Parent, teacher and pre-adolescent lived experiences of wellbeing and spirituality: A hermeneutic phenomenological study

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Ethics statement

This project has been approved by the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the project met the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

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Abstract

Over the last few decades wellbeing has occupied a significant space in the educational context due to enduring concerns about the mental health of children and adolescents, both while they are engaged in their schooling and beyond school and into adulthood. Because of this, many schools have adopted a prevention-to-intervention framework for addressing mental health and wellbeing. However, wellbeing is not solely concerned with mental health, and the field of wellbeing in education has continued to be influenced by many different theories and approaches. Holistic education is one particular perspective that goes beyond mental and physical health to frequently highlight the spiritual aspect of the child in relation to their overall wellbeing. In this perspective, spirituality is a dimension of the child that schools have a duty to nurture. Yet, despite its enduring position in theology, religion, philosophy and education, spirituality is an ineffable phenomenon. Whether confined to religion or viewed as an abiding aspect of humanity itself, spirituality remains a nebulous ontological field of inquiry. As schools privilege experiences in children that teachers can observe, the predominantly unseen ontological experiences occurring in the life of the child tend to be unnoticed. Disregarding what is ontologically obscured is an educational problem that this study seeks to address, given the connection between wellbeing and spirituality posited by holistic education.

This study, therefore, questions the vague positioning of spirituality in the context of education, particularly as it is situated in relation to wellbeing. The philosophical and methodological frame chosen for this study is hermeneutic phenomenology. By focussing on the lived experiences of parents, teachers, principals and pre-adolescent children this study illuminates the significance of wellbeing and spirituality as ontological phenomena in education. Interviews were conducted in Victoria with participants from one Catholic primary school and one state government primary school. Five parents, two school Principals, four teachers and eight pre-adolescent children were asked to describe experiences associated with wellbeing and spirituality. The interviews were analysed using a hermeneutic phenomenological method that privileged the researcher's 'prejudices' in the analysis.

Findings from this research posit that wellbeing and spirituality are essentially relational phenomena. These relations are not simply self-other relations in the here-and-now, but form part of the in-between of self, other, mind and world. Experiences described by the participants illustrate lives that are imbued with past relationships and unseen entities, including deities and loved ones who have died. Drawing on Heidegger's understanding of Dasein and the psychoanalytic thinking of Donald Winnicott, this study questions current

approaches to wellbeing in education that are reliant on cognitive, behavioural and ecological theories, which can only be interpreted and acted on in relation to what educators can observe. Additionally, the findings of this study circumvent political-educational questions of whether spirituality is, or is not, religion. Instead, both wellbeing and spirituality are understood as ontological phenomena primarily concerned with Being. As an alternative to prevailing theories discussed, a connection between wellbeing and spirituality is made that offers responsive and emancipatory conditions to support pre-adolescent students, in particular, in relation to the phenomena.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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This thesis has been proofread by Rosemary Viete, making grammatical and semantic corrections, and giving feedback regarding clarity of meaning, but preserving my content, style, organisation and voice.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my friend Thy Uyen Nguyen.

(7/12/1978 – 15/1/2019)

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Table of Contents

Preface **1**

Chapter 1: Why study wellbeing and spirituality? **6**

1.1 Introduction 6

1.2 Wellbeing and Spirituality in Policy 8

1.2.1 Frameworks for Wellbeing in Education: Examples from Australia, the USA, Ireland, England and New Zealand *12*

1.3 Wellbeing and spirituality in practice 18

1.4 Wellbeing and spirituality in research 20

1.5 Purpose of the research 23

1.6 Aims of the Research 25

1.6.1 Research Questions *25*

1.7 Philosophical, methodological and cultural framing of the research 26

1.8 Significance of the research 30

1.9 Thesis Structure 32

Chapter 2: Literature Review **35**

2.1 Introduction 35

2.2 Wellbeing in Education 36

2.3 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) 40

2.4 Health Promotion 44

2.4.1 Prevention to intervention *46*

2.4.2 Risk and protective factors *47*

2.4.3 Ecology of childhood *48*

2.5 Resilience 48

2.6 Individual, cultural and political considerations 50

2.6.1 Wellbeing through a Western Lineage *51*

2.6.2 The 'Management' of Emotions in Individuals *53*

2.6.3 Culture and Emotions *58*

2.6.4 Wellbeing and Neoliberalism *59*

2.6.5 Summary *63*

2.7 The Whole Child 64

2.7.1 Historical background *65*
2.7.2 A Responsive Approach *67*
2.7.3 Spirituality in the Whole Child Approach *68*
2.7.4 Summary *71*

2.8 Spirituality in Education 72

2.8.1 Spirituality and religion *74*
2.8.2 Relational Consciousness *75*
2.8.3 Themes from the literature *76*
2.8.4 Self and Other *77*
2.8.5 Transcendence *78*
2.8.6 The Western Spiritual Lens *80*
2.8.7 Does spirituality belong in education? *82*

2.9 The connection between wellbeing and spirituality 83
2.10 Drawing together wellbeing and spirituality for this study 85

Chapter 3: Methodology 88
3.1 Introduction 88
3.2 Why hermeneutic phenomenology? 89
3.3 Phenomenology 91

3.3.1 Lifeworld *93*
3.3.2 Intentionality *93*
3.3.3 The Epoche and reduction *94*

3.4 Hermeneutics 99
3.5 Hermeneutic Phenomenology 99

3.5.1 Dasein *100*
3.5.2 Prejudice *104*
3.5.3 Fore-projections and fore-meaning *107*
3.5.4 Fusion of horizons *111*
3.5.5 The Hermeneutic Circle *113*

Chapter 4: Methods 115
4.1 Recruitment of schools and selection of participants 115
4.2 Setting 117
4.3 The adult participants 118
4.4 The student participants 118
4.5 Interviews 119

4.5.1 Interview 1 ..... *120*
4.5.2 Interview 2 ..... *121*

4.6 Methods of Analysis 121

4.6.1 The interviews *121*
4.6.2 Phase 1 ..... *125*
4.6.3 Phase 2 ..... *126*
4.6.4 Phase 3 ..... *127*
4.6.5 Phase 4 ..... *128*

4.7 The challenges of hermeneutic phenomenology 129

4.7.1 Evaluative Criteria for hermeneutic phenomenology *130*

4.8 Ethical considerations 131

Chapter 5: The permeable self-other 134
5.1 Introduction 134

5.1.1 Descriptions of wellbeing and spirituality: A brief summary *134*
5.1.2 From 'meaning' to 'lived experience' *136*

5.2 Beyond a self-other dualism 137
5.3 Self-Other Relations 139

5.3.1 Students *139*
5.3.2 Parents *143*
5.3.3 Teachers *146*
5.3.4 From teachers, parents, students to adults and pre-adolescents *148*

5.4 Dasein and the self 149

5.4.1 The call to Conscience and "the They" *152*
5.4.2 Wellbeing and "the They" *155*
5.4.3 Disruption *156*

Chapter 6: Pre-adolescent experiences of hiddenness and discovery 159
6.1 Introduction 159
6.2 Inauthenticity and Authenticity 160
6.3 Pre-adolescent truth 163

6.3.1 The vulnerable self *166*
6.3.2 The undisclosed self *169*
6.3.3 The destructive self *171*

6.4 The pre-adolescent experience as understood through Winnicott 176

6.4.1 Withdrawal and solitude *178*
6.4.2 Withdrawal *178*
6.4.3 Solitude *179*
6.4.4 "It is a joy to be hidden but a disaster not to be found" *181*
6.5 Inner Relations 181
6.5.1 In solitude with an unseen entity *185*
6.6 Pre-adolescence: The precipice 186
Chapter 7: Discourse, Affectivity, Understanding 191
7.1 Introduction 191
7.2 Discourse 191
7.2.1 Internal relations in discourse *196*
7.2.2 The systemic "They" *197*
7.3 Affectivity 201
7.3.1 How do I find you? *205*
7.4 Understanding 205
7.4.1 Pre-reflective understanding *207*
7.4.2 Groundlessness *209*
7.5 Ontic-ontological conditions for the expression of wellbeing and spirituality 210
7.5.1 Temporality *211*
7.5.2 Holding *212*
7.6 A Responsive Environment 214
Chapter 8: Conclusion, limitations & recommendations 219
8.1 Conclusion 219
8.2 Challenges and Limitations 228
8.3 Recommendations 229
References 233
Appendix A: Ethics Approval 259
Appendix B: Parent information letter & consent form for student participants 262
Appendix C: Student information letter & assent form 265
Appendix D: Parent participant information letter and consent form 268
Appendix E: Teacher participant information letter and consent form 271

Appendix F: Post interview slip for student participants.....274

Appendix G: Interview schedule.....275

Appendix H: Phase 2 analysis 277

Appendix I: Sample of phase 3 analysis 286

Appendix J: Sample of phase 4 analysis.....291

Preface

In 1999, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCCEETYA) met to endorse the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in Australia in the Twenty-First Century*. The purpose of this document was to provide a guiding set of goals for schooling in all states and territories of Australia. The *Adelaide Declaration* included the following phrase in its preamble, "Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development" (1999, p. 1). This statement refers to dimensions of the individual that require development in a nurturing educational setting in order to achieve a "productive and rewarding life" (MCEETYA, 1999, p. 1).

In 2008, this statement was repeated in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* and elaborated on with, "Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of Young Australians" (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). The inclusion of the term 'wellbeing' marked a significant shift in the Australian educational landscape as schools transitioned from interventionist welfare models of support for children with mental health needs to a broader recognition of wellbeing, which recognised the role schools should play in fostering mental health. The *Melbourne Declaration* has had a significant role in promoting an understanding of education that includes the responsibility of schools to care for the wellbeing of the students. By referring to the dimensions mentioned above (physical, social, spiritual, etc.) the *Melbourne Declaration* drew from a perspective of education known as the 'whole child'.

Although the *Adelaide Declaration* identified the spiritual aspect of the student, there was no further elaboration around what this aspect was, or what it meant for education to nurture the spiritual. The *Melbourne Declaration*, however, made one elaboration stating that, "The curriculum will enable students to…understand the spiritual, moral, and aesthetic dimensions of life" (2008, p. 13). This struck a chord with me when completing research for my master's degree and led me to contemplate how curriculum or the school environment and community, in general, enabled students to engage with the spiritual dimension of life. I was particularly interested in this document, the overarching statement of education for all Australian schools, declaring that schools have a duty to nurture the spiritual aspects of the child. It seemed to me that such an inclusion led to all manner of questions around the place of spirituality in a secular education. I wondered whether the working group who create the *Melbourne Declaration* were so clear on distinguishing spirituality from religion, and if the historically contentious ideas about the role of religion in schools had been finally put to rest.

As an enthusiastic master's student, I tracked down one of the members of the Melbourne Declaration Working Group online and sent him an email to find out about the reference to the 'spiritual dimension'. His reply to my query was, "No debate…we just lifted it from the last declaration!" My fantasies of atheists, agnostics and theists engaged in a deeply philosophical and theological debate were quick to dissipate with this response. I began to notice the occurrence of the 'spiritual dimension' of the whole child in the literature more frequently. I also began to notice its absence. It seemed that parts of the whole child varied, depending on who was writing about the whole child, and for what purpose. I found myself with more questions than answers: What dimensions constitute the whole? What processes are involved in deciding which aspects of the whole are to be included in policy, standards for teaching, curriculum or educational theory? Who is this 'whole child' and on what bases have the differing dimensions been determined?

The influence of the above statement from the *Melbourne Declaration* is far-reaching. Not only has the *Melbourne Declaration* been the over-arching visionary guide for the national curriculum, but the particular statement outlined above, which aroused my interest, has guided frameworks that have supported the implementation of wellbeing in education in Australia over the past decade. Such frameworks include the *Health Promoting Schools Framework* (2002), the *National Safe Schools Framework* (2011), *KidsMatter* (2012), and *MindMatters* (2014), and the most recent iteration, the *Australian Wellbeing Framework* (2019). These frameworks have been instrumental in increasing the prominence of wellbeing in schools, and have all maintained a connection to the *Melbourne Declaration*, through an emphasis on the physical, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions of the child. In relation to wellbeing, there are countless references to these dimensions on school websites that appear to serve as declarations of care and commitment to a well-rounded education.

Thus, concomitant with the exploration of the spiritual dimension was my dawning realisation that wellbeing was an equally elusive term. The *Melbourne Declaration* refers to wellbeing as a subjective state or condition that schools have a duty to nurture. The term 'wellbeing', however, is almost as nebulous as 'spiritual' in the declaration. It refers to students' ability to manage their wellbeing in the "emotional, mental, spiritual and physical" (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9) dimensions. It asserts that curriculum will nurture wellbeing, particularly through health and physical education subjects (2008). It also suggests partnerships with families and communities to support wellbeing. Though the *Melbourne Declaration* outlines wellbeing as requiring student capabilities, environmental supports and curriculum, it offers little in terms of a clear definition of "wellbeing".

The impetus for this project was initially centred on three related aspects: (1) the dimensions of the whole child, (2) how spirituality was situated in relation to wellbeing in education, and (3) the seemingly blasé nature of this inclusion. Since the beginning of this

project, the *Mparntwe Declaration* (2019) has been produced as a new iteration. Though there are significant differences in the *Mparntwe Declaration* (2019), such as an emphasis on partnerships and a noteworthy shift in the attention towards Indigenous Australians, the references and dimensions of the whole child remain very similar. The policy requires children to 'manage' their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing and, now, also includes 'cultural wellbeing' as a dimension. These slight changes in language suggest that, despite the response from the working group member, wellbeing and spirituality are not thoughtless inclusions in education; neither are they fixed ideals about the 'warm and fuzzy' aspects of life. Rather, like any educative agenda, both wellbeing and spirituality are subject to political, social and cultural contexts that shape their appearance – and disappearance – in education.

Along with the educational representations of wellbeing and spirituality presented above, my own experience and history have contributed to the development of this study. I am a former primary school teacher and wellbeing leader. I am currently a researcher. Where once I identified strongly as Catholic, I now consider myself a critical agnostic. My own historical context has been a part of this study from the beginning, and my own curiosity about the ways in which I have discovered, or rediscovered, aspects of myself as I think about wellbeing and spirituality, has set the direction of my methodology and philosophical frame from the very beginning. I knew from the outset that an objective or detached stance from the phenomena under investigation would be impossible for me to achieve. How was I to investigate phenomena that were so inextricably bound up in my own personal history?

When I began my appointment as a Wellbeing Leader in 2011, I was introducing myself to a new staff member who asked, "What's a Wellbeing Leader?". I hesitated, and became flooded with embarrassment as I found that I was unable to describe my role. This uncertainty, which until this particular moment had been largely unconscious, was brought to

the foreground by her question and I began to reflexively wonder about, and feel greatly perplexed by, the question of what wellbeing actually was. These wonderings continued as I worked through my master's degree and completed my master's research project, which was an exploration of spirituality in education. I had begun to internally reflect on the meaning of wellbeing as I understood it, attempting to draw links between what I experienced in my role at school, and the internal meaning I gave to the term. I was never able to reconcile my work as a Wellbeing Leader with the meaning I attributed to the term 'wellbeing', quite possibly because I never felt that I had a good grasp of the term itself. Additionally, my master's project had left me with more questions than answers and, therefore, led to a new proposal for PhD research.

Chapter 1: Why study wellbeing and spirituality?

1.1 Introduction

Efforts to implement wellbeing in schools aim to address a continuing crisis in mental health for children and young people. Mental health disorders are common and disabling across the life span (Slade et al., 2009). One of the most recent national surveys in Australia estimated that one in five Australians reported mental health issues (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2018). For young people in particular, mental health concerns have long been noted as responsible for almost half of the overall health issues (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Anxiety disorders in children 5-14 years are a leading cause of health problems, second only to asthma (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Suicide, self-harm and alcohol use (males), and anxiety and depressive disorders (females) carry the greatest burden of disease in the 15-24-year-old age group (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Globally, depression is the fourth leading cause of illness among adolescents aged 15-19 years, with many mental disorders having their period of onset in childhood and adolescence (Kessler et al., 2007).

The positioning of wellbeing in education has benefited from growing academic research over the past few decades and continues to be the focus of policy makers, school leaders and teachers. The significance of wellbeing and its relationship to academic achievement is a well-researched and accepted premise (Noble et al., 2008; Fisk, 2021; Spratt, 2016). Schools now actively attempt to address wellbeing through the structured implementation of social and emotional learning programs, the employment of Wellbeing leaders and co-ordinators, and by drawing on frameworks which have been developed to assist in providing a whole school approach to primary prevention and intervention, in an effort to address mental health and wellbeing in schools.

Spirituality, on the other hand, has less of a marked place in the educational context. References to spirituality in educational policies are vague and tend not to explain why it may be meaningful in the school community context. One of the challenges is that whether confined to religion, or viewed as an abiding aspect of humanity itself, spirituality remains nebulous and difficult to describe. Although there is a plethora of research interest and literature around the potentiality of exploring and addressing spirituality in the educational setting, the term remains elusive and exists largely on the periphery of school community, culture, teaching and learning. Thus, spirituality remains an unnamed phenomenon in school communities.

Education is a field broadly overseen by governments and systems, who, along with individual schools, develop policy to inform current practice. Frameworks are often developed to drive policy implementation in schools and to bridge gaps between policy and school implementation and between research and practice. Research in the area of wellbeing and the translation of wellbeing research into school practices are particularly challenging. Wellbeing itself is a broad field supported by research from disciplines such as psychology and philosophy, and research from these fields needs to be adapted to fit into the core business of schools, which is education and learning.

Though wellbeing has achieved recognition as a priority area from governments, systems and schools, spirituality has not. Wellbeing has a strong research base linked to mental health. The recognised impact of mental health on productivity and the economy places wellbeing as central to government policy. However, there are no clear links between spirituality, productivity and the economy, which provides one obvious reason why spirituality is not featured on any governmental agenda. Despite this, spirituality continues to make appearances in systemic education policy and individual school policy, and even enjoys a rare inclusion in government policy at times (such as in the *Mparntwe Declaration*). Given

the disparate positioning of both phenomena in education, one may ask what could possibly draw the two phenomena together in any meaningful or coherent way? It is the aim of this study to do exactly that. But before providing a justification for this, a brief examination of policy, frameworks, practice and research will map the current positioning of wellbeing and spirituality in schools and illustrate the overlapping contexts in which this research is situated.

The following sections of this chapter provide a background to wellbeing and spirituality in education. Firstly, I consider wellbeing and spirituality in policy which has driven the inclusion of both phenomena in education, albeit in different ways. Secondly, I consider five national frameworks that have been created to promote wellbeing in schools, examining the similarities and differences between them. The section that follows this, gives an illustration of what wellbeing and spirituality look like in practice, before turning to the research context. After this, I outline the purpose of the research, identify research aims and explicate my research questions. I then introduce the philosophical, methodological and cultural framing of the research and identify my positioning as researcher. The significance of the research is then stated and finally, I provide an outline of the overall thesis structure.

1.2 Wellbeing and Spirituality in Policy

Given the prevalence of mental health concerns amongst children and young people, the education sector has long been recognised as an important place for addressing mental health. In addition to recognising the importance of measures that aim to prevent detrimental mental health issues, there has been an increasing emphasis on improving overall wellbeing. Consequently, schools have progressively recognised their role in supporting the wellbeing of children and adolescents, along with their academic learning. Current approaches to wellbeing in schools favour adopting a whole school approach that emphasises culture, an

ethos of positive behaviour, short-term structured class sessions on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (Durlak et al., 2011), partnerships with parents, and partnerships with community agencies. Despite efforts to foreground wellbeing through allocations of time and other resources, there are a number of complications around the implementation of wellbeing approaches into school communities in ways that are sustainable and meet the needs of the individual school context (White & Kern, 2018).

Spirituality is considered a protective factor that contributes to wellbeing (Cotton et al., 2006). In times of crisis, spirituality can offer a sense of hope and security that allows individuals to find solace in their religious community and with a protective deity (Briggs et al., 2001; Cotton et al., 2006; Herrman et al., 2005). Research has determined that in the context of religion, spirituality can promote optimism and resilience (Koenig et al., 2001) and act as a mitigating factor against conditions associated with poor mental health, such as substance abuse (Herrman et al., 2005). In the education context, spirituality is considered essential to culturally responsive education (Berryman, 2014), which acknowledges spirit and spirituality as central to Indigenous culture and wellbeing (Hargreaves et al., 2018). Furthermore, spirituality is posited as offering new and creative possibilities for those who find themselves increasingly disillusioned in a world that appears perpetually in crisis (Bangert, 2014).

However, because spirituality can exist within or without a religious context, it occupies, at least partly, a contentious space in education (Gearon, 2001; Maddox, 2014). Though schools need to be inclusive of different faiths and belief systems and there is increased acknowledgment of Indigenous perspectives in education, government schools in Australia cannot promote any adherence to religion. On the one hand, inclusive practices call for an acceptance of spirituality, whilst, on the other hand, government schools are usually expected to remain religiously neutral – that is, they should not promote any particular

religious beliefs. The easiest way to do this is to avoid discussions about religion altogether, which then obstructs dialogue about spirituality in general. This places spirituality, particularly in public education, in an ambiguous position.

Not only is spirituality ambiguous but, in education, its position in relation to wellbeing is also unclear. Though research may contend that spirituality is a protective factor for children and adolescents, it does not necessarily follow that schools accept that they have a role in recognising or promoting spirituality. One of the reasons for this is the bigger problem of context. If spirituality is connected to organised religion, then it is connected to a historical and theological tradition that includes, among other features, a deity, written text, community of believers and ritual. If spirituality is connected to Indigenous knowledges, it sits at the heart of culture and identity (Education Review Office, 2016; Gee et al., 2014). When viewed as something outside of religion in the education sector, it is included as a dimension of the whole child or, more generally, as connected with having a sense of purpose and meaning in life (de Souza, 2009). Within each of these three areas are a multitude of definitions and descriptions, almost all of which recognise intangible aspects of spirituality.

In addition to the already established complexity, spirituality is most often connected to wellbeing via a 'whole child' approach to education. This approach positions spirituality as one dimension of the whole in education policy (as seen in the *Mparntwe Declaration* [MCEETYA, 2019] and Ireland's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* [Government of Ireland, 2019]). Prominent educational theorists, such as Froebel, Montessori, Dewey and Noddings are commonly connected to an understanding of the whole child (Miller, 2018), given that they are considered founders of holistic education. However, the whole is commonly divided into dimensions in contemporary education and this has little to do with any explication of holism that these theorists are connected to. Although reference to the whole child is made through a combination of dimensions, such as physical,

intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual, there is no well-defined theory or conceptualisation which suggests which dimensions to include and why. Essentially, the parts of the whole can be cherry-picked according to any given educational agenda. This is noteworthy because elements of the whole child are frequently visible in policy (as outlined above) and on many school websites that promote themselves as attending to the whole child.

An illustration of how the ambiguity plays out in systemic contexts can be found in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teaching* (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2014). In these standards, there is no reference to spirituality or the spiritual dimension of the child, despite spirituality's positioning in the *Mparntwe Declaration* (2019). The key focus area for 'Professional Knowledge' in the standards, asks teachers to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the "physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students" (AITSL, 2014). Teachers are required to *know* who they are teaching. But why is the whole child represented here via only three dimensions? It appears that aspects of the child, which are perhaps a little less tangible, are ignored. If one accepts that there is a spiritual dimension that gives a sense of purpose and meaning in a child's life, it follows that when it comes to the standards of teaching, this meaning and purpose can be conveniently bypassed in favour of more observable characteristics.

Thus far I have looked at the role of schools in promoting mental health and wellbeing, noting mental health as a priority area of governments. Although spirituality is an identified protective factor that contributes to wellbeing, and is a focus of culturally responsive education, it is not a policy priority area of governments or education policy. In the education context, there are three avenues for the appearance of spirituality in relation to wellbeing. Firstly, this occurs in the whole child approach to education where spirituality is included as a dimension of the whole child. However, this is where spirituality is also

sometimes disconnected from education, due to ad hoc decision-making around what parts should be included in the whole. Secondly, it occurs through religious schools and religious education. However, this connection to religion makes it essentially contentious, particularly in the realm of secular education. Thirdly, it appears in wellbeing frameworks where spirituality is sometimes included. In this connection, although frameworks may include spirituality, the links between spirituality and wellbeing tend to be given little attention. In the following section I briefly explore some frameworks for wellbeing in order to consider this connection more explicitly.

1.2.1 Frameworks for Wellbeing in Education: Examples from Australia, the USA, Ireland, England and New Zealand

What follows is a brief examination of the frameworks that support wellbeing in Australia, New Zealand, England, Ireland and the USA. The reason that these countries have been chosen is that they have all developed a national approach to support wellbeing, moving beyond program implementation to a more cohesive 'whole school approach' that is informed by government policy. Additionally, these countries are representative of a western understanding of wellbeing. However, they also have culturally diverse populations that are changing over time and, therefore, have to contend with new and unfamiliar cultural and religious knowledges. Additionally, Australia, New Zealand and the US all have Indigenous populations and knowledges but each country relates these knowledges to wellbeing in vastly different ways.

For the last 20 or so years in Australia, a growing awareness of school as an environment to enhance wellbeing has seen the development of a number of educational frameworks designed for this purpose. One of the most significant, which represented a connection between health and education sectors, was the Health Promoting Schools framework (Australian Health Promoting Schools Association, 2001). This was followed by

KidsMatter (Slee et al., 2009), which has now been superseded by the most recent framework, the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (ASWB) (Education Council, 2018). Each framework is not simply a replacement but rather represents an evolving body of research into wellbeing in schools.

The ASWB framework is the current evolution of wellbeing in Australia, supported by the *BeYou* initiative (2018). Intended to be mutually reinforcing, both the ASWB and *BeYou* have been designed to support schools in promoting "wellbeing, safety and positive relationships" (Education Council, 2018, p.2). Five elements of wellbeing are laid out in the framework and the *BeYou* initiative addresses these elements through supporting implementation in schools. These elements include: leadership, inclusion, student voice, partnerships and support. Although there are a number of references to the social and emotional dimensions of a person, there are no references to spirituality in the framework or evidence summary.

In the US context, Oberle et al. (2016) put forth a framework for social and emotional learning in schools. The focus is SEL rather than wellbeing, and it centres on five core competencies of SEL developed by the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in the US. These competencies are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Oberle et al., 2016). In the illustrative diagram, three rings circling the competencies are named as: family and community partnerships; school climate, policies, and practices; and classroom curriculum and instruction. There are no references to spirituality or religion in this framework.

In Ireland the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (2018-2023) (Government of Ireland, 2019) is centred on key areas of culture and environment, curriculum relationships and partnerships, and policy and planning. This framework has in place a continuum of prevention to intervention and includes an explicit reference to

Bronfenbrenner's model of ecology (1979). The framework includes a similar statement to the *Mparntwe Declaration,* contending that:

> Schools and centres for education in Ireland play a vital role in the promotion of wellbeing through a range of activities and approaches to support the academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of all children and young people (Government of Ireland, 2019, p. 5).

Aside from repeating this statement once, there are no other references to spirituality. Additionally, religion is only mentioned once, presented as 'religious community' in the microsystem of the model adapted from Bronfenbrenner.

The English framework, *Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school and college approach* (Public Health England, 2021), has a report that identifies seven elements around the central area of leadership and management. The seven areas are: ethos and environment; curriculum, teaching and learning; student voice; staff development; identifying need and monitoring impact of interventions; working with parents/carers; and targeted support. The framework mentions social moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) education numerous times, which is a cross-curricular focus in the English curriculum (Moulin-Stozek, 2020).

The New Zealand framework, *Wellbeing for Success: A resource for schools* (Education Review Office, 2016), is embedded in Maori culture. This framework centres on the following Maori perceptions of connection between the child and adult and is depicted by a house, with each of the following four walls contributing to wellbeing:

- Manaakitanga: refers to a particular responsiveness whereby the interaction between host and visitor is seen to create a living bond. Responsiveness of the host (teacher, adult) to care for visitors' (students') emotional spiritual, physical and mental wellbeing (an extension of love [Aroha])

- Whanaungatanga: represents deeply held kinship connections and the establishment of family-like relations
- Ako: is a reciprocity whereby learning is for both teacher and student, and the role of 'learner' and 'teacher' can shift between the two
- Mahi tahi: refers to a common task or work, that brings a sense of solidarity to the community (Education Review Office, 2016).

The spiritual aspects of a person are mentioned a number of times throughout and are distinguished by the inclusion of 'taha wairua' in relation to spiritual health. This refers to "unseen and unspoken energies; faith and spiritual awareness" (Education Review Office, 2016, p. 26). It is significant for this study that this is perhaps the only reference to something 'unseen' in educational policy.

The similarities between these frameworks include the implementation of a whole school approach to wellbeing. Leadership, a school vision or ethos, and a focus on the school climate are considered key elements in a whole school approach, along with using evidence informed practices, the provision of professional development, and on-going program evaluation.

In regard to wellbeing there are two discrete differences in the USA framework that distinguish it from the Australian, Irish and the English frameworks. One is a different use of the term 'intervention'. In the other frameworks, intervention typically refers to targeted individual support for students experiencing severe difficulties. Such support may include turning to external community agencies to provide help, such as referral to psychologists or social workers. In the US framework, intervention refers only to 'classroom interventions', meaning, the teaching and learning of SEL for specific classes (Durlak et al., 2011). The second difference is that the US framework has no reference to student voice, which is emphasised in all other frameworks.

Regarding spirituality, the frameworks range from the embedded inclusion seen in the New Zealand framework, to no mention at all in the US framework. The lack of spirituality in the US framework is primarily due to the foundation of behaviourism on which social and emotional learning is built (see Chapter 2). In the frameworks from Ireland and England spirituality is mentioned as a dimension of the whole, and in the English framework it is indicated that spirituality is incorporated formally in education through social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) curriculum.

The New Zealand Framework stands out as unique largely due to the way that education is immersed in Maori culture. New Zealand is bicultural (Higgins & Goodall, 2021) and policy approaches represent education holistically. The model of wellbeing as a house with four walls is adopted in both health and education sectors and includes the spiritual or what is beyond the physical realm. The bicultural nature of New Zealand education enjoys a stronger connection between Māori and non-Indigenous New Zealanders and therefore spirituality is more apparent in this framework. However, a recent policy analysis has suggested that wellbeing policy in New Zealand still struggles with interpreting wellbeing as "interrelated, complex or contextual" (Higgins & Goodall, 2021, p. 10)

Having briefly considered wellbeing frameworks in education it is relevant to ask: are there comparable spirituality frameworks in education? Although systems such as Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) have frameworks that are developed in relation to the Catholic faith (see for example Catholic Education Melbourne, 2017a, 2017b), to my knowledge there are no 'spirituality' frameworks that seek a whole school approach or suggest an implementation of spirituality in schools. A search of government department websites for education generally shows that spirituality appears primarily in documents related to Indigenous cultures.

What does this policy and framework space reveal about wellbeing and spirituality in education? The first point to note is that wellbeing is prioritised by government and education. Wellbeing is represented as a phenomenon that is important, able to impact learning and life outcomes, and able to be improved or achieved if schools take a comprehensive and deliberate approach. The second point to note is that spirituality is not a priority and has not garnered the attention of governments or schools in any broad scoping way. Spirituality is not connected to learning outcomes, although it is connected to mental health outcomes. In research and policy spirituality is not viewed as something that can be 'improved' or 'achieved'. A question from this then, could be formulated as: What would be the purpose of focussing on spirituality in education if spirituality cannot be directly linked to learning? In this study I contend that spirituality can (and may already) occupy a space in education, although it may not necessarily be labelled as 'spirituality'. Additionally, I suggest that there are other ways of identifying the space for spirituality rather than via an explicit link to learning, in the same way that wellbeing has been linked to learning.

Spirituality is often described as having a sense of meaning and purpose (de Souza, 2009). It could be argued that this *is* the purpose of education, broadly speaking. Though I suggest this is a prevalent but limited description of spirituality, I also think it shows a gap in policy regarding how, and if, spirituality is understood by policy makers. The strong link between wellbeing and mental health gives the impetus for approaching wellbeing directly, and also enables the use of the research base of psychology and health promotion. Spirituality does not enjoy these clear linkages and thus, is relegated to a 'nice thought' but not worthy of any real attention in policy. The following section considers whether this trend continues in practice.

1.3 Wellbeing and spirituality in practice

A whole school approach to wellbeing suggests a focus on culture and ethos along with wellbeing curriculum, which is usually presented as social and emotional learning. An emphasis on SEL is found in all five of the countries' wellbeing approaches explored above. But what of spirituality? Within the English curriculum, the spiritual aspect of the child is included in social moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) education, which is monitored and regulated by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). In Australia, spirituality appears in the Australian Curriculum predominantly in relation to exploring the significance of spirituality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In Irish curriculum the term 'spiritual' appears in the context of Religious Education and reference to spirituality is made via a mention of the whole child in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Finally, in New Zealand spirituality is found in 'taha wairua' – a Māori concept that is related to spiritual wellbeing. This is found in the Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2015).

A brief examination of curriculum in these countries reveals two significant points related to this study. One is that any mention of the spiritual is brief and although ostensibly related to the 'whole person', seems to only appear in relation to Health and Physical Education, and Religious Education. This means that if one were to look to curriculum for spirituality in schools, one would perhaps be looking in the wrong place. Secondly, all countries do acknowledge the 'whole child' at some point. In Australia it is in the *Mparntwe Declaration*, whilst in Ireland, England and New Zealand it is in within the context of their wellbeing frameworks. The whole child is not acknowledged in any wellbeing or curricular context in the USA. However, the USA is the home of the *Whole Child Initiative* which exists as a response to more traditional and technical forms of schooling (this will be examined further in Chapter 2).

As mentioned above, wellbeing in practice is often situated within a whole school approach where leadership, school improvement frameworks and teacher professional development are inclusive of wellbeing. This means that wellbeing can be situated within formal curriculum but is also referred to as a way of establishing and maintaining healthy relationships in the school setting. Nurturing the whole child is a practice that can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context of the school and the work of the individual teacher. The *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* (WSCC) model (Rooney et al., 2015) is one model that attempts to offer strategies for school communities to take up and can be applied here as an example of what 'whole child' practices might look like in a school. This model developed 5 'tenets' of the whole child: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. These tenets allow for schools to adopt their own strategies for how this might occur, and these are generally focused on changes to the environment, working with support staff and effective evaluation, rather than teaching practice or strategies for students (Lewallen et al., 2015). Notably however, the purpose of the tenets is to provide indicators for success and thus, shifts away from the internal experiences of the child towards what can be observed by educators.

Wellbeing when implemented in school practice often enjoys the benefits of a whole school approach, which means that it is purposefully implemented through strategies such as: confirming it as a priority of leadership; improvements in the culture of the school; partnerships with families and community agencies; and implementation in curriculum via SEL and/or health and physical education. The WSCC follows a similar approach, but names it as 'whole child' rather than wellbeing. In sum, there are no formal frameworks supporting spirituality in schools although it can be found in curriculum, through religious education and health education. Ultimately this means that if spirituality is in existence in schools, it occurs in a far more elusive way. The more significant problem associated with this is if spirituality

is vague and elusive, then the recognition of whether and where spirituality exists in schools is challenging. This brings me to the question of what the associated experiences of spirituality (and wellbeing) are for those who are on the receiving end of policy, practice and research.

1.4 Wellbeing and spirituality in research

Many approaches to wellbeing in schools are informed by health promotion and ecology, and behavioural and cognitive theories of psychology and learning. All of these approaches rely on research that measures outcomes and looks for tangible evidence of success. This is of course important; we need information that is generalisable to help inform policy in schools, nations and across the globe. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for example, have been instrumental in providing large-scale snapshots into the health and wellbeing of young people across populations (See for example Kessler et al., 2007; OECD, 2020). Additionally, wellbeing research that considers subjective and objective indicators of wellbeing is useful in providing a glimpse into how children think and feel, alongside objective indicators that measure such things as educational attainment, family income and so on (Bradshaw et al., 2013). However, research that relies on measurement to determine 'what works' in school settings inevitably requires "some disaggregation of its elements and results to understand various wellness domains" (Kempf, 2018, p. 7). This means that wellbeing on the whole—and the child as a whole—becomes split into elements to be understood via measurement.

Furthermore, there is little agreement on what it is that needs to be measured when looking at children's wellbeing (Pollard & Lee, 2003). This is problematic because the drive towards accountability in education is frequently associated with measurement. But if measuring wellbeing becomes the dominant discourse, then the lived experiences of students

become increasingly diminished. This is problematic for students as it inadvertently sends the message that their own experiences of wellbeing are not of (measurable) worth. Wellbeing becomes something *done to* students, rather than felt, experienced and shared.

Concurrent with the 'doing to' is the notion that the wellbeing of students is easily understood and accessible to adults. This belief, taken to the extreme, is the notion that wellbeing can be made visible. With regard to what can be made visible in schools, John Hattie's work has had a profound influence for over a decade. So much so that the effect of his *Visible Learning* on teachers is frequently referred to as 'the cult of Hattie'. Through conducting large scale meta-analyses, Hattie systematically analysed the in-classroom effects on children's learning (Hattie, 2009). What is significant to this study is not so much his findings but, rather, the disclaimer in the preface of his book:

> It is not a book about what cannot be influenced in schools – thus critical discussions about class, poverty, resources in families, health in families, and nutrition are not included – but this is NOT because they are unimportant, indeed they may be more important than many of the influences discussed in this book. It is just that I have not included these topics in my orbit (pp. viii-ix).

The above quote is seldom mentioned in references to his work. Although Hattie recognises that the child's context is important (and not included in his enormous body of data), he does not hold that there is an interrelatedness between school, home, class, poverty and so on. The very premise of his disclaimer is predicated on the idea that such things can be separated and split apart. Indeed, he claims that issues around class and poverty "cannot be influenced in schools" (Hattie, 2009, p. ix). There is a multitude of problems in conceiving of schools as having no influence on issues of social inequities, but in specific relation to wellbeing, his research has laid the groundwork for a perspective of wellbeing that also splits off the child's broader ecology and puts the teacher in charge of what can be brought into the visible realm of schooling.

As an offshoot of Hattie's work, Waters (2017) has developed 'visible wellbeing™'; an "evidence-based organised approach" (p. 8) that aims to integrate wellbeing into schools in a way that is aligned with Hattie's focus on teacher effectiveness and teacher practice. What Waters (2017) offers is a teacher led cycle of learning and teaching that draws on any number of positive psychology classroom interventions, combined with instructional leadership, to achieve positive wellbeing. Waters uses examples such as the maths teacher helping students understand their emotions in relation to a challenging problem, or a drama teacher helping students find a moment of flow on stage (Waters, 2017). These suggestions are predicated on teachers identifying and then pointing out 'wellbeing' to the students in the course of their teaching.

The problem is not with the interventions that Waters (2017) suggests, though they do seem to reduce wellbeing to the teacher's ability to identify emotions in their students. The problem is more with the assumption that student wellbeing can, and should be, entirely visible to adults. Not only is the discrete and nuanced emotional world of the student reduced to emotions that are accessible to any observant teacher, but this visibility is reliant on the teacher's planning, timing and agenda. Additionally, it suggests that invisibility in relation to wellbeing is something to be conquered.

In contrast, research into spirituality has more of an acceptance of the ineffable and indescribable (Scott, 2009; Sunley, 2009; Watson, 2009). Although some attempts have been made to measure spirituality (see for example Fisher 2008, 2013), most authors agree that spirituality is highly idiosyncratic whilst also holding a prevailing assumption that spirituality has an ontological foundation. In the research on children's spirituality, the phenomenon is often regarded as a primordial, or universal, state of being (Gellel, 2018; Hay & Nye, 2006; Hyde, 2008; Keating, 2017; Adams et al., 2008). The difficulty with labelling something as ontological, whilst also claiming it cannot be defined, is obvious. A further complication,

however, is the tendency of researchers to make ontological claims whilst neglecting to outline their own spiritual or religious fidelities (Manton, 2019). We need only look at the history of colonialism to determine why that may be problematic when it comes to spirituality and its association with religion.

This section has briefly summarised the educational research that contributes to approaches to wellbeing and spirituality in policy and practice. What I have sought to do here is problematise current trends in education that focus on what is visible in education, using Hattie's profoundly influential work as a seminal example. For wellbeing, these trends imply that unless phenomena are observable, or can be made observable, they are redundant. Spirituality, on the other hand, comes from a field of educational research that is more accepting of its ineffable nature. This field has its own challenges, however, particularly around the predominantly theistic perspectives which make claims about universal understandings without acknowledging the western-centric consciousness in which these claims have been developed. Moreover, although researchers in the field are adamant that spirituality deserves a place in education, this has not translated to the policy or practice contexts. My study aims to elucidate how wellbeing and spirituality are experienced for individuals who belong to school communities. In doing so, I aim to address the various gaps identified here between the phenomena in policy, research and practice.

1.5 Purpose of the research

The wellbeing frameworks discussed above also served as the beginning point for looking at wellbeing in education and the literature review was developed from the supporting references of these frameworks. From the above brief exploration, it is apparent that spirituality is present in education policy, but references are vague and so too is the relationship between wellbeing and spirituality. The primary purpose of this research,

therefore, is to explore this relationship. Three key challenges emerged in considering wellbeing and spirituality in education. The first challenge was the nebulous nature of both phenomena in theory, policy and practice. The second challenge, connected to this broad and nebulous nature, was the difficulty in working without a definition of either. In focusing on lived experience in this study, it was important to eschew definitions so that my interview design could elicit current experiences and associations related to these terms for those in school communities. While being open to various perspectives meant that that there could be many generative possibilities for interpretation, there also existed the possibility that wellbeing and spirituality would become even more vague and that the words themselves would be rendered meaningless.

The third challenge was my own embedded personal history whereby my lifelong curiosity and interest in both phenomena meant that my history would inevitably influence the study. I knew from the outset that it would be impossible for me to retain any sort of detachment from wellbeing and spirituality. Therefore, I needed a methodology that would enable me to consider the intersecting horizons between myself, the phenomena, and the experiences of others.

This study abjures problems of definition, focusing instead on experience and recognising that both wellbeing and spirituality remain indefinable. This study considers how things appear (Heidegger, 1962), whilst also acknowledging that appearance is nuanced and mutable. This requires a shift from wellbeing and spirituality as 'terms' or 'constructs' to wellbeing and spirituality as phenomena. Derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, the translation of phenomenon pertains to 'appearance', rather than a set reality of a 'thing' (Spinelli, 2005). Consequently, searching for a clear-cut definition to begin this research is unnecessary and problematic. Instead, this research recognises that wellbeing and spirituality have an ineffable quality to them that render both, at least partly, inscrutable. This research,

therefore, was designed to use a hermeneutic phenomenological method to better understand wellbeing and spirituality through lived experiences. By applying an inductive approach, I was able to put aside the question of definition in order to focus on experiences.

1.6 Aims of the Research

The aim of this research is to address the implicit inclusion of spirituality in education, and the positioning of spirituality in relation to wellbeing. As the whole child is often referred to as a means of connecting the two phenomena, this research seeks to understand the 'whole'. Through attention to lived experiences of wellbeing and spirituality, this research aims to consider the appearance of both phenomena and how they are related to education.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To explore the relationship between spirituality and wellbeing
- To identify the lived experiences of wellbeing and spirituality, from three perspectives within school communities: parent, child and teacher
- To find out how participants describe/represent connections between spirituality and wellbeing by drawing on their lived experiences.

1.6.1 Research Questions

The primary research question is:

In what ways do the lived experiences of parents, children and teachers illuminate a relationship between wellbeing and spirituality?

From this, the following research questions were developed:

(1) What is the meaning of spirituality for the participants and what is the context in which they experience it?

(2) What is the meaning of wellbeing for the participants and what is the context in which they experience it?

(3) What are the links, if any, between spirituality and wellbeing based on the participants' experiences?

1.7 Philosophical, methodological and cultural framing of the research

These research objectives and questions demand an inductive approach that begins with the lived experiences of participants. This means that rather than asking participants to respond to a formulated definition of wellbeing and spirituality, they would need to be asked to consider the phenomena in their own terms (see Chapter 4). This assumes that questions about 'the meaning of *my* life', are not only of interest to researchers but are of a continuing philosophical interest to humanity. This study argues that both wellbeing and spirituality are metaphysical phenomena. Although spirituality is connected to ontology in research (see Chapter 2), ontology tends to be overlooked in wellbeing in education, the dominant discourses being more concerned with epistemological questions, for example, questions related to objective and subjective indicators of wellbeing (Kristoffersen, 2018).

The conception of spirituality as an ontological reality and an innate and essential human trait is prevalent in the literature (de Souza, 2006; de Souza, 2012; Eaude, 2009; Harris, 2007; Hay & Nye, 2006; Hyde, 2008; Wills, 2012; Adams et al., 2008). If the consensus *is* that spirituality exists as something essentially human and a part of our being, then how does this ontological reality manifest itself in an educational context? Similarly, the term 'well*being'* in itself can summon a number of ontological questions: What is the nature of my being and how do I know my being is well? How and when do I reflect on my being and how do I describe my sense of wellness? One way of approaching an exploration of both

terms while holding in mind the complex and multi-layered nature of both is by employing an ontological lens, retaining a focus on being.

Coupled with the challenge of looking at something holistically is the challenge of maintaining an awareness of one's own historical context. Reading Heidegger and his focus on Being, at times, led me to believe I was on a quest for 'universal' understanding. His Dasein (a significant contributing theory in the findings presented in this study) is, after all, intended as a universal feature of human existence. Therefore, it is essential to point out the caveat that any references I have made, which imply 'universal' human experiences, have emerged *within* my own context. Both Heidegger and Gadamer held the perspective that Being is interpretation. But while Heidegger strove for a complex ontological study of existence (1962), Gadamer's study in *Truth and Method* (2004) was to thoroughly explicate interpretation as a method for the human sciences and as an *a priori* of human experience. In a sense, Heidegger enabled me to keep in mind the whole of wellbeing and spirituality, while Gadamer consistently led me back into the parts, his method requiring that I scrutinise what I brought to the 'text'—that is, the interviews—against the text itself (Gadamer, 2004). This intersection between researcher and text forms the most fundamental aspect of analysis in this study (see Chapter 4).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is about interpretation of texts which includes one's own interaction with the text. It is important to acknowledge a political standpoint within this act of interpretation, and alongside it. For my work in this study this meant acknowledging the perspectives I brought and finding ways of respecting the standpoints, values and stories of the participants when designing methods of gathering, interpreting and reporting.

This study is situated within a western paradigmatic understanding of wellbeing and spirituality. To call something 'western' can at times be so vague and all-encompassing that it loses meaning, therefore some teasing apart of what 'western' refers to in this research is

necessary. Particularly relevant to wellbeing in western perspectives is its association with health. In western thinking, there is a significant focus on prevention (Reveley, 2016), which has most definitely made its way into the discourse of wellbeing in schools (see Chapter 2). Prevention in western health disciplines is supported by solid research bases, and the idea of prevention itself seems a sound health ideal. However, health does not exist as a separate entity from government or the economy, and the fixation on prevention also occurs within western neoliberal ideals. In neoliberal perspectives, the onus is on the individual to manage their own health successfully, shifting responsibility of care away from governments.

Additionally, in a western paradigm that is politically joined to neoliberalism, the focus on wellbeing for children and adolescents may be taken as care and compassion, but also hold other motives that are not child-centred or focused on children as Beings in their own right. Wyn (2007) for example, suggests that young people can be viewed as "instruments for economic development" (p. 43). Therefore, the aim of success and productivity that is future-focused can place a great value on children 'becoming' successful workers or innovators for the sake of the nation's continuing financial growth. This is not to say that there is a clear-cut polarity between those who care for children and those who do not, but it does demonstrate that wellbeing is not necessarily a universal good that comes from a place of universal goodness.

Another feature of western history is the trace of colonialism that has marred many nations across the globe and continues to affect modern consciousness. 'Western' refers to a history of privilege and superiority that has been achieved by the displacement of non-Western people, the dismantling of culture, and the enforcement of laws, governance and religion over entire populations. My own personal ancestry includes convicts who were forced to come to Australia from Ireland and England. But even this sad punishment my ancestors faced is situated within a colonial push for dominance and control over Indigenous

people and country. When 'spirituality' is used in policy and frameworks, it often appears as a recognition of the central place spirituality has for Indigenous people. However, this centrality of spirituality and Indigenous knowledges, at least in the Australian context, remains an added feature of education rather than an embedded aspect of it.

Given this complicated history, I use the term 'western' perspectives in this study to refer to work that is being completed within a number of intersecting contexts (as outlined above), but also within a particular historical consciousness (Gadamer, 2004). This study holds the perspective that references to wellbeing and spirituality, which imply a universal or ubiquitous feature, are generally shaped within western perspectives and although one may strive to present essential features of human existence, one's own context cannot be evaded. As mentioned above, any reference to anything 'universal' must be understood as existing within this western consciousness.

Finally, western philosophy is imbued with dualism exemplified by Descartes notorious separation of mind and body. Western thought is replete with all forms of dualism and polarities; subject-object, individual-collective, reason-emotion and so on. Additionally, western Judeo-Christian religions hold their own dualisms, most notably, God as opposed to Satan, heaven as opposed to hell, and good as opposed to evil. These religious dualisms permeated western philosophy before the enlightenment period, and the Judeo-Christian belief system is still prone to polarities that are held and enacted by many. Of recent historical note is the USA seemingly more divided than united, where we saw a president who was all-good or all-bad, often dependent on perspectives that were either saturated with or disavowing of religious thought.

