

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A LECTURER IN THE  
FIELD OF NURSING EDUCATION?**

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents findings from a New Zealand phenomenological study that investigated the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education. I decided that this was a relevant research topic as little was known about this area, and in New Zealand there were no previous studies. I also had an interest in the topic because of my own experience of being a lecturer. I was interested to find out how lecturers negotiate their work worlds in the intensifying political climate of nursing education today.

The methodology and method for the study was guided by Heideggerian hermeneutics. Open-ended interviews were conducted with five participants, all lecturers with between two and five years teaching experience. Four themes emerged: 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering', 'commitment amidst uncertainty', 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security', and 'being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space'.

Dynamic and shifting experience in the themes reveals that 'being' a lecturer includes the experience of 'becoming' one, in which lecturers are constantly required to renew themselves in the changing world that surrounds them. Their interpretation of their 'being' is always 'on the way', reflecting Gadamer's (1987) argument about the process of interpretation in understanding experience.

I argue that because lecturers' interpretation of their 'being' is influenced by their surrounding context, it is important to include this surrounding context in determining the answer to my research question 'what does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nursing education?' Issues in this surrounding context include an intensifying political climate where there is an increased risk of experiencing burnout

Four recommendations are made in response to the challenging issues that exist: first, for lecturers to engage in curriculum development; second,

establish learning communities; third, undertake professional supervision; and fourth, lobby policy makers at a local and national level to effect change.

In spite of this shifting and challenging context and the issues inside it, I contend that my participants' experience of 'being' a lecturer is determined more tellingly from a second philosophical vantage point in Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, that argued by Heidegger (1962) of an ontology of Being. In my participants' experience, their 'being' includes commitment that they don't let go of easily. I argue this is because their commitment is deep and spiritual, of the kind that parents also experience with their children. I argue that what it means to be a lecturer is determined more by this deep commitment in my participants' 'being' than what is happening in the context that surrounds them. They are always 'becoming' as lecturers as they interpret their experience in their shifting and changing world, but their 'being' remains committed whatever pressures their surrounding context brings.

I argue that because of the fortitude in their 'being', lecturers have the potential to enact some or all of the recommendations that have been made for responding to the issues they face in their jobs.

Key words: nursing education, lecturers, phenomenology.

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I dedicate the thesis to my grandmother 'Pinkie' who died in 2007

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## **Chapter One: Introduction to the study: Setting the scene**

After twenty-five years of neo-liberal reform, New Zealand nursing education faces intensifying political and financial challenges that now threaten previously held assumptions about its professional identity (Easton, 2008). The little that is known about the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education in these turbulent times comes from overseas (Andrews et al, 2001; Diekelmann, 2001; Diekelmann & Smythe, 2004; Ironside, 2001; Ironside, 2003; Ironside, 2004; Siler & Kleiner, 2001; and Young & Diekelmann, 2002). This phenomenological research adds to this existing body of knowledge and is the first phenomenological study into the lived experience of lecturers in New Zealand nursing education.

Phenomenology is “a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure” and “not a rule-bound process but a free act of seeing meaning” (van Manen, 1997a, p.79). The subjective experience of the researcher is therefore integral to this process, and I begin this introductory chapter with some personal and philosophical background to my involvement in this research.

### **Personal road to the research**

The origin of my interest in research began in childhood. Whether it is ultimately nature or nurture that shapes us into the people we are in the world (or both!), I believe my upbringing has influenced the way I understand research.

During childhood my parents encouraged me to explore the world at an emotional level. Whilst I was given permission to explore feelings, I was also taught to be cautious towards the apparent truth in reason and logic. The message I received was that the right path in the world was not necessarily the most obvious one, and that the right path was one that took into account people's feelings.

Further to this, I grew up in a quiet valley, in rural England, tucked away from much of the hustle, bustle, and pace, of modern society, and this tranquil location was important to me as I began my philosophical journey. I used to wonder deeply about the meaning of my experience in this tranquil location, and although I didn't know it at the time, my thinking was beginning to align itself with the 'free act of seeing meaning' that van Manen (1997a) says defines phenomenology. Unbeknown to me therefore, I was beginning to think phenomenologically.

The impact of these early childhood experiences continued to influence my schooling and working life till the present day. I also studied sociology and politics at university which gave my inquiry a more theoretical grounding. As a student nurse and then as a registered nurse I subsequently felt well equipped to reflect on my practice by incorporating both experiential and theoretical considerations into my practice.

