharing of your experiences will give voice to youth work educators who are working in higher education. Furthermore, this study will offer understandings about what it is like to be an educator in the context of Australian higher education. It will help participants and other educators to reflect on their personal experiences in their everyday university contexts. This study will also be of value to educational leaders within the higher education sector who will be able to use the findings to increase the support, orientation, wellbeing and retention of multidisciplinary university educators.

**Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?**

We do not need your name and you will be anonymous. Once the interview has been typed up and saved as a file, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file stored on a password-protected computer that only the coordinator (Mr Josh Spier) will have access to. Please note, however, that due to the small participant sample size it may not be possible to guarantee participant anonymity and/or confidentiality.

**Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?**

The investigator anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study. While care will be taken in maintaining participant confidentiality and in the faithful interpretation of your stories, possible risks in participating in this project could relate to:

1. Experiencing difficult emotions through the recounting of challenges faced in your professional occupation,
2. Experiencing adverse consequences if identified in the study,
3. Feeling burdened by the donation of your time,
4. Having your stories misinterpreted or misrepresented in the thesis or published material.

If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with the investigator.

**How do I agree to participate?**

Participation is voluntary. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from the project (and interview) at any time without effect or consequences. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate you will be asked to sign this form prior to the interview commencing.

**How will I receive feedback?**

Outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.**

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 6012). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)*

*Appendix 4: Participant consent form*



**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH  
(by interview)**

*What is the lived experience of being an educator in higher education youth work programs?*

I .....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction and Information Sheet for the research project on youth work educators' experiences in higher education.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
5. I understand that:
  - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
  - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
  - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained and information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence, due to the small participant sample size it may not be possible to guarantee participant anonymity.
  - I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
  - Following the interview and transcription, I will be asked to review the crafted stories (drawn from the transcribed interview) and to make any changes before returning a signed copy.
6. I agree to the recording being made available to a professional transcriber (who is not a member of this research team, and will provide the researcher with a typed transcription), on condition that my identity is not revealed, and that the professional transcriber signs a confidentiality agreement.

**Participant's signature.....Date.....**

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

**Researcher's name: Mr Joshua Spier**

**Researcher's signature.....Date.....**

7. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have reviewed the crafted stories that have been drawn from my transcribed interview and agree to their use by the researcher as explained.

**Participant's signature.....Date.....**

*Appendix 5: Confidentiality agreement - transcription services*



**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**  
**Transcription Services**

Project title: *What is the lived experience of being an educator in higher education Youth Work programs?*

I, Pauline Giles, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Joshua Spier related to his doctoral study on the experiences of being a youth work educator within the context of Australian higher education. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Joshua Spier;
3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Joshua Spier in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) Pauline Giles

Transcriber's signature *Pauline Giles*

Date 28 June 2013

## *Appendix 6: Post-interview letter to participants*

[Date]

Dear [participant]

I want to express my deep appreciation for the opportunity you gave me to interview you for my doctoral study. The transcripts have provided me with substantial material relevant to my study. The methodology that I am using requires me to work with each transcript before moving on to the next person's transcript. You can imagine - this is a lengthy process.

I have attached (below) the stories that I have drawn from our interview for your review. Please note that, for anonymity purposes, I have changed the names of all those mentioned in the interview, including your own. Would you please read these stories with the view to (a) confirming the information, and (b) allowing me permission to formally work with these stories in an interpretive way.

- *If you are in agreement, would you mind responding via email giving your permission.*
- *Alternatively, if you wish to edit any story, please make your notes on the particular story (via 'Track Changes' in the word document below), and email to me. I would ask that you return the edited stories via a reply email.*
- *If you have grave concerns over a story, can you note this on the particular story so that I can contact you and discuss this?*

Again, thank you for your consideration of these materials. Please feel free to contact me over any matter listed above.

Alternatively, should my communication with you or expectations cause you concern, please don't hesitate to call my supervisor, **Professor David Giles** by telephone on 0417 101 014, or email ([david.giles@flinders.edu.au](mailto:david.giles@flinders.edu.au)).

Yours sincerely



Joshua Spier  
PhD Candidate

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 6012). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Secretary of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 5962, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email [human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au](mailto:human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au)*

*Appendix 7: Interview guide questions*

I am interested in your personal experiences of being an educator in your practice context...

How did you come to be teaching pre-service youth workers within higher education?

How have you been involved in the youth work program?