The use of 'Western' in this study intends to denote a particular history that has influenced the shape of wellbeing and spirituality in education. In the literature review (Chapter 2), I have drawn on the work of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) to help navigate

the contexts which influence both phenomena in the present day. Though their work focused on the body as it applies to medical anthropology, their perspectives are also relevant when exploring the body as 'lived experience', because they assist in identifying and naming the political and social bodies which press upon this lived experience.

1.8 Significance of the research

In this study, wellbeing and spirituality are not assumed to be inherently 'good'. This is because there is a dynamic interaction between wellbeing and the cultural, political, social and individual spheres of life. Elements of wellbeing are taken and employed in various ways, according to various agendas. This means that wellbeing is not a static, definable outcome but a messy, indeterminate and unclear phenomenon. Additionally, while spirituality perhaps has an appearance of finding meaning and connection (Raftopoulos & Bates, 2011) that appears harmless and enlivening, it carries with it a religious (and therefore political) association. Moreover, spirituality is often associated with existential questions and inevitably these questions lead to considerations of one's own life and death. It is notable that a wealth of literature on spirituality, including children's spirituality, comes from research in the field of palliative care (see for example Barton et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2002; Robinson et al., 2006). This study is significant in that it acknowledges wellbeing and spirituality as unstable and prone to existential quandaries. The implication of this for education is an ontological and novel understanding that may illuminate what is currently hidden due to the dominant discourses that focus on positive, rational and cognitive experiences.

In relation to wellbeing, the 'whole child' is an ambiguous but commonly used phrase. One aim of whole child approaches to wellbeing in education is to recognise that academic and intellectual outcomes cannot be divorced from outcomes that are relevant to other aspects of the child—that is, learning, as an academic or intellectual pursuit, should not

be separated from social, emotional or spiritual development. This is because learning occurs in a relational context. What is problematic about the way this term is used in education is that there is no consistency in what parts actually constitute the whole. In the literature review, I consider some of the theorists connected to the conceptualisation of the whole child and problematise current notions of the whole that are focussed more on particular parts, rather than any sense of integration.

The analysis in this study challenges the assumption that the religious schools 'do' spirituality, whilst government schools remain firmly secular. Instead, experiences of spirituality from members of a government and a Catholic school will be looked at to identify who, in two different educational settings, experiences spirituality and in what form these experiences take place. Additionally, the literature review (Chapter 2) in this study will foreground the absence of spirituality in education generally. Thus, as part of the illumination of 'invisible' spirituality, this study is significant in considering spirituality as an aspect of Being, though one which does not necessitate the word 'spirituality'. It will be argued that, although a plethora of literature exists around children's spirituality, the term still carries religious connotations and is, at times, cautiously segregated.

A number of disciplines including psychology, health-promotion, ecology, philosophy, politics and economics inform approaches to wellbeing in education. Current approaches to wellbeing programs favour cognitive, humanistic and behavioural modes that privilege observable experiences and tangible evidence of impact. In contrast to these approaches, this thesis draws on philosophical understandings of Being, and psychoanalytic understandings of relationships, both of which address what is neglected in purely cognitive understandings of human experience. This study holds that experiences through an ontological and psychoanalytic lens can illuminate the phenomena in different ways. It also suggests, however, that not everything will be ultimately uncovered. For education, this is

significant as it offers a new attitude or way of being in education for those who are more inclined to act only according to observable phenomena.

Finally, this study privileges the voice of the participants to find out what we can hear about both phenomena and allows for their deeply felt experiences to be considered. In Chapter 6 this is illustrated through features of wellbeing and spirituality that have not been central to recent research, but have been explored through the work of Donald Winnicott. The experiences of the pre-adolescent children described in the interviews mirror aspects of Winnicott's thoughts on children's development and needs. The approach used here foregrounds the voices of parents, teachers and, most importantly, children, to address on-going debates about the role of education in contributing to a life well lived.

1.9 Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 reviews literature from the fields of social and emotional learning (SEL), health promotion and resilience and their respective contributions to current understandings of wellbeing in education. Following this, I provide a brief background to some key historical points in time that have been long associated with the whole child approach in education. This is followed by a consideration of the literature that supports understandings of children's spirituality. Chapter 2 concludes with an exploration of the ways that wellbeing and spirituality are typically drawn together in education.

Chapter 3 is the first of the methodology sections. What is striking about both wellbeing and spirituality, and gives a plausible reason for the lack of consensus around the meaning of both, is that they are simultaneously idiosyncratic in a subjective sense and expose themes that are considered to be universal. In essence, spirituality and wellbeing illuminate what gives the human experience its idiosyncratic distinctiveness, while at the same time highlighting what is shared. The understanding that wellbeing and spirituality are

multifaceted requires a methodology that is capable of retaining the complex whole of both terms, while simultaneously exploring the discrete parts. It is argued in my methodology chapter that hermeneutic phenomenology is an appropriate philosophical framework and methodology to employ for this research, drawing primarily on the work of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. This chapter distinguishes between phenomenology and hermeneutics to consider the aspects of description and interpretation that occur in data analysis, and to clarify my methodological positioning.

Chapter 4 follows with the research methods employed in the data collection and analysis. It begins by describing the recruitment processes, selection of participants and the settings in which the interviews took place. This chapter then goes on to give a detailed explication of the methods of analysis that occurred. Particular attention is given to my prejudices, including my history as a researcher, former teacher, wellbeing leader, along with my personal interest and experiences with both wellbeing and spirituality. This section also attends to the discrete moments of 'understanding' that formed part of my analysis, usually informed by subtle shifts in emotion, sudden memories and so on. This chapter considers some of the evaluative criteria that I applied to my analysis, and concludes with a detailed report on the ethical procedures, particularly those pertaining to working with children.

Chapter 5 is the first of three findings chapters. It introduces the feature of 'relationality' as central to both wellbeing and spirituality and goes on to problematise the self-other dualism that became an obstacle during the course of the analysis. Heidegger's notion of Dasein is then presented as a way of overcoming the self-other divide, also placing ontic notions of the 'self' into an ontological understanding of Being. In this discussion, I consider Heidegger's understanding of "the They" as the social aspect of Dasein that both pulls one away from authenticity, while also providing the basis from which Dasein can take

a stand against inauthenticity. Once explored through the interview data, these features of Dasein are then related back to wellbeing and spirituality.

The second findings chapter (Chapter 6) focuses on the experiences of the students involved in the project, specifically looking at ontic and ontological manifestations of wellbeing and spirituality in the experience of these pre-adolescents. This chapter draws on some aspects of Winnicott's understanding of childhood development, to give shape to experiences of Self that were described by the students. The reason for drawing on Winnicott is given through a distinction between ontic and ontological representations of wellbeing and spirituality, and I argue that ontic representations are central to the pre-adolescent experience. I conceptualise such experiences through hidden narratives of Self, experiences of solitude and withdrawal, and finally through an understanding of pre-adolescent experience as a felt 'precipice' entailing their experience of transition in this challenging developmental period.

Chapter 7 looks at wellbeing and spirituality through the lens of Heidegger's equiprimordial structure: discourse, affectivity and understanding. This chapter highlights the ever-present mood that besets experience and underpins both discourse and understanding in relation to wellbeing and spirituality. In doing so, this chapter reveals some conditions for nurturing wellbeing and spirituality in schools, regardless of whether schools are religious or secular.

Chapter 8 concludes the research by returning to the key themes and challenges established in the literature review, and summarising what this study offers in relation to those themes. Recommendations for future research are considered, with reference to intercultural dialogue around phenomena that are posited as 'universal'. Finally, the limitations of the study are considered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review explores three fields in education. The first is wellbeing, which is positioned as multidimensional, with various definitions developed in a number of fields applied to the educational context (Watson et al., 2012). After briefly examining some definitions of wellbeing, this review focuses on some major contributing areas in education, including Social Emotional Learning (SEL), health promotion and resilience approaches to wellbeing. I use Scheper-Hughes and Lock's (1987) conceptualisation of three intertwined 'bodies': the individual, social and body-politic (as outlined in Chapter 1), to consider some of the contributing challenges for wellbeing that are woven through the experience of the individual and emerge in the lived experience of the student at school. In doing so, I argue that wellbeing is not simply a 'universal' good but carries with it layers of political and social features that emerge discreetly in school.

Following this, I consider the whole child approach in education that is often presented as the link between wellbeing and spirituality. Beginning with the commonly used 'dimensional' perspective of the whole child, I then briefly consider some of the theorists who are associated with this approach and argue that, rather than focusing on dimensions of

the child, the whole child approach has historically acted as a response to the social and political inequities of the time.

Following on from wellbeing and the whole child I consider spirituality in education, which has emerged from a different historical tradition to wellbeing, and has a different positioning in education. Unlike wellbeing, spirituality is not regarded as a universal 'good', and interpretations around what spirituality is tend to be interpreted by governmental policy through the connection to religion. Despite this, the literature presented here shows an acceptance of the idiosyncratic nature of spirituality and allows for the possibility of spirituality as a place of curiosity, tension and integration in lived experience. This literature review concludes with a novel understanding of the connection between wellbeing and spirituality that positions lived experience as central to furthering understandings of both phenomena in the educational context.

2.2 Wellbeing in Education

Wellbeing in the education context is situated within a milieu of disciplines, including social, personality and cognitive psychology, health promotion, economics, sociology and philosophy. Although it is frequently described as difficult to define, there are nevertheless definitions of wellbeing that have been applied in the field of education. For example, Weare (2015) characterises social and emotional wellbeing as

> a state of positive mental health and wellness. It involves a sense of optimism, confidence, happiness, clarity, vitality, self-worth, achievement, having a meaning and purpose, engagement, having supportive and satisfying relationships with others and understanding oneself, and responding effectively to one's own emotions (p. 3).

This definition is focused on subjective wellbeing, conceptualised primarily as internal states and the intersection between emotions and relationships. This perspective assumes that wellbeing is an aspirational 'state', meaning that the attainment of wellbeing comes from

fulfilment in relationships and having a good understanding of one's own emotions. Weare's work in the field of wellbeing education refers specifically to *social* and *emotional* wellbeing and is in line with the emphasis on social emotional and academic learning (SEAL) in the UK (Weare 2013, 2015). From this perspective, the state of wellbeing can be achieved through the teaching of social and emotional competencies.

Similar to Weare's definition, but with more of an emphasis on the role of the school, Noble et al.'s (2008) definition of wellbeing in education suggests that:

> Student wellbeing is strongly linked to learning. A student's level of wellbeing at school is indicated by their satisfaction with life at school, their engagement with learning and their social-emotional behaviour. It is enhanced when evidence-informed practices are adopted by schools in partnership with families and community.
>
> Optimal student wellbeing is a sustainable state characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimisation and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences (p. 5).

In this definition, wellbeing is explicitly linked to learning and the ecology of the child. It references a 'state' and the positive emotions and relationships that make this state attainable, this time specifically including school satisfaction in relation to the student (Noble et al., 2008).

In both definitions, an admixture of associated fields contributes to understandings of wellbeing. For example, "life satisfaction" is a term derived from indicators research, where measures are applied to determine levels of subjective and objective wellbeing across populations (Forgeard et al., 2011). The references to social and emotional learning have their roots in behaviourism and cognitive behaviourism theories (Hoffman, 2009). "Positivity", "optimism" and "resilience," however, are areas associated with an understanding of wellbeing that has developed via health promotion and positive psychology. In fact, both

definitions are replete with positive terminology; the idyllic plateau of wellbeing, it seems, can be reached via positivity, satisfaction and optimism.

The intersection between health, psychology and education situates wellbeing in a nexus where research from a number of different fields converge. Historically, the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of health lay the groundwork for new understandings of health that were not simply about the absence of disease or infirmity, but rather, "a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being" (WHO, 1948, p. 1). This introduced a new perspective that broadened notions of health beyond the physical. In the WHO's definition, there is another reference to an optimal or 'complete' state, which in turn is divided into three dimensions that posit an underlying assumption about *who* the person is, and what parts of the person need to be well. These dimensions—the physical, social and mental—introduce us to the perspective of wellbeing that I referred to in Chapter 1: the 'whole person' (or whole child) approach. This perspective is where the association between wellbeing and spirituality is often found, which will be explored later in this chapter.

In education, wellbeing is also posited as an outcome of positive relationships, emotional regulation and a supportive environment (Cahill et al., 2014; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009a; Education Council, 2018; Noble et al., 2008). This means that wellbeing is something that is attainable, and education has a role to play in the intervention and promotion of child and adolescent wellbeing in the school environment (Jamal et al., 2013). This conceptualisation of wellbeing as a state or outcome is not ubiquitous, however. In their literature review, Cahill et al. (2014) defined wellbeing as "both an outcome and a process which facilitates children's progression towards learning and development outcomes" (p. 13). This shifts the conceptualisation of wellbeing from a fixed plateau to an active and dynamic process where attention to wellbeing, from the student and the school, forms part of wellbeing itself.

So far, wellbeing has been posited as both an outcome, or state, and a process. A further positioning of wellbeing is as a prerequisite, particularly for learning in schools (Cahill et al., 2014; Spratt, 2016). When wellbeing is viewed as a prerequisite for learning, support, security, safety and attachment to caregivers are emphasised (Cahill et al., 2014; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009a), along with the impact of risk factors in early childhood experiences (Department for Education, 2020; Murray et al., 2010). Therefore, early intervention before school years is considered fundamental to wellbeing, and long-term support is considered crucial for those students who have experienced trauma. This understanding of wellbeing draws on research around risk factors for students and the school's role is seen as supportive, where significant relationships with adults are considered fundamental to students' continuing healthy development.

In contrast to the above wellbeing definitions that posit the construct as 'positive', others use the conceptualisation of 'homeostasis' for wellbeing. In the conceptualisation of wellbeing otherwise known as set-point theory, one can be faced with challenges and utilise internal and external resources in order to meet such challenges without becoming overwhelmed (Dodge et al., 2012). Life challenges, in this sense, are not seen as ordeals to suffer through, but are rather viewed as experiences that can impact positively on wellbeing, resulting in a life that is more vitalising than one that remains perpetually unchallenged. This definition, therefore, presents a dynamic and on-going lived experience, with the individual innately striving for the maintenance of equilibrium. This understanding of wellbeing challenges the notion that wellbeing is an outcome. From Dodge et al.'s (2012) perspective, if wellbeing were an already established inner state susceptible to being rocked by challenges before settling again, then there would be little point in aiming for an increase in students' wellbeing in schools, because the state is already set at a particular point for each individual (Dodge et al., 2012; Headey, 2010). Rather, the authors suggest that it is the individual's

awareness of external resources and the ability to draw on them during times of challenge that can help return a person more swiftly to homeostasis.

The complex and multifaceted nature of wellbeing means that different authors have conceptualised approaches to wellbeing in education in different ways. In their deconstruction of wellbeing, Watson et al. (2012) characterise wellbeing as a "plane of immanence" (p. 5), signifying its intersection with a vast number of related concepts (positivity, relationships, emotions, *student* wellbeing, etc.) in the field of education, along with a significant number of other fields. From the above ways of conceptualising wellbeing, particularly in relation to students and school settings, we can see the immense scope of the term and have begun to unravel some of the differing discourses that influence its place in education. A closer look at the emergence of wellbeing in schools from three of the major contributing approaches, social and emotional learning, health promotion, and resilience, will now be explored.

2.3 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a widely adopted approach to wellbeing that underpins many educational programs, particularly in North America and the United Kingdom. In North America, SEL is the preferred term whilst the UK has adopted the acronym SEAL (Social Emotional and Academic Learning). In other countries that draw from SEL, the term is used interchangeably with wellbeing, with some authors relying on the whole phrase 'social and emotional wellbeing' to describe their field. SEL and wellbeing, however, are not the same thing. Whilst wellbeing is a term spanning many perspectives, including humanistic, ecological and philosophical, the SEL approach is more closely aligned with teaching and learning and draws largely from behaviourist perspectives and social learning theory (Elias & Moceri, 2012). In the SEL approach, wellbeing is positioned as

something that a student may have if indicators are in place, such as positive social behaviour, academic success, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress and less drug use (Taylor et al., 2017). Such indicators are generally observable and thus measurable, which has resulted in a large 'evidence base' of what are considered to be effective SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2011).

All of the wellbeing frameworks, mentioned in Chapter 1, draw from the research that has come out of the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) – a research network established in the USA in 1994 (Oberle et al., 2016). In CASEL's definition, SEL is "the acquisition of skills including self and social awareness and regulation, responsible decision making and problem solving, and relationship management" (Elbertson et al., 2010, p. 1017). A meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011) concluded that an approach to SEL that is likely to have the best outcomes includes four key practices: sequenced lessons that build on each other; active learning; focussed time periods for the development of skills; and explicit learning goals. Thus, SEL, as a wellbeing approach, centres on curriculum, teaching and learning (Watson et al., 2012), with a short-term (8 week) sequence of classroom-based activities considered to be essential to a SEL approach.

SEL and SEAL programs hold the perspective that academic learning goes hand in hand with the development of relational skills, and the implementation of SEL curriculum is best adopted across the whole school via a focus on prevention, rather than intermittent interventions for classes, groups or individual children (Oberle et al., 2016). There is a general consensus across all fields related to wellbeing in education that a whole school approach is most likely to be of greatest success (Cahill et al., 2014; Hawe et al., 2015; Weare, 2015). SEL, however, can be distinguished from other approaches through its principal emphasis on the teaching and learning of social and emotional skills, with the

primary outcome being behavioural improvements in the school environment (Watson et al., 2012).

The seminal meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011) of 213 SEL programs implemented between 1970 and 2007 showed that students in classrooms with a positive atmosphere demonstrated substantially higher social and emotional skills, positive social behaviours and also showed lower conduct problems and lower levels of emotional distress than was the case in classrooms with a less positive atmosphere. Furthermore, the academic performance of these children was also improved as a result of the positive classroom atmosphere (Durlak et al., 2011).

This analysis, which to date has more than 7000 citations, focused on programming, that is, implementation of planned and "systematic instruction" in the interrelated competencies of cognition, affectivity and behaviour (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 406), along with school-wide components that extend the opportunity to promote what has been learnt outside of the classroom. It is unsurprising then that many programs in SEL utilise a cognitive behavioural approach (Sklad et al., 2012), where the emphasis is on these three interlocking strands where cognition—that is, thought—is considered the driver of feelings and behaviour.

SEL approaches to wellbeing emphasise interventions in the form of teaching, indicating that children need to 'learn' the appropriate forms of behaviour and this is best achieved through structured teaching. Hoffman (2009) argues that this interventionist approach is, in part, due to a discourse around problematic behaviour in young people and the need to wipe out burgeoning delinquent tendencies with clear instructions and expectations for students to manage their behaviour. As Vadeboncoeur et al. (2013) suggest:

> Many SEL programs define social and emotional learning as individual self-control – with practices based on rules, behavioural contracts, manufactured "choices", and structured activities – rather than as social relationship, engagement, and belonging (p. 204).

Success in the implementation of these interventions emphasises fidelity to the program, which is achieved by thorough training for the staff who put the program into practice (Weare & Nind, 2011). But given the highly contextual nature of school environments, the schools in which these interventions take place paradoxically become limitations to the implementation and research outcomes. When SEL interventions are launched in schools, they are faced with unique educational contexts where the onus is on the leaders, teachers and students to adhere to the program with fidelity (Weare, 2015). Thus, SEL is at risk of becoming a doing 'to' rather than a doing 'with' when SEL programs cannot be adapted to work within the contextual arrangements of each school as a system and community.

A further challenge with the SEL approach is the assumption that, "if social-emotional skills are not taught systematically, they will not be internalized" (Elias, 2006, p. 7). This, taken as a broad statement about childhood development, is of course untrue, as infants develop socially and emotionally from infancy well before any systematic instruction takes place. Taken as a reference to systematic instruction versus ad-hoc learning, however, Elias is perhaps arguing for teachers to prioritise the teaching of SEL as much as they would 'the basics' of numeracy and literacy. Elias' argument is connected to other arguments about prioritising wellbeing in schools, emphasising that wellbeing and learning have a bi-directional impact on each other (McCallum & Price, 2016).

Given the push for evidence of 'what works', SEL approaches have provided large amounts of research on improved social and emotional competencies of children. Hoffman (2009) argues that the focus on SEL is ultimately a focus on skills that are quantifiable. Therefore, the nuanced emotional worlds of children take a back seat to behaviour and cognition. Self-management for example, is about the "active managerial control" (Hoffman, 2009, p. 540) over one's own internal states, which serves to counteract impulsivity. New efforts to control one's own behaviour, can be observed by teachers noticing, for example,

when a child has walked away from a peer disagreement and taken a few deep breaths, as opposed to impulsively acting-out physically or verbally.

Thus, this focus is not on being curious with children about why they might have difficulty controlling their emotions, but rather on teaching strategies of becoming aware of feelings before they 'boil over', thereby growing the capacity to pause before acting out, and then choosing a more socially acceptable course of action. Such interventions are predicated on children whose behaviour is externalised, and tend not to address children who supress emotions but do not cause social troubles. Supressing emotions is, of course, just as concerning as acting out (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011), but this is not an easily observable emotional problem and, thus, is unlikely to gain the attention of teachers or other students.

The development of SEL in education has seen structured teaching and learning embedded in school curriculum, with the aim of improving children's emotional regulation and social capabilities. Although SEL has more recently situated classroom teaching in a broader ecological framework (CASEL, 2020), it has predominantly focussed on behavioural change in children. Because of this, SEL has been criticised for being essentially behaviourist, where the individual students are taught to 'manage' themselves in order to fit in with social norms, typically via the use of rewards (Hoffman, 2009). Despite SEL being used synonymously with wellbeing, there are other fields connected to wellbeing that have originated in a historically different way, and thus have developed from very different underpinning assumptions. Therefore, I now turn to the field of health promotion.

2.4 Health Promotion

The historical link between wellbeing and health can be traced back to the first International Conference on Health Promotion in Ottawa, 1986. The Ottawa Charter was developed at this point in time, with the aim to achieve 'Health for All' by the year 2000 and beyond

(Kickbusch, 2003). It broadened the notion of health to include a more holistic conception of wellbeing. It also challenged thinking about how to promote health and wellbeing outside of clinical settings by encouraging an approach to health in which the role of the school became more prominent (Young, 2005). This saw the beginnings of a more inter-sectorial approach to promoting health and wellbeing, particularly between health and education.

The Ottawa Charter's definition of health promotion was tremendously influential in the HP movement across a range of sectors:

> Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. Therefore, health promotion is not just the responsibility of the health sector, but goes beyond healthy life-styles to well-being (WHO, 2021).

The WHO's Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework advanced the connection between health and education (Langford et al., 2014) and formed the basis for many of the wellbeing frameworks that followed. In the Australian context, this included the *Australian Health Promoting Schools Framework*, its successor, *MindMatters*, and the most recently developed framework, *BeYou*. Much like the synonymous use of SEL in reference to wellbeing, in the health promotion literature, health is also at times used interchangeably with wellbeing. However, the intersection between health promotion and education focuses on mental health in particular (Weare & Nind, 2011), rather than on social and emotional skill acquisition. This distinction is important as it illustrates the different backgrounds that the two approaches have come from. While SEL is situated within behavioural and cognitive behavioural perspectives, health promotion is aligned with socio-ecological theory, where a holistic understanding of the student includes the individual, familial and broader environmental

factors that influence behaviour and learning.

2.4.1 Prevention to intervention

One of the key shifts that occurred through the development of the Ottawa Charter was the inclusion of a 'prevention to intervention' continuum to address the wellbeing needs of children in schools. Otherwise referred to as a continuum from 'universal' to 'targeted' approaches to mental health and wellbeing (Reinke et al., 2011), this perspective viewed wellbeing broadly and suggested that all children could benefit from the promotion of wellbeing, particularly if wellbeing is adopted as a whole school approach (Hawe et al., 2015; Public Health England, 2021; Spence & Schortt, 2007; Weare, 2015). In this framework, the broader school community can benefit from preventative actions towards wellbeing, for example, celebrations or special events that promote a sense of belonging. In addition to this, small group interventions may include short-term programs with select groups of children who have like needs, while more intensive interventions are reserved for the minority of children who are in need of concentrated support, such as individual sessions with a counsellor or psychologist (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2017).

As opposed to a SEL approach to wellbeing, with its focus on changing behaviours in children, health promotion has a broader focus on the environmental contributing factors of health and wellbeing. Viner et al. (2012) determined that focusing on family, peer and school connectedness, and strengthening protective factors around young people improves health outcomes. Moreover, they conclude that the strongest determinants of health in adolescence were "structural factors" (p. 1649), such as national wealth, income equity and access to education. This significant work reviewed data across countries, determining that social and economic factors considerably modify health. It suggests that focussing on children's

behaviour and social competencies alone, will not lead to better health outcomes across populations, unless issues of access, participation and equity are addressed.

Health promotion in schools has been criticised as having a projected focus on the student "becoming", that is, the notion that what happens in childhood and adolescence significantly affects outcomes in adult life (Langford et al., 2014; Viner et al., 2012). The emphasis, therefore, is on promoting positive and healthy behaviours during formative periods as a means to healthy outcomes as an adult. This has been criticised as a problematic view of the child that regards the child as incomplete (Fattore et al., 2012). To counter this, Fattore et al. (2012) argue for an ontological positioning of the child as a being in their own right, rather than a not-yet adult, which they consider to be a deficit perspective of childhood and children's experiences. However, health promotion research is increasingly looking to student voice and participatory approaches to research to counter this criticism (see for example Kostenius, 2013; Lind, 2007).

2.4.2 Risk and protective factors

The field of health promotion recognises risk factors as experiences that put the child at greater risk of mental health problems and poor outcomes in life, such as lack of employment, susceptibility to drug and alcohol abuse, and poor life satisfaction. Examples of risk factors include poverty, abuse and neglect, family violence, grief and bereavement, or having a parent with severe mental illness (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011; Weare, 2015). Protective factors are those factors that mitigate the risk of poor outcomes for the child. Such factors include internal levels of resilience, strong attachment in infancy, or having a sense of connectedness and belonging at school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). The school environment has been long recognised for the central role it plays as a protective factor. For example, positive relationships that teachers

establish with students are considered crucial to nurturing connectedness (Jamal et al., 2013). Given that internal resilience has long been identified as a protective factor, a connection can be made here between health promotion and positive psychology, which has an increasingly large evidence base around the building of resilience as something that can be taught in the school environment (Cahill et al., 2014).

2.4.3 Ecology of childhood

An ecological approach to wellbeing is apparent when there is recognition of individual, family and broader socio-environmental factors contributing or constraining the development of health and wellbeing in an individual. For the education sector, perhaps the most commonly referred to ecological model is that of Uri Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner's ecology model (1979) is commonly used in educational theory and practice as a way of situating the individual student within a complex array of systems such as family, school, systemic, political and so on. In Bronfenbrenner's model, the systems closest to the child (family and school) have more of an effect on the child than the broader (meso) systems, such as politics and the media. An important contribution to health promotion from Bronfenbrenner is the recognition that when systems are aligned, the outcomes are better for the child. Harmony between the systems has a positive impact on the child and much of the work on family and school partnerships, is driven by this perspective (Yamauchi et al., 2017).

2.5 Resilience

Resilience approaches to wellbeing are situated within both ecological approaches and positive psychology approaches to wellbeing. The hallmark of positive psychology is the identification and development of individual strengths as opposed to focussing on deficits in the individual (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Resilience is closely aligned with positive psychology due to the underpinning perspective that the internal dimension of

resilience can be developed and strengthened (Cahill, 2014). However, research into resilience also places the person within their familial and societal context and identifies these contexts as factors essential to resilience (Rutter, 1985). Much of the early research into resilience looked at why some children were still able to have positive outcomes in life when faced with extreme adversity (Knight, 2007; Rutter, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1992).

As for so many terms related to wellbeing there is no universal definition of resilience. However, it refers generally to coping mechanisms, optimism, and the ability to 'bounce back' after challenges or setbacks. There is a link here between resilience and wellbeing as homeostasis (Dodge et al., 2012), where the aim of resilience is to return to a set point of individual wellbeing after setbacks. Importantly, although resilience refers to an individual's ability to manage setbacks, there is an acknowledgement in the literature that resilience is not solely dependent on the individual's capacity, and definitions of resilience therefore must include the role of environmental contributors (Cahill et al., 2014). Thus, for students, the school becomes integral to building resilience, primarily through connectedness and belonging.

Much of the research on resilience suggests that resilience can be taught to all children and thus, can be acquired and developed rather than it being thought of as a static internal trait. Moreover, research in the area of resilience has revolved around the concept of 'flourishing', yet another term that has become synonymous with wellbeing. Flourishing has its contemporary foundations in the work of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000). It is considered to be the state of wellbeing where both hedonic and eudaimonic forms of wellbeing mutually exist (this will be discussed further on in the chapter) (Henderson & Knight, 2012) and, "refers to the experience of life going well" (Huppert & So, 2013, p. 838).

The focus on flourishing signified a shift away from happiness as the hallmark of wellbeing, towards a term intended to be more holistic, and less marked by reference to an affective state. Seligman (2011) describes the shift in his own thinking when he states,

> I used to think that the topic of positive psychology was happiness... I now think that the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing (p. 13).

Implicit in this is the suggestion that with the development of a particular positive attitude and mindset (Dweck, 2012), lifelong problematic patterns of behaviour and ways of relating can be ameliorated. This assumes that we are rational beings with not only the freedom to choose our attitudes, outlook and behaviours, but also a fully conscious ability to do so (Miller, 2008). Thus, resilience improvements at school are predicated on an observance of students' inner states, and the capacity to shift problematic thoughts, feelings and behaviours to reflect a strengths-based approach to one's life. Equally, the environment must also shift to reflect an atmosphere of positivity, hope and optimism. This intersection between the inner and external worlds of the student is central to resilience and ecological approaches to wellbeing.

2.6 Individual, cultural and political considerations

The applied practices of wellbeing in schools are at least partially dependant on the theory from which they are derived. However, approaches to wellbeing are also informed by other discourses that are considered here in order to identify the ways in which wellbeing is an instrument of political and economic ideologies. Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) provide a useful frame for situating wellbeing within three spheres: the individual body, the social body and the political body. The methodology and analysis in this study are focussed on the individual 'body', understood here as individual lived experience (Scheper-Hughes & Lock,

1987). The social body is represented by culture, and the body-politic is the political and authoritative body that may or may not have a vested interest in wellbeing. Situating wellbeing within these three 'bodies' challenges the idea that wellbeing is simply a universal 'good'.

Thus, in order to fully understand the current positioning of wellbeing in education, it is important to explore the intersection of some of the individual, cultural and political considerations that impact on understandings of wellbeing, marking it as not only a state or process, but also as a contested space in education that is mediated by our current socio-political and historical positioning.

2.6.1 Wellbeing through a Western Lineage

The broader wellbeing discourse that includes psychology, health promotion, indicators research and economics frequently draws on the Aristotelian notions of *hedonia* and *eudaimonia* to situate wellbeing in a philosophical tradition. Early conceptualisations of wellbeing initially formed around the notion of hedonic wellbeing. Hedonia refers to affect and life satisfaction, and the pursuit of life's pleasures (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Ryan & Deci; 2001, Steger et al., 2008). Wellbeing, according to this hedonic approach, can be measured subjectively according to positive mood (generally construed as "happiness"), the absence of negative mood, and life satisfaction (Carlisle et al., 2009; Christopher, 1999; Diener & Suh, 1997; Ryff, 1989). Generally considered to be a subjective form of wellbeing (Henderson & Knight, 2012), hedonic wellbeing was originally measured via self-reports on happiness. Ryff (1989) argued that happiness in itself was too narrow an understanding of wellbeing and therefore broadened her understanding of the concept by including a conceptualisation of eudaimonia. This meant that wellbeing was understood to not only be a pursuit of happiness as a short-term goal, but included the long-term engagement with one's

own potential (Ryff, 1989).

Eudaimonic wellbeing, therefore, refers to the pursuit of self-actualisation, nestled in not only desires but deeply held personal values that provide the foundation for personal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The eudaimonic form of wellbeing refers to living up to one's potential in the face of life's many challenges, and the pursuit of a more virtuous form of personal growth, driven by something more than the pursuit of happiness (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Steger et al., 2008). Ryff's eudaimonic model of psychological wellbeing refers to self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Why draw on an Aristotelian understanding to conceptualize wellbeing in this era? Aristotle was indeed concerned with a life well-lived. His *Nichomachean Ethics* is an ancient thesis on how to live well through the cultivation of virtues and a balanced approach to life. In applying eudaimonia to modern perspectives of wellbeing, Peterson, Park and Seligman state that Aristotle's eudaimonia refers to "being true to one's inner self" and that "true happiness entails identifying one's virtues, cultivating them, and living in accordance with them" (Peterson, et al., 2005, p. 25). In this interpretation, eudaimonia involves reflection on one's virtues (or 'strengths' in modern parlance), developing and working on these and living in accordance with these understandings. This is a practical interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy that enables one to live a flourishing life (Seligman, 2011).

Another interpretation of Aristotle's eudaimonia is provided by McMahon (2006), who notes that *eudaimon* was used in relation to having a "flourishing, *favoured* life" (p. 3, my italics). He also considers the etymology of the word eudaimonia, noting that it combines *eu* (good) with *daimon* (god or spirit). This recognition of daimon is not simply an 'inner self' but refers instead to the role of luck, fortune and favour in living one's life. For the ancient Greeks, gods were imbued with human characteristics that rendered them erratic and

unpredictable. In this understanding of eudaimonia, wellbeing was not simply a matter of knowing and building on strengths, or pursuing self-actualisation by engaging mindfully with one's own virtues, but rather, wellbeing was understood within the experience of life's unpredictably and one's inability to control everything. Eudaimonia referred to being favoured by the gods (Woolfolk & Wasserman, 2005). Fortune and luck were powerful concepts in Ancient Greece and stand in contrast to the pursuit of self-actualisation in modern understandings of eudaimonia. Moreover, Aristotle's highest good was contemplation and he viewed the contemplative life as the closest one could be to the divine. Unfortunately, this highest good was not available to women, slaves or any other individual not fortunate enough to be favoured by the gods through their birth-right. Though a sense of gravitas may come from tracing a line between modern and ancient Greek understandings of eudaimonia, Aristotle's context was vastly different to the western world in which eudaimonia is now applied.

2.6.2 The 'Management' of Emotions in Individuals

What is the role of teaching and learning in regard to wellbeing? In SEL, it is assumed that self-management can be taught and learned, and the onus is on the child to enact behaviours that are socially acceptable. The priority, therefore, is on changing the child rather than changing the social and cultural contexts in which the child is placed (Hoffman, 2009). This is particularly problematic when childhood trauma manifests as behavioural problems, as it frequently does (Howard, 2013). Interpreted through a SEL lens, the child's observed behaviour is recognised as a deficit and something that needs intervention in order to 'fix' it (see Durlak et al., 2011).

In attachment and trauma informed practice, however, the child's behaviour is more likely to be viewed as a communication about fear and abandonment (Department for

Children, Schools and Families, 2009b), rather than simply not having learnt the correct way to behave. Rather than viewing behaviour as a communication, SEL is aligned with a more rationalist approach to emotions, whereby once a child becomes cognisant of their problematic behaviour the child should then become adept at making changes by 'choosing' more appropriate ways of thinking and interacting with others (Hoffman, 2009). Many of the classroom interventions in SEL frameworks are based on cognitive behavioural therapies, which focus on uncovering unhelpful thought patterns in order to change emotions and behaviour (Pilgrim, 2011). Cognitive behaviour therapies are an almost hegemonic approach to mental health in Australia because of their time-limited, cost-efficient approach and evidence base. The fact that such approaches inform many wellbeing interventions in schools demonstrates how political decisions around mental health travel into educative practices. 'Thinking' as the driver of emotions and behaviours is only one way of theorising the psychology of mental health and relationships but is often presented as the *only way* due to the hegemony of both cognitive behaviour therapy and positive psychology (Minozzo, 1990).

In contrast to 'changing one's thoughts' or 'choosing alternative behaviours', Viner et al.'s (2012) research suggested that environmental circumstances affect wellbeing in schools more than individual behaviour. Given that it is much easier to focus on changing children's behaving then it is to address widespread social inequities, this throws into question whether behaviour modification is about the child's wellbeing at all. Critiques of behavioural interventions suggest that such a focus on behaviour management is about compliance rather than social cohesion. Theorists such as Alfie Kohn have long been critical of any behaviour modification programs, suggesting that the goals of such approaches are simply to produce compliant students (Kohn, 2006).

Lloyd (2013) is critical of emotions being cast as competencies, suggesting that this is simply a consequence of pre-industrial schooling (2013) which prepared children for labour.

Of course, teachers need to have a degree of order in the classroom so that students feel safe and can engage in their work. However, both Viner et al.'s (2012) work and Bronfenbrenner's model remind us that there is more at play when a child is not complying to social norms, and it may benefit the child more if attention is given to their context, rather than just the behaviour that disrupts class and school cohesion.

Much is written about self-management in relation to wellbeing in schools. It must be asked then, how did a "management" discourse find its way into wellbeing? CASEL specifies 'self-management' as one of the core competencies of SEL. It suggests that once problematic emotions are located and connected to problematic behaviours, the child will then be able to make a correct choice, thus managing their behaviour and negative impact on the environment. This concept of 'choice' is particularly prevalent within neoliberal discourse and, in the wider health literature, links have been made between the discourse of management of the self, in relation to health, and neo-liberal principles. Brijnath & Antoniades (2016) argue that, "Neoliberal principles often assign responsibility for social risks, such as illness, unemployment and poverty, to individuals and families as a problem of 'self-care'" (p. 1). The two-sided nature of neoliberal principles plays out in the classroom as well. On the one hand, self-management is associated with choice, autonomy and personal responsibility, a far cry from authoritarian classroom structures. However, as Brijnath & Antoniade (2016) note the flipside of this is a "culture of accountability and blame" (Brijnath & Antoniade, 2016, p. 2). In the classroom this manifests as the onus being on the child to self-manage once the SEL curriculum has been delivered. In contrast, the concept of 'self-regulation' is a much gentler term and refers to the growing ability to regulate one's emotions as a natural part of children's development. Regulation is experienced through parents as caregivers, 'regulating' for the child until the child gradually develops the ability to do this

for themselves. Given that this is the term commonly used in early childhood studies, it is surprising that this language is not more common in schools.

Whether the child is able to manage their emotions or not, it should be noted that students live at school in asymmetrical power relationships. With regard to these power relations, Jamal et al.'s (2013) research found that teachers tended to lack credibility with students if students did not feel understood by their teachers. Moreover, students can be preoccupied with how adults exert power over them (rather than preoccupied with their learning), particularly during the adolescent phase (Lodge & Lynch, 2003). If students do not feel understood by their teachers, and if the outcome of this relational malfunction leads to a lack of respect, it suggests that there are complex and nuanced teacher-student, not to mention student-student, dynamics that are not necessarily consciously accessible. Therefore, choosing appropriate behaviour may not be so readily apprehended in the service of 'right' decision-making. Thus, the impact of wellbeing approaches can be questioned when the underlying assumption is that they can be 'taught' systematically, with little regard for the student who is on the receiving end of this teaching, or perhaps more importantly, for how the teacher relates to the student.

In a statement on their website, the Victorian Department of Education suggests that, "social and emotional learning emphasises 'right' decision making in children to support wellbeing in others" (Department of Education Victoria, 2020). By using the phrase 'right decision making', the implication is that there is *wrong* decision making. This then denotes a polarity in what is going on in the minds of children when they are making decisions, that is, a split between good and bad (decisions). Additionally, it implies that once armed with a full knowledge of social mores, children (and adults) have the capacity to choose and act rationally, thereby making these correct social decisions. This is, of course, absurd. There are many examples of adults making questionable social decisions. One only has to watch

question-time in the Australian parliament to see politicians 'making poor choices' in their behaviour, resorting to personal attacks, name-calling and eye-rolling as part of their formal debating strategies.

I have already identified asymmetrical power relations with teachers, leaders and peers as an important facet of schooling that is neglected in SEL literature. It should also be noted that students are under the care and authority of their parents. This adds another layer of complexity to their positioning between home and school, which Bronfenbrenner addressed through his ecological model. Bronfenbrenner stressed that harmony between the home and school via a shared set of values can be of most benefit to the student (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Conversely, if the learning at school is discordant with the learning from home, the student is then faced with mixed messages about how to *be* with others. I suggest that these subtleties in the practice of wellbeing, and the nature of relationships in schools, require a more integrated understanding of emotional dynamics than is addressed through the approaches outlined above. One such understanding is found in the work of Donald Winnicott which will be explored further in this study (see Chapter 3).

Although literature exists around the teacher-student relationship and the emotional pull between teacher and student (Riley, 2011; Wentzel, 2002; Winograd, 2003) this literature has not been drawn on in the wellbeing sphere. Thus, challenges and questions around the emotional impact of the student in relation to the teacher have been largely neglected in wellbeing research. Such questions could be phrased as: what role does the child play in the life of the teacher and/or parent? Do children *give* the teacher something emotionally, or do children deplete the teacher emotionally? To position the teacher as a calm and neutral role model, carefully teaching children to navigate and manage their social troubles, is a fabrication of the reality of day-to-day dynamics between the members of a classroom. Teaching is a relational profession. What emotional competencies are required for

teachers to work with children, and what systemic processes are in place to help teachers negotiate powerful feelings in relation to children who make every day emotionally difficult? The analysis in this study disclosed the significance of these questions, and Chapter 7 will illustrate some considerations in relation to the teacher-student dynamic.

2.6.3 Culture and Emotions

Although there is some acknowledgement of respectful cultural application of wellbeing practices, competencies related to SEL in particular, are represented as 'universal' (Durlak et al., 2011), rather than western-centric (Hoffman, 2009). Most problematic is when cultural diversity is represented as a 'challenge' to educators (Durlak et al., 2011; Weissberg et al., 2015), something that needs to be overcome, rather than simply a part of our lived experience. An alternative perspective of cultural diversity is offered by Weare (2000), who suggests that teachers need to become sensitised to cultural differences, rather than applying a 'one size fits all' rule to social and emotional understandings in the classroom (Weare, 2000). In suggesting that, for example, languages other than English should be valued in schools, Weare advocates for cultural diversity as an enabler of wellbeing, which therefore presents cultural difference as an *opportunity* for educators, rather than a constraining and unfortunate effect of global movement and migration.

Wellbeing research predominantly derives from the USA (Carlisle et al., 2009). Perspectives of emotions, such as the idyllic position happiness has in the USA, are presented as universal. But such western conceptions of wellbeing are highly individualised; any focus on relational problems tends to be with the individual who has the problem, rather than truly between people. Christopher (1999) asserts that the "division of well-being into a psychological dimension and a presumably physical dimension is a direct by-product of our

philosophical, particularly Cartesian, heritage" (p. 143) and goes on to note that in collectivist cultures, emotions are more interpersonally felt and understood.

A problem with western individualistic perspectives of emotions is that emotions, as shared and occurring between people, easily become secondary to the person who has the emotion or emotional problem. However, this problem also presents an opportunity to consider shared emotional experience as a hallmark of wellbeing from Indigenous cultures in particular.

In the frameworks reviewed for this study, it was only the New Zealand framework that demonstrated a perspective completely embedded in Indigenous culture (Education Review Office, 2016). When looking at the background references of wellbeing frameworks, New Zealand stands alone as the country that draws comprehensively on Indigenous understandings. This is not only evident in the framework but the integration of Indigenous understandings is a hallmark of New Zealand society (Bishop et al., 2007), at least in comparison to other western societies. This framework is inclusive of Māori spirituality, and wellbeing derives from a spirituality embedded in community relationships. In comparison to New Zealand, Indigenous perspectives in the US and Australia are vastly under-represented. Thus, any claims to holism or universal understandings of wellbeing should acknowledge that the holism referred to is *within* the western perspective, while claims to universal understandings should be refuted until dialogical encounters across cultures become the norm, rather than the exception.

2.6.4 Wellbeing and Neoliberalism

Martin and Griffiths (2012) describe two strands of neoliberalism as political and economic. The political strand emphasises individual agency and individuality, in pursuit of self-actualisation (Martin and Griffiths, 2012), where liberty and freedom are both the goals of

neoliberalism (Peters & Tesar, 2018) and the means to achieving such goals. Additionally, individual agency comprises both the will to achieve, and the ability to compete (Olssen & Peters, 2005). This emphasis on individual rights transcends the individual sphere to permeate the social and economic spheres. Rights become activated in the economy via the protection of the free market, protection of private property and accumulation of wealth.

The economic strand refers to a liberation of the economy, whereby decentralisation and deregulation are viewed as key mechanisms for enhancing economic competitiveness and producing better economic outcomes for nations and individuals (Leitner et al., 2007). In order to 'free' the market, governments must relinquish their power through privatisation of government assets, reducing their role in social services and welfare, and the withdrawal of support for labour unions.

Social justice and freedom are the explicitly stated values of neoliberalism, espoused by politicians, policy makers and philanthropic organisations. The undercurrent of economic neoliberalism is the removal of government control in various economic and social spheres, and the appropriation of this control by corporations and private interests. In supporting these measures, both political and economic theories of neoliberalism purport to have a 'socially just' orientation. Such theories espouse free will and individuality, with the free market representing an enactment of these liberties. Additionally, neoliberalism holds meritocracy as a core value, where "the individual alone is the master of his or her life" (Lennon-Patience, 2013, p. 26) and failure to achieve wellbeing, becomes a "personal negligence" (Lennon-Patience, 2013, p. 27). In this belief system, anyone has the chance to achieve, if they are committed, work hard and seize opportunity. Failure to achieve economic success, or sound mental and physical health in this perspective, is viewed as a choice.

In the political sense, neither eudaimonia nor wellbeing are a universal good. This is because they cannot be divorced from the political and social sphere, any more than can

religion and spirituality. Wellbeing can become problematic through, for example, its association with neoliberalism (Wright, 2014). Neoliberalism presents autonomy and the free-market as ideals, and wellbeing is frequently inserted into a discourse that promotes ceaseless individual gain as part of 'progress'. Wellbeing becomes something in this perspective that can be purchased if one can afford it, or something that can be earned if one pulls one's socks up, works hard and stops being dissatisfied about life.

In education, wellbeing becomes contentious when used as a method of control over the individual child, whilst masquerading as a form of support. Methods such as cognitive behaviour therapy are often adapted to the school context in service of wellbeing and privilege the student's ability to have rational control via their thoughts over 'irrational', or perhaps unmanageable, emotions that potentially lead to problems with compliance. Thus, being able to think one's way towards positive outcomes supports social cohesion in schools. However, this perspective of the individual student's mastery over their emotions downplays aspects of children's experiences that have long been considered in psychoanalytic, attachment and trauma perspectives, namely, the early childhood experiences of the child, the unconscious reasoning that influences behaviour, and the broader social context that contributes to the vulnerability of children and poor outcomes. Thus, wellbeing that is predicated *only* on the visible and rational is viewed in this study as problematic.

It has been argued that a wellbeing 'agenda' has been pushed by governments with the underlying aim of improving economic standards (Carlisle et al., 2009). From this perspective, rather than wellbeing addressed as an end in itself it is addressed for the sake of the national economy. A publication from the Australian government acknowledges this in its response to a commissioned review of mental health services, stating that "improving services for people with mild to moderate mental illness through appropriate primary mental health care and/or self-help interventions offers the greatest economic returns through

improving the productivity of the workforce" (Australian Government Department of Health, 2015, p. 4). Statements such as these indicate that the government's priority in supporting wellbeing research is ultimately on the productivity of its citizens. When wellbeing appears in public policy, the narrative centres around contentious notions, which suggests that measuring wellbeing and developing brief and cost-effective interventions results in a "happier" and more productive workforce. Wellbeing, life satisfaction and happiness, in this sense, become important only in terms of what can be measured and streamlined for the sake of productivity (Wright, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, 'managing behaviour' is a particular way of viewing the student that places an emphasis on observable behavioural change, rather than the internal emotional state of the student. How did the term 'management' make its way into the social and emotional worlds of children at school? 'Skills', or indeed 'competencies' that are taught to individuals around one's own management of self, are far less of a strain on the mental health system than long-term interventions or widespread socio-cultural change. It places the onus on the individual to improve his or herself, shifting the burden of improvement away from broader social or cultural contexts (Lennon-Patience, 2013; White, 2010).

Cooper and Jacobs (2011) draw attention to the prevalence of packaged programs based on psychological theories, mainly cognitive behavioural. As they note,

> In English speaking countries teachers need have only rudimentary knowledge of psychological theory and therapeutic practice. As a result…the perceived need for school-based interventions…has meant a proliferation of intervention 'packages' for use by teachers and other educational staff with minimal training (p. 56).

The education system is inundated with wellbeing packages, programs and wellbeing consultants promising to bring a wealth of wellbeing strategies into schools (White & Kern, 2018). Placing this in the broader body-politic, Lennon-Patience links wellbeing to

capitalism, noting the prevalence of self-help tools and strategies available for purchase, "which is more akin to the consumer culture of late capitalism with notions of self development and fulfilment" (p. 16). Perhaps more concerning than wellbeing as consumerism, she suggests that the move from welfare to wellbeing, at least in the UK, has aided in the dismantling of the welfare state (Lennon-Patience, 2013).

These questions, therefore, act as a guide for critically examining the work that is *done to* children. If we accept that wellbeing is complex and sits at an intersection of numerous research fields, meta-theories, and political, cultural and individual landscapes, then we must also accept that our aims for wellbeing do not necessarily exist exclusively in the realm of altruistic, rational decision-making about what is best for the child.