The experience of becoming a lecturer in nursing education threw my reflective processes out of kilter. As a clinician my ability to use reflective processes had always brought me to a place where I felt that overall I had a healthy balance between certainty and uncertainty, knowing and not knowing. As a lecturer new to the field of nursing education I experienced more uncertain and unknowing feelings. I felt I didn't know how to teach and my efforts to use my trusty reflective skills didn't work in this new environment. The relative certainty I had experienced previously in school and in work was replaced by a sense of impending failure, which I experienced this as both exhausting and overwhelming.

After three years of lecturing I had overcome many of the early challenges that I faced, such as for example basic classroom management. However, other challenges arose to take the place of these earlier ones. For example, I only became aware of the full complexity of workplace relationship dynamics in the second year of my job. I found myself wondering what becoming a lecturer was all about. This 'wondering' resonated with my philosophical



inquiry from earlier life, and although I did not know it at the time would go on to be significant part in the development of this research study.

## **Justification for the study**

My first step towards the research study that I would eventually carry out, was to establish a need for the research, based on where there were particular gaps in the existing body of knowledge. I began searching the CINAHL, ERIC, and Academic Search Elite databases in a broad search of articles about nursing education and lecturing. I was looking for a research question and a methodology that would fit with my research interest.

It was literature about the 'unknown' in nursing that helped provide me with the impetus I was looking for. My earlier skepticism about locating truth in reason and logic was awoken by the literature that I read. Silverman (2000), for example, observed that attempts to make sense of feelings in nursing research have tended to use traditional research methods, and that these methods have used theory to inform research questions. Using this approach, the 'unknown' has been viewed as a temporary state of affairs that drives the research. Cayne and Loewenthal (2004) make the alternative argument that it is in fact experience and the 'unknown', rather than theory, that is required for generating and informing research ideas. They reflect how "seemingly disparate experiences sometimes come together in previously unthought-of ways drawing attention to something that seemed irrelevant or perhaps even strange, so that it can be seen anew." (p. 356). I was drawn to the way this argument allowed for a fullness of attention in regard to the world of experience. I wondered what becoming a lecturer was about and what the literature revealed about the overwhelming uncertainty I had experienced in the role. An approach was therefore warranted that paid the fullest possible attention to experience, and so I was therefore looking for a methodology that enabled this.

Given that motivation was about uncovering experience, I soon discounted using a postpositivist methodology. Postpositivist research reduces human

experience to numeric measures of behaviour (Cresswell, 2003) and therefore ran counter to my research interest.

Action research (Lewin, 1948; Carr & Kemmis, 1986) appealed to me because of its focus on 'effecting change through meaningful research in the context of practice' (Meyer, 2000), and it resonated with the deep philosophical inquiry from my childhood. However, because action research is about change, and I hadn't identified anything to change as yet, I discounted action research as well.

The focus in ethnography on explicating meaning related to specific cultures, psychological research regarding mental types, and sociological research about social groups, also failed to fulfill my desire to understand about experience. My research interest was not motivated by the particular foci of these methodological approaches.

I became interested in phenomenological research as a methodological approach that does capture my deep sense of wondering about what the meaning of experience is about. Van Manen (1997a) describes phenomenological human science as the study of lived or existential meanings; he says that phenomenology "attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness" (p.11). Phenomenology therefore fitted with the depth and richness of the questions I was beginning to ask about teaching and becoming a lecturer, and was the methodology I chose for my study.

In his seminal phenomenological text *Researching lived experience*, van Manen (1997a) asks "what does it mean to be a teacher?" (p.42). He comments that in spite of extensive theoretical writing on the area of teaching, this question still has the effect of embarrassing educators who attempt to answer it. It was 'being' rather than 'becoming' a lecturer that I also decided to investigate in my study. I inferred that 'becoming' would have limited my inquiry to one distinct area of 'being', and this ran counter to my search for a deeper understanding about experience.

Later in my thesis however, I re-evaluate this. I find myself continuing to reflect on 'becoming' when I feel my focus should be on 'being'. This was motivated by a new colleague of mine whose experience as a new lecturer reminded me of my own process of becoming a lecturer, including the challenges I overcame at the start of my own career and all the challenges I have overcome since then, and including the ones I am working to overcome now. I will argue that 'becoming' a lecturer is in fact an ongoing process that is inextricably linked to 'being' one.