Can you tell me about a time when you experienced a sense of being 'at home' as an educator in your university world? (Alternatively, a sense of 'this is what it really means to be an educator')

Have you ever wanted out?

Tell me about a time when you have felt alienated as an educator in your academic community.

***Appendix 8: An example of an extract from an interview transcript, followed by a crafted story derived from this extract***

The following excerpt comes from the transcript from an interview with Emma  
(Interview 6)

*\* Comments within square brackets [ ] have been inserted.*

*\*\* Strikethrough are comments and details omitted from the crafted story.*

***A moment of joy***

~~One of them happened earlier this year, how we [We] were talking with a group of students and we were talking about [a hotly debated social issue] gay marriage and talking about how an interpretation of anti-gay marriage activists are seen as bigots are seen as people who are not inclusive.~~

~~And I posed the [a] question to the students well if we are arguing that if you don't accept gay marriage or the practice of homosexual marriage, and you argue that this isn't accepting, but you reject the notion of someone who perhaps has a differing opinion, aren't you doing the same thing? You are actually then being exclusive. We talk about the notion of being accepting towards different preferences of sexual identity, but if we reject the notion that someone can have a different opinion we are actually in itself being quite closed minded.~~

~~And this room full of students kind of paused... [And] they looked at me, and they were like... (dramatic pause) whaaaaaat?~~

~~And I repeated the question again, and I said we argue for the fact that people who reject this notion are narrow minded, but if we reject all of that by face we are actually being narrow minded in ourselves. Just to try and get a sense that there is an ideology behind that.~~

~~And they all paused, and were looking at me like I was screwing with them. And it was a wonderful moment of joy, the fact that making the familiar unfamiliar, or just trying to twist perspectives a little bit. And I really enjoyed that. And I found that encouraging. And I found that I suppose energising.~~

***The crafted story (as it appears in Chapter 9)***

*We were talking about [a hotly debated social issue] ... And I posed a question to the students ... And this room full of students kind of paused ... And they looked at me, and they were like ... [dramatic pause], whaaaaaat? And I repeated the question again ... And they all paused, and were looking at me like I was screwing with them. And it was a wonderful moment of joy.*

## *Appendix 9: Story titles*

### PARTICIPANT ONE

- Story 1: Pathway
- Story 2: Baptism of fire
- Story 3: Being a maverick
- Story 4: It's like being a parent without your kids
- Story 5: Being on the map

### PARTICIPANT TWO

- Story 1: Starting
- Story 2: Being drawn
- Story 3: Praxis
- Story 4: Playing the game
- Story 5: Being mentored
- Story 6: It doesn't matter where you do it
- Story 7: Becoming legitimate
- Story 8: Writing the code

### PARTICIPANT THREE

- Story 1: Way of being a youth worker educator
- Story 2: Being discontent with content
- Story 3: Exercising judgement
- Story 4: Un-shiftable goal posts
- Story 5: Play on!
- Story 6: Homebirth
- Story 8: Growing youth work
- Story 9: Going with the game
- Story 10: Being a trickster
- Story 11: Landing them in
- Story 12: Being safe
- Story 13: Growing the whole person

### PARTICIPANT FOUR

- Story 1: Pathway
- Story 2: You're not an idiot
- Story 3: A name for what I was already doing
- Story 4: The essence of a degree in youth work
- Story 5: Transitioning from learning into teaching
- Story 6: Exiting the game

### PARTICIPANT FIVE

- Story 1: Beginning
- Story 2: Early experience lecturing
- Story 3: Reviving the union
- Story 4: You've got to write
- Story 5: Being reviewed
- Story 6: What keeps me in the game

### PARTICIPANT SIX

- Story 1: Being hesitant

Story 2: Beginning to teach  
Story 3: My compass  
Story 4: Tricking yourself  
Story 5: Being nervous  
Story 6: A moment of joy  
Story 7: An unexpected journey  
Story 8: Unexpected fallout

#### PARTICIPANT SEVEN

Story 1: Pathway  
Story 2: A foundational story  
Story 3: A moment of not feeling safe with a student  
Story 4: Striking a chord with student  
Story 5: Being in the zone  
Story 6: Pressure  
Story 7: Being on the edge

#### PARTICIPANT EIGHT

Story 1: Being able to teach youth work  
Story 2: Reentering  
Story 3: Being connected in  
Story 4: Worth fighting for  
Story 5: Living in uncertainty  
Story 6: Getting to know students  
Story 7: Integrating