2.6.5 Summary

The promotion of wellbeing in schools has prioritised relationships in school and permitted school leaders and teachers to spend time on these relationships. It has given children and teachers a language for talking about emotions and social relations and has provided an overarching discourse that, to a greater or lesser extent, is taken up by schools with the dual aim of improving relationships and improving learning. Ostensibly, wellbeing is about the promotion of positive and safe education where the student can thrive. The reality is that wellbeing is a contested space, within the endlessly contested space of education.

Having reviewed the contributing research on wellbeing in education, I suggest that there is a gap between children and adults in understandings of wellbeing. Some authors might say that this gap is due to a lack of attention to student voice, calling for more attention to student voice both in research and in the school (Cook-Sather, 2018; Powell et al., 2018). Although student voice is important, particularly when it goes beyond mere tokenism to real contributions in schools (Charter & Smardon, 2019), I propose a different understanding of

the gap that is centred on the 'unknowing' of the adult in relation to the child. Further on in this literature review, I argue that spirituality appears to open up a space for this unknowing to be more acceptable in education. For now, I suggest a consideration of the following questions: (1) Do we strip away the parts of the child in a western-centric attempt to theoretically own a concept that is ontologically nebulous? (2) Do we facilitate or obstruct the healthy integration of the growing child? This study aims to consider this more fully, primarily through the lived experiences of the participants. Before considering spirituality in education, a brief consideration of the whole child perspective is necessary, given that it sits (precariously) between wellbeing and spirituality.

2.7 The Whole Child

This section of the literature review was promoted by the question: What are the parts of the whole child? When looking at educational policy and frameworks, it seems that the whole is divided into parts in a relatively ad hoc manner. Indeed, in the literature on wellbeing that draws on a whole child perspective, the rationale for why particular dimensions are included or excluded is rarely, if ever, explained. Firstly, the dimensions in relation to the whole child include: academic, intellectual, cognitive, economic, social, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual. Secondly, it is unclear why particular dimensions are chosen while others are excluded. Why do some authors include an *economic* domain (Fraillon, 2004) while others exclude it? Why do some rely on the use of the term *cognitive* (Diamond, 2010; Fraillon, 2004; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008; Noddings, 2005) where others may use *intellectual* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008; Noddings, 2005)? And most importantly for this research, why is *spiritual* included in some (de Souza, 2009; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008; Noddings, 2005), and excluded in others (Allensworth et

al., 2011; Blank & Berg, 2006, Diamond, 2010; Fraillon, 2004)? Either the dimensions are chosen in an ad hoc manner, or they represent some sort of educative meaning and are selected carefully to demonstrate that.

Referring back to my email exchange with a *Melbourne Declaration* working group member (see Preface), at the time I began to wonder how seminal statements come into being in education, and if the process was as seemingly superficial as the response from the member of the working group led me to suspect. What I have found in looking at the theorists associated with the whole child approach historically is not so much a dimensional perspective, with the dimensions of the social, emotional, spiritual and so on. Rather, it appears that holism is associated with education that is: 1) alternative to traditional forms, and 2) responsive to social bodies and the body politic of the time. Thus, Froebel, Montessori, Steiner, Dewey and other seminal theorists attached to holism, were all responding to a particular educative landscape where the historical context provoked a need to educate differently. The dimensional perspective outlined above is perhaps a response to the needs of our time, but there is an enormous lack of clarity around its use. What follows therefore, is a shift away from the dimensions to a discussion of the whole child within the *holism* that is a complex and politically responsive educational approach.

2.7.1 Historical background

Theorists who are connected to the whole child have used different ways of conceptualising the whole. The most used is a triune, which incorporates the corporal aspect of existence with the mind/emotions, and spirit. Montessori for example, is frequently associated with the triune of mind, body, and spirit (Edwards, 2003), while Rudolf Steiner conceptualised education as care for body, soul and spirit. John Dewey, whilst not using a triune, was active during the same period and developed a secular spirituality that focused on a devotion to

ideas and goals, and turning this devotion into political and social action (Dewey, 1916).

Since Montessori and Steiner, a number of theorists and educators have been linked to the whole child approach in education, including Nel Noddings, Neil Summerhill, and psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. What these theorists appear to have in common is a notion that education is permeated with broader socio-political challenges, and it is beholden on educators to respond to these pressures by *being* child-centred; allowing the child to teach and lead the adult towards understandings of education. Additionally, the adult needs to maintain a being-with the children that is responsive to their needs and allows for children's natural development to guide learning processes. As with the first progressive educators, the whole child movement in contemporary education was formed in response to conservative influences on education. For example, in 2007 the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), a US not-for-profit organisation, launched the Whole Child Initiative to actively promote a broader contextual understanding of the child (Upitis, 2011). Referring to John Dewey and Nel Noddings, the ASCD's conceptualisation of the whole child includes reference to dimensions but also refers to the child being nested in a supportive and engaging environment (Upitis, 2011).

Further discussion of holism necessitates putting the dimension perspective aside. This perspective has found its way into education with a lack of theorising, and conceptualisations of it are often vague. Moving away from dimensions, it can be seen that holism, at times, implies a spiritual view of the child with reference to the child's heart, spirit or soul (Miller, 2018). It is also focussed on the emotional life of the child (Miller, 2018). What appears to be a central feature for all of the theorists mentioned is a focus on democratising education, including the relationship between teacher and child, and respect for the child's capacity for curiosity, awe and wonder (Miller, 2018).

2.7.2 A Responsive Approach

One of the key figures who influenced both Montessori and Froebel was Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (Miller, 2018). For Pestalozzi, education was emancipatory and sought to provide (something) for children, but he also recognised a certain paradox. This paradox was that *who* one is and *what* one needs, in relation to *who* others are and *what* society needs, are rarely in alignment (Soëtard, 1994). Navigating this tension between the individual and society, or the idiosyncratic and universal, is what, according to Pestalozzi, led to efforts at the development of the autonomous personality (Miller, 2018). At the core of his method sit three elements of the whole: head, heart and hand, each referring to the reflective, relational, and autonomous aspects of one's own being. Pestalozzi argued that what education should strive for is foregrounding all three aspects, rather than one element taking the central focus (Soetard, 1994). For Pestalozzi, and other holistic educators, their responsive approach to education arose from a need to challenge the particular inequities and constraints of education in different historical periods.

A current constraint of education today is the focus on standards, comparisons, league tables and what is measurable. This sits in tension with whole child approaches that call attention to what cannot be measured and what remains largely unseen, namely, the mind and spirit. It is argued in whole child approaches that there is more to the child than what can be observed from a test score, and that the purpose of education extends beyond the attainment and assessment of cognitive skills (Noddings, 2005). Noddings (2005) wrote about the whole child specifically as a response to the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) in the US, which prescribed largely unrealistic outcomes in numeracy and literacy, standardised testing, school and teacher comparisons, and an emphasis on accountability. While western school systems are no longer looking to free children from the constraints of industrial schools, the focus on relations in whole child approaches privileges education as emancipatory (Miller, 2018), even

if this emancipation is simply to be freed from over-valued testing, and enforced entry into PISA competitions.

2.7.3 Spirituality in the Whole Child Approach

Even though it is possible to trace a historical line from theorists who are aligned with holism, there are still debates about what exactly constitutes a holistic approach. Miller (2018), for example, distinguishes between holism and wholism, suggesting that spirituality belongs in the former, placing both Dewey and Noddings into the category of 'wholism' that is pragmatic and scientific and where the spiritual is largely absent. However, as mentioned above, Dewey's spirituality is situated within his anti-dualistic thinking, whereby one might suggest that the spiritual in his work is a pragmatic spirituality with a focus on action, rather than on any transcendental inner experience (Dewey, 1960). Additionally, while Noddings writes of the spiritual in relation to care and as an aspect of the whole child, she does not specifically describe the spiritual dimension of the child. Nor does she specifically describe any dimensions. What Noddings offers instead is a discourse of care (Spratt, 2016) in addition to humanistic and behavioural discourses in education, all three of which are apparent in wellbeing literature.

Early theorists associated with holism positioned education as relational. In doing so, they worked to overcome Cartesian dualities that positioned the individual as an isolated entity. Froebel, for example, was concerned with the concept of unity and saw the whole child as a unity of relationships including self, others and the universe (Bruce, 2012). His whole was a 'unity' that attempted to transcend the duality between self and other, or self and world. Thus, the early attempts to educate the child appear to have responded to Cartesian duality in a way that placed emancipation from dualistic thinking as a fundamental aim of education. This emancipatory understanding is missing in contemporary use of the whole

child, particularly in policy. In fact, rather than emancipatory, by selecting what parts of the whole are required, it actually becomes a method of control, subverting the historical intention of holism outlined here. Spirituality is often called upon in the service of integrated (whole) experiences and left out when education agendas are heavily circumscribed (such as in the AITSL standards, as explored in Chapter 1).

Montessori wrote, "our educational aim…must be to aid the spontaneous development of the mental, spiritual, and physical personality" (1912, p. 231). However, these divisions of mental, spiritual and physical were less about attending to each in equal measure, and more about bringing the spirit to the fore in education. The bigger project for her was the place of the spirit in the largely empirical realm of her time. She wrote,

> There exists, then, the "spirit" of the scientist, a thing far above his mere "mechanical skill," and the scientist is at the height of his achievement when the spirit has triumphed over mechanism. When he has reached this point, science will receive from him not only new revelations of nature, but philosophic syntheses of pure thought (1912, p. 26).

This was written in relation to educators attending to children through both the science and art of teaching. Though it borders on the idealistic in relation to the possibility of 'pure thought', Montessori was perhaps placing the spirit in a prominent position to communicate the idea that learning and mastery over a task are not simply mechanistic processes. By putting the spirit into learning, she suggests that learning becomes a process of revelation, where thought is the consequence of an emotional and heart-filled engagement in the task at hand. It is interesting to contrast this with contemporary ideas about scientific teaching, for example, the method of clinical teaching (Dinham, 2013) along with what can be empirically observed and controlled in the classroom (Hattie, 2012). The perspective of teaching and learning as something that retains a sort of spirit is a more subtle and unseen discourse, by the very nature of what it is trying to give voice to. By contrast, discourses of science,

empiricism and associated methods sit very well in political agendas that are preoccupied with the pursuit of evidence.

Philosophy has long been concerned with a dichotomy of human understanding and experience that is posited in various ways: science versus art, spirit or human sciences; technology versus humanities; nature versus spirit; or mind versus body. Such dichotomies involve a Cartesian dualism that emerges in different forms in human experience. The work of philosophers has involved careful elaborations on some of these dichotomies, such as sciences and human sciences, in an effort to pursue meaning and experience in a methodological way. Other splits, such as what occurs between mechanistic and artistic worldviews, have been the subject of classic literary works, such as Robert M. Persig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1999), where the protagonist is taken to the very edge of sanity in his attempt to draw these two worlds together. To bring this dualism back to western education, the split often appears between cognition and emotion, with a tendency to invest primarily in cognition (Vadeboncoeur & Collie, 2013). Additionally, there is the self-other split in wellbeing that privileges a focus on improving self.

I would argue that splitting is also present in references to the whole child when the dimensions of the child are named without reference to themes of integration, tension, ambivalence or conflict. It can be argued that tension sits between the parts – the social and emotional, for example – and that development occurs when integration means that the whole is held together. Thus, for the whole child, internal conflict, tension and ambivalence, are central to experience rather than something to be overcome. This concept of integration is found in the work of Dewey, Steiner and Montessori for example, where engagement in learning comes through the connection between polarities (Bleazby, 2012). For Dewey, this connection is achieved through inquiry or reflective experience (Bleazby, 2012) and, for Montessori, it involves incorporating spirit into one's work. Steiner developed the term

anthroposophy for his conceptualisation of this, where he interwove the material and spiritual world, the mind and body, and intuition and intellect (Uhrmacher, 1995). Though Dewey had a more pragmatic understanding of this, for these theorists, the *connection between* is what was essential to holistic learning.

In this conceptualisation of the whole, wellbeing is not found in attending to whichever parts are recognised. Wellbeing instead comes from recognising and coping with polarised experiences as they become more integrated. On a philosophical level, as mentioned above, this includes the tension between science and humanities. On a political level, it can include what Rousseau identified as the impossibility of merging the education of the individual for one's own autonomy, with the education of a citizen for productivity (Soëtard, 1994). On a personal level, it includes seeing relationships and people as whole, rather than either good or bad (Lemma, 2003). In psychoanalytic theory, it is integration that is seen as a hallmark of wellbeing, which does not only apply to the personal body, but also to the social and political realms. Though psychoanalytic theory is not commonly drawn on in education research, there is space for a psychoanalytic understanding of wellbeing to contribute to educators' understanding of children. This will be addressed further in Chapter 3, through an account of the applicability of the work of Donald Winnicott to this study.

2.7.4 Summary

The 'whole child' is not a collection of dimensions. Attending to the whole, requires a radical rethinking along the lines of integration, rather than identifying the parts extempore. As Noddings herself puts it, "students are whole persons – not mere collections of attributes, some to be addressed in one place and others to be addressed elsewhere" (Noddings, 2005, p. 10). One might ask what non-holistic education might look like. An answer to this would inevitably include: technocratic education to produce compliant citizens; educational settings

that are reminiscent of industrial periods of schooling; and teacher-directed, didactic instruction. Thus, holistic education is often situated within progressive education movements and as a political response and alternative to the prevailing traditions of schooling at various historical junctures. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that it is not common to see an exclusively traditional or exclusively progressive approach to education in schools.

In reviewing the literature on whole child approaches in education, I have found a lack of clarity regarding the place of spirituality. Critically reflecting on this, I ask: what use is spirituality in the whole child perspective? Although it remains murky, I suggest that the inclusion of spirituality offers a space where it appears more acceptable to consider non-empiricist aspects of education such as the art of teaching, the place of intuition and the *unseen* connection between things. A history of holism illustrates how these undisclosed features of education are not new and have long been a concern of western philosophical traditions. Current whole child approaches in education attempt to make a space for educative experiences inclusive of the unseen for the benefit of wellbeing, Nevertheless, a lack of theoretical clarity means that any given dimension of the whole can be easily dismissed. Given that this study is focussed on spirituality in particular, I now turn to the broader placement of spirituality in education from perspectives other than holism.

2.8 Spirituality in Education

The question that comes prior to whether wellbeing and spirituality are connected and what the implications are of this for educational settings, is, does spirituality belong in education? To answer this, we must discover the meanings that are ascribed to spiritualty, particularly in relation to children's spirituality. Like wellbeing, spirituality is a contested term in education (Gillespie, 2019). But, unlike wellbeing, which is unequivocally represented as a 'good', spirituality is, at times, approached with a degree of caution (Gillespie, 2019) if not entirely

dismissed due to concerns about the religious indoctrination of children. Should spirituality be addressed explicitly? This is a difficult question to answer. If spirituality truly exists as part of the whole child, then it would be a sad fact if it were something in the child's experience that remained completely neglected. But given that spirituality remains such an ambiguous phenomenon, perhaps it is understandable that at times it is relegated to the 'too hard basket'.

As a point of departure, I shall begin by looking at the same countries whose frameworks served as the starting point for the literature review: Australia, the USA, Ireland, England and New Zealand. In the Australian context, spirituality is a term that is comfortably employed in religious schools, but does not enjoy any particular prominence in Government school settings. Despite this, spirituality appears in some wellbeing frameworks and at times it is vaguely connected with areas related to wellbeing, such as mindfulness meditation (Broderick & Metz, 2009). In religious schools, spirituality is located within a discourse of faith, belief, deity and ritual. Education departments in most Australian states approach spirituality cautiously. For example, in Victoria, General Religious Education can be taught. This is where students learn about a diverse range of religions and world views in a neutral manner. However, the beliefs of any one particular religion cannot be promoted, as government schools must be secular (Victorian Government, 2006). There are very heated, on-going political arguments about Government schools in Australia having either too much or too little of an influence of religion, depending on what side of the religious debate one is situated, and the debate is almost always focused on Christian beliefs and practices making their way into schools. Examples of this include the debate about the National Chaplaincy Program and Special Religious Instruction (i.e., religious education in one particular faith) in government schools (Maddox, 2014). Additionally, there is no federal law that mandates the separation of church and state.

The history of religion in schools in the USA is fraught with politics and legalities and rests on the interpretation of US law where religious education is forbidden, except when taught from a neutral standpoint. Rosenblith (2017) suggests that most of the tension from all sides depends on whether the intention is "exposure or indoctrination" (p. 11). In countries such as Ireland and England religion is historically intertwined with schooling. In the UK, religious education is mandated in government schools (Hannam et al., 2020), whereas in Ireland, schools have traditionally been under the patronage of the local parish, and it has only been in the last 15 years that secular schools have emerged under the collaborative initiative named *Educate Together*. This collaborative project is meeting a growing demand in Ireland for secular schooling that is inclusive of multi-faith students. Finally, as has been previously discussed, and in stark contrast to the other examples given, New Zealand has spirituality entirely intertwined with schooling through Māori culture.

Although a great deal of literature exists around the potential to explore and address spirituality in the educational setting, the term remains elusive and largely exists on the periphery of school community, culture and learning. In the faith-based context, spirituality is located within a religious perspective. In the secular context, there is a much more tentative acceptance of spirituality as seen in the whole child approach to education. In both contexts however, questions endure as to the nature of spirituality, and in what ways education can be inclusive of spirituality within school communities.

2.8.1 Spirituality and religion

Early western research into children's spirituality as understood by 20th century theorists, mirrored the work in cognitive development, particularly the work of Piaget, and focused more on cognition in religion, than religious experience (Ratcliff, 2007). A seminal work by Fowler (1981) delineated stages of faith that were aligned with cognitive approaches to

understanding. This meant that research into children's spirituality categorised aspects of cognitive understanding into stages of development through childhood (Ratcliff, 2007).

A formative work by Coles (1990) marked a shift towards experiential knowing of children, avoiding linear and cognitive conceptualisations of spirituality and children's development (Ratcliff, 2007). Coles considered himself a "field worker" and dedicated his study to listening to children. He identified that what children might demonstrate in a controlled situation, such as in the classroom or under research conditions, is not necessarily what they are capable of showing under other circumstances. Coles' work was a shift towards the phenomenological, grounded in experience rather than accumulative cognitive stages abstracted from Piaget's research (Coles, 1990). Research that followed from Cole continued to shift away from examining spirituality and religion as pertaining to cognition and moved towards the idea that cognitive understandings of spirituality provide only one medium to search for a 'truth' (Erricker, 2000).

Succeeding the work of Coles, Hay and Nye (2006) conducted their grounded theory study that was to become the seminal work in western children's spirituality. Although the authors recognised that spirituality could be found in religious experience, they also emphasised the many and varied non-religious dimensions of children's spiritual sensitivity, formulating the three categories of awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing, and value-sensing (Hay & Nye, 2006). These three categories distinguished a "raised awareness" (de Souza, 2014, p. 45) or consciousness, and are related to salient themes in the literature on children's spirituality, namely: mindfulness and presence, awe and wonder, and searching for meaning.

2.8.2 Relational Consciousness

The core category discovered by Hay and Nye (2006) was relational consciousness. 'Relational' refers to the relationship between self, God, others, and the natural world, whilst

‘consciousness’ is posited as an unusual level of perceptiveness in children during extraordinary moments in ordinary life (Hay & Nye, 2006). These moments appeared sometimes as embodied experiences and at other times, as existing in the world of imagination (Hay & Nye, 2006). In these moments, children display an awareness of their own subjectivity, thus relational consciousness is intended to promote the ‘in between’ of connectedness in relation to the inter- and intra-personal (Hay & Nye, 2006).

The authors note that replacing ‘spirituality’ with ‘relational consciousness’ helps to put to one side questions of how religion and spirituality fit together, and instead creates a space where the focus shifts to what is fundamental to human experience, namely, relationality (Hay & Nye, 2006). In contrast to what education departments, legal systems and politics focus on, Hay and Nye (2006) propose spirituality as essential to children’s very natural experience. They suggest that

> knowledge about religion and the ability to use religious language is not the whole story when we are thinking about spirituality. It is important not to get caught into the assumption that spirituality can only be recognised by the use of a specialized religious language (p. 63).

This suggests that that the debate around religion in schools is addressing a very different problem than whether to include spirituality in schools. This has paved the way for the representation of spirituality in children’s research as ontological (Adams et al., 2008) and therefore, part of the very nature of being.

2.8.3 Themes from the literature

Hay and Nye’s conceptualisation tied together a number of themes that exist in the literature on children’s spirituality. Authors have since continued to describe spirituality as a search for identity, belonging, meaning and connectedness (de Souza, 2009; Eaude, 2018; Hyde 2008; Lee, 2020). Spirituality is also associated with a sense of awe and wonder (Hart, 2003; Lee,

2020; Mata-McMahon et al., 2018; Ratcliff, 2007). Certainly, the relational aspect of spirituality is almost always emphasised (Lee, 2020; Mata-McMahon et al., 2018) and commonly examined via exploration of relationship between self and other, and self and Other (de Souza, 2014; Lee, 2020). This Other is indicative of a relationship with something 'greater than', or beyond the self and implies a relationship with deity (de Souza, 2014; Mata-McMahon et al., 2018).

It is generally an accepted premise in the research into children's spirituality that spirituality can occur within or without a religious framework (Adams et al., 2016; Eaude, 2018), and religions are simply one expression of spirituality. As an illustration of this expression, Tacey (2000) writes that religion is an organised way of expressing truth through, for example, sacred rituals and the gathering of community. Given that religion is seen as a branch of spirituality, it is proposed that spirituality underlies not only all religious experience, but also all human experience (Bellous, 2019). In fact, Bellous (2019) goes so far as to suggest that to be human is to be spiritual, whether that is an accepted premise of the individual or not.

2.8.4 Self and Other

A sense of self and identity is frequently related to a sense of something 'greater than' or 'beyond' the self (de Souza 2009; Mata-McMahon et al., 2018). As children experience a sense of self and become curious about the self, they are also occupied with questions of 'other'. This is a part of the field of spirituality but what makes this curiosity 'spiritual' is perhaps a) the sense of wonder that we are able to ponder the self at all, and b) that the 'other' is sometimes referred to as a transcendental 'Other'.

Hay and Nye (2006), along with a number of researchers in the field of children's spirituality, draw on Buber's conceptualisation of the I-Thou relationship to theorise relations

of self-Other (Chapman et al., 2021; de Souza, 2014; Wills, 2012). Buber (2013) drew a distinction between I-it and I-thou that is not dissimilar to the differentiation Heidegger (1962) makes between the ontic and the ontological (see Chapter 3). Buber uses 'Thou' to designate a primary relationship and interconnectedness between a person, the world, others and Other. 'Other' is understood to be a presence that can be perceived through moments of meeting with others, such as children, animals, artistic expression and the natural environment. The 'meeting,' Buber writes of, is a rare moment where one breaks through their habitual separated and isolated experience of self, to discover an "eternal connectedness" (Buber, 2013, p. 44).

2.8.5 Transcendence

The relationship to Other, and the yearning to go beyond self or ego is sometimes positioned as transcendence, or transcendental experience (Tacey, 2000). The idea of transcendence is closely connected to spirituality and is described in a number of ways. Firstly, transcendence is something about going beyond our own ego, to consider in depth our relatedness to others, the environment and perhaps, God (Hay, 1998). In this understanding, transcendence implies an open-heartedness and willingness to forego self-preservation for the preservation of all. Secondly, transcendence is considered to be a type of end point of spiritual development, where a heightened consciousness leads to fusion with 'Other' (de Souza, 2014). Hart (2013) distinguishes two types of transcendence. One is in the metaphysical realm where an individual goes beyond one's own ego. This at times is associated with moving towards the sacred (Bangert, 2014; Tacey, 2004). The second is a capacity of human growth in relation to becoming a better person and linked with a sense of agency (Hart, 2013). Although in the literature on children's spirituality transcendence is more commonly associated with going beyond the ego, there is also an implicit assumption relating to Hart's latter type of

transcendence. The assumption is that moving towards transcendence, in whatever form or shape that may be, enables deep growth in an individual's relation with self and other, and therefore, is wholeheartedly positive for human experience.

A number of authors, philosophers and mystics, however, poetically warn of the immense internal struggle that comes with searching for meaning and seeking transcendence. The classic text by St John of the Cross, titled *The Dark Night of the Soul*, is about this struggle – specifically in relation to God – and more than 500 years ago he wrote of his yearning for a relationship with God, and also the struggle to detach himself from this yearning (Kavanaugh & Rodrigues, 1991). Similarly, St John's companion, Teresa of Avila, documented her inner journey in the *Interior Castle* using reptilian metaphors to represent danger and cold, dark rooms to symbolise isolation and despair on the journey towards God (Peers, 2004). These are two Christian-theistic examples of transcendence and these authors are known as Christian mystics. Indeed, the mystical, mysterious aspects of human experience are generally associated with transcendence, positing experiences that have elements of the unexplainable in them. Transcendence thus, is a journey of cosmic proportions, into a connectedness that is rarely visible or knowable, but sacred, and yet so meaningful that individuals devote their entire lives to its possibility. But in this devotion is the commitment to both the darkness and light in experience (de Souza, 2012; Lovelock & Adams, 2017).

While many authors write of transcendence in relation to spirituality, there is little explanation of what transcendence is in research on children's spirituality, other than a searching towards something 'other', 'greater' and 'beyond' the self (de Souza, 2012; Fraser, 2014; King & Benson, 2006; Tirri & Quinn, 2010). This is also conceptualised as a movement outwards, to others, and inwards, to the self (de Souza, 2009). A desire to engage in an unseen and largely unknown realm seems to be the hallmark of transcendence. Hay and

Nye (2006) connect transcendence to mystery, wonder, awe and imagination. In doing so, they relate transcendence to an example of an existential question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" (p. 71). Hay and Nye use this question as an example of how mystery can imbue human life, once we, including children, pause to reflect on questions that are an articulation of the mystery of existence, and our knowledge of this existence.

2.8.6 The Western Spiritual Lens

Hay and Nye's (2006) research was conducted in the UK, and was located in a largely Anglo-Christian context, thus is situated firmly within a western perspective. For such a seminal study that has had such a wide-reaching impact into children's spirituality (at the time of writing, there were 1193 citations), the mono-cultural nature of the participants has been criticised (Csinos, 2018), along with the lack of direct reference to cultural perspectives that impact understandings of spirituality and challenge any idea of spirituality as 'universal'. Wills (2012) is critical of Hay and Nye's use of the term 'God', noting that, "it was mainly the researcher who used the term 'God', more so than the children" (p. 54). Wills also notes that the child-God relationship is presented in Hay and Nye's work as an immediate and experiential relationship. However, the 'God' the children spoke of was reminiscent of the Judeo-Christian God and therefore is a god mediated by a theistic interpretation. This means that rather than pointing towards some primordial 'truth' of an I-Thou relationship, as the authors intended, it simply points to the Christian-theistic perspective that formed part of the children's experience.

Elsewhere I have criticised the tendency in literature on children's spirituality to make broad inclusive descriptions while then following with a generally Christian-theistic perspective into the research (Manton, 2019). Hay and Nye's research is no exception to this. Without identifying the perspective that the researchers themselves come from, they engage

in research that positions them as the authority on what is universal in life. Research is imbued with traces of ones' own historical consciousness (Gadamer, 2004), and when this is unacknowledged it is difficult to avoid marginalising the need for inter-cultural dialogue with researchers and participants who have a different lived experience of spirituality.

At this point, it is important to note the observation that western spirituality positions the self as central (Ritskes, 2011). From this central self, spirituality may be experienced both as a movement outwards for connection and a contemplative movement inwards (de Souza, 2009), but what is apparent is that anything positioned as spirituality is born out of the 'I' or ego (Palmer, 2003). When compared with Indigenous spiritualities, this beginning point of 'self' is positioned as the fundamental disconnect between western and non-western spiritualities. Ritskes (2011) describes Indigenous spiritualities as being situated within a connectedness across temporalities, where a spiritual essence is not located primarily in the self, but rather, is the link that binds selves together. This serves as another reminder that claims of universality in spirituality research need to be met with caution, particularly when such claims come from western perspectives that are imbued with traces of a colonial heritage that has globally stripped Indigenous communities of their connectedness to family, ancestry and country.

In reviewing the literature on spirituality, it seems there are ongoing challenges related to ontological claims from a predominantly western or theistic perspective. Spirituality is regarded as universal and yet uniquely personal. Terms such as *meaning*, *connectedness* and *relationality* suggest a concept that captures individual consciousness and the inescapable interconnection of individual consciousness to the world it inhabits. It is necessary to pay rigorous attention to assumptions about spirituality because if we believe that spirituality is indeed universal then there is good reason for it to be approached by

examining individual contexts. When this occurs, the identification of personal experiences becomes a necessary part of understanding and interpreting the phenomenon.

2.8.7 Does spirituality belong in education?

In recent research, authors seem almost exasperated by the constant question of how to extricate spirituality from its religious connotations. This frustration may be exacerbated by educational policy that insists on focusing on the place of religion in education rather than spirituality. Organised religion is built on centuries of written tradition and because of this, policy makers know what they are dealing with. Spirituality remains ineffable, despite decades of recent research regarding its positioning in education. Two associated problems with this include:

(1) Does spirituality *always* include a transcendent element, and if so, is there a place for making the transcendent visible in (secular) schools?
(2) If we take the most common themes from the spirituality literature, is there another term that could be used that enables us to put the religion-spirituality debate to one side, at least in the educational setting?

Spirituality is a "possible arena for dialogue about what a human being is" (Sagberg, 2008, p. 356). One of the questions that I return to throughout this study, is the question of whether the word spirituality is so vague that it could be replaced with something else. This question is not in search of a definitive answer, but rather, searches for possibilities. For example, Bellous (2019) notes that it is generally less contentious to talk of 'the human spirit' than of spirituality. Certainly, in contemporary discourse we can say that one is 'spirited' or shows great 'spirit' without any thought of religion at all.

Is it possible to be searching for meaning in life without naming it as spiritual? Is finding meaning in life perhaps simply a "cognitive and emotional process" (Ruddock &

Cameron, 2010, p. 25) and, if so, what does the inclusion of the term 'spirituality' in education add to education? With all the research that has been conducted on children's spirituality, Government schools are still hesitant to refer to the term. This means that, although there may be tolerance towards individual and familial spirituality, using the term in the school setting is still undertaken with caution. Additionally, in comparison to wellbeing, these broader social aspects of spirituality are less discernible, and certainly less of a priority for politicians.

2.9 The connection between wellbeing and spirituality

I have already discussed how wellbeing and spirituality tend to be connected through a dimensional whole child perspective of education in practice and in policy, and through references to Indigenous spirituality. In research, wellbeing and spirituality are connected through their inherently ineffable state. Defining wellbeing and defining spirituality present the same difficulties. They are both broad terms that attempt to conceptualise areas that are characteristically difficult to make sense of and articulate. What is striking about both terms, and gives a plausible reason for the difficulties in definitions, is that they are simultaneously idiosyncratic in a subjective sense, whilst at the same time represent features of human existence that are considered universal. In essence, spirituality and wellbeing illuminate what gives the human experience its subjective distinctiveness while at the same time highlighting what is shared. This creates a number of tensions in both internal and external experience and relatedness. How does one live with interior desires, wishes and needs which rely on relationship with others, yet which at the same time can be thwarted, neglected or negated by others? Despite these complexities, policy and practice tend to overlook these tensions in favour of more idyllic representations of existence. Terms such as connectedness, meaning and purpose sound like appropriate educational ideals, but when repeatedly used in policy,

without connection with the school context where such ideals may be enacted, these words tend to lose meaning. Coming to an understanding of how these terms are experienced through the phenomena of wellbeing and spirituality is a hermeneutic problem (Gadamer, 2004).

Research into wellbeing and spirituality emphasises connectedness to others (Eaude, 2009; Westenberg, 2017). But spirituality is posited as having the potential to either facilitate or obstruct wellbeing dependent on how much of a young person's spirituality is individualistic and aligned with material or superficial pursuits (Hodder, 2009). The centrality of the self in western spirituality, as mentioned above, has been labeled problematic, particularly in relation to adolescence. As a result, in the spirituality literature, a concern for young people's wellbeing is frequently accompanied by a concern that they will fall prey to the dangers of an increasingly materialistic western society (see for example Hodder, 2009; Rossiter, 2006). It is proposed by some authors that when adolescents are encouraged to think of others via social justice or community work, their spirituality has the potential to connect positivity with wellbeing (Büssing et al., 2012; Fraser, 2014).

It is suggested in the literature that spirituality in education provides a space that is not adequately addressed by more technical perspectives of education. Watson (2009) argues that spirit and science together can serve wellbeing in education (Watson, 2009), a view that is not dissimilar from what we have already seen in Montessori and Steiner's perspectives. Watson goes on to argue that spirituality provides opportunity for dialogue. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin she attests that meaning is socially construed and comes from a struggle between self and other – what I have previously referred to as tension. This struggle results in spiritual *truths* that look different for each child.

Watson's emphasis on the spirit–science dualism is a response to the body-politic's preference for "measurable pedagogy" (2012, p. 314), which profoundly limits curriculum

and children's experiences in education. In a similar vein, Hyde argues that spirituality can speak back to neoliberal agendas (Hyde, 2021), giving children the opportunity to engage their "spiritual voice" (p. 20), as opposed to development that occurs in a culture where the worth of the child is in their performance and output (Hyde, 2021). These authors posit spirituality as an antidote to neoliberal agendas that find their way into education.

Cole (2011) defines spirituality as reflecting "a child's development of self that includes a search for meaning, transcendence, wholeness, and purpose" (p. 5) This inner drive can be situated as a post-modern search for identity and connection, and for feelings of wholeness. This is similar to an understanding of wellbeing that is not a central theme in the literature: wellbeing as a sense of unity and wholeness. In the psychoanalytic literature, which Coles (1990) and Bellous (2019) draw on to understand spirituality, the whole is represented as whole object relating – being able to experience whole and full experiences in life, which includes a capacity to perceive others as whole rather than split into good or bad people. Such understandings will be drawn on in the findings chapters because what has been seen in reviewing the literature is that these two phenomena lend themselves to holistic understanding, where there is no truth to which pieces of wellbeing or spirituality are of most worth. Instead, the complex and multi-layered elements of each, and where these elements sit in individuals' experiences, create nuanced constellations of meaning. These constellations resist knowing, and resist observation.

2.10 Drawing together wellbeing and spirituality for this study

This literature review has sought to outline two extremely broad fields and their place in education. Beginning with wellbeing, some of the prominent approaches to this in education discussed here include SEL, health promotion and resilience. Each perspective posits a complex interaction between individual, social and political factors that influence how

wellbeing is understood in theory, policy and research, and how it is put into practice in schools. I have suggested that rather than existing as a universal 'good', wellbeing is a thorny phenomenon that holds all manner of human experience in its grasp. Wellbeing becomes most problematic when this is not recognised. Whether it is used in the service of economic agendas, hidden in cultural privilege masquerading as 'universality', or concealed in asymmetrical relationships between child and teacher, wellbeing can be quite an insidious method of hiding the whole of human experience, which includes hidden policy imperatives and unrecognised relational dynamics.

Comparatively, the field of spirituality is a very different beast. There is little reason for spirituality to be taken up as a priority by governments and policy-makers in the way that wellbeing has been, because spirituality has too many associated features that cannot be the focus of observation, measurement or large-scale program rollouts. At times spirituality is used in policy as a show of inclusivity and understanding towards Indigenous culture, but outside of these polite nods (in the Australian context at least), it largely exists on the periphery of education. What I am referring to here, of course, is spirituality, not religion. Religion, as it has existed in both religious and government schools, involves organised institutions that have had a long history of political, economic and cultural influence. Thus, religion, for government schools, remains tied to the secular or non-secular state of nations.

When considering wellbeing and spirituality together I have found that not only are they connected through the whole child, but also through the nature of them as phenomena that are both idiosyncratic and ostensibly universal. I have suggested that perhaps what is shared between the two phenomena is an understanding of the whole person that incorporates spaces for tension both in intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. This tension also represents a 'holding together' of dualities in education that are present in the individual, social and political realms.

Do we want wellbeing because we care for children? Is it because they will more likely contribute productively as adults? Is it because they are more likely to demonstrate less problematic and disruptive behaviours in class? Is it because there are wellbeing approaches that require a market? Such questions may appear cynical but they direct attention towards the social and political bodies that press in on children. Such bodies are not neatly separated out from children's experiences in the way that Bronfenbrenner's model suggests, rather, they imbue the experiences of children primarily through their relationships with adults in their world. Therefore, a consideration of wellbeing requires a consideration of: the role and influence that adults have on children; the powerlessness of the child's positioning in the wellbeing discourse; and the numerous agendas of adults that may or may not involve care for the child, and may or may not be consciously accessible for reflection. Though I have focussed on wellbeing here, one could critically examine children's spirituality through the same considerations.

What is under consideration in this study are two extremely murky phenomena. To define either, is to limit them to a definition and perspective that, in definition, immediately lose their ineffable qualities. Rather than viewing this as a problem, I suggest it simply requires the researcher to consider a non-reductive approach to understanding. Rather than fragmenting knowledge (Ritskes, 2011) about the phenomena, I aim to preserve the whole of these phenomena's possibilities through a method that has been designed with this purpose in mind.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Wellbeing and spirituality are difficult to define. They encompass a multitude of relatable concepts, and subjective experience is a hallmark of both phenomena. The literature review has demonstrated that despite elusiveness within each respective phenomenon, and between them, both continue to be meaningful to human experience and both continue to make appearances in educational contexts. Humans, not only in the educational context, continue to wonder about the meaning of existence and both wellbeing and spirituality provide a phenomenological space to play with existential ideas. I have not come across any literature arguing that their ineffable qualities are so insurmountable as to render them meaningless. Given spirituality's 'ontological' status in the literature, the concept warrants deeper exploration, particularly in the current social and political climate of measurement, accountability and neoliberal influence in education. At this point I cannot make the claim that spirituality is an aspect of wellbeing (as suggested in whole child approaches), any more so than wellbeing may be an aspect of spirituality. For the purposes of this research, the connection between the terms remains pliable. This means that there is an opportunity to explore both phenomena by focusing on participants' experiences and, hence, without any

pre-conception that one is subsumed into the other.

This chapter provides a rationale for using hermeneutic phenomenology in this study. Given that hermeneutic phenomenology is a complex methodology with no easily discernible procedures to frame the analysis, I have provided a description of the history of phenomenology and hermeneutics, distinguishing them through the focus on description (phenomenology) and interpretation (hermeneutics). I outline the two philosophers who have shaped the interpretation of this study: Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Heidegger's *Dasein* is introduced (which will be drawn on in the findings chapters) and Gadamer's 'method' of interpretation is outlined (which shapes the methods of analysis).

3.2 Why hermeneutic phenomenology?

In order to explore experiences relatable to wellbeing and spirituality it was necessary to employ a methodology that has the interpretation of experience as its primary task. Hermeneutic phenomenology is both a philosophical frame and a methodology. To explain its use in this research, I will explore the philosophical foundations of phenomenology, followed by the integration of phenomenology with hermeneutics. I will then describe particular elements of hermeneutic phenomenology and address how and why, within this complex methodology, particular methods have been chosen to collect and analyse the data. The focus on the selection of analysis methods is not to be underestimated here. Given that some authors working with this methodology acknowledge that there is no specific set of methods and it is up to the researcher to choose an appropriate set of procedures (Finlay, 2009; van Manen, 2014), it is important to clarify my selection of specific methodological strategies and how such choices involve a necessary interpretation of the methodology itself (Finlay, 2009).

There has been a shift from predominantly quantitative approaches in wellbeing research to a recognition that these measures need to be supplemented with qualitative studies, particularly those that emphasise children's voices (Fattore et al., 2012). Alternatively, research into children's spirituality is usually undertaken via qualitative approaches and has long recognised the importance of foregrounding individual, subjective experiences of spirituality and the meaning that is attributed to such experiences (see for example Hay & Nye, 2006; Hyde, 2008, 2010). Broadly speaking, phenomenology is an inquiry into the lived experience of phenomena and is therefore well placed to closely examine subjective experience. The deceptive simplicity of capturing and analysing lived experience, however, belies an inherent difficulty – that is, how do we experience what we experience? Does experience occur through consciousness, and if so, does that experience reside solely in the mind?

Husserl, the founder of phenomenology sought answers to these questions and his method aimed to capture lived experience via consciousness—that is, consciousness in Husserl's phenomenology focused on consciousness to clarify how objects are experienced (Spinelli, 2005). Husserl aimed to establish a human science that was as tangible and methodical as a natural science, thus situating his phenomenology as an epistemological endeavour (Spinelli, 2005).

Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger, shifted the focus of phenomenology from consciousness to being, thereby also shifting the study from epistemology to ontology (Dreyfus, 1991). In what follows, I will explore these two strands of phenomenology and how the focus of each has resulted in methodological distinctiveness, with particular reference to the difference between Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Teasing apart some of the key differences here has helped to affirm my own philosophical position – a task that has arguably been lacking in many phenomenological

studies (Finlay, 2009). The discussion that follows includes a rationale for why a study of wellbeing and spirituality requires an interpretive base, rather than a purely descriptive one, along with the complexities of working from an interpretive stance.

3.3 Phenomenology

The philosophical school of phenomenology originated in the early 20th Century, although the term has been in use since the 18th Century (Spinelli, 2005). Three important etiological underpinnings give some sense of the essence of the term: *phainomenon*, *noumenon*, and *logos*. Phaimonmenon translates as 'appearance' and noumenon refers to 'the thing itself' (Spinelli, 2005). Heidegger used the term logos which etymologically refers to study (van Manen, 2014) but in Heidegger's use, refers to allowing entities (things, people, feelings) to be seen. An understanding of phenomenology can be briefly articulated here, therefore, as a study that seeks the appearance of the thing in itself.

An attempt to uncover the appearance of 'the thing itself' shows both the purpose of phenomenology and the inherent difficulty within both the philosophy and the methodology of phenomenology. Debate amongst researchers includes those who follow descriptive phenomenological methods with an epistemological purpose in mind, or those who follow interpretive phenomenological procedures, perhaps with an ontological aim (I say perhaps because the epistemological/ontological distinction is not always made clear). Whether following Husserlian lines of 'pure' description or incorporating an interpretive position, naming the philosophical underpinnings is crucial in order to lay claim to doing phenomenology (van Manen, 2014). Here, then, I will attempt to trace a line from description to interpretation to illustrate how I have arrived at my particular position.

Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological 'movement,' developed the strand of phenomenology known as transcendental phenomenology (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2013; Spinelli,

2005; Vagle, 2014). The purpose of Husserl's phenomenology was to see the essence of a phenomenon and to explicate the structures of consciousness. Husserl developed a method that intended to free the phenomenologist of all bias and presuppositions. Centered around the notions of the lifeworld, intentionality, epoche and reduction, Husserl sought to provide a scientific philosophy for the human sciences that was as rigorous as the one found in the natural sciences. His phenomenology, therefore, had an epistemological focus.

In Husserl's phenomenology, we are concerned with consciousness. Although consciousness can refer to a number of things, such as the mind, self-consciousness, thought, a state of wakefulness and so on (Velmans, 2017), Husserl was concerned with a particular type of consciousness called phenomenal consciousness. This type of consciousness refers to the subjective experience of objective reality (Vagle, 2014).

For Husserl, consciousness was always intentional – that is, it was directed towards 'something' (Kearney & Rainwater, 1996; Spinelli, 2005). Husserl's concern from the outset, therefore, was not a 'thing' as it exists in objective reality (Spinelli, 2005) but the way that the subject experiences the thing. In other words, Husserl explored the subject and object as they exist in the relationship between subject and object, as experienced by the subject. Husserl's phenomenology can perhaps be seen as comprised of two aims: one, to describe the activity of consciousness (*noesis*) (Kearney & Rainwater, 1996), and two, to describe the thing intended (*noema*) (Kearney & Rainwater, 1996). In essence, Husserl was interested in the *how* we experience, alongside the *what* is experienced (Spinelli, 2005). These two aspects of Husserl's phenomenology are inseparable and in a sense his theory requires a dual examination of both consciousness of the object, and the object itself.

Husserl's key ideas that contributed to his theory of phenomenology include his understanding of the lifeworld, his foregrounding of intentionality, and the importance he placed on the 'Epoche' and reduction.

3.3.1 Lifeworld

The lifeworld is the everyday, taken for granted existence that we are generally engaged in (Smith et al., 2009). Far from being engaged in a perpetual state of reflection on our experience in the world, the world seems to 'just exist' (Luft, 2004). For example, we get up, shower, get dressed and go to work without our minds being absorbed in the immediacy of these tasks; our minds are more likely engaged in matters pertaining to other times and other spaces. This is what Husserl termed our 'natural attitude' and it is only when this taken-for-granted mode of existence is disturbed that we find ourselves jolted out of it. For example, a car accident on the drive to work shocks us out of the pre-reflective state of our ordinary, everyday routine and, through the jolt of disruption, we are forced to look at the world anew. Thus, for phenomenology, the object or phenomena under investigation is not a fixed and static aspect of the world, rather it exists and is explored via our relatedness to it. Moreover, phenomenology as a method can make use of disruptions (Jardine, 1990) to see the appearance of things in ways that differ from our habitual mode of engagement with the world.

3.3.2 Intentionality

For Husserl, the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity was prime and this relationship can be found in the 'intentionality' of consciousness (Kearney & Rainwater, 1996). Vagle (2014) argues that to understand phenomenological intentionality, we must first release ourselves from the use and meaning of "intention", as it is commonly understood: autonomous, purposeful and conscious choice. Phenomenological intentionality is indeed about consciousness but not about purposeful actions and choices. Rather, it refers to the more fundamental idea of consciousness, which is that consciousness requires a some*thing* to be conscious of (Spinelli, 2005; Vagle, 2014). Intentionality does not provide an explanation

for whether the thing or 'object' exists independently of our consciousness. Rather, intentionality is concerned with the inherent relationship between consciousness and object, and the ways in which that relationship is rendered meaningful. Consciousness is not meaningful without an object to direct its intention towards, and an object is not meaningful without a consciousness directed towards it (Spinelli, 2005). When Husserl referred to "the things themselves" (Husserl, 1970, p. 168), he referred to things as they are made meaningful to us via intentionality.

3.3.3 The Epoche and reduction

The Epoche has been described as a tool, a method, an attitude and a way of thinking that is central to Husserl's phenomenology (Kakkori, 2010; Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 2014). Translated from the Greek as "suspension" (Kakkori, 2010), the Epoche refers to the bracketing of one's natural attitude towards the world; the taken-for-granted state of daily existence (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2013). Husserl used the concept of the Epoche to represent a shift from this pre-reflective interaction with the world and its objects to a reflective attitude that allows for the focus on phenomena to occur. This shift entails the conscious suspension of pre-existing beliefs, ideas, theoretical standpoints and pre-determined conclusions. The challenge is how does one suspend, and what is one suspending? Whether one can truly bracket experience is not only the topic of on-going debate amongst phenomenological researchers but was also central in the radical turn for Husserl's student Heidegger, towards a new understanding of phenomenology.

Reduction stands alongside the Epoche as central to Husserl's phenomenology and refers to the process of exposing the essence of the phenomenon. Although they are not the same, the terms are at times used interchangeably (see for example Laverty, 2003; Vagle, 2014). van Manen (2014) places the Epoche and reduction in juxtaposition to each other. He

argues that while the Epoche represents a withdrawal from the natural attitude, the reduction represents the moment of return. This means that we return to the object itself to look at it anew when our prejudgments are being held somewhat at bay.

Husserl delineated three types of reduction: phenomenological, eidetic and transcendental (Kakkori, 2010). The phenomenological reduction is phenomenology itself, when what is taken for granted becomes an object of inquiry. For example, wellbeing is taken for granted as something 'good' and something that we aspire to have; further reflection seems unnecessary. However, when an individual is asked about the meaning of wellbeing for them in their experience, the elongated pause that comes after this question gives an indication that there might be something more to the phenomenon than simply taking it for granted as something 'good'. This research is, therefore, a phenomenological reduction of the term, looking at wellbeing anew.

The eidetic reduction refers to the particular techniques employed to get at the 'essence' of the object (Smith et al., 2009), or the universal structures of consciousness (Kakkori, 2010). Husserl hoped to achieve the truly eidetic or universal structures of consciousness that guarantee the certainty required for scientific research of all kinds (Kearney & Rainwater, 1996). If we are looking at the phenomenon of wellbeing, the question that comes from the eidetic reduction might be, 'What makes the particular phenomenon essentially 'good' rather than something else? Husserl used free imaginative variation (Smith et al., 2009) to outline the process of applying multiple possibilities to uncover essential features of something. For example, if we take the 'good' out of wellbeing, is it still wellbeing? Or, in the case of spirituality, is a 'search' an essential feature of spirituality? Can spirituality exist without this 'search'? Or, alternatively, what might a search be if it is not spiritual – that is, what makes a search 'spiritual' and not psychological? For the phenomena of spirituality and wellbeing, this clearly presents a complex task. However,

questions that point the analysis towards what is essential can help to shape a plausible interpretation.

Following Husserl, other branches of phenomenology that identified themselves more or less with epistemology, by grounding their work in either description or interpretation, are known as descriptive phenomenology. A seminal example of descriptive phenomenology can be found in the work of Amedeo Giorgi. Giorgi, along with other researchers from Duquesne University, worked to develop phenomenological methods for psychology that are aligned with Husserlian philosophy (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2013). A set of steps is explicated in Giorgi's method of conducting phenomenological research (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2013). The first step is to obtain a description of the phenomenon and establish 'meaning units'. A meaning unit is a piece of data that has been stripped back to its most basic description and contains one single piece of information for analysis. The next step is to transform these meaning units into a psychological expression – that is, to make the particular psychological meaning relevant. Following this is the development of a general structure of meaning units as a whole – this means the development of an essential description (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2013).

Even with this brief description of the research procedure, the appeal of such an approach is obvious. Researchers using Giorgi's methods have a clear set of procedures to follow and these procedures go some way to providing the researcher with a method to suspend subjective interpretations. Additionally, this method pays attention to the rule of horizontalisation (Spinelli, 2005) in phenomenological research, where premature conclusions regarding the significance of the data are held at bay by treating all data as equally significant in the initial stages of the analysis. This form of phenomenology asks that the researcher *describe* the data, rather than apply abstract explanations, thereby enabling the researcher to maintain fidelity to the reported experience (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2013). Once the researcher has established meaning units by describing the data as faithfully as possible, the

application of psychological meaning situates the analysis in a particular psychological theory, deepening the analysis by the systematic application of theory to the data.

Once the descriptive phenomenological method is named as the methodology, it is necessary to provide readers with the particular lens that is being used for analysis. That is, if a psychological lens has not been used to describe meaning units, then what are researchers relying on for their frame of reference? In the educational literature, the use of descriptive phenomenology is particularly problematic when the psychological theory is not explicated. For example, an educational research study by Ganeson and Ehrich (2009) claims to employ Giorgi's methodological steps for conducting descriptive phenomenology. When it comes to the application of psychological meaning, the engagement with this particular step is described thus: "The researcher transforms the participants' colloquially expressed language into more meaningful and revealing psychological language" (Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009, p. 66). This statement says nothing about what their particular psychological language is, nor does it explain exactly how it is 'more meaningful and revealing' than the initial meaning units created. If the phenomenology study is not psychological, then the inclusion of an alternative theoretical frame is necessary, in order to conduct the analysis (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2013).

The application of Giorgi's method highlights a difficulty in employing phenomenology for this research study. This particular problem has been sitting with me from very early on in the research as I was acutely aware that I had no clearly defined theory from which to draw, given the rather nebulous nature of both phenomena in question. The difficulty is this: once I began analyzing data, which particular lens was I to use to give meaning to the descriptions? As has previously been noted, wellbeing is a term used in a variety of disciplines. In the earliest stages of designing my methodology, this led to a number of questions: Should I draw on cognitive-behavioural theory to interpret descriptions

of wellbeing? Should I analyse the date via the dimensions of the whole person? Perhaps I should take the already established themes of spirituality – meaning, connectedness etc. – and use those to frame my analysis? Those persistent questions helped to establish the rationale to move towards an interpretive position, drawing on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004), who suggests that some degree of patience is needed to avoid prematurely applying an existing theoretical frame to the data. Indeed, choosing a theoretical lens to apply to the data formed part of the process, but came further on in the analysis, rather than being established at the beginning (Vagle, 2014).

The purpose of explicating phenomenology via the distinction between description and interpretation is to demonstrate the importance of the researcher deciding where, within these murky phenomenological waters, she is positioned, and providing a rationale for how it suits the particular investigation at hand. It is important to highlight the very real difficulties of this approach, and making these distinctions is one way of doing so. As a neophyte researcher, there was a hesitation to allow myself to interpret anything, as I wanted to follow clear steps to get the analysis 'right'. I was, however, already bound up in my own idiosyncratic struggle to make sense of both wellbeing and spirituality and, what became more evident to me as I explored the research was that bracketing out aspects of myself was an impossible task.

There are a number of other approaches to phenomenology that position themselves somewhere along the descriptive–interpretive continuum. Some adhere to the Husserlian assumption that the researcher can engage in acts to suspend bias and preconceptions (Colaizzi, 1978; Moustakas, 1994), while others lean more towards the interpretive lens, arguing that preconceptions can be employed as a tool in the analysis (Tordres, 2007; van Manen, 2014). Given that I do not subscribe to the idea that I can bracket out my prejudices it was necessary to place this research into a frame that could work within, rather than evade,

the inter-subjective dynamic between the researcher and participant. As previously mentioned, the frame needed to allow for some degree of theoretical ambiguity in the initial stages of analysis. I therefore turned to Gadamer and his theory of interpretation.

3.4 Hermeneutics

The word 'hermeneutics' is roughly translated as 'interpretation' from the Greek (How, 2016). The origins of the term are complex and multi-layered, and some doubt has been cast on the connection between the Greek *hermenia* and the Greek god Hermes, which would seem an obvious connection given the godly duty that Hermes was required to perform in delivering divine messages (Gadamer, 1976). Regardless of whether the etymology of hermeneutics resides with the origins of Hermes—a god who delivers messages exactly as they are, without any added opinion, exaggeration or poetic license—or not, it serves as a useful metaphor to think about hermeneutics and interpretation.

Hermeneutics gathered momentum as a theory of interpretation during the 19th Century (How, 2016). Although its origins are often associated with the interpretation of biblical texts, hermeneutics eventually came to be understood and employed as an interpretive method for texts in general: in art, poetry, theatre and, in the case of this research, in interviews. Thus, hermeneutics pays close attention to the relationship between the subject and the text (or the researcher and text) and the relationships between understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 2004). The succinct definition put forward by Gadamer states, "hermeneutics is the art of clarifying and mediating by our own efforts of interpretation what is said by persons we encounter in tradition" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 98).

3.5 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

While Husserl's focus was on consciousness, his student, Martin Heidegger, transformed phenomenology by shifting the focus from consciousness to 'being' (Vagle, 2014). Husserl's

question was an epistemological one: how does intentionality give us knowledge of ourselves and the objects of our world? Heidegger's concern was ontological and he substituted Husserl's epistemological focus on the relation between the knower and the known with ontological questions concerning the meaning of being and how being is bound up in our intelligibility of the world (Dreyfus, 1991). More specifically, his work was defined by a key ontological question, "What we are *seeking* is the answer to the question about the meaning of Being in general, and, prior to that, the possibility of working out in a radical manner this basic question of all ontology" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 231).

3.5.1 Dasein

Heidegger addressed the above question in his seminal work, *Being and Time* (1962). In trying to understand being, certainly in western societies, we tend to turn towards our own self-experience that is, what is the meaning of being *for me*? Heidegger held that this kind of philosophical inquiry had long misinterpreted Being, by focusing on understanding and structuring what was considered to be the "essence" of each individual self, where the aim was to unveil a universal structure of being. Heidegger challenged the idea that a universal essence was bound up in the structure of "self" thereby formulating an understanding of Being that was predicated on Dasein.

The literal translation of Dasein is "being there", however Heidegger uses the term to denote "being-in-the world" (1962, p. 78). For Heidegger, a sense of self, or understanding of consciousness is not primary to philosophical inquiry. Rather, an essential structure of Dasein is understanding being-in-the-world and what this is. In fact, Heidegger would consider this particular study up to this point as ontical, rather than ontological. The reason for this is that the meaning of Being so far has only been discussed in relation to self, other, spirit, wellbeing, spirituality and so on. To make an ontological turn would require recognition of a

self as a non-isolated entity. Ontological inquiry is understood by Heidegger to be primordial and must discuss the meaning of Being in general (Heidegger, 1962). Thus, Heidegger's radical suggestion was that it is not possible to do ontology, whilst starting with the (isolated) subject. In fact, he labels the focus on subject and all ensuing focus on human consciousness to be a fundamental misunderstanding of ontology (Heidegger, 1962). In *Being and Time* (1962), he argues that the human subject exists as one of the possibilities of Dasein, but only because Dasein is self-interpreting, and understands itself as Being. Dasein is also recognised primordially as Being-with others (*Mitsein*) in the world. Thus, the priority of the self, as an isolated subject for analysis, and the self-experience that emanates from this, is thrown into question by Heidegger.

Heidegger was devoted to the question of the meaning of Being, and decentred the self, mind and consciousness through a consideration and formulation of the meaning of Being in general. "Being-in-the-world" is hyphenated to designate a "unitary phenomenon" that "must be seen as a whole" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 78). In order to study Dasein, one has to somehow place the human subject in the world and understand that it is constituted within this worldly foundation. There is a danger however, of thinking of Dasein as being-in-the-world in a way that is akin to being in a physical, containing space such as a human in a house, car or even the natural environment. As Wrathall & Murphy (2013) note, "being-in is not the spatial containment of one object within another, and it is not a representational relationship between a subject (Dasein) and an object (world)" (p. 13). What being-in describes, is an inherent relationship without which Dasein would not exist.

Heidegger uses the term "thrownness" to describe how we are born into a world with no choice about why or where we suddenly exist. Rather than being constantly baffled by this "thrownness", we engage in an ordinary everydayness; learning about our societal and cultural embeddedness in a largely unthinking engagement. Of course, there are many

examples of Dasein focussing on society as an intellectual and philosophical pursuit, but this is not the habitual way of existing in the world – that is, we do not habitually engage in deep existential reflection about needing to get in the car to buy groceries.

Additionally, we also have no say in who forms our world, from those closest to us, to those who inform our historical, cultural and social environment. Again, rather than being habitually stupefied by this, we engage with this world, according to Heidegger, in authentic or inauthentic modes. A brief understanding of the difference between the two is as follows: inauthentic is not meant in a negative sense; rather, it refers to being absorbed by the world to varying degrees. Heidegger's word for this absorption is "fallenness". A simple example would be the way that one scrolls through social media, briefly glimpsing a multitude of other lives, which have been sanitised for public consumption. Social media is one example of what Heidegger (1962) calls "the They", the public world that we engage in, unthinkingly, to a lesser or greater degree. Spending time absorbed in an activity, such as scrolling through social media, mostly lacks meaning and needs no concentration or thinking to occur. This is one example of the state that Dasein primarily exists in. "Authentic," on the other hand, is the recognition that one can choose to relate to one's Being by "owning" it. This is associated with emancipation and free will. Rather than being swept along in "the They", Dasein accepts that there is a "groundlessness of its own existence" (Dreyfus 1991, p. 27), albeit briefly, and uncovers a way of finding its own Being.

Heidegger's use of the term "groundlessness" is important to consider in light of both wellbeing and spirituality. It is often suggested that being "grounded" is being rooted to the earth, in a secure state or frame of mind. Grounding activities for the sake of wellbeing often focus on having an individual concentrate on their feet and bodily connection to the earth beneath them. Groundlessness, therefore, seems to be the antithesis of grounding. Heidegger is arguing for the acceptance that one day the ground will give way beneath one, and what is

then found is more than this inauthentic attachment to the world of "the They"; what is found is the finitude and limits of the self, and of life. This terrifying realisation, he calls "authentic". Authenticity and truth are also related to wellbeing. How this could possibility relate to wellbeing will be explored throughout the following chapters.

Heidegger writes that, "Dasein is an entity, which in its very Being comports itself understandingly towards that Being. In saying this, we are calling attention to the formal concept of existence" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 78). This self-interpreting way of being is what Heidegger calls existence and he uses this term in a way that is different from the existence of all objects, meaning that the hallmark of Heidegger's use of the term 'existence' is self-interpreting beings (Dreyfus, 1991). Rather than referring to a self-aware and self-reflective state, it refers to a preontological understanding, meaning that we engage in shared practices and cultural activities and this engagement is already interpreted but not necessarily questioned (Wrathall & Murphey, 2013).

To help further clarify the shift from the epistemological to the ontological Vagle (2014) emphasises the 'in' of being-in-the-world. For Vagle, being-in-the-world means being *in* pain, *in* confusion, *in* love; something that Dreyfus (1991) refers to as an existential 'in' as opposed to a temporal or spatial 'in' (e.g., in the kitchen). For this study, it was common for the teacher participants to begin the interview by defining in educational terms what wellbeing is *for children* in school. But when I directed them towards their own experience (i.e., 'That sounds important, can you tell me about an experience of when you…?') they began to describe being *in* their experience, memories, thoughts and emotions. This led teacher participants to describe experience and its meaningfulness for them as it is lived, rather than making broad generalisations about the experiences of children in the school.

Inherent in our Being-in-the-world is that we are already interpreting the world as our natural state. For Heidegger, interpretation does not come through moments of reflection, or

out of formal research activities; rather, to be human is to be interpreting. The corollary of this and a key distinction between Husserl and Heidegger is as follows. If our Being-in-the-world is an act of interpretation in itself, then it would follow that detached non-interpretive descriptions of the lived experience of others would be impossible to achieve (Dreyfus, 1991). Heidegger (1962) argued that all interpretation springs from an ontological question and that interpretation itself is the primary ontology of humans—every act of being is an act of interpretation. In Heidegger's understanding, therefore, it is not possible to achieve pure detached descriptions because, due to the very state of our being-in-the-world, we are already in an act of interpretation.

In hermeneutic phenomenology, rather than suspending subjectivity, it becomes foregrounded. Heidegger's student, Hans-Georg Gadamer, placed this at the center of his philosophy and was concerned with exploring, examining and uncovering what understanding is, how understanding works, and the movement between understanding and interpretation (Vilhauer, 2010). For Gadamer, this is the 'method' of a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis. As will be explained below, his elaboration of prejudices, fore-meaning and fore-projection, and the fusion of horizons, have been essential to analysis in this study and are encompassed in the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 2004). Understanding here should not be taken for granted as something that 'just happens'. In fact, it is the task of hermeneutics to clarify the concept of understanding itself (Bruns, 1992) while engaged in the process. Therefore, reflection on the methodology itself throughout the analysis, contributes to the analysis, whilst the analysis contributes to my evolving understanding of the methodology.

3.5.2 Prejudice

Prejudice is Gadamer's term for what the researcher brings to the phenomena (Gadamer,

2004). In hermeneutic research, other terms are often used interchangeably with 'prejudice', including 'pre-conceptions', 'presuppositions' and 'biases'. In contemporary usage, 'prejudice' often has negative connotations. However, Gadamer uses the term to refer to "the conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 9), calling for a more value neutral understanding of the term. Our own psychosocial history directs our attention towards particular things in the text, whether we are aware of it or not. While Husserl urges us to place prejudices to one side in order to see the text more clearly, Gadamer insists that, whether hidden or exposed, such prejudices influence and form part of the interpretation. In doing so, Gadamer provides a method for working with such presuppositions, rather than attempting to transcend them altogether (Gadamer, 2004).

What prejudices do I bring to this research? Some years ago, I commenced the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. This is a form of Christian meditation traditionally completed over 30 days as a silent retreat. I completed a modern version known as 'the spiritual exercises in daily life'. In this version, I meditated on a small piece of text from the Bible for about an hour a day for a period of nine months or so, and then met with a Spiritual Directly once a week. At the conclusion of this meditative and deeply reflective practice, within the context of this guided relationship, I felt immense disappointment that my own search for meaning and connectedness stopped quite abruptly. There was no enlightenment, no transcendental feeling of connection to 'something greater', and no deepening of faith or religious practice. After years of this sitting somewhere in my unconscious, I can now see how stunned and disappointed I was by the feeling that all of my hard meditative work came to nothing. But, at the time, this was not a conscious disappointment, and only in more recent years was I able to see the complex mixture of emotions I was experiencing. Not long after

the conclusion of the practice, I pushed the entire experience aside; any relevance it had to my life appeared to be gone.

Two years later, I accepted the position of Wellbeing Leader at the school where I was employed and began studying for my master's in education, in the area of wellbeing. I had professional knowledge about children's ecology and development, and experiential knowledge of how this played out in a particular school community. Moreover, I worked in a Catholic school community and was involved in aligning wellbeing with the Catholic values and the vision of the school community.

During this time, although it was barely perceptible, I began to feel a sense of derision when people described the importance of their faith in this school community, thinking somewhat disparagingly that they were living in fantasy. These barely conscious responses to people's articulation of their faith and belief system also contained a kernel of jealousy; I was upset and disappointed that my own spiritual journey had not brought me to any soothing experiences of faith or belief. However, along with these discomforting feelings, I also remained curious and chose to explore individual experiences of spirituality in the school community for my Master's research project.

This story forms only a fraction of my historical relationship with the concept of spirituality. Since undertaking this research, specifically during the phase of data collection, I have been surprised by experiences of my hidden prejudices playing out in moments within the interviews (a detailed example of this is presented below). At times these are obvious and easy to catch, and at other times they are discrete, presenting themselves to me many months later during seemingly random moments of daily life. It was the art of 'catching' and using these prejudices that was of particular interest to me and formed a key aspect of the method. As Gadamer writes, "all correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and

the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought" (2004, p. 279). It is the 'imperceptible habits of thought' that I address through my methods.

3.5.3 Fore-projections and fore-meaning

The awareness of feelings, thoughts and rationalisations that emerge during the research process is one thing, but it is quite another to know exactly what to do with them. Once I become aware of a particular presupposition, what then? I will offer an example to illustrate how I fore-grounded these prejudices and how, in conjunction with the analysis of my fore-projections, I used them to conduct the analysis.

Having already engaged in a process of unveiling prejudice or pre-understandings about spirituality by engaging in a literature review and journaling my own thoughts about spirituality, I had become dimly aware that the search for meaning is a recurrent theme in spirituality that speaks to my experience. For example, my own experience of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises could be named as a 'search' for something. My disappointment at the end of the experience gives a clue that I was looking for something, and appeared to find nothing, therefore, conceptualising it as a 'search' is a plausible interpretation (Packer & Addison, 1989). The impact on this current study might then be that I would look for where participants have engaged in a search for meaning in their own lives. Without even being consciously aware of it, I might identify this search in the data and feel an immediate sense of confirmation about the participant's response, apperceiving that it is a good fit with what I already know. Consequently, this could emerge as an important aspect in my analysis.

This is an example of my fore-projection onto the participant's experience and onto the data. However, the employment of fore-projection should not be to confirm what I already know; I am not ending with ticking off the participant's search for meaning as some sort of confirmation of what I have discovered in the literature review or in my own

experience. Rather, at this point, having recognised how I have brought my own search to the text, I would now need to engage in another deeper projection into what the search is in this particular case, how the participant experiences the search for meaning within everyday life, and how this changes my thoughts about what a search for meaning looks like. Would I still label it a 'search'? Gadamer (2004) explains this process as follows:

> A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there (p. 279).

This means that by identifying what is projected onto the text, by noticing that I have come to a conclusion that was there waiting to be found, the initial stages of the analysis have begun. The method that Gadamer is writing about, therefore, is the ongoing revision of one's own fore-projections, which are to be scrutinised against "the things themselves" (2004, p. 279). This refers to the researcher's expectations of the text, which help to illuminate the text itself as it emerges in the researcher's understanding. This is the process and task of hermeneutic phenomenology and is constant throughout the research process (Gadamer, 2004).

If presuppositions are brought to the text (perhaps unconsciously) by the researcher, then fore-meaning is the meaning made of the text based on the presupposition. It is a *fore*-meaning because we are making meaning before a true engagement with the text has occurred. To refer back to my illustrative example, looking for a 'search' in the data is a way into the data, reading and responding to the search and finding something familiar to my experience forms part of the initial analysis. It is therefore not a methodological error to initially identify a search, but rather is a necessary part of the analysis, as it is these fore-

meanings that help to make an initial sense of the text. Without such fore-meanings there is no way *in* to understanding.

Gadamer writes that, "working out appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature, to be confirmed 'by the things' themselves, is the constant task of understanding" (2004, pp. 279-280). This can be understood as an arching movement back and forth between the data itself and the researcher's prejudices. To use an illustrative example from my interviews, I outlined many of my own experiences of wellbeing and spirituality before I conducted the interviews. This did not inoculate me against finding 'new' pre-conceptions brought to the data. While interviewing a teacher participant, 'Shelly', I noted silently in the first interview that that she spoke about a number of spiritual explorations that were remarkably similar to my own, jokingly informing me of how she was fond of a 1990s popular occult film titled, 'The Craft'. Her experience of being in her early twenties and exploring more subversive forms of spirituality, such as paganism, similar to my own experiences at this age, left me surprised to see that I had left this section of my personal history not only out of the interview, but almost entirely out of my thoughts until that point in time. I began to wonder about this phase of my life, and wrote extensively about it in my research journal. Having done that, I turned back to Shelley's interview transcript and her description of this event. When I turned back to her description, I saw something new in my line of questioning. I noticed this in the following transcript excerpt, where I had asked Shelly where her interest in paganism came from:

> Shelley: I suppose as all teenage girls do go through the witchy phase.
> Claire: Yes
> Shelley: You know and you're looking at all the candle burning and the incense and the there was a shop in…Morticia's… and getting special books to write down your memories and things like that all that sort of side of things. Watching The Craft. [laughs]
> Claire: How old were you?
> Shelley: Oh, I would've been about 15, I suppose, something like that.

> Claire: And do you remember what triggered that or what made you interested?
> Shelley: I think the movie is probably because there was The Craft that was really big. One of my best friends was sort of into that. She had a little shrine in her room and so, I suppose, again dabbling in what other people are doing and yeah.
> Claire: And how did it feel when you were immersed in that?

My question about Shelley's 'immersion' is straight from my own experience where I'm assuming that her experience was similar or the same as mine, and that she got quite swept up in what was exciting, mystical and mysterious. It was quickly confirmed in her following statement, however, that I had misunderstood what this experience was for her:

> Shelley: I wouldn't say I got immersed I probably just… you know you can have interest and you know read some books and things and just trying to find out more. And for me, I thought it was just a bit of a crock [laughs] but it was something that you could connect with and you could do… I got a spell book for my birthday you know because it has spells for good dreams and spells for getting revenge on people and getting them out of your life sort of stuff.

After noting that I had misinterpreted her experience, made obvious in this case by her disagreement with the term I chose to describe her experience, I was able to see the data anew. While not completely throwing out all of my presuppositions, I was able to separate my wishes for Shelley to join me in *my* experience, and subsequently found that something else began to emerge in her material. I noticed something new, which was as follows: Shelley's 'dabbling' was relational. She talks about the influence of her best friend and 'other people'. She then goes on to talk about 'getting revenge', which opens up new possibilities in terms of how spirituality has been used as a vehicle for understanding and negotiating relationships in her life. I could say tentatively at this point that relationality for her involves connection and disconnection. Here also, the 'good' of wellbeing and the 'connectedness' of spirituality - the implied connotation of healthy relationships in both - has suddenly been disrupted.

By engaging with my prejudices, I was able to direct my attention back to Shelley *herself* and open up my engagement with what she was saying to discover something new. Thus, the awareness of my particular prejudices, at this point, led to a questioning of them, "in light of new evidence" (Finlay, 2009, p. 12). Working within this methodology inevitably includes the discomforting experience of becoming aware of and accepting all manner of reactions to the text. The purpose of becoming aware of prejudices, therefore, is not to dwell in one's own lived experience, but to more clearly illuminate the experience of the participants. This example of the analysis was placed back into the whole interview and then into the interviews of others. This is not a linear analysis defined by line-by-line coding; as such a linear progress assumes that all preconceptions can be made available before the analysis begins. As previously noted, the task of unveiling and employing preconceptions in the service of the analysis remains constant throughout the analysis.

3.5.4 Fusion of horizons

The awareness and use of one's pre-existing beliefs alongside the data, leads to what Gadamer has poetically named a *fusion of horizons*. This represents the way that meaning is made when the text and the interpreter blend their individual subjective meanings to create a fusion, which enables a generation of new meanings. The fusion of horizons is not an operational method for an interpretive methodology, but rather it is a metaphor for a number of intersections in interpretation.

Perhaps the best way of knowing that there is some interpretive common ground between the researcher and the participant is to check this with the participant at the time of the interview, or to present the understanding to the participant for review. In the above interview excerpt, Shelley clearly indicated that my understanding of her experience was incorrect, which made the task of re-examining her text all the easier. However, it is more

likely that preconceptions may come to light after the interviews are well and truly over and the interpretation has begun (Smith et al., 2009). The fusion of horizons is understood here, therefore, as a metaphor for the meeting of minds and experiences but stops short of assuming that there needs to be a consensus about how those experiences are understood.

Additionally, Gadamer uses the idea of the fusion to refer not only to a meeting between two individuals, but to demonstrate how the horizon of the past and the horizon of the present are constantly held up against each other (mirrored) in the inquiry (Iser, 2006). The fusion of horizons, therefore, also refers to the researcher's past and how the researcher carries this past into the interpretation of the present (Gadamer, 2004). Prejudices, therefore, are inconspicuous representations of our past, intersecting with the present and creating a potential space for understanding to occur.

Gadamer (2004) is clear that the fusion of horizons does not involve the researcher cherry picking appealing data so as to confirm what the researcher already knows or suspects. He writes that

> the interpreter's own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text's meaning. In this the interpreter's own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk and that helps one truly to make one's own what the text says (p. 406).

Gadamer here is talking about a generated state of ambiguity, which puts the researcher in the uncomfortable position of being prepared for all foregone conclusions to be put at risk. Fore-projections do not occur prior to a fusion of horizons; each of these concepts blends together and is a constant part of interpretation. This can be compared with the more structured, linear method of descriptive phenomenology. Here, due to the ongoing nature of interpretation, the constant task of revised fore-projections, which involve ongoing movements back and forth

between the researcher and the text, have been depicted by the metaphor of the Hermeneutic Circle.

3.5.5 The Hermeneutic Circle

The Hermeneutic Circle is often described in research methodology as a process of illuminating the whole of the data by analysing the parts and illuminating the parts by analysing the whole (Laverty, 2003), demonstrating the cyclical nature of understanding (Gadamer, 2004). The philosophical background of the hermeneutic circle is Heidegger's claim that interpretation always takes place within our own context and thus, we are already in the circle, drawn to the topic of inquiry through our 'background practices' (Dreyfus, 1991). Far from being a linear process, the circular movement between the whole and part/s of a text signifies the on-going nature of understanding and interpretation. It is argued, therefore, that interpretation can never be finalised in the sense of reaching a clearly visible end point, but instead, the researcher needs to find a justifiable point to cease analysing (Laverty, 2003).

The metaphor of the circle can be misleading in that it utilises a one-dimensional symbol to delineate a complex, multi-dimensional process. The hermeneutic circle is not only a movement between part and whole, but also between past and present, between prejudices and new understandings, and between interpreter and text. Packer and Addison (1989) argue that one way of working within the circle is to see a forward arc as establishing a point of view, while a reverse arc would represent an evaluation of that point of view. This aligns with fore-projection onto the text resulting in fore-meaning, and then the reevaluation of the projection against the text itself.

It is helpful therefore, to think of the hermeneutic circle as a bi-directional movement, shifting back and forth between fore-projection and the text. But a movement back and forth

has its own stagnant connotations (i.e., going around circles), which have led some authors to refer to hermeneutic interpretation as a spiral, rather than a circle to provide space in the metaphor for a movement towards *something* (Vagle, 2014). Movements between part and whole of a transcribed interview, between all the transcribed interviews in relation to each other, between fore-projection and the text, between understanding and interpretation, suggest that the image of a circle may be incomplete for hermeneutic interpretation. However, as a reminder that interpretation is not a linear process, it served as a useful representation to hold in mind throughout the duration of the analysis.

In this chapter I provide a rationale for employing hermeneutic phenomenology as a philosophical and methodological framework. I distinguish between phenomenology proper and phenomenology which incorporates hermeneutics, and I position this study within the perspective of Heidegger and Gadamer. Heidegger's radical claim was that the primary state of our being, as it exists in relation to the world, is interpretation. From this position, Gadamer's understanding of prejudices becomes central to interpretation, and I give an extensive example of how engagement with prejudices was carried out in the data analysis. Finally, I consider the point of engagement between the text and the researcher through Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons, and the hermeneutic circle.

Chapter 4: Methods

This chapter details the specific methods that were involved in completing this study. After describing how schools and participants were recruited, I briefly describe the two school settings in which the interviews took place. I then report on the procedure for organising interviews and obtaining consent and assent from the participants. After briefly describing the structure of the interviews, I provide an extensive explication of the methods of analysis and the challenges of completing a hermeneutic analysis, which involves finding and evaluating one's own method, rather than drawing on a set of prescribed procedures. This chapter concludes with a report on the ethical considerations of this study.

4.1 Recruitment of schools and selection of participants

To identify schools potentially interested in this study I conducted an online search of primary school websites in Victoria looking for specific references to wellbeing, spirituality, or the whole child. This was based on the assumption that if schools made specific reference to these areas in their publicly available information, then those schools might find the study to be of interest. This initial search was directed towards schools from all Victorian primary

sectors including government, Catholic and Independent (private fee-paying) primary schools.

The initial invitation was sent via email to school principals, explaining the research and inviting them to participate. One Catholic school principal and one government school principal agreed to participate and to extend the invitation to their school community on my behalf. Invitations and consent forms were then sent to families and staff (see appendices attached). In the Catholic primary school, the principal, two teachers and three parents returned consent forms, and seven children returned parental consent forms. After meeting with me, six children returned assent forms indicating that they would like to participate. In the government primary school, the school principal and two parents agreed to participate. Two participants who had dual teacher/parent roles in the school also consented to participate. Three children obtained parental consent to participate in the study, and an invitation was extended to all three, to meet with me on the morning I was to conduct the interviews. Two of the children came to meet me and after doing so, gave their individual assent to participate (see Tables 1 & 2 below for the lists of participants).

The invitation to participate formed an aspect of the participant selection process. It was assumed that those who responded to the letter would have considered their own spirituality/wellbeing and were interested in the topic. It was unlikely that individuals who had no thoughts, feelings or experiences of spirituality would respond to the initial invitation. It was therefore, a reasonable assumption that the participants who were recruited had experience of the phenomena and also felt they were able to talk about the phenomena (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). In giving consent or assent, the participants agreed to be interviewed twice.

4.2 Setting

The Catholic primary school was located in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Two interviews with each participant took place in a room adjacent to the school library for all participants. The government primary school was in rural Victoria. The interviews at this school took place at a number of different locations within the school, depending on room availability at the time. Due to her work commitments, the second interview with one parent participant from the government school (Nicky) occurred via phone.

Table 1

Participants from a Catholic Primary School

School A: Catholic Primary School		Interview 1 May 2017	Interview 2 Dec 2017
Shelley	Teacher	✓	✓
Jill	Teacher	✓	✓
Louise	Principal	✓	✓
Brie	Year 5 student	✓	✓
Mai	Year 5 student	✓	✓
Jennifer	Year 6 student	✓	✓
Marion	Year 6 student	✓	✓
Ashleigh	Year 6 student	✓	✓
Alison	Year 6 student	✓	✗
Nina	Parent	✓	✓
Gabby	Parent	✓	✓
Matthew	Parent	✓	✓

Table 2

Participants from a Government Primary School

School B (State Primary School)		Interview 1 Aug 2017	Interview 2 Dec 2017
Rachael	Teacher/Parent	✓	✓
Natalie	Teacher/Parent	✓	✓
Patrice	Principal	✓	✓
Chloe	Year 6 student	✓	✓
Lesley	Year 6 student	✓	✓
Nicky	Parent	✓	✓
Vanessa	Parent	✓	✗

4.3 The adult participants

My initial invitation to participate was directed to school principals and I proposed that they participate in the research in my introductory email. Once the two participating schools were established, the invitation to participate was extended by the principal on my behalf to all of the teachers. The teachers who wished to participate collected an Information Letter and Consent Form which was then signed, sealed in an envelope, and left at the school office for me to collect.

The school principal also recruited parent participants on my behalf, by approaching parents in the school, explaining the research and leaving the consent form with them. The parents who wished to participate signed the consent form, sealed it in an envelope, and left this at the school office for me to collect. Once the consent forms were collected, the school principal and admin personnel organised a timetable of interviews so that they could take place on the school grounds during the course of the school day.

4.4 The student participants

The decision to include senior primary school students was based on my experience in my master's research project where I found the students were able to easily engage in

conversation about spirituality due to their own interest in the topic and the open-ended style of the interview. In both schools, the teachers explained the Invitation to Participate to their classes, and the students who indicated their interest met with me in a small group where I introduced myself and explained why I was conducting the research. At that time, I explained the purpose of the research and what they would be required to do, what would happen with their data, and what they could do if they no longer wanted to participate. During this rapport-building phase, I answered questions about the structure of the interviews and affirmed that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. I encouraged the children to think about "what comes to mind" when they thought of the terms spirituality and wellbeing, prior to having the first interview, so that they were not going into the interview 'cold'. This also alleviated any pressure on my part to 'feed' them with suggestions or examples at the commencement of the interview.

I left the assent forms (see Appendix C) and envelope with the students, to be returned to the school and collected by their teacher. This was a deliberate act to enable children to have a sense of control over their participation, rather than participating because of any nudging from their teachers or myself. In the Catholic school, I met with seven students and six of those students returned assent forms. In the government school, I met with two students who both returned assent forms.

4.5 Interviews

Interviews are frequently used to gather data in hermeneutic phenomenology (Vagle, 2014) and for this study data was collected through two individual semi-structured interviews with most of the participants. 'Vanessa' and 'Alison' participated in one interview only due to them being unavailable for the second interview. For this study, data comprised my research journal along with the interview transcripts. I conducted the first set of interviews in the

Catholic primary school in May 2017 and the second set in December 2017. In the government primary school, the first set of interviews took place in August 2017, and the second set took place in December 2017.

Prior to the interview, I had a colleague interview me using my interview schedule (Appendix G). This was recorded and transcribed by me and allowed me to reflect on my own experiences with wellbeing and spirituality, and also gave me a sense of what the interview experience might be like for the participants.

During the interviews the participants were asked to speak freely about what comes to mind when they think of spirituality and wellbeing. The questions were focused on obtaining the participant's experiences of wellbeing and spirituality as they associated to the each term. The questions encouraged the participant to describe in detail the lived experiences that were relatable to the concepts of wellbeing and spirituality by using interview techniques that included: reflection, asking for clarification, asking for examples and probing for more detail (see Appendix G), aspects recommended by Jasper (1994) and Taylor (2005).

4.5.1 Interview 1

The first interview occurred in May 2017 for the Catholic school and August 2017 for the government (also known as state) school. The discrepancy in time was simply due to two different systemic processes, which resulted in a lengthier approval period for the state system, and then a slightly lengthier period of time taken to locate a government school that would agree to participate. The interview was open-ended. After briefly describing the purpose of the project, my first question asked about the meaning of wellbeing or spirituality and I asked participants to begin talking about whichever they felt comfortable with. My follow up questions saw me direct their attention to their own experiences, asking them to describe such experiences in more detail.

4.5.2 Interview 2

The second interview occurred seven months after the first interview for the Catholic school, and four months after the first interview for the state school, both in December 2017.

4.6 Methods of Analysis

4.6.1 The interviews

Having reflected on my own understanding of wellbeing and spirituality, the analysis was already under way by the time the first interviews occurred. For each interview I paid attention to my reactions to each participant, noting in my research journal my thoughts and feelings about them, particularly focussing on strong emotional reactions. Paying attention to fleeting thoughts and feelings (included in field notes and journal entries after the interview) was important as these momentary reactions were initial clues to my own prejudices (Manton, 2019). This can best be illustrated through the following example of my feelings about the interview with Marion, a Year Six student at the Catholic Primary school.

Marion was a well-spoken girl, who seemed eager to share her thoughts about wellbeing and spirituality. Although I enjoyed listening to her, I had an uncomfortable feeling that I wasn't 'buying it'. When I am with children and I feel slightly irritated with them, my initial reaction is to chastise myself for failing to see the 'good' in them. However, I have learnt through self-reflection that this moralistic position cuts off my emotional state and avoids any access to emotional truths in what is occurring between myself and the child (Holloway & Jefferson, 2013). Why would I find her inauthentic? This question can only be considered by first acknowledging my own irritation. I wrote the following note in my research journal straight after the interview:

> I'm not sure if I cut this interview short because I found her precocious. A lot of words, gorgeous smiles, she reminded me of a confident American child being interviewed on the

> Disney channel. I do not like meeting with people who are brimming with positivity. A self-professed pessimist, I am easily suspicious of anyone who appears too happy. I think I started to glaze over when she talked about her grandmother miraculously recovering from stage 4 cancer. I also found the library distractions difficult – noisy children!

In the days following this, I made further notes in my research journal to look at the discomfort in my reaction. At this stage, I realised that Marion and Matthew were family friends. They belonged to a Missionary group who were raising money to build a new church in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

> I don't think the child he was talking about – Marion – is his relative but is a family friend. I started to feel cornered by this group who had enthusiastically taken up the opportunity to be interviewed. And the thing that struck me as quite important was when he said, 'You remember…Marion?' and said 'she gave the testimony about the woman with cancer' and it was when he used the term 'testimony' I felt that the child had been 'prepped'. Clearly she had had a conversation about the interview with her family and it made me wonder in what ways her family prepared her for the interview. It was interesting because my initial reaction to her was that she was like a precocious American child. I didn't note it at the time, but she did also speak with a slight American accent. There was something about the way she spoke that struck me as inauthentic because I was associating it with this American evangelical brigade.
> Now I'm wondering…I always take my reactions to people, my responsiveness, as needing to unearth my presuppositions and assuming that there is something wrong about these presuppositions. My reactions to her were that she was evangelising and there was something false about it. But I immediately feel guilty for having these reactions because I have no way to prove that my reactions say something about the truth of that person's experience or intention. But perhaps my reactions say something about the truth of the dynamic between us. When I spoke to Matthew, it was confirmed that she was indeed giving me testimony and evangelising – it was not her experience. So what does that mean?

The purpose of this process was not to enable me to locate my reactions and put them aside. Rather, my reactions said something about the truth of what is occurring *between us*. My intention was to have a conversation about wellbeing and spirituality to find the lived experiences of the two phenomena. Marion and Matthew's intentions were to use the

conversation as an opportunity to evangelise. I had this similar sense from my interview with Nina as she spoke about her business, and then towards the end asked me if I had a mobile number (I tactfully didn't answer and just handed her the information letter with my work number on it). For them, it was an opportunity to spread the good news.

The interpersonal dynamic of the interview is significant in a hermeneutic interpretation. Another example of this dynamic and the effect on me as the interviewer, is when I strayed from my own process. For example, I tried not to share too much information about myself in order to keep the focus on the participant. However, upon reading the transcripts I noticed that I was more likely to share personal information for two reasons: one, when I felt connected to the participant by such mechanisms as sensing that they were 'just like me', as seen in the example above with Shelley. The second was when I felt a sense of interpersonal pressure. For example, at the end of my interview with Gabby, she gave me a considered gaze and asked if I was Catholic. I nodded to her question and said that I had been raised Catholic, but did not disclose to her that I do not identify as Catholic any more. In this moment I felt myself crumble under the gaze of an authoritarian mother-figure, and my Catholic statement was an assurance to her that she could relate to me in this foreign world she finds herself in. Perhaps my admission was also a misguided attempt at inclusivity. She had spoken during the interview about losing the sense of family and community connection that was so strong in her home country, and I was trying to show her that we were alike in some small way.

Two key elements formed my interview method: 1) associating to the phenomena; 2) picking up on elements of the associations to have participants describe their experience in more detail. The purpose of the first few questions in the interview was to gently guide the participants to associate with the phenomena. After a connection to the phenomena had been established, I focused on participants describing their experiences in detail. In asking for

descriptions in as much detail as possible, van Manen (2014) provides a method that attempts to avoid self-interpretation on behalf of the interviewee. In reality I found that my participants shifted from introspective self-reflection, to descriptions of experience, and back again.

I used any opportunities I had in the interviews to check my understanding of participants' experiences. I did this by forming interpretations in the moment and asking participants if I had understood correctly, at times reflecting their words back and asking, "I'm not sure if I understood this right, please tell me if I haven't, but it sounds like…" However, given that participants almost always affirmed that I had understood them correctly, I could not assume that their acquiescence indicated a sound interpretation on my part. Therefore, when transcribing the interviews, I listened carefully for hesitation and uncertainty in their responses. For example, Vanessa was talking about how important her yoga practice was to her, I made a connection in my own mind, theorising what was happening during her practice:

> Claire: Do you find that when you do that you're able to connect the physical sensations with an emotion?
> Vanessa: Yeah. Yeah [uncertain]. Sometimes.

When I connected Vanessa's bodily sensations during yoga, with her emotional state, she initially agreed with me, but then went on to say,

> I think sometimes by trying to going back over the story about what's happened to us or how we feel… things like that, sometimes we manifests it even a little bit more, and I think if we can just tune into that physical feeling, without judgement without attaching to it in an emotional way (Vanessa).

Much of the transcribing and re-reading of transcripts, therefore, was about gaining new insights into the interaction between myself and the participant, to hear what they were

saying or not saying, particularly when the conclusions I jumped to in the interview were too hasty.

4.6.2 Phase 1

I transcribed the interviews myself (19 interviews in total) to become as familiar with the data as possible. As soon as I began transcribing, I assigned each participant a pseudonym. By the time I had finished the transcriptions – which occurred over a period of many months – I could recall many aspects of the interviews, and what it was like to be with the participant.

I then read and re-read each transcription, making notes about questions to follow up with for the second interview. I paid particular attention to any line of thought that I appeared to have disregarded, illustrated through abrupt shifts in topic, that is, changing my line of questioning to a new topic. I also began highlighting things that stood out, both repetitive 'themes' across the interview data, and other ideas that stood out as particular irregularities or differences between experiences. It was important during this phase to highlight what seemed lifeless and devoid of meaning to me, as much as it was to highlight what seemed exciting or resonant. All material in the interview was fodder for writing and my journaling enabled me to think through various aspects of the texts. Spending so much time dwelling in the text also enabled me to become very familiar with the participants and their experiences.

At this point it is important to point out an ongoing difficulty during this phase of analysis, which was my questioning of why the bits of data that 'stood out' to me, should be any more important than the bits that I could easily ignore. van Manen writes that "phenomenological research is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness" (1990, p. 9). However, what is recognised by my consciousness and how I become aware of what is important or significant is a fairly nebulous aspect of the interpretive process and there is scant literature regarding the internal processes that mark

something as significant to the researcher and therefore more worthy of attention than parts of the data deemed insignificant.

My understanding is that this process requires a certain self-attunement whereby thoughts, images, memories, emotions or bodily sensations are recognised as signals that something significant has occurred. Intensive writing then followed long periods of what I came to think of as 'digesting' the data. In the end, I cannot say that the issue of significance or insignificance has been resolved. What I can say however, is that long periods of time spent reading, writing about the data, and mulling over it in the background – digesting the data – seems to allow for a rich and accessible entry into the participants' worlds. I *carried* the participants words with me throughout the analysis, and still do.

This process of transcribing, thinking and writing, was repeated with each interview transcription. When it came time for the 2nd interview, I used it as an opportunity to extend on thoughts, pick up on things I had missed and see if any of the 'leads' I had followed, were re-introduced by the participant.

4.6.3 Phase 2

I initially began to organise the data according to the questions that I asked at the very beginning of the interviews. I extracted from the interview data any response to the questions: "What does wellbeing mean for you?"; "What does spirituality mean for you?" I also extracted any spontaneous explicit connections between the two phenomena given by the participants. After I pulled out these statements, I combined them to find an initial summative description of each phenomenon for each participant group: parent, student, and teacher. This was my first layer of analysis and formed the first part /whole representation of the data.

The purpose of this phase was to find a way into the enormous amount of data I had gathered from both interviews, and to begin organising some broad understandings about the

phenomena (see Appendix H). Initial comparisons were made at this stage between students, teachers and parents. I was also able to make note of unusual responses that did not fit into any pre-conceived ideas I had about the phenomena. This phase focussed on the explicit statements about what participants thought wellbeing and spirituality were. These statements were not drawn from lived experience but were general comments in which the participants drew from familiar discourses (Heidegger, 1962).

4.6.4 Phase 3

Once I had whole descriptions of wellbeing and spirituality drawn primarily from the first interview question, I turned back to the many and varied lived experiences that formed the majority of the interviews. An adaption of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) was chosen for the fourth phase of analysis for two reasons. One, it provided an alternate route into to the data beyond the more self-evident descriptions. Two, it gave a structure that enabled me to tease out my descriptive and interpretive work (see Appendix H). This does not mean, however, that I was attempting to clearly distinguish between description and interpretation. As Gadamer clearly states, "no one can doubt that what we are dealing with here is interpretation, and not simply reproduction. However faithful we try to be, we have to make difficult decisions" (2004, p. 387). What I accomplished here philosophically was a more faithful adherence to Heidegger's understanding of Being as interpretation.

IPA analysis has a clear structure that stays as close as possible to the participants' descriptions (Gadamer, 2004). However, during this phase I noted that even my descriptions were interpretive. The experience of having to choose a word, let alone form an entire descriptive sentence, to represent a participant's own description had me noticing how choosing one word over another potentially could set the description on a new path – a

different path for a different word. Considering each of these discrete moment-to-moment, word-to-word decisions illustrates that even the most faithful description of an aspect of the text inevitably remains an interpretation.

After completing this phase, I had amassed a large number of descriptions, interpretations, and ways of seeing the data, and began thinking about how to give it shape. The difficulty was that a number of projects, activities and events, ways of doing wellbeing and spirituality, were described in the lived experiences. Such activities included mindfulness, music, religious rituals, sport, holidays, work, and events included death of loved ones, accomplishments, and periods of reflection. This phase could be characterised as a lengthy period of discomfort, which I regard as essential to the analysis; it involved letting the data speak.

While not subscribing to Husserl's assumption that there is an essential truth to be found, some sort of core that connects wellbeing and spirituality, I found it a useful analytic exercise to strip away all of the various activities and projects by considering the following question: For all participants, whether discussing wellbeing or spirituality, what is common to their experiences? This led to identifying 'relation-to' as an essential feature of both wellbeing and spirituality (See Chapter 5).

4.6.5 Phase 4

Positing wellbeing and spirituality as relational phenomena showed that all of the participants talked about relating to a *something* or a *someone*. Considering the data in light of 'relation-to' allowed me to frame the analysis at this point through intentionality, drawing on Husserl's (2001) understanding of consciousness of *something*, and thus to ask myself: What do all the participants talk about and direct their attention towards when speaking of both wellbeing and spirituality?

Having found a central feature to both phenomena, the analysis became freer, allowing me to play with ideas within this relational frame. I re-read the transcripts and made notes of any text that had been previously skipped over by me. I employed my understanding of free imaginative variation (Manton, 2019) to consider 'insignificant' bits of data in various ways. I did not try to force them into the frame I had discovered, but rather, found a space to hold them for further consideration.

The separation of the analysis into phases suggests that this was a linear process, which was not the case. In actuality, I moved back and forth between all phases for the duration of the analysis of the two sets of interviews. Although there were certain 'steps' that can be repeated, the process in its entirety cannot be repeated, because it was not linear and involved a re-examination of my understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology as I was engaged in it.

4.7 The challenges of hermeneutic phenomenology

Gadamer (2004) writes of a gulf between translator and text, or interpreter and text. This gulf was a recurrent struggle in the analysis of the data. For example, during the interviews, I made tacit interpretations and asked questions to see how these interpretations fit with the participant's experience. I took note of their hesitation, affirmation, agreements and disagreements, which came verbally through their language, tone of voice and interjections, and expressively through their body language and pauses. During transcription and the initial phase of analysis, I recorded their responsiveness to me, and mine to them. All this time, I was considering how to draw together these pieces – the interviewee's descriptions and ways of describing, with myself; my interpretation, my prejudices, my feelings and so on – to form a meaningful interpretation. But the longer I sat with this gulf, the more it became lodged in my experience until it was felt as a concrete reality of analysis and subsequently, a gulf that

was impossible to bridge.

I am hesitant to call any features of the data 'themes', even though this term is commonly used in many recommended texts on hermeneutic phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 2014). 'Themes' are not mentioned by Gadamer, and a focus on themes holds a danger of simplifying the process of interpretation to a series of key words. Moreover, themes are an over-valued form of analysis in qualitative methodologies, with almost all methods susceptible to arriving at a thematic analysis. I have therefore used the word 'features' for parts of the data that were illuminated, but did not become so due to their frequency or significance. Rather, they became features as a result of the prolonged periods of re-reading and writing described above. In this way, "rival projects" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 280) stood side by side until it became clearer where a unity of meaning existed.

4.7.1 Evaluative Criteria for hermeneutic phenomenology

To address questions of validity of the method, a range of criteria was developed and referred to throughout the analysis. These criteria include:

- clear acknowledgement of the researcher's subjectivity
- the commitment throughout the process to include detailed descriptions of the researcher's subjectivity when brought to awareness
- using prejudices as a communication regarding the intersecting horizons of the researcher and participant
- clear links to phenomenological philosophy (Finlay, 2009)
- a clear explication of the beliefs and assumptions that have driven the process (Austgaard, 2012).

The interpretation offered in the following findings chapters is, I believe, both accepting of the participant's subjective reality, and also plausible (Packer & Addison, 1989: Vagle, 2014), in that it adequately describes their experiences. By engaging with my prejudices throughout the entire process, I was able to direct my attention, "on the things themselves" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 279), and consider new interpretive possibilities. The aim throughout was to ensure that the analysis was plausible and coherent; that there was a relationship to external evidence as the literature review; and that the study was directed towards useful and practical implications (Packer & Addison, 1989).

4.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the Australian Catholic University prior to any contact with schools or participants. Permission to conduct research was also sought and granted by the Department of Education Victoria, and Catholic Education Melbourne. I expected ethical issues around the inclusion of student participants and was aware that cautious attention needed to be given to the inherently asymmetrical relationship between adult and child. I paid particular attention to how I would introduce the research to students, and how they might give assent for participation, hoping to avoid any pressure from myself or their teachers. For example, having to sign or discard an assent form in front of an adult may have put pressure on children to do what they think the adult would like them to do. My strategy for overcoming this, was to hand out the assent form and invite the students to participate if they felt interested, or disregard at their leisure. I left with instructions to "have a think about it" and sign the form in their own time. The students had the option of returning it to their teacher in an envelope provided by me, or simply disposing of it.