#### PARTICIPANT NINE

Story 1: Pathway  
Story 2: Saving grace  
Story 3: Thinking of myself as an academic  
Story 4: Relishing youth work  
Story 5: A relished moment  
Story 6: Crying for a home that doesn't exist  
Story 7: Giving students a feel for the game  
Story 8: Knowing students  
Story 9: Not feeling at home

#### PARTICIPANT TEN

Story 1: Pathway  
Story 2: Early experience  
Story 3: Being devastated  
Story 4: Being scarred  
Story 5: Student campaign  
Story 6: An essence of youth work

#### PARTICIPANT ELEVEN

Story 1: Being in a clash  
Story 2: A month in India  
Story 3: Beginning as a teacher  
Story 4: Getting canned  
Story 5: A big clunky moment  
Story 6: What keeps me in the game

PARTICIPANT TWELVE

Story 1: Passion

Story 2: Moment of vision

Story 3: My way of seeing young people

Story 4: Being alienated

Story 5: Being too theoretical

Story 6: Being excluded

Story 7: Is that youth work?

Story 8: A haven in a heartless world

Story 9: Being validated

## ***Appendix 10: A crafted story followed by an example of an initial description and interpretation of a crafted story***

### **Story: 'Being drawn'**

*I went from working as a youth worker running a drop-in centre with homeless young people.*

*I had some really good mentors along the way and Donald is certainly one of them. Donald, who I knew very well and respected, had started a youth work course at [the university]. Donald is a genuine, serious academic in a traditional sense... He had been involved in youth movements. He had seen the possibilities for liberation, and he had seen the self-determination that young people took up in those youth-led movements; some of the first, and was very shaped by that. So Donald had both those things going on. He understood and was accepted. People would refer to him as a real academic, and yet he was also subversive and radical in lots of ways, in his thinking and what he was trying to achieve through youth work, politically and socially.*

*Donald had known me from the sector and seen the work I had done. He realised that we were committed to similar things and that I could, like him, play the game of the university but also try to achieve those broader things. I think the work that I had done previously with trade unions, the street work, all of that resonated. That is also what attracted me to [Donald] as much as [he] could see that in me.*

*Donald asked me maybe you could do some part-time teaching? I said, yeah. So it was a career shift to go from working in a drop-in centre. I then moved across and started teaching in the course.*

*Donald was definitely a mentor. In some ways I have been similar to Donald. Maybe I was like that beforehand. Maybe he saw that in me. Maybe that is his influence on me...*

### **Description**

In this story Tony reflects on his relationship with one of his academic mentors. This mentor's way of being as an educator seems to have had a profound and enduring influence on Tony's own life as an educator.

### **Interpretation**

Tony's entry into life as an educator within higher education, and into a particular academic field, appears to have been profoundly influenced by his relational encounters with certain mentors, particularly Donald. Seeing how Donald had gone

about being an academic seems to have drawn Tony to live his own life as an educator in a similar way.

This educator does not seem to have been drawn in by mere favouritism; not by a lure of a secure tenure within an established institution; or by a hope of one day inheriting his mentor's standing. Rather, this educator appears to have been attracted to a distinct way of taking up life as an educator in a university world, of working as an academic towards a common social purpose.

It is not that 'being seen' and 'validated' by just any senior academic was the key drawcard. It was perhaps in the light of the life Donald had already lived – the specific goals and vulnerable people he had been implicitly teaching for in the university context. In other words, Tony may have been drawn through recognising Donald's mode of operating within the university game for the sake of a greater social and political cause. Being 'tapped on the shoulder' by someone of Donald's ilk is more than flattering; it is a call to action. This way of being an educator within the university world is less about existing and working for the establishment, but comporting oneself in the university, perhaps almost covertly, towards a life project that Tony had already committed himself to. In a sense, in choosing Donald as his mentor, was Tony essentially choosing a way that he wanted to go about his own being as an educator?

## *Appendix 11: An example of notions for a participant's stories*

### *Notions from Tony's stories (Interview 2)*

#### *A sense of knowing how to be*

The educator feels at home in knowing how to be a youth work educator. The educator appears to be secure in having found 'tools' and certain techniques that work for him in teaching students a particular vocation ('youth work') in the university context. The educator has his own way of being an educator that is familiar, trustworthy and rested upon.