The question of working with children is an ethical one, but the flipside of that is, is it ethical to not work with children? Working ethically with children was not only about negating harm and risk but also about allowing them to have a voice (Ben-Arieh, 2005). There is a fine line between encouraging them to speak freely, providing a holding space for their darker thoughts, knowing when intervention is needed, and being careful not to compromise their trust and confidentiality. The truth was that these children were grappling with significantly stressful circumstances beyond their control: parental separation, grief over the death of loved ones, cancer, and mental health issues such as anxiety. This anxiety was manifested in their lives in a variety of ways: nightmares, insomnia, and trichotillomania. Equally important, however, was their understanding and expression of their anxiety to a 'trusted adult'. At the end of each interview, I handed them a slip to give to their parents (Appendix F), reminding them that the interview had occurred, and pointing out my email address. I made an exception for one child, who was worried about her mental health while also dealing with two significantly stressful situations. In the case of this child, I alerted the principal to my concerns around her wellbeing, while not disclosing the content of our discussion.

My experience as a former teacher and wellbeing leader led me to suspect that the students would use a non-judgemental space to disclose information to me. It was in reflecting on an ethical course of action, for the above-mentioned child, that an aspect of the data was illuminated for me. This was centred on the developmental stage of the girls and their fears of transition, which forms the basis of Chapter 6.

Finally, with regard to the student participants, this research aimed to steer away from "adultist" (Fattore et al., 2012) methods that rely on adults to develop categories to which children respond. Instead, I listened to the children first, and then chose the theory to elucidate their experience. Of course, this is still an adult interpretation but it is an ethical

decision to approach research with children with respect towards their own ontology, as Beings in their own right, rather than being-towards adulthood.

This chapter has focused on the details of conducting an educational research study in schools and has provided a description of the particular methods used for recruitment, participant selection, conducting interviews and researching ethically, particularly with student participants. It was also important to detail the methods of analysis that were developed, which required an almost intimate relationship with each participant's data, and a large degree of reflection on the 'in-between' of researcher and text. The result of this reflection has been the continued development of the analysis as I worked with theory to illuminate the meaning and experience of wellbeing and spirituality. The three following chapters explore the connections between wellbeing and spirituality and explore what these connections might mean for the phenomena in the sphere of education.

Chapter 5: The permeable self-other

5.1 Introduction

In this findings chapter, I begin by giving a brief synopsis of participants' responses when I asked the introductory question in the interview: What does wellbeing and spirituality mean for you? After summarising the responses from the three participant groups, I introduce the distinguishing feature of wellbeing and spirituality that was discovered after the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (see Chapter 4). This distinguishing feature, identified as relationality, brought with it the problem of dualism that I introduced in Chapter 1. The challenge was how to analyse relationality by looking at 'relationship with self', and 'relationship with other', whilst retaining the absorption of self into other that was characteristic of all relational descriptions. Through conceptualising 'Being-in-relation-to' as the relational structure of wellbeing and spirituality, I interpret this using Heidegger's notion of Dasein. Dasein is Heidegger's attempt to overcome dualism through an understanding of self that is part of Dasein, but not the central underlying feature of Dasein.

5.1.1 Descriptions of wellbeing and spirituality: A brief summary

Descriptions of wellbeing and spirituality came about through extracting each response to the question "What does wellbeing/spirituality mean to you?" from the interview transcriptions, along with any spontaneous interpretations of the connection between wellbeing and spirituality offered by the participants (See Appendix H). After the participant descriptions of wellbeing and spirituality were extricated from the data, they were re-read and combined to form descriptive summaries from the perspectives of students, teachers and parents. This was done to get a handle on the data overall and also to determine, in creating these 'whole' descriptions, which idiosyncratic experiences were left out. This technique generated general descriptions but in doing so, disclosed other phenomena that would otherwise have faded into

the background as too idiosyncratic to be of significance. This technique matches with Heidegger's understanding of *alethia*, which allows something to be disclosed (the whole description) while other parts temporarily withdraw. Then these parts emerge as significant, which produces "a complex interplay between showing and hiding" (van Manen, 2014, p. 343).

The whole descriptions go some way in representing contemporary discourses of both phenomena in the research literature. The teachers and students demonstrated an integration of educational wellbeing discourses into their own understanding. They spoke of dimensions of the whole person, emphasising that wellbeing is *more than* physical health, and also spoke of mindfulness as an activity related to wellbeing. Wellbeing was predominantly associated with positive feelings including: kindness, energy, feeling social, happiness, contentment, gratitude, empathy, enjoyment, feeling comfortable and bright. Three of the teachers, Shelley, Natalie and Patrice, spoke of "coping" in relation to wellbeing, and being able to draw on the support of others. Two of the students, Ashleigh and Jennifer, associated wellbeing with having a range of feelings, however, this acknowledgement appeared to exist alongside the search for an idealistic state of contentment.

With regard to spirituality, the descriptions were related to religion, a sense of spirit, existentialism and the internal self (see Appendix H). Again, these features of the descriptions connect to literature on spirituality in education, particularly feelings of connectedness, searching for meaning and purpose (Hyde, 2010) and references to an unseen 'Other' (de Souza, 2009, Hyde, 2010; Kimball, Mannes & Hackel, 2009). Two teacher participants, Patrice and Natalie, stated that the term had no personal meaning for them; they immediately associated the term with religion. Patrice also added that spirituality was associated with Christian religious values of how to treat others, such as "following the Ten Commandments" and "following the Golden Rule".

5.1.2 From 'meaning' to 'lived experience'

The above summary pertains to the initial phase of analysis (see Chapter 4) which gathered together data that was related to my initial interview question, "What does wellbeing/spirituality mean for you?" Hermeneutic phenomenology, however, requires the researcher to look beyond these self-interpreted meanings abstracted from the everyday. Therefore, this chapter looks towards lived experience to see what experiences associated with the phenomena can tell us about the phenomena. After the surface descriptions were extracted and described in the analysis, the next phase was derived from Smith et al.'s (2009) IPA. The purpose of drawing on IPA, was to attend more closely to the associated experiences of both phenomena for each participant. This method, outlined in Chapter 4, distinguishes between description and interpretation, and also draws attention to spatial, temporal, embodied and metaphorical aspects of experience stated by the participants. Having elaborated and teased apart the minute details found in the data, I then turned my attention back to the data as a whole in order to discover a broad conceptualisation of both phenomena. I considered the following question: If all the minutia of individuals' diverse experiences were stripped away, what is common to experiences of wellbeing and spirituality for *all* participants?

At this point, relationality was discovered as a feature central to the experiences of participants and, thus, became an organising feature for the next phase of analysis. Relationality, as elaborated here, was used to discover *who* and *what* the participants were relating to in their lived experiences of wellbeing and spirituality. Because the *who* of relations immediately draws attention to self and other, the major difficultly in exploring relationality in reference to wellbeing and spirituality centres around noticing and overcoming an inherent self-other dualism. This chapter, therefore, first provides a brief summary of the problematic of self and other that arose in data analysis. The second section

goes on to give a description of self-other relations from the perspective of students, teachers and parents. This is followed by outlining the way that the self-other binary in the analysis was negotiated by drawing on Heidegger's concept of Dasein. The reason that it was important to move beyond self-other in the analysis is because 'self' and 'other' as two separate categories in the data did not constitute a true representation of the data. In trying to distinguish between self and other in the initial phases of analysis, I became more aware that I was beginning to lose the fluid experiences of relationship that were described by the participants. This is explained further through examples below.

5.2 Beyond a self-other dualism

'Being-in-relation to' is the essential feature of spirituality and wellbeing explicated by this hermeneutic phenomenological method. As mentioned above, initially self and other were distinguished from each other almost immediately. This was because questions around wellbeing and spirituality invoked introspection from the participants, and this introspection tended towards references to how one feels "on the inside" (Jennifer), "personality" (Alison), and "how I feel about how my health is and how things around me affect me" (Lesley). However, these reflections on self were always in-relation-to other, for example, withdrawing from others to take time for the self, reliance on family, prayer, or enjoying the support of colleagues. The challenge at this stage was to not lose the meaning of the experience by focusing on either self or other, whilst still using these two categories as a means of organising the descriptive experiences.

As I explored this self-other dualism, my own theoretical position was illuminated, which perhaps influenced the difficulty I was having in analysing the data. This position is best captured by Donald Winnicott's statement, "there is no such thing as an infant" (1960, p. 586). What Winnicott meant by this, is that there is no infant without a mother—that is, the

infant cannot be brought into existence without her, and continues to need the mother to develop, and to turn inchoate sensory experiences into thoughts and feelings that mark the beginnings of lived experience. Thus, self cannot become self without this primary other. Although I had this position in mind to which I subscribed theoretically, I still initially attempted to bracket out this knowledge, partly because it was too difficult to analyse the data without first teasing it apart according to a binary conceptualisation. Additionally, whilst consciously embracing the non-linear and non-generalisable method of hermeneutic phenomenology, I was unconsciously trying to formulate a neat, organised and impregnable analysis. This experience illustrates an enactment of the historical consciousness (Gadamer, 2004) – in this case a Cartesian duality – embedded in my experience. It also gives us a clue as to why we might believe something about wellbeing – such as that mindfulness is important – and then act in a way that is contrary to this belief. For example, Rachael spoke about the calming benefits of mindfulness at school,

> I can see, definitely see the benefits of mindfulness and we do 'peaceful kids' program and I help run that for the kids and I find that calming and I quite enjoy when [a teacher], she'll take us through a mindfulness 5 minutes or something at a meeting and I find that quite relaxing (Rachael).

But when the attention was on her own wellbeing, she described situations where she was aimless and distracted in her own company,

> I might send a few emails and sit down. Then you might get on Facebook, you might watch your favourite show or whatever. So it's sort of that's probably, that gets me through. That's my quiet hour of just turning off. I watch reality crap on tv, so I don't have to think about it [work] (Rachael).

Rachael followed this by speaking of how she liked to sometimes wander aimlessly in a supermarket late in the evening. She did not seem comfortable with her own thoughts, openly admitted to filling her head with 'reality crap' so as not to think about work. My feelings at

the time were of someone restlessly trying to block others out. Of course, mindfulness generally aims for an open acceptance of whatever thoughts come into one's mind (Kabit-Zinn, 1994) but Rachael's method of calming herself seemed the antithesis of this. Rachael's example also illustrates a disconnect between the discourse of wellbeing and spirituality that occurs in education, but also suggests a need to move beyond discourse. Descriptions of lived experience allow one to do this, and Chapter 7 is an exploration of this.

As I attempted to gain clarity by teasing apart the data into 'self' and 'other', I noted that 'other' could be split into any number of categories of existent relationships: friends, parents, family, colleagues and so on. However, as I considered these 'here and now' existent relationships it became apparent that many of the relationships spoken about were past relationships now existing primarily, but not entirely, as memories. Additionally, there were many existent relationships with what I have termed 'unseen entities', including spirits, God and deceased family members. These entities and relational memories occurred for the participants as internal relations. This means that they were not simply static images or memories but lived dynamic relations for the participants. Again, these dynamic relations required an interpretation that disables the constraints of dualistic categories and these will be explored further in Chapter 6. What follows here, is the relational description of wellbeing and spirituality, assembled together through the three participant groups: student, parent, teacher.

5.3 Self-Other Relations

5.3.1 Students

The students used a variety of terms and phrases to talk about wellbeing and spirituality in relation to self, and to represent their self to me in the interviews. These phrases included: personality, spirit, soul, mind, "what's inside of me" and "what I would feel on the inside, not

just the outside" (Alison), "who you are on the inside" (Jennifer), "yourself and your spirit within your mind" (Brie) and "what you are" (Marion). Contrary to consisting of a combination of various dimensions as presented in both the literature and at the beginning of the interviews, this sense of self was represented less as a definitive combination of "parts", and more as a familiar representation that the students recollected and explored in my presence. The students had an understanding of an internal self and tried to represent it. This self, although abstract, was *known* by the students in their reflections. Perhaps this is unsurprising. In childhood development theory, a struggle for a sense of self or identity, is a predominant feature of adolescence (Coleman, 2010; Erikson, 1963). In this study, it is not the representation or development of a sense of self that is of interest here; rather, it is their *concern* for this interior self. As the students spoke, they were troubled, thoughtful, earnest, and careful with their words as they endeavoured to express this self to me.

Some of the students tried to distinguish between self as perceived in relation to wellbeing, and self as perceived in relation to spirituality. For example, Marion said that wellbeing is "representing what you are" while spirituality is "a part of who you are". Alison distinguished between her "personality" – what is represented and visible to others and her growing sociability in relation to this, and her "spirit" – what is inside of her and hidden. Such distinctions were meaningful to the students and were also described thoughtfully and carefully. Jennifer referred to spirituality as "who I am on the inside", whilst wellbeing related to the "outside", meaning, external expressions of the self with others. Brie also talked about this sense of spirit being within her mind, commenting, "sometimes it's hard to get stuff out". Brie's comment alerts us to the potential to share this hidden interior self with others and a longing for her spirit to find some sort of connection to the external world.

The students' relationships and struggles with their own internal spaces were not simply a matter of identifying emotions, although all students identified the importance of

attending to their emotional states for the sake of their wellbeing. The relationships that these students had with their minds (souls, spirit, interiority, etc.) were complex, lively, energised, frightening and fraught. Mai's evocative descriptions of her 'spirit' illustrates this:

> If I'm happy it might be more bright and cheerful and then like bouncy, but then sometimes if I'm sad I just want to stay still and then like my spirit is just like smaller and like I guess, dark.
>
> If I'm feeling sad, the reason why I huddle in a corner, I guess, might be because my spirit is feeling low and it needs time to heal itself so then I just curl up and then it will slowly heal. But then when my spirit is, I guess, brighter and cheerful I like bounce around because like my spirit just wants, it's like excited and wants to do good.
>
> I'm a worrier…I just leave them alone [frightening feelings]. I just carry them around…I have this thing where it's called an existential crisis so it makes me wonder about all the things in the world like how I'm just one person in the whole human race and I can't really do much (Mai).

Mai's experience is that she is alone with her spirit and there is a sense of danger – she needs to lay low, curl up and be still. She talks about healing her spirit as if it is out of her hands; she simply curls up and waits. She recognises that this same spirit is bouncy and bright and wants to do good. Here we can see that the sense of a low spirit is associated with withdrawal and isolation, while a cheerful spirit is associated with others and, in particular, with helping others through acts of goodness. Mai's existential crisis cannot be viewed as simply the catastrophising of an overactive mind. During the interview, she spoke about her fear of terrorism, global warming and pollution. Given the more recent visibility of young people demanding action on climate change, her fears are very much grounded in the experience of a world that sometimes feels unsafe and, therefore, it is no wonder that she 'lays low' to protect her spirit when overwhelmed.

Though we conversed about their 'self', not all students represented a curious interest in their own self. Chloe exhibited what felt like a tense and unfriendly relationship with her mind. Throughout the interview she would introduce a topic and then brush off further elaborations with a disinterested shrug of her shoulders. In the interview, I followed the ebb and flow of this because trying to get her to follow a particular train of thought felt very uncomfortable. I found myself wondering whether my questions were quite silly, which was uncharacteristic for me. In a memo following the interview, I wondered about my uncomfortable feelings and whether Chloe's dismissiveness was an act of self-preservation.

The students sometimes talked of relying on others in relation to a sad or low spirit. In Ashleigh's case, she recounted how she would do arts and crafts with her Nan when she was upset to "feel more myself". Lesley would choreograph her own dances and perform them to her mum. She also composed a song and performed it in front of her school community. The feeling from this was described as:

> Well when I was in a bad situation in my life with a boy I wrote a song and I performed it in front of my whole school and I actually let go of that and let go of him and that sadness…because I felt like my heart had broken, I felt like it got glued back together (Lesley).

However, in contrast to this very public expression of feelings, more than one student also spoke of protecting others from their sad or low feelings, concerned that what they were experiencing would be too overwhelming for their friends and family.

The students spoke evocatively about their "self" and "spirit" and were deeply concerned with descriptions of "who I am". They tentatively explained their curiosity to me about their minds and selves, and it is possible that they felt encouraged to share their thoughts by finding themselves with an attentive adult, who offered no interpretations of what was happening for them, but simply listened and asked questions. As I listened, I felt a

relation to self that was deeply held in mind by the students but was also aware of a vulnerability. This vulnerability can be understood to some extent through child development theories that emphasise the development of identity through the transition from childhood to adulthood (Allen & Kern, 2017). However, the existential nature of their wonderings, and my associated experience of the students in the interviews invites a philosophical understanding, rather than a purely psychological one.

5.3.2 Parents

Both wellbeing and spirituality were strongly associated with care for the self. For some of the parents this was an embodied care. Walking and yoga were activities associated with taking time to focus solely on the self. Decisions to engage in these gentle physical activities were deliberate and were described almost as a sacred time that was put aside daily, in an act of nurturance and healing. For Nicky, it involved walking along the beach every day after dropping her children off at school. Her husband knew that she would not be contactable during this time and that she left her phone in the car. Vanessa had a similar emphasis on her own self-care, reflecting on becoming a mother at a young age:

> My own wellbeing has become more in the forefront to me in the past probably three years, because as a mother, as a woman often we tend to put everyone else's needs before our own and I was doing that for a very long time and it got to the point where I was simply not getting anything I needed. Like I was starting to suffer mentally and physically because I wasn't looking after my own wellbeing so I have to make some conscious choices to change the way I was living my life I guess. So, I got back into my yoga, I'm a bit of a yoga addict, and I do a lot of meditation. I like to walk and I've recently over the last couple of months started to really concentrate on what I've been eating as well. Seeing food as more of a fuel rather than just something to throw in my mouth (Vanessa).

In stark contrast to the solitude of this embodied care were the experiences of two of the parent participants, Matthew and Nina, who had some curious similarities in the way they described their experiences. Matthew was a middle-aged man who had emigrated from India with his family to help establish a new church in the area. Matthew showed a happy, almost joyous, representation of a person who had found answers to the question of wellbeing and the meaning of life. He did not speak in any ambiguous or uncertain terms and there were no pauses in his conversation; the careful searching for words to describe experiences that was exhibited in most of the interviews did not occur with Matthew. He said at the beginning of our interview,

> without spirituality I don't think we can be a good human being…kind to our colleagues or friends… spirituality is the main thing because Jesus taught us love itself…The chapter in the gospel, St John Chapter 1, starts with 'God is love' so I think that is the important thing (Matthew).

My suspicion over the course of the interview was that he saw our interview as an opportunity to 'spread the good news'. Rather than describing experiences, he gave testimonies and told me many stories of people from his church who had experienced miraculous recoveries from illness. This feeling of mine, that he was evangelising, was confirmed at the end of both interviews when he presented me with a number of religious magazines and asked if I would display them at the university.

Matthew was keen to share his answers with me, and I found something similar in my experience with Nina. Her answers, however, were found not in religion (although she was Catholic), but in network marketing. Nina talked about "brainwashing" herself into focussing on personal development through her discovery of a large network-marketing group. She noted many positive changes in her self and was eager and enthusiastic in sharing her story with me. Her account of these changes contended that whereas once she was close-minded,

she became open-minded and absolutely certain that her direction in life would bring huge benefits to herself and her family. The contradiction between describing herself as "open-minded", whilst also being absolutely certain of having found the right way to live is an interesting one, as it suggests that the open-mindedness is only within the context of her belonging to her network marketing group. She was aware that some of her friends and family likened her involvement to being in a cult and often retorted:

> You guys are in a cult and you don't know it you know you just watch TV and the television and media is actually what's getting you stuck you know, cause the media is always negative. It's always negative.
>
> And so the people that I associate myself, we are all very positive. We're all very energised. All you want everyone to do is be happy and be successful and it's all about your success in the business but everyone is very, very positive and so when you walk in you feel the energy in the room it's like 'Ah man, this is great' and anyone that's new that's coming in the room they feel like 'this is what I want' instead of being out there and getting all the crap (Nina).

At times, I felt that both interviews were more testimonial than conversation. Both Nina and Matthew were almost bursting with enthusiasm to tell me what they had discovered. They suffered from no painful questioning of their self; in fact, a grappling with self or any sense of doubt was conspicuously absent. It was no wonder that when I went back to my initial notes written immediately after Nina's interview, I had written 'I've found the way', meaning, there wasn't a questioning or curious perspective — there was certainty. How this certainty relates to wellbeing is an interesting question. Spirituality and religion are noted in the literature as protective factors (Briggs et al., 2011) and can provide a sense of security and a sense of belonging when life is challenging. There was no reason for me to doubt Matthew and Nina's proclamations of wellbeing and happiness but it was the certainty with which they

expressed themselves that was particularly striking to me, and at odds with my own experience of ambiguity, uncertainty and doubt.

5.3.3 Teachers

The beginning of the interviews with teachers tended to be focussed on their professional role. Some of the teacher participants began the interviews by speaking of wellbeing and spirituality in the school context and speaking *for* the children, rather than initially speaking of their own self-experience. This was unsurprising as the interviews were occurring on the school grounds and the teachers therefore met me within their professional setting. As they opened up about their personal lived experiences, most of the teacher participants explained how they experienced the professional and personal as intertwined. There was an emphasis on enacting professional development about wellbeing at home. Natalie for example said,

> Everything you preach at school you don't do at home and you're sort of probably left to the last, you're on the bottom. Like we did this activity one time where they had pebbles and you had to put important things in your life and then, all the little bits and pieces that you think you have to do, and it was funny because I had to fill my jar up – I'm not sure if you've done this before – and my big pebbles, the most important things, I couldn't fit into my jar. So we had to do it again and put the big pebbles in first and say that they are important. So I think by doing all this at school I'm actually linking it to my home and it's making me think more about my wellbeing and what I have to do to change my life to actually have a better…because if I'm well and I'm actually in the right space, I will be a better teacher and a better parent (Natalie).

This was one of only a few comments Natalie made comments about her home life, predominantly speaking about her wellbeing in terms of her professional role. All of the teachers commented on professional learning in regard to wellbeing, but it was only the two school principals, Louise and Patrice, who deliberately enacted this learning in their personal lives. In the case of Louise, who had engaged in a resilience project at her school, she would

walk every morning keeping a mindful focus on gratitude before beginning her working day. Patrice, whose school wellbeing was framed through positive education, made determined and deliberate attempts to see her relationships through a positive perspective. This included being self-aware and aware of others, and the "practical application" of this awareness, such as relating to others with kindness, support and hope.

Like the parent participants, the teachers also focused on self-care. The support of colleagues was deeply felt, particularly during challenging times where personal circumstances were overwhelming and impacting on their work as teachers. Only days after my first interview with Jill, her beloved aunt died from cancer. This aunt was also a teacher and had been a huge influence in Jill's life. On the morning that Jill's mother phoned her to give her the news, Jill remained determined to attend school that day. This determination was bound up with a desire to honour her aunt's life. They were having a dress up day at school and Jill planned to wear the same tutu that she wore for a charity run which was a shared experience with her aunt, who participated in a wheelchair alongside her. Jill recalled arriving at school in the morning an "emotional wreck". Her colleagues were concerned for her and her principal immediately responded to her distress:

> I don't know exactly what the conversation was but I think it was along the lines of 'Are you okay? Do you want to be here?'
>
> That goes a long way to supporting my wellbeing as a teacher, in that recognition of [the principal], [the deputy principal], and [her colleague] and other staff, that we exist outside our jobs. We're not just teachers we're also have families, and have loved ones and you know, we have people that we care really deeply for and so being able to go and being told 'Go. You need to go.' And so not worrying about you know the ramifications of…of course I had stuff organised and ready to go but just being told 'Don't even think about it. Just think about what's going on for you at the moment.' I think that was pretty amazing (Jill).

This concern and care for Jill from members of her school leadership team were clearly a memorable experience of support. It beckons us to look more deeply at the notion of care, particularly as the focus on care for the self was central to not only Jill's experience but the experience of all participants. In Shelley's case, this is perhaps easy to understand, as she is the mother of a toddler and, therefore, her self-care was in "taking time" to relax – reading a book or taking a bath. In Rachael's case, she looked forward to when all the evening chores were complete and her family asleep, so that she could relax by engaging in mindless activities – glancing through social media or watching what she called "reality crap" on TV. Concomitant to care, therefore, are questions around why care for the self frequently involves a withdrawal from others and a need for solitude. Equally important is to look at how care for the self can come about through immersive experiences with others, as in the case of Matthew and Nina.

5.3.4 From teachers, parents, students to adults and pre-adolescents

Although I have divided the data into categories of student, parent and teacher, it is important to note the dual roles of participants. One of the parent participants was herself a teacher at a secondary school, and of the two principals and four teachers I interviewed, five were mothers, three of which had children living at home with them. Although the project began by inviting "parents", "children" and "teachers", and the Invitation to Participate and associated ethics documents were also divided along those lines, from this point forward I will be speaking only of adult participants, and pre-adolescent participants. This is in recognition of what emerged from the data; personal and professional are not bound by any clear division when attention turns to relational experiences. Additionally, it is the difference between the adults and pre-adolescent experiences that warrant closest attention.

It is at this point that I would like to revisit one of the methodological difficulties of this study. My research question asks about the connection between wellbeing and spirituality according to the lived experience of adults and pre-adolescents. My intention was to gain some perspectives from people who belong to school communities, which includes parents, teachers and students, but what emerged in the data analysis was the distinctive experiences of pre-adolescents in relation to their particular stage of life. Consequently, I found myself with two nebulous phenomena, two divergent participant groups, and a prodigious range of experiences that at times shared some general features, and at other times were idiosyncratic. This perhaps points to a design flaw: I simply had too much data. Regardless, I was obligated to work with all the data I had gathered, and thus, needed a way to hold the data (and participants) in mind. Given the whole-part emphasis of hermeneutic phenomenology, I turned back to the philosophers who had provided my philosophical frame. It was at this point that I decided to approach the data from Heidegger's understanding of Dasein. Not only did this align with my philosophical frame but Heidegger's Dasein also sought to overcome self-other binaries through the de-centering of self as subject (Heidegger, 1962). Through this de-centering, Heidegger presents Dasein as ontologically relational. Dasein thus appeared to provide an apt frame for interpreting the data. Given that I have already described Dasein in Chapter 3, I will now offer an interpretation of the data from this perspective.

5.4 Dasein and the self

In interpreting the data through Dasein, we need to go further than notions of self and other that have been explored. Dasein allows one of the above-mentioned challenges to potentially be resolved in that Dasein allows for a non-dualistic, non-binary perspective of self and other. However, another problem has emerged: how is it possible to comprehend the self and other as together, and, indeed, how is it possible to comprehend Dasein? Heidegger's penchant for

inscrutable language, and the difficulties in translating this from German to English is one problem. Another, however, is that this particular thesis is located in a western individualistic horizon of understanding. Each moment I felt certain that I had cast aside my own individualistic notions of self to successfully comprehend Dasein was short-lived, as the practice of data analysis simply led back to teasing apart, splitting off, categorising and sorting into pre-determined ways of understanding. The notion of the hermeneutic circle has played out in an excruciating way and continued to do so throughout the duration of the study. However, having caught some small fleeting moments of insight into Dasein, I am able to engage in some tentative considerations.

The difficulty in understanding what Dasein is stems partly from the insistence within ourselves that the beginning point is perceived around an 'I', the subject. The search for, and identification of, an unshakeable core is a part of being human, and a part of wellbeing. In fact, many psychological theories are founded on this solid sense of self; personality disorders, for example, are predicated around having no solid sense of self that can be sustained during challenges (Luyten et al., 2019). However, as mentioned above, if we take Dasein to be an understanding of 'I', subjectivity, or self-consciousness, then this is an essential misunderstanding of Dasein (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 13). Instead, Dasein *precedes* this sense of self and the 'I' as subject. In the data analysis, it is the 'I' that seeks security, protection, care and belonging from others for the sake of both wellbeing and spirituality. Dasein therefore seems almost antithetical to wellbeing, if it is the 'I' that seeks calm, solitude and time for self-care, thereby enhancing wellbeing. Thus, how would we benefit from the idea that a focus on the 'I' is essentially a misunderstanding of our experience?

The answer to this question is in the consideration of the core of the self as essential, but not essentially isolated. For example, even in times of physical solitude, the self remains in-relation-to others. What is it that we are seeking then, when we retreat to be with the self?

Furthermore, if this is not in complete isolation, then who remains with us? For Year 6 student, Lesley, she is clear about what time alone offers to her. She retreats into fantasy, imagining herself as a star volleyball player, or the lead singer in a famous band. It seems that even in this isolation, one's mind can be crowded, and sometimes crowded in a satisfying way. An alternative example is Mai taking herself into the garden to talk to plants because, "they won't judge you". But this, too, leads to a consideration of the other in her mind: who does judge her? And who is in the plants that represent a non-judgemental listener in her world? In this sense then, physical separation from others provides an illusion that the self is a separate being. The examples above show some ways that we are in each other's minds rather than isolated when on our own physically.

The soul, the spirit and indeed, "what makes me *me*" suggest that the participants have a sense of an essential core or essence to their experience. If we consider this in light of historical consciousness, influenced by a combined history of Christianity and Greek thought (Heidegger, 1962), this essence is a western way of understanding the self and suggests an internal core from which self-existence springs. However, a second way of considering the self through Dasein is to imagine what precedes the essential core and solid self-structure; this way involves the sense of self remaining present, but with a possibility of there also being something else *to* this self. Self-interpretation is fundamental to Dasein, but the idea of self-interpretation lends itself to something other than an essential core. If self-interpretation cannot be perceived as a concrete solid essence, then in what ways can we conceive of it? I imaginatively comprehend Dasein as energy. This allows me to consider something unceasing and dynamic at the heart of experience. This does not mean that the core self should be disregarded, but rather, regarded with *possibility* in mind. Possibility implies that the self is created and recreated throughout life, and that the sense of self as a solid internal

structure, isolated from others, is somewhat illusory. But what does this possibility offer to human experiences?

5.4.1 The call to Conscience and "the They"

Continuing with the image of Dasein as energy conjures up the question: What allows this energy to connect to others and the world? Heidegger poses two important ideas here: one is the call to Conscience and the other is "the They". Beginning with the latter, Heidegger proposes that much of our lives are spent lost in "the They" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 319). "The They" is what Heidegger uses to describe the public sphere of life that we are all engaged in. In our forgetting of Dasein, we are able to completely lose ourselves in "the They", the consequences of which vary for each Dasein. In his conceptualisation of "the They", Heidegger considers the ways in which the loss of Dasein has an associated loss of responsibility. We do not live authentically, but rather, get swept along by our own societal currents. Heidegger (1962) writes,

> The Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the *authentic Self* - that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way. As they-self, the particular Dasein has been *dispersed* into the "they", and must first find itself (p. 167).

A quite striking example of discovering a different standpoint from "the They" comes from the beginning of my second interview with 12-year-old Brie. This example is illustrative of Heidegger's 'call to Conscience' to denote that which "summons Dasein's Self from its lostness in the 'they'" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 319). I noticed that Brie's first statement about the meaning of wellbeing differed markedly from the description given in her first interview.

> Brie: But so mental wellbeing's when…so if they're thinking happy thoughts and things, so that's good mental wellbeing, but a not so good one would be if you're thinking negative thoughts all the time.

Claire: So you're saying it's very much about the way that you think and your wellbeing is going to be better if you're thinking in a-
Brie: More positive sort of manner.
Claire: Has that happened for you recently is there anything that you can relate to that?
Brie: If it helps to any degree I've reached recently started seeing a psychologist.
Claire: Yep.
Brie: So he's tried to tell me more think happier thoughts because if you're negative you're going to dwell on the bad stuff and your life's not going to be as good as it can be.
Claire: Does that sound right to you? Does it sound true for you?
Brie: Yeah, but I'm not completely sure that's the way it is because that's the way I think, or because my parents have already…have always told me that since I was little. So whether I've been led to believe that by my parents or whether I believe that by myself, I'm not sure.
Claire: Believe?
Brie: That that's the way things work. If you're happier, you'll have a happier life.
Claire: So your parents have told you that?
Brie: Yes.
Claire: And the psychologist is saying the same sorts of things?
Brie: Yes
Claire: And you're-
Brie: Not sure whether it's-
Claire: You're wondering about it.
Brie: …them that's persuaded me or whether I did it by myself.

In this excerpt, Brie gives a description of wellbeing as being able to think positively. This description in Heideggerian terms comes from "the They", represented by her parents and, more recently, her psychologist. Brie's expression of doubt shows that she is aware that this thinking has not come from herself. Perhaps this doubt is an expression of her conscience; one that she is grappling with, given it has the potential to stand in opposition to the adults closest to her. Heidegger depicts the call of conscience as interrupting, unambiguous and without mediation (Heidegger, 1962). By the time Brie finds herself explaining it to me, the call has come and gone. However, it has left a trace of *something* in her mind. She wonders aloud and does not try to come to any conclusion. This moment in the

interview is marked by an openness and curiosity about her experience of self and other that is in stark contrast to some of her other ideas about who is good and who is bad in her life. She seemed to be finding where she stands in relation to these others.

Heidegger (1962) states that placing a psychological or biological framework around the call to Conscience in an attempt to classify the inter-physic requirements for experiencing such a call would be totally inadequate. In relation to wellbeing, I found myself trying to capture what was 'healthy' in this experience for Brie so that I could perhaps consider ways to reproduce such an experience. In trying to capture Brie's experience, and our interaction in the interview, I grasped at inadequate conceptualisations derived from theory. Rereading the above section from Heidegger, led me to turn towards what had been there all along: my own experience that Brie connected with as she talked of her parents and psychologist. The following memory from my childhood illustrates my own call to Conscience.

> My mother was deeply committed to a conservative Christian organisation. One day she asked me if I would like to take the day off school, to go and pat a horse. I didn't need to be asked twice. I loved horses and was apathetic about attending school so I set off with her feeling very excited. This horse was quite well known in Australian horseracing circles and we turned up to the stables to find a beautiful mare had been led out to greet us. There were a few other children there at the time, and I began to wonder what was happening. Up until this point, my mother had been vague on the details and I was too excited about seeing the horse to ask any further questions. As I got out of the car, I noticed that the children were all wearing jumpers with the logo from my mothers' organisation emblazoned on the front. She began asking me if I would wear a jumper, so that I could go and pat the horse with the other children, who were now milling around the mare and reaching their hands up to pat her muzzle. It suddenly dawned on my child's mind what was happening. This was a photo opportunity for the organisation, provided by a horse trainer who was sympathetic to their cause. If I wanted to pat the horse, all I had to do was put on the jumper. I refused and spent the rest of the time standing by the car, watching the other children surrounding the horse and having their photo taken (Claire).

What led me to take such a stand? There is no doubt that I felt deceived and stood in stubborn opposition to my mothers' tactics. However, the 'dawning on me' was an undeniable moment of interruption (Heidegger, 1962) that I remember so well it is as if time stood still. And even to this day, I remember the feeling of the situation being inherently wrong for me. I would not put on the jumper. It was most definitely unambiguous and without mediation (Heidegger, 1962). This was my own decision, and I was alone in it.

Although Brie's experience has some similarities to my own, my experience benefits from years of introspection whilst Brie's was described in a fleeting moment of an interview. Brie, after all, was only alluding to her experience, noting commonalities between her parents and her psychologist, and sharing this with me. I did not share the story about the racehorse with anyone until I was in my thirties, and even then, I have only spoken about it twice. The experience remained with me, but I was unable to articulate its importance to others and perhaps there was no need to. In the experience at the time, I was resolute and calm, and since then I have felt no need of reassurance from anyone that I was making a good choice for myself. Additionally, this spontaneous response *is* me; I experience this as a truth that is beyond overly saturated theories of wellbeing, and beyond moral guidance from others.

5.4.2 Wellbeing and "the They"

In contrast to the experience of Brie and of myself, it could be argued that both Matthew and Nina are (happily) lost in "the They". Totally immersed in their respective social groups, they seek nothing of the self; they have already found their answers. From a researcher's perspective, I could not possibly negate their experience of wellbeing, nor minimise their descriptions of spirituality. But it does lead to a consideration of the sense of belonging that is found in groups, where the self is so entrenched that there ceases to be any further interest in anything other than the group. Any number of examples come to mind that represent the

extreme end of this: religious zeal, Nazism, cult membership and so on. But there are also less extreme examples, such as religion, social-cultural groups centred around, for example, music scenes (punk, hardcore, country, etc.), or even belonging to an athletic group that mark themselves as of a particular kind (cyclists, gymnasts etc.). I would not attempt to explain the psychological factors that induce humans to this total abandonment of self to a group, but as this is a philosophical inquiry it is important to consider: if immersed in group belonging, how does the human hear the call to Conscience? Heidegger argues that Conscience is Dasein and therefore a universal feature. In this sense the possibility to hear the call is ontological. What is done with what Dasein hears, is then a matter of individual interpretation. In Matthew's case this interpretation would most likely include hearing the call as the voice of God. For Nina, it would perhaps be a knowing resonance with her mentors or group leaders.

5.4.3 Disruption

Interviewing participants about wellbeing and spirituality opened a space where it seemed that the participants were able to bring forth aspects of themselves that would not be heard in ordinary pre-reflective experience. In this sense, the interviews acted as a form of disruption where some aspect of experience was uncovered and presented to me, the interviewer, to be heard. This disruption seemed to be linked to the call to Conscience which was manifest in the interviews via a particular kind of solemn, quiet way of speaking. During these moments, I felt a sense of aloneness emanating from the participants, but it was somehow not a distressed aloneness. Rather, it felt fertile, as if a part of the person was still growing through the experience as they spoke to me. Perhaps the call to Conscience can also be likened to Gadamer's prejudices. It seems that spontaneous moments of disruption that allow one to feel or re-discover something within, alert us to an aspect of the self that is seeking expression. Such disruptions are the hallmark of hermeneutic phenomenology. These disruptions can be

an abundant ground for growth if one can bear the loneliness of the experience, and the discomfort of feeling that everything one has known up until that point has been shaken to its core.

The interior space of spirit or self is clearly accessible and precious, particularly to the students. However, thinking through Heidegger's understanding of Dasein requires a shift from self as a primarily separate, internal essence, to a Being-in-the-world. Heidegger argues that in our average everydayness (Heidegger, 1962) we are neither concerned nor thinking about Dasein. The interviews, however, gave pause to this average everydayness as participants considered and wondered about the self in relation to wellbeing and spirituality.

If we consider Dasein as *a priori* the self, then, in one sense, it leads us to foreground others. But this foregrounding is not at the expense of self, and certainly does not imply that introspection and self-reflection should be disregarded. Instead, it begs us to consider the whole person in a new way that does not include splitting the parts into dimensions. If we consider the self-interpreting activity of Dasein, then Dasein is a whole that cannot be split. A solid sense of self is necessary for mental health, but Heidegger provides a way of understanding that self *is not all there is*.

In this chapter I began by briefly summarising the responses to the question which began my interviews: "What does wellbeing/spirituality mean to you?" I found that students understood wellbeing and spirituality primarily as involving a significant relationship with their self. The parents who were interviewed focussed mainly on both wellbeing and spirituality as self-care and the teachers demonstrated an intertwining of the personal and professional in their understanding of the meaning of both phenomena. After summarising these responses to my initial question in the interviews, I described how, using IPA, I identified relationality as a feature of both phenomena evident in all interviews. This feature, however, carried with it the problem of how to tease apart self-other relations in order to

conduct further analysis, whilst also retaining the significance of the relationships that were described. I drew from Heidegger's understanding of Dasein to hold self-other relations together in subsequent analysis, to move beyond the problem of dualism. In doing so, I found that there is an inherent play between interior and exterior relationships as participants negotiate their positioning within the social world of "the They", and the interior call to Conscience. In this way, wellbeing and spirituality can be seen as phenomena in which this negotiation finds expression.

Chapter 6: Pre-adolescent experiences of hiddenness and discovery

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter comes from a reoccurring theme throughout the data from the pre-adolescent participants, which differs markedly from the adult participants. Given Heidegger's emphasis on drawing entities out of their hiddenness (Heidegger, 1962), it is no small irony that the focus of this chapter is on lived experiences of hiding and being found. This is something that emerged in the data after a lengthy analysis of the pre-adolescent participants and this chapter centres on their experiences only. But a distinction needs to be made between Heidegger's ontological understanding of concealment and disclosedness, and the ontic experiences of hiding and being found. Both ontic and ontological are significant here and in this chapter I aim to illustrate why. In the following discussion, I will explore Heidegger's understanding of authenticity and inauthenticity – modes of being that are illuminated in the concerns of these participants. Following this, I explore how Heidegger describes truth as *Aletheia* and consider how truth – as concealed and discovered – emerges in pre-adolescent experiences. I argue that although these experiences need to be understood ontologically through Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's hiddenness, I also suggest that Heidegger's Dasein is not concerned with the uniquely fraught experience of being a pre-adolescent, and therefore turn to Winnicott to theorise the significant relationships that were disclosed in the student interviews. This chapter, therefore, prioritises what can be understood as ontic manifestations of wellbeing and spirituality in the pre-adolescent experience. Furthermore, this chapter illuminates relations that are unseen and, therefore, largely hidden in everyday school life. These unseen internal relationships exist as rich aspects of internal worlds that give clues about what is of concern to the student, both in phantasy (which will be explained below) and in their reality. Finally, for this unique developmental stage characterised by impending change and transition, I introduce the metaphor of the Precipice

to give shape to pre-adolescent experiences.

6.2 Inauthenticity and Authenticity

Alison was a Year Six student at the Catholic primary school. Although I had only one interview with Alison, her shy demeanour and almost whispered answers have stayed in my mind and I have retained feelings of care and concern for her. Alison not only spoke softly, but also briefly. During the interview I was not at all sure if my attempts to put her at ease were working and I felt like she was carefully managing a barrier between us so as not to share too much. I felt like I had to be cautious, so as not to frighten her away.

Alison told me, "I'm more sociable and I talk more now" and this change had occurred because her teacher "made me share to the class more of my work". She associated these sociable feelings, and talking more often, with wellbeing. She saw this shift towards extroverted social behaviour as a positive change. Clearly, students being able to present work in class was an expectation of the teacher, which is not at all uncommon. Perhaps Alison felt that talking more helped her fit into the classroom environment and perhaps she had received positive feedback from her teacher in this regard. The classroom environment is a significant social body for the pre-adolescent, along with the family and home. But further on in the interview, Alison alerted me to the fact that not all of her self was acceptable to share with others. I discuss this further on in the chapter but before I do, I will introduce Heidegger's understanding of authenticity and inauthenticity, which challenges the notion that what is presented and shared with the social world, is the best or most significant self. This challenges the notion that what is visible to teachers represents the best, most significant or even 'whole' parts of the student.

A hallmark of the adolescent period is separation from family and the growing intensity of relationships with peers. Parents are often surprised to suddenly find themselves

less important and existing on the outer periphery of their child's world as they gain independence and become increasingly consumed with their social relations. This chapter is concerned with what is going on for the child before this 'fall' into social relations occurs. The girls interviewed in this study were between eleven and thirteen years old. I was struck in the interviews with the earnestness with which these girls, on the cusp of many transitions, disclosed their 'self' to me, but I was also aware that they were making conscious choices about what aspects of the self they would reveal to friends and families and what aspects would remain hidden. This brought to mind questions of what circumstances allowed them to show an authentic self to others, and what made them hide themselves, perhaps opting for a kind of inauthenticity.

Inauthenticity in Heidegger's (1962) understanding is not a criticism of how we live, but rather a recognition that it would be very hard to go about our daily lives if we were confronted every second with the truth of our finitude. 'Inauthentic', therefore, is not intended as inferior, or some less noble form of existence; it is simply one of the habitual ways in which Dasein exists. This inauthenticity is connected to whichever social body we are initiated into depending on our particular socio-historical cultures. This puts aside judgements of whether one is being authentic or not, and simply acknowledges that inauthenticity is part of lived experience.

Inauthentic pertains to a mode of being related primarily to fallenness. Heidegger refers to this as "an absorption in Being-with-one-another" (1962, p. 220). He is emphatic about this not being a negative mode, but again argues that it is simply a part of our being in the world. For example, there are those fortunate individuals who proudly proclaim that 'family is everything'. Such people have experienced the benefits of a protective, secure and loving familial environment, so much so that they seem to need nothing more from the world. Those who are totally devoted to their families and committed to family events and rituals

may illustrate an inauthentic mode of being in that they may appear to feel as if there is nothing beyond the family. Consequently, if there is nothing beyond the family, then there is no Dasein to be discovered.

Within inauthenticity there is also the undifferentiated mode of Being. At times, we take our particular cultural interpretation as human nature (Dreyfus, 1991), which Heidegger considers to be an undifferentiated mode of being. For example, it was considered human nature for a man and woman to get married and it has only been recently that more nuanced understandings of gender and sexuality have given rise to political and cultural change. Thus, the taken-for-granted idea that sexuality only belongs to the coupling of man and women because it is 'human nature', rather than socially constructed, has been thrown into question. Prior to new and extensive social questioning of gender, the unthinking assumption that marriage occurs only between man and woman is one example of living as Dasein primarily drawn from what is gathered from the public consciousness. This is the undifferentiated mode of being. It is a subset of the inauthentic mode in that it is existence as totally and unthinkingly bound up in the cultural and historical mores of the time.

Dreyfus (1991) refers to the adolescent period as characterised by choices adolescents make to belong to particular social groups and take on particular social roles. Joining particular social groups allows for a strong connectedness with others and when this connectedness occurs at school, it is considered a protective factor (see Chapter 2). Often adolescents describe how their peers just 'get them' and they feel like they have found their tribe. This same sense of connectedness can at times be found with an adult role model who is able to influence and excite the adolescent about new possibilities. Going through this process of discovering and feeling a sense of belonging to various social groups is characteristic of the identity crisis of adolescence (Dreyfus, 1991), and the individuation from the centrality of the family (Allen & Kern, 2017; Fargher & Dooley, 2010). For Heidegger, it

seems that this resolution – falling into the adolescent social world – remains inauthentic, as it is still the product of the dimension of Dasein relating to the socially constructed identity (Dreyfus, 1991). The question that has emerged from this research, however, is what happens *before* the 'falling' of adolescence?

Before attempting to answer that question, a consideration of Heidegger's authentic mode of Being is necessary. In this mode, Dasein finally achieves individuality by realising it can never find meaning in identifying with a social role, the outcome of which is that "Dasein then 'chooses' the social possibilities available to it in such a way as to manifest in the style of its activity its understanding of the groundlessness of its own existence" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 27). This perhaps suggests that implicit in everyday life exists a vulnerability that comes from owning up to the fragility of one's own life. It also suggests that when faced with this vulnerability there is the possibility that one can envisage self as *not only* a mind enclosed in a body, but as an entity united with others and the world. This is where the self may discover Dasein as opposed to being fully immersed in one's social role, which leaves Dasein concealed.

6.3 Pre-adolescent truth

One of the most striking features of the student interviews was the earnestness in which most of the students communicated with me. I came away from the interviews aware that I had collected rich data that was abundant with a variety of experiences. At first, I wondered about how the students came to be so open with me, and I put it down to a child-like amicability. However, Chloe (Year Six) was not amicable in the interview. Her recalcitrance showed that she was clearly not about to be agreeable for the sake of politeness. In fact, she displayed a brute 'stand' that made me uncomfortable at times. At the time of the interviews, I understood the student participants to be enacting a type of truth with me where they revealed

to me their internal worlds. Paradoxically, what they revealed were many forms of hiding, concealment and withdrawal from others. This led me to consider Heidegger's notion of truth as *aleithia* in order to uncover what was going on for the pre-adolescent participants, particularly in relation to these acts of concealing and unconcealing that seemed to be a feature of their way of relating.

In the pursuit of truth, Heidegger (1962) states that "the entities *of which* one is talking must be taken out of their hiddenness; one must let them be seen as something unhidden; that is, they must be *discovered*" (p. 56). The 'self' of the pre-adolescent participants was present-at-hand (Heidegger, 1962) and under scrutiny in the interview. When the pre-adolescent participants spoke during our interview, they were immersed in the task of introspection and expression, thoughtfully relaying to me what they knew about themselves. Heidegger calls this type of introspection "circumspective concern" (1962, p. 263), which can be likened to a cautious and careful interest in entities. Thus, a range of features and entities were discovered in these descriptions, including:

- Feelings: described as pleasant, unpleasant, sadness, "low wellbeing" and "high wellbeing", "inside feelings" and "outside feelings"
- Aspects of the self: including physical, social, mental, emotional, positive and negative
- The individual as spirit, soul and self
- Self-in-relation-to others: including friends, God, pets, and family, including beloved family members who had died.

They spoke about such things in the context of their ready-to-hand (Heidegger, 1962) activities, such as art, music, athletic activity, and reading. Such entities and activities were

significant to the pre-adolescent participants and clearly connected to their understanding of wellbeing and spirituality.

All of these activities, feelings and entities were uncovered in the interviews and represent what Heidegger would frame as a secondary type of truth (Heidegger, 1962). This means that such things are representative of a truth but that they exist within an encompassing primordial truth. The primordial truth Heidegger calls *aletheia* from the Greek, which is understood as "uncoveredness" and "Being uncovered" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 263). This primordial truth is not the features and entities listed above, but rather it is the act of uncovering that is the ontological truth. Thus, his understanding of ontological truth is the interplay between concealment and unconcealment. This fits with his understanding of authenticity and inauthenticity; not as representations of being 'good' and 'bad', but simply an action within Dasein where one slips in and out of these modes in lived experience.

Truth, therefore, can be understood as follows: the pre-adolescents tell me about hiding, withdrawal, inside feelings that are not for others, and so on. This becomes a feature of the analysis as I discover more and more experiences of the pre-adolescent participants retreating and note that there is something qualitatively different between their descriptions and those of the adults. As I begin to look at this aspect of their experiences, I liken it to a game of hide and seek where the adolescent needs to hide but also expresses in various ways the desire to be found – not the least of which is through the opportunity for me to 'find' them in the interview. Between the circumspection of the participants and the repeated listening (reading) from myself as the researcher, we were "letting-something-be-seen" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 56). Thus, truth in this sense occurs as a "dynamic happening" (Huttunen & Kakkori, 2020, p. 609) of Dasein both in the interviews and in the subsequent analysis.

For Heidegger, it is the 'how' of uncoveredness that says something of the truth. We could say simply, at this point, that the concealed self was uncovered through an interview about wellbeing and spirituality and, therefore, we have found that both phenomena are a means to understand how the self is understood and expressed. In this uncovering, the 'concealed self' has been discovered as a feature of experience for the adolescent. This conceptualisation of the 'concealed self' is an ontic manifestation of ontological truth. It is what Heidegger would call 'true' in a second sense (1962). Putting aside ontological truths for now, it is important to understand more what this concealed self is about, in the adolescent experience, and what can be discovered about this particular developmental stage.

What follows is a focus on the 'self' of the student participants, particularly as it is related to their pre-adolescence. As I moved through the data analysis, I used a number of different terms to try and capture an experience that the girls were disclosing to me about the 'self'. These terms included: hiding, protection, withdrawal, retreat, and isolation. Such terms were used in relation to a differentiation between an inner/interior self, and an external/exterior self. The student participants spoke with a great deal of awareness about their inner self, describing to me their decisions to hide aspects of their self. Some of these descriptions were about protecting the self, while conversely, other descriptions of 'hiding' seemed to be about protecting others. But in these attempts to express the self to me, they were paradoxically sharing the very self they sought to keep hidden. Below I explore the representations of the self that came from these interviews: the vulnerable self; the undisclosed self; and the destructive self. Winnicott's understanding of child and adolescent development is then drawn on, to theorise what may be going on for these students.

6.3.1 The vulnerable self

As the girls described their experience of the interior self, they distinguished their inner self

from an external self that was visible to the world. In constructing such distinctions, it became apparent that they were aware of making particular decisions around which aspects of the self they chose to present to the world and which they decided to keep hidden. One example of this came from Alison, who spoke softly and shyly to me in our interview. I found myself spending a good part of our only interview encouraging her to share her thoughts and trying to help her feel relaxed. But even in this shy reticence, she managed to give an intriguing description of her inner and outer self.

> Alison: Um, well like, what's inside of me, like what I would feel on the inside, not just the outside.
> Claire: Okay, yep. Can you say something more about that?
> Alison: Like, all my emotions are on the inside, like when I'm happy, sad and yeah.
> Claire: So when you talked about the inside and the outside, that's an interesting way of describing it. So I'm guessing, and please tell me if I've got this wrong, when you were talking about being happy or feeling energetic around your friends, are you talking there about your outside feelings?
> Alison: Like, the ones that I'm showing.
> Claire: The ones that you're showing, yeah. And then what about the inside ones?
> Alison: Um, I think they're more of the ones that I just feel but I don't really show.
> Claire: Yeah, okay. Does anything like a memory or an experience come to mind, thinking about those inside feelings?
> Alison: Um, not really.

Despite her reserved demeanour and her hesitation to extend her thoughts to a specific experience, Alison had offered an expression of how internal experience differed from her exterior self. It was not only Alison who distinguished between the interior and exterior in this way. When we got onto the topic of spirituality, Brie at first described her spirit as "what notices what you're thinking". She then went on to associate spirit with her sub-conscious and defined the sub-conscious as a part of the self that observes the self. This part of the interview was confusing as she tried to explain what seemed to me to be conflicting thoughts

about her spirit and subconscious and how this internal relationship was enacted. The confusion seemed to be around whether her spirit was something she had awareness of, which led to my following question:

> Claire: So, do you see your spirit or spirituality as something that's partially hidden?
> Brie: Yeah.
> Claire: Something that maybe we don't fully understand?
> Brie: Yeah, and maybe something that if we don't want to show we can hide easily.

Although it was me who had offered up the term 'hidden', Brie added reflection, indicating that she had some control over which aspects of her inner self she would show and which she would hide. These conscious decisions came up with other girls also, along with their reasoning for why they would hide parts of the self. What is particularly striking about Brie, and the revelation of conscious decisions about what can be shared with others and what needs to be hidden, is that in hiding from others it is almost as if she is claiming her self as her own, but paradoxically, revealing the self through the action of hiding it. This can be seen in the form of a physical 'hiding', using space to withdraw from others when Brie described a unique hidden 'nook' in her bedroom:

> My room is the biggest of the three rooms, but I still find it really small but I'm pretty happy there's a nook which means that, because …so I've got a little hallway that goes into my room. There's a hallway that's here [she gestures] it's only about a metre long…And then there's my door which is often open because I don't like to keep my door shut unless there's an air-con or a heater on, and then it comes in a little bit more but then it turns to the left and then there's a big space so nobody from the hallway can see in to my room unless in that little space there, so it just gives me some time away (Brie).

In her home environment, Brie has been provided with the kind of space that allows her to hide herself away. Brie gestured as she spoke to me, indicating the way her little bedroom nook was somewhere that she could sit without being seen. In other parts of our interviews,

Brie talked about a withdrawal into isolation as a way of coping with her peer relationships when she felt hurt or misunderstood. It was striking, however, that in the example she offered of withdrawing from peers it was evident to me that she was highly visible:

> And I'm not a very social person unless…because I have got friends now, but I didn't make friends until grade two. I spent prep, one and most of two… just I'd find a book and sit outside for all of lunch by myself and read (Brie).

An important part of this hiding, for Brie, is leaving the door open a little and ensuring that her parents know where she is. Similarly, she also would isolate herself from engaging with peers at lunchtime, but nevertheless would stay visible in the yard and read by herself. This suggests that the hiding is not a complete isolation and that, in both illustrations of hiding above, there remains a possibility of being discovered. In the possibility of discovery, therefore, one might say that they are still *with* others. This suggests ambivalence about hiding and leads me to question what it is in or about the self that the girls feel compelled to hide. In the next section, in an attempt to answer this, I look at what the girls could not allow themselves to show to others.

6.3.2 The undisclosed self

In this excerpt from Alison's interview, she associated her spirit with what she termed "inside feelings".

> Alison: Sometimes my inside feelings, sometimes I show them, but sometimes I don't.
> Claire: Yep.
> Alison: Like when I'm showing one feeling, on the inside it might be like the opposite.
> Claire: Oh, okay. Have you got an example of that?
> Alison: Like, if one, like for example if I was happy, then on the inside I might have been a little bit sad.
> Claire: Okay, yep. So sometimes the feelings you show on the outside are not the same as the feelings you have on the inside?

Alison: Yep

Claire: Why is that?

Alison: I'm not sure. Sometimes is just happens like that.

Claire: Yeah, yep. Would you say that can happen around your friends or around your family or-?

Alison: Uh, it only really happens a little bit. Not really that much.

Claire: Yep. So if you don't show your feelings to other people, what do you do with the inside feelings?

Alison: Um, it usually just goes away and then I'm back to being like…just showing them.

In this case, spirit is understood as something that can be hidden and protected and, like Brie, it is within Alison's power to choose to do so. However, Alison's deliberate showcasing of the 'opposite' feeling was concerning to me. At the time, I thought about the way that we sometimes mask our feelings when around others, but what was striking for me, was her choosing the opposite feeling to portray to others and her awareness of this at such a young age. I questioned in a memo at the time, "Feeling sad, but presenting as happy, why would she need to do that?" It was Jennifer who provided a potential answer to this when she spoke of her sad feelings saying, "I try to keep it to myself and just like something isolated. I know it's not good to myself but it's better for everyone else."

For Jennifer, it is far better to deal with her painful feelings alone, rather than sharing them with others. She fears that her sadness will be 'too much' for others. In this example, protection becomes about protecting others from the self, rather than protecting the self from others. Similarly, Mai felt that her thoughts might "drown" her friends, while Lesley recounted that when her friends ask her how she feels, she tells them that she doesn't feel anything. This sense that 'my feelings will overwhelm the people who are close me' is worth considering, particularly in relation to wellbeing in schools. It is one thing to provide opportunities to share feelings with peers and teachers, but it appears that the ambivalence about sharing the self or sharing these 'inside' feelings means that these opportunities may

not necessarily be taken up by students. Additionally, it is notable that it is not parents or teachers to whom they turn. In fact, when viewing the student interviews as a whole, parents and teachers were not the primary relations that the students spoke of. This is a humbling reminder that, as adults, we most likely do not have as much access to their internal lives as we assume that we have.

Another example of ambivalence in relation to exposing aspects of the self comes from Lesley, who expresses a concern that she will negatively impact the mood of her peers by sharing her feelings:

> As I like to conceal things a little bit because I feel like they're going to get brought down or they're going to make…usually when I talk to my friends and I do express my feelings, they'll relate it back to them and I sort of feel like they're not actually listening to me so I sort of bottle it up and then when I finally like go…it's either a picture or writing a song (Lesley).

Is Lesley trying to protect her friends here, or protect herself? Is she 'too much' for her friends, or is she anticipating some hurt when they inevitably ignore her and talk about themselves instead? She worries that her peers cannot provide what she needs, so she turns to other forms of expression and release. Rather than bottling up her feelings or passively waiting for the unpleasant feelings to go away, Lesley has a different solution, one where she calls on her artistic capacity to express her internal self. In the interview, Lesley described writing a song about a boy who had hurt her feelings and then performing the song at a school assembly. She said that in performing it in front of others her broken heart "got glued back together."

6.3.3 The destructive self

So far, I have focussed on how the students protect the interior self from others and how they perceive their interior self as potentially overwhelming others. The idea that they may overwhelm others is closely tied to their vulnerability: what if they disclose this authentic

self—make it visible—and it is ignored or dismissed by their loved ones? This question is explored through Winnicott's theory of childhood development that is centred on the child's discovery of the self. However, before I turn to Winnicott, there is one more description of the self that needs exploration, and that is the 'destructive self'. In this section I am particularly concerned with one of the student participants, Chloe, and her manner of interacting with me that noticeably differed from my experience with the other students. I also had a responsiveness to Chloe that was unusual. My interaction with her in our two interviews is best understood through the following memo:

> Interviewing Chloe had me feeling like a bit of a 'loser'. I've spent a lot of the time in interviews asking questions to engage her, trying to establish a rapport, but generally feeling like she was disinterested. I wonder if she is communicating a sense of 'adults just don't get me'? Chloe would introduce something to do with wellbeing that sounds good in theory and then soon after negates this theory through her own experience, becoming dismissive of it. I'm thinking of when she brought up a mindfulness activity at school in association to wellbeing, and then talks about not wanting to be mindful over "disgusting food"; and not wanting to be sitting in silence with "annoying classmates". This is my experience of Chloe: she introduces a thought, and then immediately shuts it down. But then tentatively opens up again. It's a stop-start interaction that has me on edge more than any other interview (Claire).

In the interviews, it was difficult to get past a feeling of trying to please and engage with Chloe. I felt slightly wounded when she dismissed my time with her at the end of our second interview, indicating that it had been a waste of time:

> Claire: So do you think about…do you feel curious sometimes about that sort of stuff or not usually?
> Chloe: Not usually.
> Claire: Yep. So if you think about wellbeing and spirituality is there anything else that comes to mind?
> Chloe: Not much. I basically said everything in the first interview.

As my experience is that I generally feel comfortable in talking to primary school children, I

felt it necessary to examine these unexpected feelings I had in relation to Chloe. Any research methodology that employs the researcher's subjectivity necessarily employs the researcher's emotions (Holloway & Jefferson, 2013). Given the contrast in my feelings between interviewing Chloe and interviewing other students of a similar age, I came to see my discomfort as an opportunity, rather than something to feel ashamed of or disappointed about, consequently probing the uncomfortable feelings that were evoked in me. I wondered, if Chloe projected feelings of uncertainty and shame in me, then what would she be left feeling?

Having explored this in memos, I recalled Chloe's initial description of wellbeing. It should be noted here that until I explored my own feelings, I had missed much of the content that lay in the moments between her abrupt dismissiveness. In answering, "What does wellbeing mean to you?" Chloe replied, "A well person who's not sick or unhappy so they're trying to hurt themselves." I then returned to some of the remarks she made flippantly, sometimes giggling a little after each one.

> Chloe: Yeah we do that sometimes and then when we're eating our lunch they get you to think about your food and we stop the sense…so you close your eyes and so you get more of the taste.
> Claire: Does it make you enjoy your food more?
> Chloe: Yep
> Claire: It does?
> Chloe: Unless it's really disgusting. (laughs)
> Claire: Surely not! Surely you wouldn't have disgusting lunches (laughs). And if you did, you wouldn't want to be concentrating too much on it would you?
> Chloe: Nah (laughs)
> Claire: So okay, do you think… that's the mindfulness activities…do you feel more calm, or do you feel more mentally healthy after you've done it?
> Chloe: Well sometimes I fall asleep and then I don't want to wake up.

This excerpt includes Chloe's laughter after her statements that, in the interview, created a feeling of casualness and detachment about everything she was saying. My response ("Surely

not…”), on the one hand, could be seen as a continued attempt at rapport, but I interpret it as me joining Chloe in this insouciant attitude towards her thoughts and towards others. It was as if we were having a laugh together at others and their ridiculous attempts to ‘help’ her wellbeing. It was not long after this description, however, that Chloe referred to having suffered from trichotillomania – a disorder whereby one habitually pulls the hairs out of one’s head. This act of hair pulling is the embodiment of hurting oneself and, in reviewing her first statement, I surmise that what was being communicated to me was that wellbeing was something missing from her life. As she herself stated, “a well person isn’t sick or unhappy or trying to hurt themselves”.

At the beginning of our second interview, I asked Chloe to describe an experience of feeling calm. This was because she had associated ‘calm’ with the term wellbeing in the first interview. Chloe responded:

> Sometimes like when I’m angry at mum or someone because they didn’t take me somewhere else they… well, I get angry at them and then I start crying and I just go into my room and read or do something and it helps me feel better, being calm, because if you just get angry a lot and you might actually do stuff that you’ll regret. Damage property or something (Chloe).

The experience of being calm is completely overshadowed in this statement with a number of other more negative experiences; Chloe feels angry with her mother and withdraws. She withdraws to her room because that is how she is able to start feeling better. But she also withdraws because she fears her own potential destructiveness and the possibility that she might “damage property.” In a sense she withdraws to protect others and because she does not trust herself. It is no wonder that Chloe has engaged in hair-pulling: perhaps it is far better to attack the self, than anyone else.

One further example of a destructive self is found in Marion (Year 6). Marion’s religious lens also suggested that she believed she was not to hold onto angry feelings,

speaking of Jesus as her role model, and how he was able to forgive those who killed him. She said, "Because you know probably in later life, you'll regret it that you didn't forgive." Marion lives with the very real risk of Satan coming into her house. The priest in her church would speak to the congregation about the split between good and bad, emphasising the need to stay close to the church community in order to protect oneself from evil. In Marion's understanding of Satan, the entire family was at risk if even one member strayed from the worship of God. This, coupled with witnessing priests perform miracles and members of the congregation fainting on the altar, cemented her devotion to the all-powerful 'Good' in fear of the all-powerful 'Bad'. In a small slip-of-the-tongue, something of the nature of these figures was captured after she briefly recounted a story of something 'bad' happening in her family, because they had temporarily strayed from their faith. Marion explained to me how her family had become too caught up in their work and began missing church. In her explanation, Marion connected missing church and being focused on worldly goods, with an event that followed soon after. When I asked what had happened, she said that she felt like she couldn't describe it, but said:

> I can say that it was through a member of my family and he did something really small that was a temptation from Jesus, sorry, a temptation from Satan, that affected every single person in our family so much (Marion).

Though it would be unreasonable to probe too deeply into this slip what it does perhaps show, is an equating of two very powerful internal figures in her mind, Jesus and Satan. In Marion's inner world these internal figures are able to help her make sense of bad things happening, whilst also providing a sense of security for her, as she enthusiastically embraces her faith. In this example, 'the They" of religion, is equally influential in her mind as it is in her environment, particularly the close environment of her family and church. One

wonders what might happen to her understanding and experience of wellbeing and spirituality if there were room for theological doubt or mistrust of church authority figures.

The above experiences say particular things about the pre-adolescent experience of Self, which I have captured in the following points:

1) The self is a known entity that is precious, vulnerable and in need of protection.
2) Conscious and deliberate decisions are made around what aspects of the self are shown, and what aspects are hidden. In these decisions, there is an awareness of 'other', who can be, among other things, trusting or mistrusting, protective, or vulnerable to attack.
3) Physical withdrawal does not constitute a relational withdrawal; the other is still in mind.

Friends, teachers, family members and I represent the 'other' in the interviews. Given the focus in Chapter 5 on the intertwining of self and other as an experiential reality, this chapter continues with that thread, and focuses on how the pre-adolescent experiences 'other' within their own minds. Given that various forms of hiding and being found is the basis of this chapter, I turn to Winnicott whose theory directly addresses these experiences. Using Winnicott helps to understand experiences of hiding that can be either restorative or detrimental to wellbeing, and either way, are a hallmark of the pre-adolescent experience.

6.4 The pre-adolescent experience as understood through Winnicott

In regard to adolescence, Winnicott poses the following question "How shall the adolescent boy or girl deal with the new power to destroy and even to kill, a power which did not complicate feelings of hatred at the toddler age?" (Winnicott, 1965a, p. 80). Winnicott's understanding of adolescence is that it is just as much a return to toddlerhood as it is a transition to adulthood. The parallels between adolescence and the toddler stage are one of the reasons I have chosen Winnicott as a theoretical perspective in this chapter. Winnicott's

interest in the mother-infant relationship allowed him to focus on the development of a sense of self – a preoccupation in the pre-adolescent that has been central to the analysis in this chapter.

According to Winnicott (1960), the students' experiences of self and spirit are an accomplishment occurring out of a safe holding environment in infancy. A holding environment is the provision of maternal care that is both the physical and psychological (Winnicott, 1960) – that is, holding includes responding, loving, caring and so on. This environment has enabled the students to have an established boundary between me/not me and it is through this boundary that they form their understanding of self, other and the world (Winnicott, 1960). Further to this, Winnicott provides a theoretical understanding of 'self' that is consistent with the descriptions from the student participants. Their interior self, described above, is considered precious and in need of protecting; Winnicott (1960) has conceptualised this as a 'true self':

> Another phenomenon that needs consideration at this phase [infant] is the hiding of the core of the personality. Let us examine the concept of a central or true self. The central self could be said to be the inherited potential which is experiencing a continuity of being, and acquiring in its own way and at its own speed a personal psychic reality and a personal body-scheme (p. 590).

The true self for Winnicott is the embodied self, separate from the mother-environment which has a sense of "continuity of being" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 590). By this, Winnicott suggests that the infant has experienced a holding environment that has established the beginnings of healthy development. To compare with Heidegger's Being, Winnicott's being here is an ontic being that is concerned with the development of self and represents an aspect of Dasein.

The false self, according to Winnicott has a primary function which is "to hide the True Self" (1965b, p. 147). The compliant false self is of course necessary to live in society

but becomes a problem when the ability to think and feel spontaneously and creatively is lost (Winnicott, 1965b). The false self is not all bad as it has a protective function to protect the potential of the true self. In the interview examples that follow, there is a need to protect the vulnerable core self, sometimes masking it with more sociable feelings, which is consistent with Winnicott's false self.

6.4.1 Withdrawal and solitude

As I analysed the data, I considered the following: in what ways does hiding the self facilitate or obstruct the expression of wellbeing and/or spirituality for these girls? Winnicott is helpful here in distinguishing between two forms of hiding: withdrawal and solitude. While withdrawal carries with it an expectation of persecution, solitude implies a contented state of being alone. In the following section I will consider some examples of withdrawal and solitude that emerged from the data.

6.4.2 Withdrawal

There are examples of the girls withdrawing due to competitive feelings or rivalry with peers. For some, this was in relation to a growing interest in boys and trying to navigate new feelings in relation to the opposite sex. There were also competitive feelings in relation to competitive environments. Brie ignored a rival during gymnastics training and encouraged her peers to do the same, which resulted in the ostracised girl leaving the club altogether. Interestingly, Brie used her interpretation of "being positive" to defend her actions, noting that she acted positively by ignoring the girl. Whilst this sounded amusing to me, at the time, Brie was quite unaware of the way she had distorted the teachings of positive psychology to suit her needs. Rather than isolating herself from the group, she had isolated the rival and maintained a positive social contact with her peers. She admitted to me that friendships had always been difficult for her, so this was somewhat of a triumph in the area of social

relations.

Intense feelings towards peers are characteristic of this age as separation from parental figures gains momentum and peer relationships take precedence over the family. But what happens to Brie when it is she who is ostracised? As illustrated in the above sections, Brie admitted that she had trouble relating to her friends and often felt misunderstood. She gave a number of examples where she would isolate herself, nursing her wounded feelings alone. Although "being different" to other children made her feel quite special; it was evident that she longed for close relationships and felt hurt when excluded by others. Winnicott (1958) understands withdrawal as a defensive state that holds an "expectation of persecution" (p. 416). One of the clues to whether hiding is positive or a defensive withdrawal is how the child describes her experience of being alone in terms of her internal relations.

6.4.3 Solitude

Other examples from the data sit within the realm of a more comfortable solitude. Ashleigh made a number of references to "feeling more myself" when around others, telling me that she often initially feels shy, but then grows more comfortable as time passes. She also used "feeling more myself" in relation to her Nan. Ashleigh had a very special relationship with her Nan and, at the time of the interviews, her nana had died but remained very much an alive presence in her mind. She spoke of the time when she used to do arts and crafts with her Nan "to feel more myself".

Although I write here about solitude, something could be said in relation to Ashleigh's wellbeing and Winnicott's (1958) idea of being alone in the presence of someone. Winnicott marks this as a developmental achievement, whereby the child has the capacity to withdraw without losing the link with the person to whom she identifies (1958). After her grandmother died, the link remained and she retained a capacity to be alone in the presence of

her grandmother. Winnicott positions the capacity to be alone as a hallmark of healthy development, contingent on the availability of a 'good object' (discussed below) and the early "experience of being alone while someone else is present" (Winnicott, 1958, p. 417). Thus, solitude is a contented repose away from external others (Winnicott, 1958).

Is the hidden spirit that the girls refer to the 'true self' and are the exterior feelings representative of a 'false self'? I would say that this is far too simplistic a way of understanding their experiences. What the true and false self remind us, however, is that the pre-adolescent has a right *not* to communicate (Winnicott, 1965c). Not only is it a right, but it also appears to be a fundamental need. Their conscious decisions, which allow them to protect the self, demonstrate this need. There is an agentic expression that relates to Heidegger's (1962) call to Conscience where it seems that foregrounding the self *to the self* is a striking feature of their pre-adolescent stage. In the interviews they are able to be open and communicate these struggles around knowing the self, perhaps not despite their age, but because of it.

Thus, hiding can be either to some degree facilitative, or to some degree obstructive. I say 'to some degree' to emphasise the complexity of their internal worlds. It is not for me, the researcher, to determine whether the experiences offered in the interviews were good or bad for the wellbeing of the girls. In fact, splitting complex internal/external relational experiences undermines the experience of the girls and their search for their own authentic self. Simply put, their invisible relations are a part of the pre-adolescent experience of wellbeing and spirituality, as they are for anyone. I hope to have shown in this chapter that invisible or hidden does not equate to insignificant or unimportant in relation to wellbeing and spirituality in schools.

A number of the adult participants referred to 'taking time out' or 'me time' as a form of wellbeing. Taking time out for the adults is therefore an act of self-care. However, for the

girls, this care for the self was not spoken of explicitly as related to wellbeing, it was only through the themes of hiding, withdrawal and retreat that this pre-adolescent version of self-care was revealed. Self-care takes on a form here that differs markedly from the self-care of adult participants. It is not simply about taking time out for the sake of nurturing wellbeing, but rather is about taking time away because there is something within oneself which needs to be protected as well as something within that, in their perception, which others need protection from. In addition to this, the 'protection' of others includes the prospect of avoiding the experience that one's feelings are not worthy of others' attention.

6.4.4 "It is a joy to be hidden but a disaster not to be found"

Hiding can include emotional and/or physical withdrawal. But it can also involve turning attention to activities, often with an artistic and expressive element. In the interviews the students described activities such as drawing, playing music, song writing and reading. When Winnicott stated, "it is a joy to be hidden but a disaster not to be found" (1965c, p. 186) he was referring to the establishment of a private self; the child is not communicating but wants to communicate and so finds a way to externalise their inner world. He calls it a "sophisticated game of hide-and-seek" (1965c, p. 186). In the data, we have seen examples of where this game turns into an expression of the psyche, through art, music, writing, play and so on. Important in these creative acts is the possibility that they will be seen, that is, found by an other. In these experiences, however, even when on their own, the pre-adolescent students were not alone. Their internal worlds were inhabited with the presence of other and it is to this presence I now turn.

6.5 Inner Relations

One further relational feature of wellbeing and spirituality that can be explored here pertains to the internal world of relations. Winnicott was an object relations theorist, meaning he drew

on a particular branch of psychoanalysis to theorise the way that the individual engages with relations internally and the influence these relations have on external relationships. It is helpful here to draw on the theory of object relations to give some sense of the internal world of the child; a world that is largely neglected in wellbeing research. Object relations is a complex theory that has been conceptualised through various schools of psychoanalytic thought and, as such, there are many facets of the theory that will not be addressed here. The primary reason that I draw on object relations for this study is because the pre-adolescent participants spoke of their relations to family and friends, but also to family members who had died, God, their pets and plants. Their internal worlds were replete with unseen entities who were very much 'alive' presences inside them. Object relations theory can help to give shape to these internal relations that are invisible but, nevertheless, existent and significant for these students. Additionally, the ways in which the students engage with these relations or 'objects' in their minds also serve as clues as to how the pre-adolescent feels about their relational experiences in the here-and-now.

Object relations theorists postulate that the infant's relations begin with the primary relationship between the infant and the mother. The simplest way of briefly explaining object relations is to begin with the 'object' that is of life and death importance to an infant – the mother's breast. For the infant, the breast is a source of hydration, nourishment and fulfilment. In the infant's experience hunger and thirst and the accompanying frustration when this biological need is found wanting, is transformed into fullness and satisfaction once the breast is produced. For the infant, the breast that is available and full of milk is the good breast. The breast that is unavailable and leaves the infant wanting is the bad breast (Lemma, 2003). Melanie Klein, one of the major object relations theorists, postulated that these are early 'primitive' object relations. The 'whole' of the environmental mother is not yet associated with the breast; it is simply a good or bad breast-object. Klein uses the term

‘phantasy’ to describe this way of relating. Phantasy is distinguished from ‘fantasy’ due to its position in the unconscious (Lemma, 2003). Klein argued that the infant is not yet capable of relating to the reality of the mother, instead constructing a phantasy ‘object’ (Watts, 2009) that is the source of both fulfilled contentment and frustrated discontent.

‘Part-object’ relating is a state where the infant cannot yet relate to an individual as a whole person. The individual is only functional, providing experiences that are good or bad for the infant. Conversely, ‘whole object’ relating is a more developed understanding of a relationship with a person (mother) as an individual in their own right, where a mother is a mother, not just a breast, or absent breast (Lemma, 2003). It is not only the infant who struggles with part-objects. If individuals can only see the good or bad in people then they suffer from an inability to integrate their objects, and see others as whole rather than simply sources of satisfaction or frustration. This primitive ‘splitting’ leads to relationships which are largely restrictive. As discussed in Chapter 2, this splitting is also a form of dualism that can be played out socially and politically when others, or groups of others, are considered all bad or all good, rather than realistically complex.

The purpose of this description of object relations is not to draw conclusions about the object relations of the participants. Rather, this section of the study introduces a theory that moves beyond the assumption that what individuals are concerned with in their relationships are the people in the here-and-now. Of course, relations in the immediate environment are important, but so too is the premise that such relations continue to be influenced by past important relationships that are carried into the present. This idea is not considered in current wellbeing research, which is focussed on the immediate visible environment. But the pre-adolescents in this study tell a different story about what is happening in their internal worlds and how this is related to wellbeing and spirituality, and I suggest this warrants some attention.

Most pertinent for this study is the role of phantasy in object relations. As described previously, phantasy is a part of object relating in which our internal worlds become the source of how we perceive others in the external world. In Klein's view, "phantasy is the mental representation of an experience or need" (Lemma, 2003, p. 31). Important here is that it is the mental representation of other that influences our ways of relating, more than the actual experienced relationship (Lemma, 2003). In our internal worlds, the other is not a stagnant object that perfectly matches the external other. Instead, we imbue the internal other with fragments of our past relationships and ourselves. Inevitably, this interweaving of self and other within our minds profoundly affects how we perceive and conduct ourselves in all relationships.

For this study, significant relationships and how they were experienced internally for the participants were not always about an external person. For example, although Brie spoke about her Grade 5 peers, the hurt that she carried with her came from experiences in Grade 2 – three years before our interview. For Nicky, her relationship with her deceased mother imbued her experiences, particularly those that were focussed on the wellbeing of her children. For Ashleigh, as mentioned above, her beloved Nan was an on-going presence in her life. Mai cared for and communicated with plants, addressing their needs as if they had their own inner worlds. Interesting also is the relationship with God expressed by the participants. God was conveyed to me as "full of love" and as a "friend", but God also appeared at times as needy, lonely, vengeful and sad.

Thus, inner relations cannot be simply explained away as pleasant memories or thoughts. The girls were engaged in a living relationship with these entities in their minds. Object relations can help explain something of what is going on in these relationships, while also illuminating a type of relationship that cannot be addressed through SEL approaches or

ecology. What do such entities – alive as internal relationships – have to do with wellbeing and spirituality?

6.5.1 In solitude with an unseen entity

In moments of retreat, the pre-adolescent students talk to God, loved ones who have died, plants and animals. This gives some indication that in the hiding, they remain in the presence of someone, but this presence is internal, though it may be enacted externally. Mai, Jennifer, Ashleigh and Marion talked about their withdrawal from people that included a turn towards deceased relatives, God, animals and plants. In Chapter 6, I included an excerpt from Mai's interview where she spoke of talking to plants because she fears no judgement from them. Ashleigh described her love of animals, and her special relationship with her pets, while Jennifer spoke about a quiet time spent with God in the midst of watching a school play.

> Jennifer: …sometimes when I'm not praying to him I kind of feel distant so we went to [a local Catholic Secondary School] to watch their play thing – dress rehearsal – I prayed at the start so God could come, so God could sit down and watch the Mary Poppins play with me and I talked to him in my mind like 'Hi God' and he was like 'Hi Jennifer' and we just watched.
> Claire: You didn't talk during the play?
> Jennifer: No, it was like telepathy.
> Claire: Yeah.
> Jennifer: Yeah.
> Claire: And how does that make you feel?
> Jennifer: It feels really nice.
> Claire: And why during the play or the beginning of the play, why were you-?
> Jennifer: I wanted him to experience, even though he… God is like everywhere, he watches everyone, I feel like you should…he said everyone should be equal and I sometimes wonder if he himself wants to be equal to us.

There are a number of interesting points here. Firstly, there is a quiet intimacy in this relationship with God that occurs in the midst of a school play. Such performances are

usually exciting and filled with noise until the hushed anticipatory silence marks the opening scene. It is in this silence, she invites God to watch the play with her, trying to include a god that she fears may be feeling left out. Although Jennifer had previously described God as powerful, holy and beautiful, it seems her god is also vulnerable to isolation and loneliness. One way of viewing this invitation is to see this as her care. Another way is to draw on the concept of projection, where some of Jennifer's lonely feelings are projected into God and are therefore made bearable (Lemma, 2003). She can 'do' something creative with these feelings, by caring for God and offering her companionship in an imaginative capacity. In relation to being hidden, this excerpt beautifully illustrates how Jennifer is 'with' a hidden other in an intimate withdrawal from the visible others around her. This is an important part of hiding, in that, even in hiding away, she is still with an 'other'. For Jennifer, she has recognised and shared who this other is.

6.6 Pre-adolescence: The precipice

Returning to Heidegger, I began this chapter by exploring his concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity. I noted that strong attachments to new and exciting social possibilities are a hallmark of adolescence and remain within the realm of the inauthentic. But the pre-adolescent children I interviewed are not quite there; they haven't quite fallen into the world in inauthenticity. Therefore, I have introduced the metaphor of a precipice to consider this stage of development in light of the interviews. The pre-adolescent awaits a symbolic 'fall' from family and into a circle of peers and various other social groups. The metaphor of a precipice aligns with this "fallenness" (Heidegger, 1962) and the sense of the pre-adolescent being on the verge of a life-changing transition. They have not found a social role or group yet to adhere to, although they perhaps yearn to. Instead of becoming lost in social roles, they are focussed on an internal struggle to separate the interior self from the exterior and hold the

interior self as a precious possession to be kept safe. In this, they long to be discovered by someone who understands their interior self and can offer a secure base, giving some reassurance that if they fall, they will be caught.

The transition into adolescence is full of intense emotions and experiences that can be exhilarating, full of wonder and mystery. Of course, the flip side of this intensity is the terror that comes with leaving behind childhood and entering the unknown world of adulthood. I would like to illustrate this with a segment of Mai's interview, which was the most troubling for me in my role as researcher and had me carefully considering my ethical responsibilities to her. In this section of the interview, Mai was relaying her concerns that her friend perhaps didn't like her anymore. She considered the possibility that her friend was jealous, as rumours were circulating that a boy she liked had feelings for Mai. This seemingly innocuous part of the conversation soon gave way to more sinister concerns:

> Mai: So far she's been really nice about its – quite happy – sometimes I think she goes a little overboard which is a little bit funny… but I'm not sure because I think I'm going insane. I'm not really sure.
> Claire: Why do you think that?
> Mai: Because I think I hallucinate.
> Claire: What do you mean by hallucinate?
> Mai: So I sleep on the top bed but so sometimes when I look down I just see a deep hole and I just stay on my bed and I don't really… I'm scared of falling into the hole. I know that there is no hole, but I still see a hole.
> Claire: Yep.
> Mai: But I've gotten used to a lot of these feelings that they don't really bother me.
> Claire: You're happy to carry all of that around with you?
> Mai: I just leave them alone. I just carry them around I don't think about them and if I haven't - do think about them, I have this thing where it's called an existential crisis. So it makes me wonder about all the things in the world like how I'm just one person in like the whole human race and I can't really do much.

Mai's conflicted feelings about her friendships, soon gave way to an "existential crisis".

What should be glaringly obvious from this part of the interview is the intensity of the experience of her relationships; Mai herself made the connection between her friends and her terror of night and fear of falling into a black hole. I wondered at the time about her developmental transition – and the impending transition to high school – and thought about how the fear of the unknown must feel like a black hole to her. I was concerned about her sad demeanour and towards the end of the interview asked whether there were any teachers who she trusted and could talk to. She mentioned the name of one teacher and, in conversation with the principal, I disclosed that Mai seemed very sad and suggested that she might need some extra support (mentioning the teacher's name), without divulging the content of what Mai disclosed to me. In doing this, I directed attention towards Mai, whilst protecting her confidence and my role as a researcher.

Heidegger's understanding of the call to Conscience and "the They" positions Dasein as existing on a precipice at times as we negotiate a place to stand resolute (Heidegger, 1962) in the face of societal and cultural expectations to re-encounter Dasein's authenticity. A distinguishing feature of the pre-adolescent experience, however, is that they are hyper-sensitive of an impending fall brought on by the loss of childhood and the transition into a new world replete with intense emotion, sexuality, and relations. As adults in the education sphere we perhaps could consider: Do we facilitate the understanding of this fall, or do we obstruct such an understanding?

Winnicott's dictum "there is no such thing as an infant" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 586) compels one to look at the primary bond between mother and infant, recognising that the infant cannot exist and cannot develop without a m/other. The primacy of relationship is echoed in Heidegger's *Mitsein* (Being-with) although Heidegger did not put his emphasis on the primordial m/other and infant bond. The pre-adolescent seems in touch with the owned mode of Being, on the cusp of a falling into a more rigid adolescent identity and sense of

group belonging. In the interviews the young participants explored feelings of rejection, loneliness and being on the outer. Something in their experiences allowed for an attunement to self that is frighteningly in touch with an understanding of Dasein.

The uncovering that occurred in the interviews and in the subsequent analysis is representative of ontological truth regarding wellbeing and spirituality. Therefore, some attention must be given to the conditions that allowed the unconcealedness to unfold. Through a particular discourse, replete with descriptions and experiences of affective states, the pre-adolescents, adults and I discovered modes of relating to entities which were drawn out through our dialogue on wellbeing and spirituality. I suggest that the discovering through discourse is as significant as the entities discovered. The activity of 'discovering', therefore, warrants closer attention and is explored in the following chapter by drawing on Heidegger's equiprimordial structure of Dasein.

By drawing on the work of Winnicott I have demonstrated that the feelings and experiences of the pre-adolescents in this study can be understood through the concepts of the true and false self, the holding environment, withdrawal and solitude and the capacity to be alone. Although Heidegger's work gives an ontological understanding of relationality, the pre-adolescent is in the midst of developing and understanding their ego-strength (Winnicott, 1960) and therefore any exploration of wellbeing in particular, needs to be empathic to this transitional phase.

In this chapter I describe Heidegger's understanding of authenticity and inauthenticity as the experience of Dasein and explore the relationship between authenticity and truth. From this I considered the pre-adolescent truth in particular, drawing on experiences in the interviews where the student participants expressed their self as it relates to wellbeing and spirituality. What I have discussed here is the crucial pre-adolescent period involving an acute struggle between ontic and ontological experience. From this I conceptualised three

types of self that the participants were relating to: the vulnerable self, the undisclosed self and the destructive self. I drew on Winnicott to understand the ways that these pre-adolescent participants engaged in withdrawal and solitude from other, to understand what happens in their relations. This was followed by a brief description of object relations theory, suggesting that internal relations and phantasy have as much to do with wellbeing and spirituality as what can be observed in the here-and-now of relationships. The implications of this will be addressed in the recommendations section of Chapter 8.

Chapter 7: Discourse, Affectivity, Understanding

7.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters I have used Dasein to present an ontological understanding of wellbeing and spirituality as relational phenomena. I then considered the ontic and ontological expressions of the pre-adolescent experience and used the metaphor of The Precipice to consider the complex and sometimes terrifying experiences of this particular developmental stage. In this chapter I turn back to the experiences of both adults and children, using the lens of Heidegger's equiprimordial structure of Dasein comprised of three elements embedded in each other: discourse, affectivity and understanding. This structure will be used to further elaborate the phenomena of wellbeing and spirituality in order to respond to the research question: In what ways do the lived experiences of parents, children and teachers illuminate a relationship between wellbeing and spirituality? Teasing apart the phenomena according to this structure makes visible the possibility that much of the phenomena remains invisible. Rather than obstructing wellbeing and spirituality because of what we do not know, accepting this invisible realm of both is important in that it calls for a responsive approach from adults that facilitates an expressiveness that holds an emancipatory possibility.

7.2 Discourse

According to Heidegger (1962), how we understand our Being-in-the-word is articulated in discourse. Discourse is a shared experience where Dasein talks and listens to what is pre-reflectively intelligible. Heidegger posits discourse as an equiprimordial structure by making the argument that it is not a reasoned, logical articulation that leads to intelligibility; rather, there is a shared intelligibility about the world that is already ready-to-hand for Dasein (Heidegger, 1962). Discourse is one structure that discloses this intelligibility, rendering it

meaningful in some way (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger's focus on discourse is not to be understood as a focus on language. Language is important for Heidegger (1962) but is not the *a priori* of Being; rather it has "its roots in the existential constitution of Dasein's disclosedness" (p. 203). This means that language comes from the ontological possibility of revealing Dasein through discourse.

It is interesting to consider the interviews in this study in light of Heidegger's discourse. In an ideal interview situation, the attention is gently and consistently turned towards the participant. The participants need to draw from their experience of the world and use language to articulate what is available to their consciousness at that particular point in time. Some of the teachers interviewed in this study immediately drew from their professional discourse on the phenomenon of wellbeing. For example, teachers from both schools referred to happiness, resilience, mindfulness, strengths and positivity—all terms that shape the contemporary wellbeing discourse in the current Australian context. This was an educational language I was familiar with, and when interviewing teachers, I was prone to drop my interviewer stance, almost in an effort to show them that I was part of their teacher 'tribe'. It was all too easy for me to slip into this comfortable (and comforting?) space by drawing from the educational discourse that was hanging between us. I was able to reassure them that I understood what they were talking about, revealing myself to be part of the professional group in the process. With one teacher, Natalie, I found myself asking about her 'role', which had not been my intention at all. I framed my initial question to her as, "All right, so wellbeing is a word that you would have heard in your role. To begin with that, how would you describe what wellbeing is?" This is an example of my own fallenness into "the They" and perhaps suggests that my discomfort had me clutching at a shared familiarity. Thankfully, my preparation and interview schedule enabled me to recover and continue with my intention.

The above is an example of my prejudices and, in hindsight, I can detect what led me to a question about Natalie's "role". Natalie was busy, capable and forthright. She warned me that she only had ten minutes to talk, and I was very aware that her focus for the day was where it should be—on the children in her care, rather than with me. I think that asking about her role was an effort to show that I understood her commitment to her students. Perhaps this was a good strategy in that asking about her role was something she could respond to easily. But it also suggests that I intuited she would be uncomfortable speaking from a more personal position. Thus, with both of us embedded in an educational discourse she responded to my initial question with:

> Well, wellbeing here is really important with our school. It's all about the whole child. So we just don't focus on like the curriculum areas, so like our maths, reading, writing, we look at how we can actually nurture the child. We have a really big emphasis now on positive ed [education]. So it's how the children are feeling, what we can do to help them feel the best so they can perform the best (Natalie).

I realised soon after asking the above question that I had specifically asked about her "role". Upon reflection, I could see that Natalie appeared busy and on-the-go and I felt guilty for drawing her away from her important work. Hence, I unconsciously kept her "at work" rather than opening up a line of inquiry about her personal experiences. She was comfortable with this and responded quickly with a well-rounded discourse on wellbeing in education, speaking of "the whole child", "curriculum areas", "positive education" and students performing "their best". But upon hearing her removed educational discourse, and after having quickly apprehended my error at the time, I followed up my question with a personally oriented one:

> So if you were to describe wellbeing for yourself, what would you say wellbeing was? (Claire)

> Uh, wellbeing is probably where you need to look into your inner thoughts of how you are feeling inside as well as… so it's more of your emotional…of how you're coping with your emotions, how you're physically feeling…uh, probably as a mum I don't do this as much as I should…um as I said to Patrice, sort of as a parent, or mum, you're busy, you…everything you preach at school you don't do at home…um, and you're sort of probably left to the last, you're on the bottom (Natalie).

This illustrates that when I asked Natalie about her own experiences, she was less enthusiastic in her answer—um-ing and ah-ing, and trailing off with the striking comment, "you're sort of probably left to the last, you're on the bottom." Rather than exploring this idea of 'being on the bottom' further, my interviews with Natalie continued in such a way that most of what I heard about was wellbeing in her work.

When our discourse turned towards lived experience in the interviews, it was not always the case that wellbeing and spirituality retained their aspirational and idyllic qualities, which is a significant finding in this study. For example, Brie talked about "staying positive" by ignoring and excluding one of her peers so that she did not have to tolerate feeling annoyed and irritated. Louise talked about the "double-edge" of happiness when during times of connection with her family, she was acutely aware of the fragility of life. This suggests that the phenomena had various significances that were not necessarily conscious and were not enacted in their lives according to the educational discourse espoused in research, policy and practice. Wellbeing for these participants was not a state of optimal living, while spirituality evoked a *lost* purpose as much as it did a sense of purpose.

In Brie's example, it is possible to cast off her description of positivity as simply a (wilful) pre-adolescent misinterpretation. After all, my experience of her at that time was that she sounded very much like the victor and for a pre-adolescent dealing with all the intensity of peer relationships this is perhaps a feeling to be enjoyed. As an adult, one might be irritated by her quite blatant spite but, in the interview, I was struck by the earnest way she described the situation and was also aware of her pain and hurt in relation to her peers. I

wondered what I would do if I was her teacher and she disclosed her interpretation of "being positive". Indeed, I was all too aware of my need to correct her *mis*-interpretation. However, though her experience may be perceived as socially ill mannered, I also noted something else that was quite striking about her disclosure. She was not trying to say things that would please me or win my approval, which perhaps indicated some level of trust that I would not judge her. What discourse reveals here then is that listening without enacting some sort of judgemental stance allowed for a more complex and nuanced understanding of who Brie is and how she experiences her relationships.

Listening is Dasein's existential way of Being open as "Being-with for Others" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 206). Heidegger labels not-hearing, resisting, defying, and turning away as "privative" modes of listening to one another. For example, responding to Natalie by filling in the uncomfortable silence as she trailed off is an example of resisting what she is trying to talk about, even if ostensibly I was trying to make her feel at ease. Curtailing discourse takes the shared experience back to "the They" where our efforts to understand each other are more comfortable and less awkward but regrettably inauthentic. This uncertainty and discomfort appear to be two aspects of discourse that may facilitate the expression of wellbeing and spirituality, provided that these uncomfortable and awkward states can be tolerated. Perhaps such states alert one to the disruption that I referred to in Chapter 5, whereby one has the potential to be shaken out of one's habitual inauthentic stance and towards the ontologically authentic.

In falling, Dasein interprets itself through the lens of "the They" (Heidegger, 1962). The above serves as an illustration of my own falling and I note that in the interview situation, it worked as an unintentional way 'in' to the dialogue; a shared starting point. But the interview also provided a space to slightly extricate oneself from the public world. When asked about experiences related to wellbeing and spirituality the participants started to reflect

on their memories, thoughts, feelings, fantasies and so on. Therefore, the particular type of discourse that occurred in the interviews provided a space where authenticity could reveal itself. In ontic terms, this 'potential space' has been theorised in the work of Winnicott (1960, 1965b) through his concept of 'holding' and will be explored further on in the chapter.

7.2.1 Internal relations in discourse

Heidegger's analysis of discourse, particularly in relation to "the They" leads us to an interesting question: in the interviews when I ask about wellbeing and spirituality, who exactly is speaking? Beginning with Matthew and Nina, who were strongly aligned to "the They" of their religion and business respectively, there was a fervour and a pressing need to communicate to me how they had 'found the answer'. I felt like they were trying to convince me of something that had been life-changing for them and could be so for others. Nina spoke of her desire to become a life coach and pass on her message to others, while Matthew presented me with a selection of religious magazines and asked if I might hand them out at the university. I felt the weight of their respective marketing and religious communities bearing down on me in the interview as if their community were standing right behind them.

With other adults, however, I felt the presence of their loved ones, such as children, husbands and other family members. In particular, interviewees brought with them much-loved relatives who had died. Louise and Nicky brought their mothers, Jill brought her aunty, Lesley brought her grandpa and Ashleigh her nana. These family members came into the interviews with the participants, sometimes through a direct comment, such as from Ashleigh who said, "after my Nan passed away… at her funeral I felt everyone felt upset. I felt it's like she was beside me, so she was making me and everyone else feel happy. She was making me feel happy by giving me my happy personality."

At other times, this occurred through a shift in mood, which announced a new presence in the interview. For example, when I asked Louise to speak from a personal experience of wellbeing she responded with "you've got strategies in place that will help you to not just cope with it because it's more than coping with it. It's actually about getting energy and life." When I asked her to elaborate by speaking of a challenging time, she became very quiet and thoughtful and said, "something just popped into my head". I felt immediately that she was about to share something very sensitive and sensed that I needed to tread carefully with what she was about to disclose, which was the extremely traumatic experience of losing her mother. The question of who is speaking requires a recognition that the discourse hanging between us was shared by others who were not physically in the room. Thus, discourse includes both a relational element that pertains to these inner 'objects' (see Chapter 6) and inevitably draws from the mood which hangs between people (which is described below).

7.2.2 The systemic "They"

I have described how the interviews enabled a discourse where professional and personal aspects of participants appeared intertwined and considered how professional discourse sometimes can disguise the truth of a more personal engagement with wellbeing and spirituality. Given that these interviews came about through permissions granted from the education system, I think it is necessary to consider two responses I have had from education bodies regarding my research. One response was during the course of my master's research and the second was in preparation for conducting this research. Both responses queried my choice of Year Five and Year Six students as participants. Both suggested I might conduct my research in a secondary school setting, the reason being that it was considered unlikely that Year Five and Six children would be able to talk about spirituality or wellbeing. To

illustrate the depth of how inaccurate this perception of children was, I am including this lengthy section from the very beginning of my first interview with Jennifer (Year Five):

> Claire: What would you like to start talking about first?
> Jennifer: I think wellbeing would be easier.
> Claire: Yeah. All right. So tell me about wellbeing.
> Jennifer: Yeah, has it started?
> Claire: It's started.
> Jennifer: Well I guess there's lots of things to talk… we learnt about wellbeing last year in Grade 4, about, like, physical wellbeing, like, social…that stuff. Now, we made a brochure about this. I can't really remember for social wellbeing. It was so easy for me! I just made feelings like happy, sad and that stuff but now that I really think about it, it's more than just feelings because now these days I've been actually quite sad lately. I don't really know the cause; please do not add this to the writing thing. My mum has cancer, breast cancer. That doesn't really make me feel sad. I still don't know why I was really sad. Last night I was crying, very sad. [becomes teary]
> Claire: Yeah. When did you find out?
> Jennifer: Well it's been happening for a long time but today, last night, I felt really sad. I haven't told anyone except my mum but-
> Claire: Mmm
> Jennifer: So wellbeing…it's not just about feelings. It's about yourself and, yeah, that's what I find. I would like to be more happier like last year and last, last year. I'd be like a cheerful happy thing, making puns, and making everyone say 'ew'. There's a pun that's funny. I still make a little bit puns… not much. I'm still quite sad.
> Claire: So that's really interesting because what you're saying is sometimes there's these things that happen. And when they happen it means you can't feel happy all the time. I mean you can't feel happy all the time anyway, can you? But sometimes things happen that make us really sad.
> Jennifer: Yep
> Claire: So what happens to your wellbeing while you're sad?
> Jennifer: My wellbeing actually drops. I feel less alive, I guess. If you don't understand… I feel just less active. Okay, like if I want to jump up and say 'Oh hello day! Today is the day I shall be happy!' and that stuff. I'm more, like, I just wake up, eat breakfast, go to school. It's more like a very ordinary but so ordinary that I'm just sick of it-
> Claire: You're sick of feeling sad all the time.