This familiarity and trust in his own way of teaching appears to relate to his sense of know-how: he is perhaps 'safe in his knowledge' that he has handled the craft of youth work 'outside' the university situation; that he has readily on hand the specific knowledge and tools for teaching youth work 'inside' the university. The educator is in motion, in between such 'inside' and 'outside' worlds. What is it that bridges these two worlds for him? Perhaps a taken-for-granted concern about the significance of youth work practice.

The educator's sense of at-homeness appears to be related to his self-assuredness in his own 'canniness' as a university teacher (etymology of canniness: formed from 'can'; meaning 'know how to...'). The educator is comfortable in his way of teaching and relating to students in an established way that moves students to be good youth workers in the world.

#### *Roots and wings*

The educator seems to dwell within his university world with both 'roots and wings'. Firstly, he has a sense of being rooted, or grounded, by a sense of knowing his own way around (both as a youth worker and educator) He appears to be 'settled in' his way of tackling the task of teaching youth work. He is able to reach unreflectively for his 'tools of his trade' wherever he may be physically located. This is perhaps akin to the way a carpenter unconsciously uses his familiar, trusty tools to accomplish his next project.

Does this educator reach for his preferred frameworks (e.g. the ideas of Freire) as a carpenter reaches for his trusty hammer? During his time as a postgraduate student, the educator experienced a ‘clicking’ with a specific form of praxis (Freirean), and continually draws on this familiar approach to give form and character to his own practice. This might also be a way of differentiating himself from other people (educators and practitioners), who are taken to not to be following in the same heritage.

In aligning himself with a particular praxis tradition, and with others who perpetuate it, the educator feels at home with a kinship group. Being self-identifiable with a particular lineage of practitioners perhaps grants him a sense of at-homeness as an educator – a sense of being able to return continually to a place of origin. In play in the background, therefore, are this educator’s roots to his chosen intellectual ‘ancestors’.

By invoking a particular theoretical lens (i.e. Freirean), the educator constantly experiences a sense of homecoming to his own stand on the kind of educator and practitioner that he seeks to be in the university. There might be a sense of homeliness in continually homing himself with a way of being that gives him some kind of legitimacy and ground to think and practise from. Such rootedness may give his educational activity in the university a hidden essential relatedness.

This experience perhaps reveals a meaning buried in an idiom that he speaks: ‘where I am coming from’. Is this akin to ‘coming from’ a particular family or cultural background?

Home is where on starts from (T.S. Eliot, 1963, p. 189)

The educator is not static or restricted by a continual sense of rootedness to a particular starting place. He also appears to have ‘wings’, in the sense of having room to take over his chosen heritage in his own way. For example, he talks about writing a unity of study and practice handbook with a sense of creativity and degree of freedom.

Yet he seems to want his work to bear a resemblance to his chosen heritage, to the work of his chosen way-makers (Freire). This runs to the deep 'what-for' that guides his teaching practice - an ultimate goal. He directs his everyday educating towards preparing students to continue the legacy of a distinct praxis in their future relationships with young people (ie. Freirean critical pedagogy).

*Playing our part*

The educator seems to have an implicit sense that he is playing his own part in a broader 'scheme of things'. This sense of serviceability may relate to the basic serviceability of professional youth work in society, rather than to any serviceability of the university in isolation from society.

The educator's everyday practice in the university situation may be implicitly directed towards a bigger story that deeply matters to him; that reaches beyond the immediate practical context of the classroom. He tacitly trusts that what he is doing in the university, as an educator, is serving a bigger purpose. That is, the purpose is not merely to deliver a lecture, or support students through a course of study, or even to graduate as capable professionals. Rather, the ultimate goal of educating is 'one and the same' goal of youth work within his given societal context. The educator has already taken a stand on what youth work 'is' and what it is 'for' (e.g. social change towards a more just and equitable society). It is perhaps in the light of his understanding of an essence of social justice work that his own being as an educator is rendered meaningful.

*Appendix 12: An example of a poem written to convey notions in a participant's stories*

***Coming to be***

*My pathway  
To being an educator  
Is composed  
Of times  
I have worked with,  
And cared for  
young people...*

*I have been there  
With the homeless  
With the unemployed  
With the unschooled  
With the alienated  
With those cut-off*

*These past times  
Are still leading me  
To be*

*I can hear  
The message of my pathway  
Still speaking,  
Still coming to me,  
Still gathering me  
Into possibility*

(J. Spier, 14/03/2014)

The message of the pathway speaks  
just so long as there are [people]  
(born in its breeze) who can hear it.  
They are the hearers of their origin...  
(Heidegger, 2003b, p. 78)