Jennifer: Yes. I do just want to wake up and be happy [tearful]. I just want to be happy, you know? That's not a very easy thing.
Claire: No, no. What do you do with your sadness?
Jennifer: I try to block it out. And don't try to like put people... 'I'm so sad, I'm so sad, you should pity me. You should think that I am happy. I'm so sad so I should be given lots of stuff so I should be happy'. I don't try to …people look down at me. I try to keep it to myself and just like something isolated. I know it's not good to myself but it's better for everyone else. It's better for me if they're happy than myself. Even though I know I still have to be happy myself, but just think about it. Like I have lots of friends for example, like if I have… I'm just going to think of a random number…six. I think out of twelve, six people could be happy, one person could be unhappy but still I'm trying to make myself be happy and be aware. I stop and think is this really a big deal? I have to calm down and acknowledge it's just life. Just know that it's a tiny thing it's going to be okay. So these days I've actually been more happier. So I'm actually quite happy in myself right now and I was actually quite looking forward to talking to you, so yeah. I think wellbeing sort of relates to spirituality as spirituality is being about yourself. I thought I could be so smart and research on the computer.
Claire: [laughs]
Jennifer: But I didn't get to do that.
Claire: You were going to research it!
Jennifer: Yes.
Claire: You didn't get there?
Jennifer: No I didn't get there. But spiritual…I thought about it a lot. I thought maybe it's about, it wasn't just about who you are on the outside, like on the outside I am actually Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese and I was born here, Australian. But it's about who you are inside. And my spirituality, I find that on the inside I'm sad and I guess that's about my spirituality, my 'I'm sad' and I also relate it to wellbeing. So wellbeing and spirituality are kind of the same thing. This is going to be a very hard thing for you to type up on your computer.

Jennifer was delightful, engaging with me immediately, sharing a meandering trail of thoughts, while suddenly interjecting to consider the impact she might be having on me. What I wondered about, in listening to Jennifer, was: who is speaking into her experience? At one point, for example, she imagines aloud other people's responses to her sadness. This

indicates that in the room with Jennifer and me were also her mother and her friends. These friends lacked care and needed her to play the role of 'the funny one'; her sadness was not welcomed. Moreover, the mother present in the interview needed to be protected and hidden; I was told not to write about her mother's cancer because that was not really what was making Jennifer's wellbeing "low".

I have already discussed the idea of internal relations in the previous chapter but here I would like to connect these relations to Heidegger's 'discourse'. In comparing Jennifer's excerpt with the responses from the education departments, one can see that the assumption that children are not capable of talking about phenomena such as wellbeing and spirituality disavows internal worlds that are seeking expression. The responses I received are indicative of systems that are cut off from the richness and depth of children's internal worlds and the need for these worlds to find some sort of expression.

I suggest that it is a serious problem in education if we abandon children's voices at the system level simply because we lack trust in their capacity to have a voice. This is not simply a problem I encountered in my own study. There are standards set for every conceivable area in education. This means that the possibility that students can be trusted to think and to speak their thoughts, and that the adults around them might listen without judgement, is almost beyond the realms of traditional education settings because we are currently fixated on outcomes and standards that advocate for educational certainty. Moreover, this certainty offers policy makers and educators the comforting belief that while we are constantly assessing outcomes, and comparing these outcomes globally, we are providing the best education we can. This is a discourse that ameliorates uncertainty and reassures adults that we are continually providing 'best practice' in education, which is a systemic phantasy. In this way of thinking about education, is it even possible to listen to children and provide a space for their internal relations without a planned educative motive?

Heidegger's 'discourse' is not only spoken language; it is the silence that comes from between words and phrases, the pauses that give a clue which speaks of discomfort, uncertainty and perhaps even anxiety. This authentic listening, Heidegger refers to as 'hearkening', which he connects with another equiprimordial characteristic in the statement, "The person who 'cannot hear' and 'must feel' may perhaps be one who is able to hearken very well, and precisely because of this" (1962, p. 207). The discourse of wellbeing and spirituality is not separate from an 'affectivity' that is present in the interviews. It is clear from the above discussion that all of the interviews were laden with emotion, whether of the participant or myself. These leads me to a consideration of affectivity as the next structure to be explored.

7.3 Affectivity

A number of differing translations have referred to the feeling aspect of Dasein, *Befindlichkeit*, as affectivity, disposition or state-of-mind. I use the term affectivity here because of its English association to affects and because it implies relation; if we are affected, it must be by someone. If affectivity is one of three equiprimordial characteristics of Dasein, then it follows that affects are not second to rationale thought and cannot be controlled through articulation or logic but, rather, they form a pervasive 'atmosphere' of Being-in-the-world (Dreyfus, 1991). This atmosphere is imbued in the self and saturates shared experience whether we are cognisant of this or not. For example, it is false to say that if someone asks 'how are you feeling?' your mood is immediately accessible and you have the language and desire to communicate it (Stolorow, 2011). But the lack of accessibility does not equate to a lack of affectivity.

Heidegger uses *Befindlichkeit* to denote an ontological affectivity (Heidegger, 1962). As with other aspects of Dasein, Heidegger is at pains to tease apart the ontic from the

ontological structure. For example, the phenomena of wellbeing and spirituality naturally lent themselves to discussions of various moods, such as happiness, sociability, enthusiasm, calmness, sadness, anger, gratitude, irritability and so on. Moods such as these were described in the interviews and also experienced in the interviews. *Befindlichkeit* is intended to capture the whole of Dasein's affectivity (Stolorow, 2011) before one begins to think about what the particular moods are, or who has done what to get these feelings to occur. Perhaps the closest way of describing this in English, is to consider it as an unthought or unlanguaged feeling. Heidegger's question, "How do I find myself?" recognises that I am already in a mood which is then unconcealed. Heidegger (1962) states

> Dasein is always brought before itself, and has always found itself, not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has. (p. 174)

If the ontological (affectivity) is manifested through the ontic (moods), what does this mean for the analysis of the phenomena? It appears that the various moods disclose something particular about Dasein's ontological affectivity in relation to wellbeing and spirituality.

Students and adults named "emotions" as a dimension of wellbeing. Although the students tended to consciously associate wellbeing with positive feelings at the beginning of the interviews, their lived experiences described unpleasant feelings that were centred on friendship difficulties, inner turmoil and loneliness. For some of the students what they needed to 'do' with their feelings, were ideas imbued from "the They" comprised mainly of family, teachers and psychologists. It seemed that behavioural and cognitive-behavioural theories of social and emotional learning and positive psychology approaches had gained currency in the students' worlds. For example, Brie stated that wellbeing was "how you deal with things in your life…thinking happy thoughts and things, so that's good wellbeing", while Chloe talked about being able to "calm yourself and just make sure everything is okay

so you're not stressed at all" and Ashleigh likened being "more sociable and happy" and thinking "before you do" to maintaining wellbeing. The interpretation of wellbeing from the students in these statements seems to be that the aim of wellbeing is to avoid feeling stressed and ensuring you have friends.

An alternative understanding of emotions is offered by Heidegger who regards moods not as side-effects of cognition but as underlying cognition (Heidegger, 1962). This is in contrast to cognitive-behavioural approaches that see feelings as affected by thought – that is, cognition is (or can become) prior to affectivity. With regard to the three features of the equiprimordial structure, there are ongoing debates about whether Heidegger viewed all three as equal or whether one feature underpins the other two. In this analysis, I suggest that it is affectivity that underpins discourse and understanding and this is supported by some interpretations of Heidegger (see for example Stolorow, 2011). If Dasein understands itself through affectivity, and is prior to cognition, it means that affectivity forms an atmosphere *before* it is thought and put into words. Therefore, it is possible that ontological affectivity, and even the ontic manifestation of this as mood, is something that cannot be captured and fully understood via language. Heidegger holds that, "the possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods in which Dasein is brought before its Being as 'there'" (p. 173).

This leads to the question, if mood can disclose Dasein, are efforts to change or improve the ontic manifestations of mood of a child likely to benefit wellbeing? The students interviewed at various times seemed to hold the assumption that any form of negative affect on their part needed to ultimately change to something more positive and more sociable, whilst declaring negative affect to be an ostensibly normal part of life. As Jennifer put it, "you can't be happy all the time." We have already explored the way that the pre-adolescent closes off their feelings for the sake of others, illustrated primarily through examples from

Alison, Jennifer and Lesley (see Chapter 6). But through the following excerpts from interviews with the students, I would like to draw attention to the need adults seem to have to change the mood of a child:

> I got judged and first I got emotional, but then I got the courage to know that everyone is different in the world and then being different is actually being unique… my mom was just 'they're taking advantage of you, but just don't worry about it' (Marion).

> My parents always say 'the bully wants a reaction from you, so you don't give it to them, they'll stop' (Ashleigh).

> I tend not to [cry] when I try to be strong for him because I know he doesn't want to see me cry and I know none of my family want to see me cry. So I like to stay strong but there are these few times that I've let a few tears come through (Lesley).

In these excerpts, the girls feel like they should change their moods due to an interpersonal pressure from peers and family. Marion's worries are dismissed, Ashleigh must hide any distress she is experiencing, and Lesley must not cry in front of her family. It is not possible to know what was going on for the parents when they made these comments, but it is clear that the comments are taken very seriously and remembered. Thus, well-intentioned efforts to improve feelings seem to have had the unfortunate effect of communicating that some feelings are not welcome and they are therefore minimised. This explains, at least partly, why the students need to hide their self and perhaps suggests another conceptualisation of self: the self that is "too much" for others. This brings us back to the equiprimordial structure in relation to affectivity. If there was a space created that accommodated discomfort and was able to 'hold' feelings without judgement, it would welcome expressions of wellbeing and spirituality. Ideally, this would involve accepting the general pervasiveness of mood, without trying to control or minimise it.

Discomfort is a signal that affectivity is pressing on discourse and the habitual response is to cut off and shut down any consideration of mood. affectivity is ontological and we draw from it when giving language and expressing our ontic mood (Heidegger, 1962). What kinds of conditions would enable children and adults to sit with discomfort, and how can we lessen the threatening aspects of mood that have the potential to overwhelm? Again, it appears that a particular space is necessary. But this is not simply a physical space and time to talk about moods. Rather, it is a space that is protective and can enable students to explore their mood in safety. Winnicott (1962) described this as a 'holding space' which will be described below.

7.3.1 How do I find you?

It is quite common, at least in Western contexts, to answer the question 'How are you?' with "Good, thanks" or "Fine". Neither of these phrases are moods and both shut down any further inquiry into how one might be feeling through a resistance that is bland albeit polite. One might even interpret the response to mean, "I don't know, and I don't want to know. I certainly don't want *you* to know." What this reveals is an atmosphere (Heidegger, 1962) of affectivity that is not always readily comprehensible but hangs in Dasein and between Dasein, disclosing something of our being. As Heidegger (1962) notes, "the pallid, evenly balanced lack of mood…is far from nothing at all" (p. 173). A Heideggerian understanding of wellbeing challenges the idea that moods and feelings need to be identified, controlled and managed. Rather, it is possible to have an understanding of mood as that which discloses something of Dasein, not as something to be rationally modified, but rather as something to befriend.

7.4 Understanding

The third equiprimordial characteristic of Dasein is understanding. Dasein primordially

understands itself as Being concerned with its own Being. A simple way of putting this is to say that as humans, we know that we exist in the world and are concerned with our existence. When Heidegger refers to understanding (the ontological understanding) he is referring to primarily Dasein's "potentiality-for-being" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 210). This means that understanding involves a projection in which Dasein can perceive possibilities for itself. Dasein's concern paves the way to an understanding of existence as future possibility. There is perhaps a link to the aspirational nature of wellbeing here; that Dasein can perceive a future in which life becomes better in some form. However, this would be an ontic expression of understanding whereby the individual makes decisions to enact a better life.

Thus, there is a distinction here between ontological and ontic understanding. Ontic understanding may refer to competence, skill, proficiency and know-how in relation to something. In terms of wellbeing, it may refer to the decision-making in relationships that is a competency of the SEL approach. In the comments from the students, there was a direct link between wellbeing, spirituality and understanding that was communicated as 'knowing' the self. For example, Brie noted that "you can understand your own wellbeing so have an understanding of what's going on in your life", while Lesley talked about knowing what "enriches" your life. Mai stated, "it's about how you're feeling…it's about you", whilst Marion stated it is "taking care of yourself". Knowing and understanding in these examples may be understood as ontic understandings and an important consideration of this is to contemplate the type of space which might allow this ontic understanding of self to occur. I suggest that these are examples of ontic understanding that act as an aperture to ontological understanding.

Thus, knowing the self seems to be an ontic precursor to understanding as an ontological structure. But again, we come back to what constitutes knowing the self, authentically? In Heidegger's understanding, it seems to be centred on distinguishing the self

as driven by "the They" from the self who is driven by possibility arising out of understanding. When there is authenticity, possibility is facilitated rather than obstructed. Heidegger writes that possibility, "as an *existentiale* is the most primordial and ultimate positive way in which Dasein is characterized ontologically" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 183). This means that understanding is characteristically emancipatory and holds the possibility for ameliorating barriers to Dasein's potential.

In describing the relationship between Dasein and understanding, Wrathall and Murphey (2013) state that "through its understanding, Dasein can go beyond its current situation, freely interpret itself, and, ultimately, take responsibility for its own existence" (p. 15). I consider this statement somewhat hyperbolic, however. Heidegger is at pains to note the on-going dynamic between authenticity and inauthenticity is Dasein's experience. The reference to 'ultimately' taking responsibility puts one in mind of a final transcendence, or achievable plateau, whereas Heidegger's Dasein is ongoing movement in and out of ontological understanding.

7.4.1 Pre-reflective understanding

Up until this point, I have minimised my exploration of the pre-reflective understanding that Heidegger considers primary to Dasein. Heidegger uses examples of tools and technology to give shape to the habitual pre-reflective understanding that is part of Dasein. Using the example of the hammer, he writes of how the hammer is practically engaged as a tool and that this is primordial understanding (Heidegger, 1962). Theorising about the hammer, if one were to do so, is a secondary or ontic understanding whereas it is the hammer in use that is ontological understanding. For most of the time whilst conducting this study, wellbeing and spirituality seemed far too nebulous for Heidegger's pre-reflective understanding to be of any use. After all, both phenomena are associated with many forms of reflection (self-reflection,

self-awareness, prayer, meditation and so on) and pre-reflective understanding almost seems to be the antithesis of this. But given that pre-reflective understanding is central to Dasein, I played with the idea of wellbeing and spirituality as tools in use and wondered: If wellbeing and spirituality were 'tools' with practical application, what would their pre-reflective use be?

To answer this question, I needed to consider what use wellbeing and spirituality have been for me? It is true to say that both phenomena have been means for self-understanding through various stages of my life, and they have also been means for understanding myself in relationships. But wellbeing and spirituality have not been the only methods I have used. I have looked for understanding in philosophy, therapy, literature, music, art and nature. I may have had experiences of wellbeing and the spiritual in these methods, but I do not feel any need to name these experiences as wellbeing or spiritual, I can just as easily understand them as 'literary', 'philosophical', 'musical' and so on. For me, the aesthetic beauty of these experiences does not need to be categorised under 'wellbeing' or 'spirituality'. In fact, if I were to identify these experiences as either or both phenomena, that would only occur after the fact. Being caught up in a musical moment does not require the thought, 'this is wellbeing,' for it to be a vitalising experience.

With this in mind, I turn back to the question of what use wellbeing and spirituality are and consider the interviews on the whole. Both wellbeing and spirituality were used as tools for dialogue, communication, discourse and so on that engaged participants ontologically in the equiprimordial structure of Dasein, whilst ontically manifesting this structure. Thus, the interviews in this study proved to be more than data gathering for the purposes of research. I propose that both wellbeing and spirituality are dialogical 'tools' that facilitate expression. This expression is both ontic and ontological. For the pre-adolescent in particular, the ontic expression helps them find their way through and in their relationships, and helps them discover their self again and again. Both the call to Conscience and "the

They" became illuminated in the interviews as something to be considered, teased apart and thought about. If this expression is important, as I have suggested, then it follows that space is needed for this expression. Moreover, what are tools for children if not instruments for play? I suggest that through wellbeing and spirituality, I engaged the participants in a type of play where they enacted an emancipatory form of expression. This will be taken up further below.

7.4.2 Groundlessness

In writing of understanding and possibility, Heidegger (1962) does not suggest that we attempt to capture possibilities in the way that one might write a 'bucket list'. He writes:

> Grasping it in such a manner would take away from what is projected its very character as a possibility, and would reduce it to the given contents which we have in mind; whereas projection, in throwing, throws before itself the possibility as possibility, and lets it *be* as such. (p. 185 original italics)

Ontological understanding is the competency that we have over our existing (Heidegger, 1962). A key question for Heidegger (1962) about ontological understanding is: How do our activities express an understanding of the groundlessness of our existence? As noted in Chapter 5, I find Heidegger's use of the phrase 'groundlessness' to be existentially frightening. It puts me in mind of having 'the rug pulled out from under you' and reminds me of a repetitive dream I have where I throw myself off the top of a flight of stairs and crash into the walls on my way down to the ground. The dream is accompanied by the sick feeling in my stomach that occurs when on a roller-coaster ride, the moment comes when the carriage just falls over the edge of the highest, slowest point, down to the ground below. I think these associations come from a lived experience of groundlessness as both the projected fall, and the fall that has already occurred.

In lived experience, the greatest anxieties come from death and loss. It is unsurprising that Heidegger makes angst central to Dasein's experience of its own future death. In a sense, this is the groundlessness; that all that we are will, at any given moment, cease to be Dasein. However, groundlessness is also aligned with an understanding of Dasein as energy, whose primary task is interpreting existence (Heidegger, 1962), an existence which is not captured adequately by a bounded self that is distinct and separate from the 'not self'. The 'I' of the self is not "a free-floating 'I'" (1962, p. 344). Rather, it is groundless but connected to the world as Being-in-the-world. This is anxiety provoking, in the sense of losing the centrality of self, but also emancipatory, in offering a new understanding of primordial connectedness beyond the self.

The equiprimordial structure gives a clue as to how wellbeing and spirituality might be approached ontologically with children and adults alike. In discourse, mood and understanding we find ourselves between the ontic and ontological and struggle to give expression to this. Heidegger suggests that the very character of understanding is reduced (Heidegger, 1962) when one attempts to seize on it, and delineate what the possibilities are. This means that for wellbeing and spirituality, we might be better off providing opportunities to entertain possibility, rather than trying to capture and pinpoint the ontic 'what' of the phenomena.

7.5 Ontic-ontological conditions for the expression of wellbeing and spirituality

Having revisited the equiprimordial structure of Dasein, and looked at wellbeing and spirituality through this structure, I now propose ontic-ontological conditions for wellbeing and spirituality in schools. These conditions are predicated on two significant findings emerging from this study. Firstly, relationality is the ontological feature of both wellbeing and spirituality. Secondly, I have found this relationality to be temporal, meaning that

significant past relationships are ongoing, alive and dynamic. This suggests that a space is needed in education settings that can hold these relationships in all their ambiguity, uncertainty and creative possibilities.

7.5.1 Temporality

Temporality is illuminated in Heidegger's (1962) equiprimordial structural aspect, 'understanding', as the present imbued with the past and future. In 'understanding', Heidegger (1962) notes that Dasein is always "projecting towards a potentiality-for-Being" (p. 385), which relates to the possibilities held in the future. In the present moment, we are both always projecting forward and carrying our own past with us (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger relates the equiprimordial structure of affectivity to 'thrownness', thus connecting 'mood' to how we find ourselves already in the world; moods are made possible by having-been. Finally, discourse holds us in the present as we juggle the shift between "the They" of social and cultural expectations and our own call to Conscience. This understanding is aligned with object relations as it allows for the primacy of those relations that are not visible but are significant and carried internally.

Dasein knows itself through its present *presence* in the world concurrent with its projections of itself into the future. Because it can understand itself in this way, it exists with an often implicit but ever-present anxiety that comes with being able to look towards the future; in the future, there is death. Additionally, already-being-in-a-world means that we are already *in* the loss of Dasein once Dasein *is*. To all appearances, possibilities seem endless until they end.

For education, the perspective of temporality circumvents the need to categorise wellbeing and spirituality and find an appropriate pre-determined structure for them to belong, such as in physical education, prayer time, circle time, SEL curriculum and so on. A

temporal lens simply requires policy makers and educators to engage with their own prejudices about education (their past) and accommodate their own anxieties about educational uncertainty (their projections towards the future). Moreover, temporality removes the illusion that we are 'running out of time', 'need to take time', or do not 'have enough time'. Time is something to be chased, scheduled and lamented over but temporality is constant and consistent; you cannot have enough or too much of it, it simply *is* because of Dasein. When temporality is held in mind, time appears in such a way that is less constraining. Time as an onward march slipping away without our control, becomes simply a perspective rather than a brute fact.

7.5.2 Holding

A finding of this research is the assumption from pre-adolescent students that their feelings are "too much" for their peers and for the adults around them. This assumption is an obstructive force in the children's minds, as it stops them from revealing their feelings to others and encourages the presence of a false self at times when they appear to need care and responsiveness. Additionally, while the adults in this study were able to recognise and articulate that they are hard on themselves, the students were not.

A 'holding environment' (Winnicott, 1960) protects the child and allows for their maturation and ego development to occur. I have not used the term 'ego' previously, but for the sake of this section, 'ego' is akin to what participants described as 'self'. However, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the ego is the aspect of the mind that is in touch with the external world via perception and mediates between this external world—that is, reality—and the interior world (Lemma, 2003). In psychoanalytic thinking, the structure of the ego begins developing in infancy and in relation to the mother. Thus, Bollas refers to ego structure as "the trace of a relationship" (Bollas, 2018, p. 29), an understanding which upholds

Winnicott's "there is no such thing as an infant" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 586). The holding environment has a protective function so that the ego can develop in its own time. Kalsched (1996) describes it well when he writes that "the child does not have to 'hold itself together,' there is someone else present to do this" (p. 48).

Ogden (2004) refers to the mother's holding as an ontological relational concept. He describes the mother's ability to shield the infant from time—schedules, routines, night/day etc.—and instead become immersed in the infant's own rhythms. Therefore, the environment becomes attuned to the infant's rhythm, rather than the infant adjusting to human-made constructs of time (Ogden, 2004). The holding environment safeguards the continuity of the child's experience of being and becoming over time (Ogden, 2004).

The pre-adolescents in this study have achieved what Winnicott would call 'unit status' (1965b), or an understanding of me as opposed to not-me that is illuminated by their descriptions of "inside" and "outside" feelings. Inside or interior feelings were considered unacceptable for social expression by the participants (see Chapter 6) and they struggled with these feelings of anger, sadness, jealousy and envy. In applying this to education, Twemlow et al. (2002) argue that one of the challenges of the school environments is that schools find it difficult to judge age-appropriate levels of frustration which can result in communicating that aggression, for example, is not to be tolerated. But Winnicott's holding environment helps to integrate the ego, which therefore means that aggression and hatred must be allowed some space to be integrated, as much as love and care. The provision of a holding space that allows for expression where the true self can evolve (Twemlow et al., 2002), the 'other' (teacher) needs to be unobtrusive, allowing integration to take place.

There is great difficulty in applying Winnicott's holding to the educational environment. The concept of holding in the psychological literature uses the term in reference to home or clinical situations, which are incomparable with the whole school community or

classroom environment. Thus, any application to education can only come in reference to adult-child relationships, rather than attempting to construct holding in the learning areas for a group of children, while simultaneously trying to meet other agendas and outcomes. Turning the classroom into a therapeutic space, I suggest, would create more expectations on the teacher, and therefore more tension.

But there is one area that can be considered in the school environment. If, as Ogden (2004) suggests, holding is an ontological concern for the mother, then adjusting to natural rhythms calls for a responsive approach rather than an interventionist approach. This holding environment permits the child to develop naturally and in their own time. I am not necessarily advocating for a child-centred approach to learning and teaching. Rather, I suggest that when emotions are revealed, a holding space between the teacher and child may be facilitative of wellbeing and/or spirituality.

7.6 A Responsive Environment

In the case of wellbeing and spirituality, if we recognise that internal relations add a layer of complexity to our relations with self and other in the world, then perhaps something else may be considered along with structured programs to deal with social relations in the here-and-now. If one cannot see the relations that children are engaged in and if they have a right not to communicate (Winnicott, 1965c), then how might we understanding and make space for these relations in a way that is accepting of them and perhaps even useful for students? Perhaps it is in the environment, or other settings where play is central and allows the child to represent, symbolise and externalise their internal relations.

In Winnicott's (1971) understanding, the true self has an enlivened authentic sense of its own being and he suggests that one of the processes essential to this enlivened sense of being is play. Related to the holding environment, Winnicott saw play as both offering

insight into the child's inner world and a necessary expression for the child of their internal relations (1971). In the interviews, examples of play included arts and crafts, song writing, drawing, sport, being in nature, and losing oneself in stories. The interviews themselves were at times a form of playful conversation. Jill's interview was replete with examples of her playful thinking. One such example shows how she used the absurd comedy of Monty Python to play with existential anxieties related to death, loss and religion.

> And I think… I really remember my after my grandmother died and one of my uncles died really suddenly in 2010 and I remember being like, "Well, bugger this 'Oh it's God's choice' business". I think if anyone had said that to me, I would have decked them I was so distraught. And then I remember thinking "Well this whole heaven idea – it's bollocks because they just go in the ground, and they rot away!"
>
> I just carry the memory of them in my mind and that's what's sacred to me. And if I think back on that I think, yeah, that is a sense of spirituality. That in my spirit, I have their spirit in a way. Which sounds a bit wishy-washy but I don't know. To me, it makes more sense than having this whole concept of heaven. You know heaven reminds me of Monty Python and the meaning of life. And the guy at the end, they get in a car and drive off [she starts acting it out; we start laughing] (Jill).

Jill's comment, "That in my spirit, I have their spirit in a way" captures beautifully the presence of these internal relations. Through her playful description, where she talks about "decking" people and finding the notion of heaven to be "bollocks" she expresses the angst of death where loved ones "rot away". She then finds her way through this to the comforting, felt presence of her loved ones and then connects to the dark and absurd creativity of Monty Python. Thus, play does not only refer to games and toys (or tools), but rather, the playing with ideas and possibilities, and also the playing out of ourselves in relation to others. In play, words and objects are imbued with mental representations that come from relationships and the individual is able to creatively discover their self through their play (Winnicott, 1971).

In all of this, there needs to be an acceptance of uncertainty, which means that ambiguity about children's experiences and what is meaningful about their experiences should be tolerated by adults. Most importantly, if adults assume knowledge of the child's experience, then they are in danger of, at best, misunderstanding the child's experiences and, at worst, negating the child's experience entirely. Therefore, a children's voice perspective where the adult trusts in the child's experience, thoughts, and capacity for expression is essential.

Reflecting on the interview data, it seems that there are two key questions that could be asked in relation to wellbeing and spirituality. What obstructs expression of the phenomena? What facilitates expression of the phenomena? In contemplating these questions, I have found Miller's (1997) description of vitality to be a valuable consideration:

> The true opposite of depression is neither gaiety nor absence of pain, but vitality – the freedom to experience spontaneous feelings. It is part of the kaleidoscope of life that these feelings are not only happy, beautiful, or good but can reflect the entire range of human experience, including envy, jealousy, rage, disgust, greed, despair, and grief. But this freedom cannot be achieved if its childhood roots are cut off. Our access to the true self is possible only when we no longer have to be afraid of the intense emotional work of early childhood. Once we have experienced and become familiar with this world, it is no longer strange and threatening (pp. 60-61).

Miller's vitality rejects any controlled attempts to make a better life through purely rational means. It incorporates existential themes that children are more than capable of dwelling on; themes such as death, loss, anxiety (Hay & Nye, 2006). It also highlights the intense pain, sensitivity and emotion of childhood that is frequently forgotten by adults. For a vitalised life, the focus is not on changing bad feelings to good, or negative feelings to positive, nor is it working towards an outcome of an idyllic wellness plateau. Miller's vitality, instead, is consistent with an understanding of the self as an aperture into creative dynamic possibilities. Thus, rather than restricting the emotional life of children by trying to change

their experiences—implicitly communicating that their experiences are somehow incorrect or wrong—Miller calls for a freedom that comes with accessing the most frightening, despairing and sensitive self, along with enjoyment of the happier social self.

In conducting this study over an extensive period of time, I became more accustomed to sitting with the discomfort that comes with uncertainty, rather than trying to rid myself of it. Numerous examples in this study show this to be a difficult task, one that I was often unsuccessful at. However, Gadamer's understanding of prejudices provided me with a method of engaging with my own thoughts, becoming alerted to irritations, discomfort, excitement and so on, which served as clues that something affectively significant was occurring within me and between myself and the participant/text. The fortunate side effect of this was that a space was nurtured in my mind which allowed for more play with ideas, creative interpretations, along with empathy for the internal worlds of others. Is the development of such a space within one's mind a useful aim for education? One may experience a variety of emotions in relation to children. Acceptance of prejudices does not mean cutting off one's emotions. Rather it relates to accepting one's own feelings in relation to the child, resulting in a friendlier attitude to both the child and oneself. This requires educators to engage with their pedagogy as a responsive act, engaging with internal 'flickerings' whilst working in "the They" of neoliberal discourses which demand a purpose for education that is illusory and unachievable.

In this chapter I have explored the equiprimordial structure of Dasein to further elaborate the positioning of wellbeing and spirituality in education. 'Discourse' illustrated the shifting between falling into "the They" and returning to the call to Conscience, suggesting that moments of discomfort and uncertainty signal the possibility to extricate oneself from "the They". 'Affectivity' highlighted the primacy of mood as an ontological structure and challenged the idea that students' feelings should be changed according to social expectations

of how a person exhibiting wellbeing should appear. ‘Understanding’ was used to consider how wellbeing and spirituality are existential tools for ontological considerations, such as relations, but are also useful for ontic concerns, such as expressing and understanding how internal relations have a dynamic potency that influences our way of being. Having explored the equiprimordial structure, I suggested holding and possibility as ontic-ontological conditions for expressing wellbeing and spirituality, within the primacy of temporality. Finally, I suggested what this may look like in educational settings, particularly in regard to adult-child relations.

Chapter 8: Conclusion, limitations & recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

This study initially emerged from my curiosity about why the spiritual aspect of the child is included in an over-arching educational policy statement about the purpose of education in Australia. This curiosity was not born solely out of a critical stance regarding the impact of educational policy on my work as a wellbeing leader. It grew from an elusive feeling and a question that had not yet been formed. On reflection, I can now see a frustration that my own experience of spirituality had been ignored and denied in education; something that had been so important throughout my life had not been visible in my own schooling. How is it that something that had been central to my self, though shifting and changing throughout the years, had also remained so seemingly out-of-touch with my status as student and then my status as teacher? Perhaps, it is simply because it is beyond words and, certainly, beyond the words of my pre-adolescent self.

This gap was not just a gap in my personal and professional experience. As I read literature about wellbeing and spirituality, I became increasingly aware of something absent from the discourse. It appeared that, when wellbeing and spirituality were explicitly defined, the richness of the phenomena was lost. And when wellbeing and spirituality were not defined—or only vaguely described—the same problem occurred. Definitions rendered wellbeing and spirituality too constrained, whilst lack of definition left wellbeing and spirituality too ambiguous. But this problem of definition, or lack thereof, illuminated a felt ontological truth (Heidegger, 1962) of both phenomena; that what existed beyond worlds and beyond observation, was nonetheless meaningful.

In Chapter 1, therefore, I offered an overview of the problem of connecting wellbeing and spirituality in education by highlighting its ambiguity and then considering the positioning of both phenomena in frameworks, practice and research. Within the field of

education, wellbeing and spirituality do intersect but wellbeing is more commonly influenced by psychology, health promotion and social learning theories, whilst spirituality is more often associated with religion. Within education, it is the whole child perspective that tends to draw spirituality together with wellbeing and this approach has been conveyed as a discourse of 'care' (Spratt, 2016). However, rather than a focus on nurturing a whole integrated child, I instead found a discourse that tended to split the child according to what agenda was in place. This was at odds with historical holism, which acted as a responsive and socially just approach to education. When reviewing the educational literature on spirituality, I also revealed the limitations of a field of inquiry that is influenced by politics, theology and individual prejudices, whilst also dominated by western Christian ideals. Thus, phenomena that appear to have a self-evident wholesomeness about them, are permeated by the social and political bodies in which they are situated.

To situate this study within these various and divergent fields, I posed the connection between wellbeing and spirituality as a question of ontology, suitable for an inductive study, which privileged the lived experiences of individuals from within school communities. Given the above difficulties in defining or describing both phenomena, my research question simply asked: In what ways do the lived experiences of parents, children and teachers illuminate a relationship between wellbeing and spirituality? Chapters 3 and 4 described the methodology and methods of hermeneutic phenomenology. If phenomenology is allowing something to show itself, then it follows that phenomenology is concerned with what is not already obvious (Dreyfus, 1991). This applies to both wellbeing and spirituality, although, for some people, the appearance of both phenomena may seem self-evident. As Chloe (Year 6) commented nonchalantly about wellbeing, "Well, it's well…*being*." A "well-being", she went on to say, is a person who is not unwell. Spirituality is also self-evident in its general association with religion; perhaps it is religion, perhaps it is not. However, it is delving into

what lies beneath these self-evident understandings via lived experiences that has been the purpose of this study. This research used the philosophy of Gadamer (2004) to develop a hermeneutic phenomenological method for collecting and analysing data. The central feature of the methods was a consideration of Gadamer's understanding of prejudices and how they can be used in the service of interpretation, rather than being viewed as something to be overcome, bracketed off or ignored.

This analysis initially led to an interpretation of relational aspects of the data, and I considered at length the question of who the participants were relating to. However, as I continued to examine these relationships, I found it increasingly difficult to interpret them in a way that I felt to be a truthful representation of the data. Rather than segmenting relationships into parts, I thus considered Being-in-relation-to as an over-arching feature of wellbeing and spirituality, seeking to move beyond the self-other dualism that was initially necessitated by forming categories for analysis (i.e., relations with self, family, friends, animals and so on). By utilising Dasein to consider wellbeing and spirituality, I concentrated on the complexity of the individual's relationship with others and with the world. This included the notion that there is no *I* without *you*, or as I have posited in Chapter 2, "there is no infant" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 587). However, in a western historical consciousness there is an ongoing drive to split apart this a priori of relations. While this study uses Dasein to hold together the self-other relation, it also acknowledges an ongoing unconscious slip into separation and compartmentalisation.

Heidegger's ontology was not enough to give meaning to the lived experiences of the pre-adolescent students. It was as if the student participants had a de-ontological stance. While Heidegger sought to de-centre the subject, the pre-adolescents in this study clutched at their own selfhood and were evidently engaged in a necessary period of being the centre of their own world. Thus, their self was of primary significance and, in relaying this self to me,

they disclosed certain features of their experience that have been introduced here as a novel understanding of the pre-adolescent person. In an original contribution to knowledge of the transitional phase of pre-adolescence, I have introduced 'The Precipice', which is intended as a metaphor to capture the apprehension, excitement and mystery of an impending fall. Aligning with Heidegger's fallenness, it captures the edge of impending adolescence and the potential grief at leaving childhood behind.

Ontically, this is indeed about mental health and wellbeing. Successfully navigating this fall suggests another phase of integration of self. This has been understood as a developmental task beginning in infancy and continuing through childhood and adolescence. The ontic-ontological conditions described in Chapter 7 constitute a potential situation in which educators might provide responsiveness and holding for the pre-adolescent whilst remembering the temporality of existence. Holding temporality in mind allows one to see the constraints of time as only one aspect of reality. When time is put back into its ontic place, there is greater freedom for educators to see that the pursuit of 'better', 'more' and 'higher' is part educational phantasy.

There is something in Heidegger's understanding that sheds light on one of the issues of both wellbeing and spirituality. Dasein is constantly 'more' than it factually is (1962). Thus, what is whole is more than what appears as whole and, certainly, more than what is divided into dimensional parts. If Dasein is projection, then the whole child as an entity standing before us is, in a sense, illusory. It then follows that any evidence base of wellbeing remains in the ontic sphere. Without ontology, wellbeing in education is simply a collection of strategies, programs and approaches that aid in the comforting knowledge or, sometimes, phantasy that we are doing something that is helpful to children. Thus, the evidence base in SEL, mindfulness, gratitude or any other areas associated with wellbeing, is a discourse that partly mythologises what we think we can do in the wellbeing space.

What does ontology offer to understanding wellbeing and spirituality? Given that I have noted the essentially relational feature of both, ontology perhaps asks for a certain humility from researchers, policy makers and educators. Childhood is an exquisitely sensitive period of life and this study has highlighted the parts of the child that become split off due to the agendas of adults who enforce particular understandings and misunderstandings, all the while ignorant of their own prejudices in relation *to* relations. One way of engaging with the experience of the child is to remember. Every adult has memories where, for one reason or another, their authentic self was ignored, silenced or shamed by "the They". These memories can serve as a reminder to tread cautiously and with humility when Being-with children.

I have considered, at length, the descriptions from the pre-adolescent participants of hiding their 'true self' from others in their school community. Teachers bear the weight of many requirements that are imposed on them by the curriculum, colleagues, school leadership, the system, the broader political and social bodies, and the self of the teacher. What has authenticity to do with teaching and learning, when the teacher is attempting to get through the planned requirements for one day with 25 or more children in front of them? Few would argue that we want children to be inauthentic and simply compliant in order to just get the job done, but creating moments where the true self has a voice and emerges while being *with* others seems a slippery and esoteric task. As we saw in Alison's description of her inside and outside self, this is a hard-enough task within the child and it must be asked: what conditions would enable Alison to share these feelings of how she experiences herself? Is there a place for such conditions to exist in the course of the average school day?

The conditions of holding and temporality are holistic; they do not differentiate between what is good, higher or better in terms of wellbeing. Neither do they offer a universal description of spirituality itself. They are also preliminary to the point of being very simple. This has been done purposefully because the simplicity of ideas, such as holding and

temporality, belie a sophisticated research base from both psychoanalytic philosophy and hermeneutic phenomenology. The education field – particularly when it comes to policy and practice – has a curious and long-standing habit of jumping on novel ideas and innovations as if they are a silver bullet. The ideas presented here require more thought, not the least of which, is around the enactment of these ideas in school settings.

Thus, this research has sought a way of understanding the whole child that does not involve splitting the child into various dimensions and addressing these accordingly. Instead, the focus is on integration and allowing time for individuals, particularly children, to communicate the various parts of the self to others, or to themselves. Therefore, the whole, ontologically, has become an energy that is ontically striving for integration. Vitality, or perhaps 'vitalised energy', is not a premeditated task of building positive experiences or resilience. Rather, it is an openness to the fullness of lived experiences and, ontically, it is the capacity to experience life in that way. Some children need more support to have such a capacity and adults are tasked with the provision of this.

The ontological truth of wellbeing and spirituality posits both phenomena as disclosive. They tell us something about our lived experience that allows for ambiguity and curiosity, where the full realm of one's human experience is welcomed in a dialogue. Wellbeing and spirituality are representative of a lived hermeneutic circle within which one seeks to understand their lived experience; never quite arriving at one core truth or reaching an idyllic plateau. Rather, one arrives at more questions and these questions may not be languaged solely via discourse. Instead, they may remain in the atmospheric mood that accompanies our lived experience.

A journal entry of mine from 6th January 2020 reads:

> I write this as a mass of bushfires rage across the east coast of Australia. Collectively, these fires have already burned through an estimated 5.9 million hectares – an area larger than the size of Belgium. An incomprehensible figure of 5 million wildlife are estimated

to have died, including 30% of the entire New South Wales population of koalas. Fires are always expected in the Australian summer. But this jarring state of emergency is inconceivable in its size and scope. Images of the sky shifting from blood red to black in the middle of the day are almost comically reminiscent of my childhood fantasies of hell. It forces me, as a researcher, to look at my findings anew, asking a question that has suddenly struck me in the midst of the Australian summer: of what use are Heidegger and Gadamer now? I suddenly get a feeling of them as a couple of old guys who lived with all the privilege of white upper-class males. I look to their personal stories, and I mull over their writing. Moments of disruption are integral to Gadamer's method, and these moments have always seemed so discrete to me, and tended towards slight, barely perceptible internal "flickerings". But what happens when we are in the midst of crisis that jolts entire populations of people out of the 'everyday'?

I am thinking here about the individual internal world and what happens to this focus on self, when there is a collective crisis. Do they offer anything there?
I am thinking now about the interviews I have seen on TV, people caught by reporters to tell their stories. I remain touched by stories of kindness, told by lay people with an authentic gratitude and humility that the Prime Minister has not yet been able to muster. There was the story of the pharmacist who kept his business open while the fire danger remained, knowing that his own house had burned down. There were the tender photos of a young possum who climbed up the arm of a fire-fighter in desperation, and then found safety in the fire truck, curled up in a helmet. The kangaroo, hand-reared by a family and then set free who returned to them during the fires seeking shelter – an image of him lying on a blanket on the lounge room floor, at home. And there was the elderly man whose entire town was burning, commenting gently, 'there's so much love'.

While the bushfires in 2020 represented a flickering, COVID-19 constitutes an entire global blackout. Every new virulent strain heralds a projection towards more blackouts to come. At the time of writing, the Australian Prime Minister had ceased any repatriation from India, where thousands were dying daily with inadequate vaccines or oxygen. I wonder about the usefulness of this project and how I might breathe new life into a project now situated historically in an era where people *can't breathe*.

Spirit is etymologically linked to *pneuma* which translates to breath (Webster, 2013). Christian authors claim a type of ownership over this word (Sheldrake, 2013), associated as it is with the reified Holy Spirit. But long before Christianity, pagans and Indigenous communities recognised a strength in the breath of the wind and used this to interpret their worlds. The wind that provides the most subtle cooling breeze is the same element that gives strength and power to flames, driving fire across lands and destroying everything in its path. How do we give meaning to this environmental spirit that we do not control? This is a relevant question for the phenomena explored here.

Finally, Heidegger's understanding of existential guilt is something that I would like to take up here as it provides an ontological basis for many facets of wellbeing and spirituality, including searching, yearning, sociability, silence, connectedness and so on. Heidegger suggests that the ontological guilt that Dasein carries is the fact that we did not contribute to our Dasein through any choice of our own. Therefore, wherever we landed as a result of our thrownness is not of our own accord (Heidegger, 1962). This guilt is at times covered up and projected into, for example, a religious guilt that gives one the chance to atone for ontic guilt. However, in ontological guilt, there is neither atonement nor anything to be done about our thrownness. Dreyfus (1991) puts it well when he writes, "even if Dasein has done nothing wrong there is something wrong with Dasein—its being is not under its own power" (p. 306). I would add to this, that Heidegger's ontological guilt is this: *we do not deserve to be here*. If we do not deserve to be here, how can we live with the ontic (social and political) manifestations of this? Those who are born into adverse conditions anywhere in the world do not deserve their 'lot' any more than I deserve my privilege. An ontic response to this guilt may be to engage in social action for the betterment of others. But Heidegger (1962) provokes us with a more challenging response to the underlying ontological guilt. He writes,

> The nullity we have in mind belongs to Dasein's Being-free for its existentiell possibilities. Freedom, however, *is* only in the choice of one possibility – this is, in tolerating not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them (p. 331).

Heidegger advises of a freedom that exists in the very discovery that we are not here of our own choosing. Rather than being stuck on the idea that this is a nihilistic view of life, he transforms this into the idea of possibility. If we are not here due to a supreme plan (of God) or because we deserve to be (due to social privilege) then we recognise a greater freedom from living according to the constraints of "the They". This means that we are free for spontaneity, creativity and even gaiety (Dreyfus, 1991). Given that Dasein is both authentic and inauthentic, it seems that Heidegger is suggesting that such experiences cannot ever be permanent, rationally pursued or won through merit. The corollary of this is that wellbeing and spirituality cannot be caught or achieved, as much as we might desire to own them as permanent entities.

Gadamer (2004) appears to connect with Heidegger's understanding of possibility. He writes,

> Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus on subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life (p. 289).

It seems to me that what Gadamer was trying to express is that the meanings we make out of experiences are just a drop in the ocean of life in this world as it moves through time. But rather than being nihilistic about our flickering self-awareness, Gadamer seems to find comfort in the long trail of historical life, of which we are a miniscule part. He uses the metaphor of an electrical current to emphasise energy which fits with Dasein as movement or activity underpinning the solid structure of self.

8.2 Challenges and Limitations

The specific challenges of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis were outlined in Chapter 4, along with evaluative procedures to appraise the analysis. To these, I would add that the number of participants for such an in-depth study was large (N=19). As key features of the data emerged, having the adult data to compare to student data helped to illuminate what was significant for the pre-adolescent participants. However, it also meant that with so much data I was constrained in what I could eventually choose to write up. The limitation therefore was not having enough space in the final write up to give over to the participants' data. I would suggest that further research employing a hermeneutic phenomenology should focus solely on one participant group at a time.

One of the assumptions of my participant selection process was that only individuals who were interested in the phenomena would consent to an interview. This assumption was incorrect as I found myself interviewing Natalie, who readily admitted that 'spirituality' did not hold any meaning for her. Although I have suggested that spirituality may be present in schools, but not necessarily named 'spiritual', I have been unable to follow this through to consider how this spiritual 'prejudice' may hold up against Natalie's denial of the phenomenon. I missed an opportunity to engage with her thoughts about what the spiritual dimension was, instead responding to her discomfort by shutting down that line of questioning. Had I pursued her for more information, I may have found that her understanding of the term was embedded, for example, in a connection with religion. What I consider to be a mishandling of Natalie's interview, perhaps suggests that caution is still necessary when pursuing spirituality as a phenomenon for research. As suggested above, it is inevitably a term loaded with political, cultural and social understandings, some of which remain undisclosed.

8.3 Recommendations

In making the following recommendations I have reflected on the problems that I identified in Chapter 1, including the areas of practice, research and policy. The following recommendations address the areas of transition and change, teacher development and pedagogy, research and policy-making.

Transition marks a physical and emotional shift from primary to high school. This is addressed in the literature and in school programs, which are designed to assist Year Six students in Australia to adjust to new school environments. However, the fears, apprehension and grief that mark the loss of childhood, and entry into adolescence, are not readily acknowledged. I suggest that along with transition programs that prepare final year primary school students for change, expressive arts techniques may be particularly useful for this group. All the girls spoke of ways of expressing their 'self' including: thinking (Mai), losing themselves (Chloe), fantasising (Lesley), reading (Chloe), drawing (Marion), talking to unseen others (Mai & Ashleigh). The expressive arts allow a space for holding while also allowing children to express themselves with or without words (Upitis, 2011).

Given Winnicott's (1960) assertion that a part of the person always remains isolate, it would appear that time spent on discovering and expressing the self could never be quantified in a curriculum outcome, since the interior discovery is likely to remain hidden from others. Moreover, the school, with its constrictive social roles and requisites around teaching, learning and curriculum outcomes, is perhaps mostly conducive to a false self. However, the role of the adult is not to constantly interfere, intervene, correct, coerce and control (Bennett & Bone, 2019). It is to let the child 'be'. This privileges the child's ability to find themselves and learn through this discovery.

Despite teaching being a relational profession, there is currently no supervisory requirement for teachers at any stage of their career that considers relational dynamics or

attempts to contain teacher anxiety caused by complex dynamics in the classroom, and extended dynamics of working with parents and carers. In most other relational professions, such as counselling, social work and psychotherapeutic work, supervision is a professional requirement. It is perhaps important to consider how a holding environment might be provided for teachers who must engage in emotional work. Further research could include piloting group supervision for teachers that, in itself, is a holding environment. This may be particularly relevant for graduate teachers who frequently note that behaviour management and working with parents are two areas in which they feel underprepared (de Bruïne, 2014; Peters, 2012)

Regarding policy and research, there is still a chasm between those working in the field of children's spirituality in education, and those working in other fields of education. As much as the research might attest that spirituality is not necessarily religious, it is evident from policy that spirituality is viewed as tied to religion, and as I argued in Chapter 1, still regarded with caution. Given that Indigenous cultures seem to be an accepted avenue of inclusion for spirituality, and one that does not immediately bring to mind theistic religion, I would suggest that ongoing research from Indigenous perspectives has much to offer in terms of broadening notions of spirituality beyond religion. Indeed, Indigenous perspectives offer research that is counter to the dualism I noted in Chapter 1. However, Ritskes (2011) poses what I am proposing here as a problem:

> Indigenous spirituality weaves its way inextricably through all aspects of life so how can it be brought to a Western academy that seeks to fragment and compartmentalize knowledge as a method of control and containment? (p. 411)

This situates my recommendation as permeated with issues of power, epistemological disparities and tension. However, the Western academy is not without the capacity to interpret its own understandings and therefore engaging with Gadamer's understanding of

prejudices may be one way to engage in dialogical research between western and non-western ways of understanding.

For policy purposes, I suggest abandoning the oft cited dimensions of the whole person, at least, in their current form. As I argued in Chapter 2, references to the parts of the whole child appear to be chosen according to divergent educational agendas, therefore negating the whole in favour of the parts. By dividing the whole child into such disparate parts, we recruit the whole child approach into a method of control that early theorists sought to diminish. Gee et al. (2014) offer a contribution to an understanding of wellbeing through their *Social and emotional wellbeing from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective* (2014). In considering the work of Gee et al. (2014) there is an important difference between this whole and the dimensions of the whole child. In Gee et al.'s accompanying diagram, the self is centred and surrounded by eight parts, including

- Connection to spirit, spirituality and ancestors
- Connection to body
- Connection to mind and emotions
- Connection to family and kinship
- Connection to community
- Connection to culture
- Connection to country (Gee et al., 2014).

This representation of wellbeing is illustrative of relationships that are ongoing, not only existing in the observable here-and-now. Additionally, the perspective is that the self, although centred, is inseparable from others. Most significant for shifting representations of the whole person, is the use of 'connection'. Here it is not the various parts that are prioritised, but the connection between self, others and the world. This is close to an ecological perspective of the whole, but also emphasises the nuanced interior features of self,

such as mind and emotions, spirit and spirituality. This prioritises the interconnectedness between the domains and the self in a way that is much harder to divide for other purposes. This means that the possibility of aspects being ignored or neglected is less likely to occur.

Finally, I suggest that educators take it upon themselves to slow things down. The neoliberal race to more, better, faster, higher, is an absurd race to nowhere at best, and a destructive brute show of monetary force at worst. While we may haplessly engage in this as adults, the responsibility to protect children from the neoliberal body lies with adults. In fact, teachers and school principals do form a shield around children so that children are able to develop in their own time and in their own context, and yet, at times "the They" of education places pressure and demands on teachers that obstruct their responsiveness to children. I suggest that the conditions described in Chapter 7 can provide some of this protection. However, these conditions need to be understood realistically and cautiously or else risk being turned into another ontic educational 'solution'.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Prof Alexander Kostogriz

Co-Investigators:

Student Researcher: Claire Manton (HDR Student)

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:

Experiences of wellbeing and spirituality: a hermeneutic phenomenological study

for the period: 31/12/2017

Special Condition/s of Approval

Prior to commencement of your research, the following permissions are required to be submitted to the ACU HREC:

The data collection of your project has received ethical clearance but the decision and authority to commence may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process and this approval will be ratified at the next available meeting and is subject to the following:

- satisfactory validation of Working with Children Checks;
- receipt of outstanding permission letters/other approvals;
- ratification of any outstanding items (eg: interview/survey questions).

You will be contacted should the Committee raise any issues in relation to the above matters.

The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that outstanding permission letters are obtained, interview/survey questions, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to ACU HREC before any data collection can occur. Failure to provide outstanding documents to the ACU HREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Further, this approval is only valid as long as approved procedures are followed.

Clinical Trials: You are required to register it in a publicly accessible trials registry prior to enrolment of the first participant (e.g. Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry http://www.anzctr.org.au/) as a condition of ethics approval.

It is the Principal Investigators / Supervisors responsibility to ensure that:

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC with 72 hours.
2. Any changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the HREC by submitting a Modification/Change to Protocol Form prior to the research commencing or continuing. http://research.acu.edu.au/researcher- support/integrity-and-ethics/
3. Progress reports are to be submitted on an annual basis. http://research.acu.edu.au/researcher- support/integrity-and-ethics/
4. All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Letter and consent form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.
5. Protocols can be extended for a maximum of five (5) years after which a new application must be submitted. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

Researchers must immediately report to HREC any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol eg: changes to protocols or unforeseen circumstances or adverse effects on participants.

K. Pashley.

Signed: .... Date: .... 15/02/2017.....

(Research Services Officer, Australian Catholic University, Tel: 02 9739 2646)

Appendix B: Parent information letter & consent form for student participants

PARENT/CARER INFORMATION LETTER
for your child's participation

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Alex Kostogriz
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Manton
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Parents/Carers,

Your child is invited to participate in a research project that will use interviews to find out how students describe their experiences of wellbeing and spirituality.

Claire Manton is conducting the project in 2017 to fulfill the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University, under the supervision of Prof. Alex Kostogriz. Claire is currently a lecturer at Australian Catholic University. Prior to her role at ACU, Claire was a primary school teacher and Wellbeing Leader for many years.

What is involved?
Your child will be invited to participate in 2 interviews about what wellbeing and spirituality means to them. The interviews will take place at the school and will last for **no longer than** 50 minutes. This will occur during class time however every effort will be made to ensure that your child is not missing any key learning and teaching times. The interviews will be conducted by Claire Manton and will be recorded on a digital audio-recording device that will be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisor. This study is being conducted at Australian Catholic University however it is not being conducted within a particular religious perspective. Current research about spirituality recognises that it can be located within or without a religious context. All are welcome to participate, including individuals who identify as agnostic or atheist or from within a particular religion.

What are the benefits of the research project?
Participating in the interviews will give students the time and opportunity to reflect on how they understand wellbeing and spirituality.

Are there any risks involved if my child participates?
In the unlikely event that the interview causes distress to your child the audio-recording will be stopped immediately. Claire Manton will notify your child's teacher or the Principal and will phone you immediately following the interview.

Can my child withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your child is not under any obligation to participate. If you agree for your child to participate, they can withdraw at any time before or during the interview. Your child can also withdraw from the study in the week following the first interview and their data will be deleted.

Non-participation or withdrawal from the study will not affect your child's learning in any way.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

The results from this study will be written up as a doctoral thesis and may be published in academic journals that will not identify students in any way. Due to the small number of participants, there is a small risk of participants being identified within the school community, however no one from the school community will have access to the data. All identifying information will be removed from the data during transcription of the interviews and the interviewer herself will transcribe the data.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

A summary of the results of the project will be sent to all participants.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions, please contact:
Ms Claire Manton
Associate Lecturer
Australian Catholic University
250 Victoria Pde, East Melbourne
Ph: 9953 3654
Email: claire.manton@acu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2016-322E). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519
Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

My child can participate! How do I give consent?

Please sign the consent form attached, place it in the envelope provided and return it to the school office. Once Parent/Carer consent has been given, students will be asked for their consent to participate also.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Kostogriz
Date: 28/02/2017

Claire Manton
Date:28/032017

PARENT CONSENT FORM for student participants
Copy for Parent/Carer to Keep

Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality

SUPERVISOR: Alex Kostogriz

STUDENT RESEARCHER : Claire Manton

I ..... have read and understood the information provided in the Student Participant Information Letter. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree for my child to participate in 2 interviews lasting no longer than 40 minutes and I understand that both interviews will be recorded on a digital recording device (audio).I realise that I can withdraw my consent for my child to participate in the interviews at any time before the interview takes place. I understand that if my child withdraws before or during the interview, or within a week of the interview taking place, his/her data will not be used. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF STUDENT: .....

NAME OF PARENT/CARER:……

SIGNATURE .....DATE ……

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:… DATE: 28/02/2017

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: DATE: 29/03/2017

Appendix C: Student information letter & assent form

STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Alex Kostogriz
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Manton
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Student,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project about wellbeing and spirituality. Many people have a lot of different ideas about what these words mean and I would like to hear your thoughts.

What will I have to do?
If you agree to participate I may invite you to be interviewed by me. The interview will be like a conversation where you can share your thoughts, ideas and any experiences that you can relate to wellbeing and spirituality. This will take no longer than 50 minutes and will happen in a quiet space at your school. Once I have thought and written about our interview, I will come back for one more conversation at a later date.

What are the benefits of participating in this research project?
You may find this project interesting and enjoy having a conversation about your own experiences of wellbeing and spirituality. This conversation will also give you some time for reflection during the school day. A lot of adults think that these words are important for children and this will give you a chance to express your thoughts, feelings and ideas about these words too.

Are there any risks involved?
Sometimes when we discuss things that are important to us, we can start to feel some very strong emotions and may then feel uncomfortable about being interviewed. If this happens, I will stop the interview straight away and let an adult at the school (most likely your teacher) know that you were feeling upset. I will also phone your parent/carer to let them know.

Can I change my mind if I decide I do not want to participate?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary – you do not have to participate! If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the interview at any time and you do not have to explain why you have changed your mind. If you withdraw from the study during the interview, the audio-recording of your interview will be deleted straight away. You can also withdraw from the study in the week following the first interview. If you choose to withdraw in the week following the first interview, you or your parent/carer can email me at the email address below to let me know that you do not want me to use our interview for the study.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?
The results from this study will be summarised and written up as a thesis. They may also appear in academic publications but the information that is published will not identify you in any way.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?
Yes! I will send you a summary of the results.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
If you have any questions, please contact:
Ms Claire Manton
Associate Lecturer
Australian Catholic University
250 Victoria Pde, East Melbourne
Ph: 9953 3654
Email: claire.manton@acu.edu.au

I want to participate! How do I sign up?
Great! Please sign the assent form attached and place it in the envelope provided. You can then hand the envelope in at your school office. I will meet with you before we have an interview so that I can answer any questions that you may have. If you meet me and then decide that you do not want to participate, you can keep your assent form instead of returning it to the school office and then I will know not to contact you for an interview.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Kostogriz
Date: 28/02/2017

Claire Manton
Date:29/03/2017

STUDENT ASSENT FORM
Copy for Student Participant to Keep

Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality

SUPERVISOR: Alex Kostogriz

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Manton

I ..... have read (or have had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Student Participant Information Letter. The letter has been explained to me and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

- ☐ I agree to participate in 2 interviews which will last no longer than 40 minutes each
- ☐ I understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- ☐ I know that I can change my mind at any time before or during each interview if I no longer want to participate
- ☐ I know that my interview data will not be used if the researcher is notified that I have change my mind in the week following the interview
- ☐ I understand that the research data collected for the study may be published but the published results will not identify me in any way.

NAME OF STUDENT: .....

SIGNATURE ..... DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR: DATE: 28/02/2017

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: DATE: 29/03/2017

Appendix D: Parent participant information letter and consent form

PARENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Alex Kostogriz
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Manton
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Parents/Carers,

You are invited to participate in a research project about the relationship between wellbeing and spirituality which will use interviews to find out how parents describe their experiences of wellbeing and spirituality.

Claire Manton is conducting the project for her doctoral thesis at Australian Catholic University, under the supervision of Prof. Alex Kostogriz. Claire is currently a lecturer at Australian Catholic University. Prior to her role at ACU, Claire was a primary school teacher and Wellbeing Leader for many years.

What is involved?
You will be invited to participate in 2 interviews about your experiences of wellbeing and spirituality. The interviews will take place at the school and will last for **no longer than** 50 minutes. A time that is suitable for you will be arranged and the interview can take place either during school hours or after school hours.

This study is being conducted at Australian Catholic University however it is not being conducted within a particular religious perspective. Current research about spirituality recognises that it can be located within or without a religious context. All participants are invited, including individuals who identify as agnostic or atheist, or from within a particular religion.

What are the benefits of the research project?
These interviews will give you the opportunity to reflect on wellbeing and spirituality.

Are there any risks involved?
There are no risks involved by participating in the interviews. However, in the unlikely event that the interview causes distress to you the audio recording will be stopped immediately. I can then discuss an appropriate course of action with you.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw at any time before or during the interview without adverse consequences and your data will be deleted. You can also withdraw from the study in the week following the first interview and your data will be deleted.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?
The results from this study will be written up as a doctoral thesis and published in academic journals that will not identify you in any way.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?
A summary of the results of the project will be sent to all participants.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
If you have any questions, please contact:
Ms Claire Manton
Associate Lecturer
Australian Catholic University
250 Victoria Pde, East Melbourne
Ph: 9953 3654
Email: claire.manton@acu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2016-322E). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519
Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?
Please sign the consent form attached, place it in the envelope provided and return it to the school office. If you are selected to participate, Ms Claire Manton will contact you to arrange a suitable time.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Kostogriz **Claire Manton**

Date: 28/02/2017 Date: 29/03/2017

CONSENT FORM for parent participants
Copy for Parent Participant to Keep

Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality

SUPERVISOR: Alex Kostogriz

STUDENT RESEARCHER : Claire Manton

I ..... have read and understood the information provided in the Parent Participant Information Letter. The letter has been explained to me and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in 2 interviews lasting no longer than 50 minutes each and I understand that it will be recorded on a digital recording device (audio), realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time before or during the interview. I understand that I can withdraw my data in the week following the interview. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME: ……..

SIGNATURE ..... DATE ……

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR: DATE: 28/02/2017

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: DATE: 29/03/2017

Appendix E: Teacher participant information letter and consent form

TEACHER PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof. Alex Kostogriz
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Manton
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in an interview about what wellbeing and spirituality means to you. The interviews will form part of a research project that seeks to find out how educators, students and parents describe wellbeing and spirituality.

Claire Manton is conducting the project for her doctoral thesis at Australian Catholic University, under the supervision of Prof. Alex Kostogriz. Claire is currently a lecturer at Australian Catholic University. Prior to her role at ACU, Claire was a primary school teacher and Wellbeing Leader for many years.

What is involved?
You will be invited to participate in 2 interviews about your experiences of wellbeing and spirituality. The interviews will take place at the school and will last for **no longer than** 50 minutes. A time that is suitable for you will be arranged and the interview can take place either during school hours or after school hours.

This study is being conducted at Australian Catholic University however it is not being conducted within a particular religious perspective. Current research about spirituality recognises that it can be located within or without a religious context. All participants are invited, including individuals who identify as agnostic or atheist or from within a particular religion.

What are the benefits of the research project?
These interviews will give teachers an opportunity to reflect on spirituality and wellbeing.

Are there any risks involved?
There are no risks involved by participating in the interviews. However, in the unlikely event that the interview causes distress to you the audio recording will be stopped immediately. I can then discuss an appropriate course of action with you.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw at any time before or during the interview without adverse consequences and your data will be deleted. You can also withdraw from the study in the week following the first interview and your data will be deleted.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?
The results from this study will be written up as a doctoral thesis and published in academic journals that will not identify you in any way.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?
A summary of the results of the project will be sent to all participants. The school will be offered a Professional Learning seminar discuss the findings of the research.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
If you have any questions, please contact:
Ms Claire Manton
Associate Lecturer
Australian Catholic University
250 Victoria Pde, East Melbourne
Ph: 9953 3654
Email: claire.manton@acu.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2016-322E). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059
Ph.: 02 9739 2519
Fax: 02 9739 2870
Email: resethics.manager@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?
Please sign the consent form attached, place it in the envelope provided and return it to the school office. If you are selected to participate, Ms Claire Manton will contact you to arrange a suitable time.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Kostogriz
Date: 28/02/2017

Claire Manton
Date: 29/03/2017

CONSENT FORM for teacher participants
Copy for Participant to Keep

Experiences of Wellbeing and Spirituality

SUPERVISOR: Alex Kostogriz

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Claire Manton

I ..... have read and understood the information provided in the Teacher Participant Information Letter. The letter has been explained to me and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in 2 interviews lasting no longer than 50 minutes each and I understand that it will be recorded on a digital recording device (audio), realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time before or during the interview. I understand that I can withdraw my data in the week following the interview. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME: ……..

SIGNATURE ..... DATE ……

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR: DATE: 28/02/2017

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: DATE: 29/03/2017

Appendix F: Post interview slip for student participants

Interview 1

Dear
Today, _____ participated in an interview about wellbeing and spirituality. Thank you for giving your consent so that she could participate in this research project. Attached is the information letter about the research, and my contact details should you have any further questions.
Kind Regards,
Claire Manton

Interview 2

Dear
Today, _____ participated in a second interview about wellbeing and spirituality. Thank you for giving your consent so that she could participate in this research project. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Kind Regards,
Claire Manton
claire.manton@monash.edu

Appendix G: Interview schedule

Interview 1.

The interviews will be semi-structured and the interview schedule is intended as a guide only. The interviews will be recorded using audio digital recording equipment.

1. The interview will begin with a brief description of the study and a review of the information letter and consent form. The participants will be reminded that the interview will be recorded and that they may withdraw from the interview at any time.
   Reviewing assent with the child participants will include asking the following questions:
   Do you remember the last time we met? Can you remember what we spoke about?
   I will then talk through the assent form with them and reinforce that they can stop the interview at any time if they choose to.

2. After briefly discussing how the terms 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' can have a lot of different meanings, the participants will be invited to share their thoughts on what the term/terms mean.
   For child participants I will introduce the term in the following way:
   On the information letter that we have just read, I mentioned that a lot of people have a lot of different ideas about what the word 'spirituality' might mean. Can you share your thoughts with me about this word?
   Where have you heard it before?
   What does it make you think of?

3. The participants will be encouraged to deepen their associations through questions that ask them to reflect on their particular experiences of spirituality associated with their thoughts. I will help them make links between their initial thoughts/ideas and their own life experiences by asking questions such as:

   - You mentioned x and y, does a particular experience of that come to mind?
   - You mentioned x and y, could you say something more about that?
   - You mentioned x and y, what I'm hearing is… does that sound true to what you're saying or am I not quite getting it?
   - Can you remember a time when x and y happened to you?

4. When the associations with spirituality come to an end, the interviewer will redirect the conversation to wellbeing, by noting that wellbeing is also a term that can have a lot of different meanings. The participants will then be invited to share their thoughts about wellbeing.

5. The participants will be encouraged to deepen their associations through questions that ask them to reflect on their particular experiences of wellbeing associated with their thoughts. For example:

   - You mentioned x and y, does a particular experience of that come to mind?
   - You mentioned x and y, could you say something more about that?
   - You mentioned x and y, what I'm hearing is… does that sound true to what you're saying or am I not quite getting it?
   - Can you remember a time when x and y happened to you?

6. The interviewer will thank the participant for their participation and ask how they found the experience of being interviewed about spirituality and wellbeing. The interviewer will draw the interview to a close after a maximum of 50 minutes.

Interview 2.

The interviews will be semi-structured and the interview schedule is intended as a guide only. The purpose of the 2nd interview is to clarify some of the statements made and to offer some of the initial interpretations to participants. What is covered in this interview will be dependent on what emerges from the first interview. The interviews will be recorded using audio digital recording equipment.

1. The interview will begin with a brief review of the study and a review of the information letter and consent form. The participants will be reminded that the interview will be recorded and that they may withdraw from the interview at any time.

2. The interviewer will share some of the statements made in the first interview, and the preliminary interpretations. For example:

   When you talked about spirituality, you mentioned x and y, and it seemed similar to your description of wellbeing which was x and y. Do they (the descriptions) feel the same to you, or do they feel different? Can you tell me what the differences are?

3. The participants will be encouraged to continue deepening their associations through questions that ask them to reflect on their particular experiences of spirituality and wellbeing. I will help them make links between their initial thoughts/ideas and their own life experiences by asking questions such as:

   - You mentioned x and y, does a particular experience of that come to mind?
   - You mentioned x and y, could you say something more about that?
   - You mentioned x and y, what I'm hearing is… does that sound true to what you're saying or am I not quite getting it?
   - Can you remember a time when x and y happened to you?

4. The interviewer will thank the participant for their participation and ask how they found the experience of being interviewed about spirituality and wellbeing. The interviewer will draw the interview to a close after a maximum of 50 minutes.

Appendix H: Phase 2 analysis

Wellbeing		
Participant	**Participant's words**	**Researcher's descriptions**
Alison	our feelings, emotions, personality health in our relationships with friends being kind to our friends always being there for them being happy and energetic and stuff like that 'what I'm like'; more social and happy	*Wellbeing is associated with feelings, personality, and relationships.* *In relationships, wellbeing means that you have the capacity to be kind to friends and support them.* *Feelings associated with wellbeing include being happy and energetic.* *Wellbeing is related to 'what I am like' as a person.* *I have greater wellbeing if I am more sociable and happy.*
Ashleigh	think before you do what we feel or what we do as humans (lazy, adventurous, safe or unsafe)	*Wellbeing is the capacity to think before you act.* *Wellbeing is associated with our feelings and our actions*
Brie	**physical** wellbeing as something as being healthy and **mental** wellbeing is about how you deal with things in your life You can understand your own wellbeing so have an understanding of what's going on in your life **Social i**s just how are you with other people (3 parts) able to connect with people you're able to make friends easily wellbeing is the way somebody is feeling so mental, physically how they feel about Life mental wellbeing where so if they're thinking happy thoughts and things so that's good mental well-being, but a not so good one would be if you're thinking negative thoughts all the time	*Wellbeing includes the physical, social and mental aspects of life.* *Physical wellbeing is being physical healthy.* *Mental wellbeing refers to our ability to cope.* *Social wellbeing refers to how one relates to others and the capacity to connect to others. This includes being able to make friends easily.* *The capacity to understand one's own wellbeing forms part of wellbeing itself.*
Gabby	-	
Jennifer	My feelings It's about your self When I'm sad…my wellbeing actually drops, I feel less alive I guess. It's not just about being happy all the time. It's also having a mix Physical wellbeing (as an example) eating the right foods and exercising Mentally well – have a nice social life, have lots of friends The final product is wellbeing	*Wellbeing refers to the physical, mental and social aspects of a person.* *Wellbeing is having the capacity to experience a range of feelings. However, higher wellbeing is associated with pleasant feelings, while lower wellbeing is associated with unpleasant feelings.* *Unpleasant feelings and lower wellbeing can result in feeling 'less alive'.* *Wellbeing is a result of physical, mental and social wellness.* *Wellbeing is about the 'self'.* *Brie and Jennifer both refer to these 3 aspects so possibly have explored this in class.*
Jill	Self-care is looking after your wellbeing	*Wellbeing needs to be nurtured through self-care*

Louise	Courageous conversations for wellbeing Gratitude, empathy, mindfulness Having a lot to do and knowing that I'll be able to get that done	*Wellbeing can be achieved through speaking truthfully with others, gratitude, empathy and mindfulness.* *Wellbeing is having confidence in knowing that one can cope with external stress.*
Mai	Wellbeing is how other people feel If their wellbeing is not as good as mine it will probably mean they're hut and sad inside. If they have higher wellbeing they would be more happy and they would enjoy stuff more Wellbeing can be about your health, it can be about how you're feeling but either way, its about you.	*Wellbeing is about the 'self'* *Higher levels of wellbeing are associated with pleasant feelings and the capacity to enjoy one's life and lower levels of wellbeing is associated with painful feeling states.* Notes: Both sisters talk about higher and lower wellbeing.
Marion	Taking care of yourself, looking after yourself Art is like therapy which calms me down It's representing what you are	*Wellbeing is the capacity to care for the self* *One way of caring for the self is through art.* *Wellbeing is an expression of the 'self'* Notes: Re-presenting: expression 'it represents' what you are. Expression of self to the world (art is that expression for her).
Matthew		
Nina	If you discipline yourself in all aspects of your life, you have wellbeing Wellbeing is physical, mind, family Everything is wellbeing: physical, mental, relationships Whole lifestyle (career, finances, relationships, spirituality) all interactive aspects of wellbeing If all these areas are healthy, your lifestyle is the best	*Wellbeing is associated with one's lifestyle including the physical, economic, relational and mental aspects of the self, which interact with each other.* *Wellbeing can be achieved through disciplined attention to each aspect of the whole person.* Notes: When I right 'can be achieved' or is the result of, I can bring these together in the description of wellbeing as an outcome (in accordance with the literature)
Shelley	Feeling content with what's happening and accepting it I don't think it means that everything is always good I think it means that you have tools to try and deal with things that come at you and accepting the things that you can't change Being able to let other people in, accept help	*Wellbeing is a feeling of contentment and realistic acceptance of all aspects of one's life.* *Wellbeing is associated with the capacity to deal with challenges, including having resources and seeking support from others.* *Wellbeing is about being about to accept help from others*
Chloe	happy and healthy and no problems mentally (healthy) mindfulness: calm yourself and just take sure everything is okay so you're not stressed all Well. Being. not getting distracted when you doing work or something	*Wellbeing is associated with an idealistic state of being happy and healthy and having no problems.* Notes: Rules have consequences, related to rituals
Lesley	How it enriches my life How I feel how my health is and how things around me affects me Wellbeing is about all emotions and all things around like they could be bad things around you that could be good things around you and me could be	*Wellbeing is what enriches one's life* *Wellbeing is attunement to the self* *Wellbeing is experiencing a variety of emotions* *Personality is a part of wellbeing* *Wellbeing is what makes you 'you'* *Wellbeing is associated with the things that make you comfortable, healthy and bright which includes the capacity to escape*

	healthy things and they could be unhealthy things Personality is part of your wellbeing Well that's really what makes you 'you' and what makes you feel comfortable and makes you feel healthy and bright and makes you feel like you escape from reality and make your own	*Wellbeing includes a combination of reality and fantasy* Notes Fantasy and escape Enrichment 'a rich variety of emotions'? Personality fits with the 'self'; how one experiences oneself Binaries: good/bad; healthy/unhealthy check for other children
Natalie	It's all about the whole child, we look at how we can actually nurture the child how the children are feeling, what we can do to help them feel the best so they can perform the best home life wellbeing is probably where you need to look into your inner thoughts of how you are feeling inside as well as… so it's more of your emotional, of like how you're coping with your emotions, how you're physically feeling…uh, probably as a mum I don't do this as much as I should If I'm well and I'm actually in the right space, I will be a better teacher and a better parent	*Wellbeing refers to the whole child which includes paying attention to the child's family and their feelings. If schools attend to wellbeing, the child's learning will be positively impacted.* *Wellbeing refers to an inner state. When one pays attention to what is going on internally, it uncovers how one is coping with life.* *If you are 'well' you will be 'better'*
Nicky	It's happiness and being happy with yourself and your surroundings your environment, to people you interact with and just health in general I think, physical and mentally your health and eating and looking after yourself so your healthy.	*Wellbeing is associated with physical, social and mental health, and the capacity for self-care.* *Wellbeing is a state of happiness with self and with place*
Patrice	You either can manage own emotions well and your own health, physical health. So you're able to make those decisions that you can make the best choices for yourself to be healthy physically, Emotionally that you know you're able to look after your mental health well-being, you're able to have some time out you're able to relax you're able to recharge your battery all of that. And if you aren't able to self manage that then you know how to get that support to do that from someone else. So there's times for myself when I reach out to others when I'm a violence with workload or this is a really challenging problem I can't manage it on my own, I need select tasks and	*Wellbeing is the capacity to make decisions about what is best for oneself emotionally and physically. This includes seeking support from others.*

	support some help, Knowing you like to go to for that is part of my well-being because I don't think we have to manage everything on our own to be well so knowing who I can go to is part of wellbeing for me (Issue with a staff member) affects my personal well-being at home because I can't, it never leaves me it's always with me the issue. I dream about it, I wake up about it	*Wellbeing is severely affected when the intensity of relational issues are constant* Notes: There is something evocative about 'it never leaves me' like a constant unwanted companion who will not go away.
Rachael	Wellbeing is about your whole person, so mental and physical. If you're feeling really good it would mean that you're physically well and mentally so like being able to cope with things and being resilient	*Wellbeing refers to the physical and mental aspects of the self.* *If one is feeling good, it is a sign that one is resilient and physically well.* Notes Escapism
Vanessa	I think wellbeing comes down to taking care of one's mental health as well as feeling secure and also supported. So in terms of my wellbeing, what it means to me, I think like as a teacher myself, wellbeing is so important because if your own wellbeing is not being looked after then you can't really look after those around you Wellbeing has been something that I definitely struggle with.	*Wellbeing is a combination of self-care and receiving care from others. You are only able to care for others when your own wellbeing is being looked after.*

Spirituality		
Alison	also in personality and your spirit maybe also being happy and stuff what's inside of me, like what I would feel on the inside, not just the outside	*Spirit* *Is associated with the self,* *Is associated with Internal experience* *Is associated with Internal feelings*
Ashleigh	Living and non-living things (dead) Angels and spirits Things that make you feel safe kind of makes you feel like you had somebody there by your side, but there's no one really there how humans feel somebody that's passed away and their spirit is with you	*Spirituality is about life and death;* *what was once alive is non-living now* *Those who have died are still 'with you' present* *Spirituality is about entities that can't be seen* *Spirituality is about feelings* Notes: Internal sense of protection
Brie	Peacefulness. Because I know that's not always something I find easy.	*Spirituality is about peacefulness.* *There is a sense of longing for this elusive state.*

	being happy because I know that it's just something about me but I get depression spirituality would be your subconscious so not the thing that is constantly thinking, the thing that came knocking once you've done it a million times (the subconscious is the thing that notices what we're thinking, in her understanding) also calls it your spirit its my subconscious or spirit that says come back into what you're doing like in the school room I'm right next to a window.	*Spirit is a part of our consciousness* *It calls us back to awareness* Notes: Communicates her unhappiness to me, feeling 'different' to others
Gabby	God is God Religion Spirituality is like power …for the god	*Spirituality is God. There is no need to explain God, God simply exists.*
Jennifer	Not just about who you are on the outside (Thai, Vietnamese) but it's about who you are inside. On the inside I'm sad…my spirit is sad 2 ways: there's a ghost spirit; there's a spirit like your soul, your body, your self It's not about knowledge, it's about who you are You can be kind only if you do it It doesn't have anything to do with religion Who you are but not physically, but mentally	*It is about who you are, your 'self'* *Your spirit experiences feelings* *Associated with entities that can't be seen.* *It's not epistemological* *Spirituality is associated with actions of kindness towards others.* *Spirituality does not mean religion* *Not the physical representing to the external world, but the internal feelings of being-in-the-world* *Notes* *Talked about 'spirit' rather than spirituality. More tangible? What is the relationship between spirit and spirituality?* Notes Saying 'entities' that can't be seen respects their experience. Using 'supernatural' would foreclose the experience. *Self, soul, and body*
Jill	Belief in God; belief in a higher power You can't pin it down to one particular thing A sense of 'I'll be okay through this' Sense of spirit, sense of self shaped by environment Self is spirit; spirit is self religion is an expression of spirituality	*Belief in 'something greater'* *Spirituality is ambiguous* *Spirituality is an internal sense of safety* *'Self' and 'spirit' are interchangeable* *Religion is one expression of spirituality*

Louise	Sense of having power and having connection with other people My understanding of spirituality is coloured by faith	*Spirituality is a sense of power* *Spirituality is connection with others* *Spirituality is understood through religion*
Mai	My spirit and where it belongs My spirit belongs to god right now	*Spirituality is a sense of belonging with god*
Marion	I come from a very religious family so it's a really big part of my life, the spirituality…my religion, Christianity.	*Spirituality is religion*
Matthew	Spirituality is the main thing The centre-point of spirituality is Jesus Read the Bible	*Spirituality is religion.*
Nina	I've always believed it was just god but now it could be anything spiritual. There's a higher being There's an infinite Something bigger than yourself Helping to 'spread the good news'	*Spirituality is associated with a higher being* *Something more* *Spirituality involves sharing knowledge of this*
Shelley	Connectedness with others; with nature; with religion; with places or things	*Spirituality is connectedness to others and to the environment* *Spirituality can include religion*
Chloe	Your beliefs	*Spirituality is associated with beliefs* Notes: Refers to indigenous culture
Lesley	Something inside of you at like past, like I know aboriginal culture they feel like their spirits are with them ancestry spirits with them There's spirit in the world Like there's spirits everywhere in…like, I always feel like my family is in me as a spirit and my spirit is with them (past family)	*Spirituality is associated with ancestral connectedness* *'Spirit' refers to unseen entities. When these entities are the form of family who have died, they are experiences as alive in us.* Notes: Refers to indigenous culture
Natalie	Religion. That you're going to go into your beliefs with religion so I sort of went 'whoa' with a step back which was funny really because it doesn't mean that. Well, it's a term that I don't really think of. Yeah, I wouldn't use it. Um, yeah…it's not one that I…yeah	*Spirituality is associated with religion needs to be used cautiously* *Spirituality is associated with beliefs. Her beliefs are focused on the real and pragmatic. Nothing unknown or wishy-washy but 'What can I do know to make a difference? 'Spirituality is about action.*
Nicky	our family like through the generations we've all been Catholics strong Catholics Not just that (religion) I think it's other things around us	*Spirituality is associate with religion, but not always so* Notes: Strong sense of place, experience grounded in surroundings
Patrice	it's certainly not a term that we would use in our system in our school because I think it does have a religious overtone and we are quite deliberately not religiously aligned	*Spirituality is associated with religion needs to be used cautiously*

	What I get is in the living space we treat each other with kindness and respect and the Christian values I suppose is what I live by because they work for me but I don't have this sort of grated being that you know… I am accounting that for. It's just the practical application of my life. So for me spirituality it is about how I'm feeling as a good person. So if in the 10 commandments if you're talking about Christianity as a religion, I don't think you can go too past them, they're pretty good. And they are the school's values here of respect, caring, honesty and trust. You know those cover all of those things to. But I don't need a deity I don't need anything to sort of idolise or 2 to worship or two… And certainly at schools we wouldn't be talking in that sense it's all about what do you do as a person	*Spirituality can help explicate values around how we should treat each other* *Spirituality doesn't imply belief in a deity* *Spirituality is associated with what you do as a good person (action)*
Rachael	I wouldn't personally think that I would, I don't consider myself a spiritual person probably. Saying that though, often it's with the kids, and I do appreciate the benefits of mindfulness. But when I think of spiritual, I think of more religious spiritual which has never been something I've been followed. I probably wouldn't call myself spiritual but yet depends I suppose on your definition. I can see, definitely see, the benefits of mindfulness and we do 'peaceful kids' program and I help run that for the kids and stuff so and I find that calming	*Spirituality is associated with mindfulness* *Spirituality is associated with religion and needs to be used cautiously*
Vanessa	It is being connected with yourself and others, honestly and really truthfully too Being spiritual is about opening ourselves up to, 'well what is the truth here? And if we can reconnect with ourselves in a really truthful and honest way, and we start to become really honest with the people around us as well. And that's what I think really spiritual person is	*Spirituality is connectedness to self and others* *Spirituality is associated with truth* Notes: Very connected to the idea of truth

Connecting wellbeing and spirituality		
Alison	healthy relationships with your friends, your family	*Wellbeing and spirituality are about relationships*

Ashleigh	how you think about, your awareness of different ways that you could improve, to be a better person One is kind of the religion side, is like how how Jesus went with his gut and did what was right, And then the other side it being aware of…aware of your surroundings and others' feelings and yourself it makes me feel like a better person when I can think back and think what wrong things that I've done but relate to them and make that experience a better experience Spirituality: makes you feel safe Wellbeing: makes you a better person of yourself	*Wellbeing and spirituality are about our we think about ourselves* *'being a better person* *Spirituality makes you safe, wellbeing makes you a better person. You need the sense of safety to be a better person.*
Brie	I think they are because spirituality to me means yourself and your spirit within your, so within your mind. Whereas and well-being can be mental so I think they connect quite nicely together	*Wellbeing and spirituality are about your mind*
Gabby	Feeling good, happiness always found through prayer	*Wellbeing (happiness) is found through spirituality (prayer)*
Jennifer	They are the same thing Wellbeing is inside and outside Spirituality is inside	*Wellbeing and spirituality are internal*
Jill	There's an intrinsic connection between the two Spirituality can be really integral to a person's sense of wellbeing Wellbeing is about nurturing the spirit Music is an expression of wellbeing and spirituality	*Wellbeing is about nurturing the spirit* *Music is as expression of wellbeing and spirituality*
Louise	They are strongly connected Wellbeing affects spirituality and vice versa	*They affect each other*
Mai	God's creations make us feel better	*Belief in god has a positive impact on wellbeing*
Marion	Wellbeing is pretty much what you are and spirituality is a part of what you are.	*Wellbeing is the self, and spirituality is a part of the self*
Matthew	Without spirituality I don't think we can be a good human being	*Spirituality (religion) enables us to be a good human*
Nina	The 2 are definitely correlated Spirituality and wellbeing is everything in life that's special If you have high spirituality you should have a high wellbeing, if you've got the right mindset You can't have wellbeing without that spiritual side	*Wellbeing and spirituality are both about what is special in life* *If you have high spirituality you should have a high wellbeing* *You can't have wellbeing without that spiritual side*
Shelley	It's probably really connected with the wellbeing side of things and just taking	*Both wellbeing and spirituality are about*

	that time to explore things that are interesting and taking time too also acknowledge of other people's sense of spirituality and what makes them tick Finding moments Taking the time to be with me	*finding moments for attentiveness to self and others*
Chloe	I think they're kind of the same because spirituality is also about like they believe in the rules and say wellbeing is you respect the other people so it's like respect is the joint thing	*Wellbeing and spirituality are both about respect*
Lesley	Some people their wellbeing is their family and the family is the spirit so they might feel that my family are in me and that is my wellbeing that is my personality If one drops out that the other one doesn't work.	*Spirit is in me: an internal experience of others* *They are interrelated*
Natalie		*No connection*
Nicky	Oh I think I do. Because I think it's a bit of a healing thing	*Wellbeing and spirituality are associated with healing*
Patrice	We've really moved heavily into the positive education and that is about that's being self-aware, being aware of others, being that's the day to day is on respectful relationships so it is all of that the good feeling you get from giving, from sharing, from being kind, from supporting others, from hope …being hopeful, having hope, looking after the whole body so the well-being of your physically, emotionally, mentally, and that those things are really important. so in a sense I think that is, that's what leads to spirituality that good feeling I get from being positive and having a real sense of hope	*Wellbeing is achieved through a sense of hope and through good action towards others and this leads to spirituality*
Rachael		No connection
Vanessa	The more I become aware of the importance of having, freeing up my physical body of those locks and being more mindful, by spirituality is true and that's something that with the well-being I think, you know, Really well because if we going to be looking after our well-being and those of others, there's an element of truth that needs to happen there	*Spirituality enables our wellbeing though an embodied mindfulness and a relationship with truth.*

Appendix I: Sample of phase 3 analysis

Ashleigh Analysis

- Description
- **Metaphors**
- My interpretation
- References to time
- *Conceptual/theoretical connections*
- *Pre-understandings, prejudice*
- Relation to

(adapted from Smith et al. 2009)

Original transcript	Analysis/Interpretation
Claire: Which word would you like to talk about first? Ashleigh: Wellbeing Claire: Okay, so, Ashleigh, if you had to explain what wellbeing was to somebody who had never heard the word what would you say? Ashleigh: For me it kind of means well… it kind of relates back to the wellbeing of yourself, and how … or in class we talk about how it means kind of how you're aware of things or it could also relate back to RE and our teacher Mr [name] said that it can… it's kind of based on the wellbeing of you and others and how you think about your awareness or different ways that you could improve to be a better person	Improvement, being a better person
Claire: So when you talk… I think that's a really important word, when you talk about awareness, what does that make you think of? Ashleigh: It makes me think of lots of things but being aware of… if you are being aware there's different things that can relate to like aware of your surroundings or aware of other people's feelings in case you go a step too far you have to think before you say something and also like being aware of yourself and making sure that if you're not comfortable you don't have to do it or you can make sure that you talk to an adult or someone that you trust, make them feel… to make you feel better of yourself.	Wellbeing is about being aware of your self in relation to your environment and others. It's about making sure you feel safe and that you have adults around you who you trust. **A step too far** Wellbeing and this focus on self-awareness, enables you to think about your words and actions, to avoid hurting others.Cautious.
Claire: Mmm. Can you give me an example? Ashleigh: With this is happens for me like, being aware of going a step too far, of hurting other friends or saying something that you didn't think before you said it. It might have been funny in	Being aware of others' feelings is important for my wellbeing. I am concerned about not having enough awareness of how others are feeling. I might joke but not realise the impact on others.

your mind but it wasn't funny in the other person's. Claire: Have you had an experience of that? Ashleigh: Yep Claire: Can you tell me what happened?	This is very interesting to me because she is so gentle. I can't even imagine her blurting out rude or hurtful comments.
Ashleigh: Well, a boy said something and he thought it was funny, but I didn't like it so I told the teacher and then we worked out and now we're friends. Claire: Okay do you think that… so if you had to connect that experience to your wellbeing, what would you say about it?	It is not her in this example who was hurtful, instead she was on the receiving end of the 'joke' *Stage of development – growing interest in the difference between boys and girls*
Ashleigh: I say that I would have learnt…we… from that experience we both would have learnt that you have to think before you say. But my wellbeing is kind of improved from that experience because I remember when I used to go home and cry about it and my mum and dad used to say 'you have to tell the teacher if something's happened or it's going to get worse' Claire: It sounds like – and you tell me if I've got this wrong - it sounds like that experience with the boy must have been a bit painful and your feelings were a bit hurt? Ashleigh: Yeah Claire: And you also said… it was a good thing for your wellbeing so how does that… tell me a bit more about that?	She initially seemed to be talking about going a step too far herself, but then switches to be talking about *others* going a step too far Teacher – safe haven
Ashleigh: I think it was a good thing because I'm very sensitive person and when… I know that my parents always say the bully wants a reaction from you so you don't give it to them they'll stop and they'll be your friend so it was a good experience to have and knowing that if that ever happened again I'd know what to do and I wouldn't like I wouldn't go and cry at home but I'd go and tell somebody that I trust Claire: How did you feel? Sounds like it was a new experience for you, going and telling the teacher about it, how did that feel?	She has learnt through a painful experience to rely on adults to help her through relational issues, rather than crying. *CBT program: 'passive/weak' behaviour*
Ashleigh: Well because all the boys in grade 6 think they really cool and stuff and I want to be their friend and I want to be a part of that but when you go and tell the teacher they kind of going to their groups and say, 'Oh, was she was a tattletale' so it kind of made me feel better when I told the teacher. It made me feel like there	The boys her age think they are really cool. Another comment about boys and distinguishing their behaviour from girls. **There was nothing sitting on the tip of my tongue.**

was nothing sitting on the tip of my tongue that I couldn't say. Claire: So even though it was really difficult, you feel better about the situation like there's a positive outcome? [she nods] Claire: All right. Tell me something more about your wellbeing. When you think of the word wellbeing what images, what pictures, come into your mind?	
Ashleigh: I kind of have two different… kind of two different relations to wellbeing. One is kind of the religion side, is like how…how Jesus went with his gut and did what was right. And then the other side it being aware of…aware of your surroundings and others' feelings and yourself and the pictures that come in my mind is kind of…well it's kind of a hard thing to describe but it makes you feel better knowing that you have that one other quality about you, having wellbeing and it makes you feel like… for me it makes me feel like a better person when I can think back and think what wrong things that I've done but relate to them and make that experience a better experience.	**Jesus went with his gut.** She admires this use of intuition. "Aware of your surroundings and others' feelings and yourself" this is what she began with and is clearly meaningful to her. You have that one quality about you – feeling unique. The capacity to grow through making mistakes and reparative experiences.
Claire: Okay so it sounds like you're talking about reflecting and at the beginning you were talking about awareness and that sounded like you were reflecting on things as well because you were talking about awareness of yourself and awareness of your feelings and awareness of your surroundings. So tell me a little bit more about that about that idea of being aware of your surroundings.	
Ashleigh: I think it means when you're aware of your surroundings it means that you know what…not necessarily just making sure that you're in a good environment but making sure that you feel safe in that environment and if you don't then you can like walk with someone or make- [interrupted by the phone continuously ringing. I get up to answer it, and apologise]	Safety. Relying on trusted adults.
Ashleigh: You could for an experience of one like if I didn't… because I have a younger brother and we walk home with our dad and home to school yeah, we always take the same path to school so if you walk by yourself on that path it makes you feel safer, but if you go somewhere different, and that kind of relates to trying new things, if you go somewhere different	Trying new things is important, but there is safety in what is familiar. The route you always take is safe. Perhaps the route gives her the sense that her family is with her.

you… you don't feel as safe as the route you always take. Claire: Is that true about trying new things in general. It doesn't feel as safe? Ashleigh: Well when we go somewhere that you've been, you know the area or you know the people and it makes you feel confident but if you go to a different place, like relating to when I go on holidays, if…we always go to places like Fiji or around Fiji but if we go somewhere different you don't quite know the area or the people so it makes you feel a bit shy or un-secure.	The familiar instils confidence.
Claire: So can you give me a place where perhaps when you're on holiday you felt like that? A new place? Ashleigh: Well, when we're out to Fiji we usually go to Port [name] but when we went on our cruise we went around all of Fiji so when we…our first stop was kind of the outer area so it kind of felt like even though my family was there, my cousins were there, it kind of made me feel a bit un-secure but it made you feel like an explorer because you haven't been there before but when we got to Port [name] when we were there it made me feel I knew this place because I remembered it from when I was little and I knew this shop and this restaurant so it made me feel a bit less of an explorer because you already knew what was there.	When she goes to new places, she feels like an explorer.
Claire: Did you like feeling like an explorer? Ashleigh: Yeah but I also liked feeling like less of an explorer because when you're less an explorer, you can relax, when you explore you get to go different places and relax. So it's two different…very different things.	She is ambivalent about adventure. She likes to explore, but also likes to be in familiar places where she can 'relax'. *I think of a toddler exploring the environment and then running back to her mother.*
Claire: So if I ask you now about spirituality what would you say that word means to you? Ashleigh: Well I haven't heard that word quite that much but I'd say just from the base of the word it kind of relates…I think it relates to living and nonliving things. Like, in the word it has 'spirituality' and it kind of makes me feel, when I first heard that word, it made me feel kind of like angels or spirits. But I think it can mean different things. Like…like I said, angels or things that make you feel safe around…around new surroundings like when you first go somewhere you kind of feel, me, I kind of feel a bit shy but once I've been there for five minutes, I talk to everyone and I… I'm more of myself then being that…more my personality's closed inside of me but yeah	Spirituality is associated with living and non-living entities including angels and spirits, 'things that make you feel safe', and then talks about being in a new place and feeling shy and 'closed' Personality again. "My personality's closed inside of me". Shows the girls' understandings of what their personality is, their relation to self.

Claire: So you started by saying it's sort of makes you think of living and non-living things and I think you said when I first heard it… when did you first hear it? Ashleigh: I heard it in class and then when I first well when our teacher was talking about you that's when I kind of first heard it but I think my parents have said it a couple of times but I haven't really taken any notice of them saying it. Claire: Somewhere along the way you've been thinking your own thoughts about it, haven't you? When people talk about it you've been thinking it through in your own way because you started talking about a couple of different things and one of them was you mention is spirits and angels and the other thing that you said which was about you talked about going to a new place feeling a bit shy and feeling like your personality is closed in you and then it coming out. Does that… how does that connects with the word spirituality for you when you think about what's inside you? Ashleigh: I think I kind of meant like, when you go to a new place and you do feel shy, you kind of feel a sense of safeness. Or like cause those… like, it kind of makes you feel like you had somebody there by your side, but there's no one really there. Claire: What's the image that comes to mind when you think about that? Feeling of safety and you're saying it's not like I've literally got the person there but… Ashleigh: I kinda feel about me and my nan because she makes me feel safe and she… when I sound a bit upset she'd always take me somewhere alone and we do something like an arts and crafts to make me feel more myself. And kind is because I like to draw… Claire: Yes, I'm looking at your arts team badge.	I'm trying to capture 3 seemingly unconnected associations from her. "It kind of makes you feel like you had somebody there by your side, but there's no one really there." What does this mean? Is she imagining or is it more than imagining that someone is there. When she explores somewhere new, she feels that she has someone by her side. This person is her nan, who makes her feel safe, even though she has died. She remembers how her nan used to look after her when she was upset – engage her in activities "to make me feel more myself" *Truth. Personality.* She fees her nan's presence

Appendix J: Sample of phase 4 analysis

Relation to Self: How is the participant relating to her 'self'?

Nicky
"Being happy with yourself, your surroundings, your environment, the people you interact with and just health in general."
Nicky sees herself as different to others and likes this about herself. Being on her own helps her mind. She likes hiding away, retreating from others, in the liquid amber tree, and on the beach. There is time then, to think on her own. This has been essential to her wellbeing. She spent a lot of time on her own in her childhood/adolescence. She often uses the word 'relax' to describe being on her own.
When her mother died 2 years ago, she prioritised time for herself. She takes care of herself but every now and then has a 'meltdown'.
Spirituality and wellbeing are connected through the healing of her self. She thinks that being connected and in touch with things helps her feel better within herself. This experience of being in touch with things is a reference to things that are not visible to her.

Patrice
Wellbeing is managing emotions and physical health. Being able to make the best choices for mental health, having some time out. She is aware of her wellbeing but is not always able to act on all aspects, all the time. There are parts that she feels better about and other parts that have to take a backseat; she will get to them in time. Sometimes she just falls into a heap on the couch but her descriptions of how she takes care of herself centre around action rather than contemplative states. This is in contrast to Nicky and Natalie for example, who need time away. Patrice talks about socialising, hosting dinner parties for example, as her way of relaxing.

Rachael
Feeling good is being mentally well and physically well; coping and resilient. She associates wellbeing to calmness and initially talks about mindfulness. Her experience of a calm time is a quiet hour of 'turning off'; activities where she doesn't have to think, are important for her wellbeing such as: watching mindless tv, reading trashy novels, wandering aimlessly around a supermarket, "just doing my own thing". Being on her own is important to her. Her own company is comfortable. Mindfulness is about being in the present moment and finding an inner peace however the activities she associates to her wellbeing are mind-less, rather than mindful. She acknowledges this by talking about going on facebook or 'watching reality crap on tv so I don't have to think about those sorts of things'. She talks about this quiet time, late in the evening after work is finished, dinner and the dishes are done, her husband and daughter are in bed, emails have been sent'. When I ask her about whether this time alone is important to her, she associates it with the amount of free time she had before she was married, and how she has spent a number of years being comfortable in her own company.