The re-evaluation I refer to comes later. For now I had reached a point where phenomenology seemed to be a suitable methodological approach for investigating the meaning of the experience of 'being' a lecturer in nursing education. I still, however, needed to establish if there were particular gaps in the existing body of knowledge, that suggested a need for a phenomenological study to be undertaken.

A search of the CINAHL and ERIC databases, post 1982, revealed significant gaps in the body of knowledge. Worldwide, there was a paucity of phenomenological studies in my area of interest about the meaning of the experience of being a lecturer in nursing education, and in New Zealand there were none. I found one paper (Siler & Kleiner, 2001) where the sole focus was on the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education. Eight other papers focused on the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education as it pertains to narrative pedagogy. Since I was interested in this topic, and there was a gap in the existing body of knowledge, I decided to propose my own research study in the area. Firstly, however, I needed to articulate a relevant research question, and clearly define the purpose of my intended research.

## **Research question**

The research question was framed as follows:

- What does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nursing education?

## **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to

- Systematically uncover and describe the meaning of being a lecturer in the field of nursing education
- Gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of being a lecturer in the field of nursing education

In particular, this research study makes an important contribution to understanding the lived experience today of lecturers in New Zealand nursing education. In what Easton (2008) describes as an intensifying political climate, I argue that the pressures and challenges faced by lecturers are more intense now than ever before, with one commentator suggesting recently that a collapse in academic identity is occurring throughout Australasia (Marginson, as cited in Malcolm & Tarling, 2007).

I intend to reveal how lecturers are negotiating the current environment, and provoke discussion about how lecturers can respond to challenges they face. First, however, I continue to focus on the environment itself by describing the social and political context that currently surrounds lecturers in nursing education. This will provide a platform for illuminating the lived experience of lecturers presented later in phenomenological themes, and the discussion that follows.

## **Background to the New Zealand context of nursing education**

The social and political context faced by lecturers in nursing education is dynamic and challenging, influenced over the past twenty-five years by major political and ideological changes such as the advent of neo-liberalism (Easton, 2008), contentious cultural issues surrounding the Treaty of Waitangi and the introduction of cultural safety in New Zealand nursing education (Richardson & Carryer, 2005), structural changes to how undergraduate nursing courses are delivered (Department of Education, 1978), and shifts in pedagogical approaches (Diekelmann, 2001).

I begin my description of the context faced by lecturers with some background to the New Zealand context of nursing education. This is followed by sections on political influences, the Treaty of Waitangi and cultural safety, and pedagogical context.

Currently in New Zealand, undergraduate nursing courses lead to a bachelor of nursing degree, and registration as a Comprehensive Nurse. These courses are mainly delivered at polytechnics, although universities are also now beginning to offer their own nursing degree programmes. The developments that led to the degree based programmes of today can be traced back to 1970 when the New Zealand government asked World Health Organisation consultant Dr. Helen Carpenter to review nursing education in New Zealand at all levels. Students and teachers of the time considered the existing apprentice type training system to be “inadequate from an educational point of view because it was very difficult to correlate theory and clinical work while meeting the service needs of the hospital” (Department of Education, 1978, p.2). The hospital-based format of the training was also criticised for being “too narrow, given that graduates were expected increasingly to practice in the community where broader-based skills were required” (p.2).

Carpenter’s report, *An Improved System of Nursing Education for New Zealand* (Department of Health, 1971), recommended the introduction of undergraduate nursing diplomas based in colleges. The New Zealand government implemented Carpenter’s recommendations, and the first courses began in 1973 at Christchurch Technical Institute and Wellington Polytechnic. The same general structure of the courses operates today, although in a major change in 1990, the courses began to be conferred degree status.

A notable gain from the new structure, according to the *Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Nursing* (Ministry of Health, 1998), has been an increased emphasis on the use of health research in the development of evidence-based practice. However, there have been accompanying

challenges regarding how and what to teach (I will consider this curricular and pedagogical context more fully in later sections) as students move between tertiary and clinical learning environments (Holloway, 1999). Further challenges arose in the 1990s with a funding squeeze on polytechnics, resulting in the downsizing of lecturing staff, while student numbers continued to increase, and the Ministry of Health report also found that relatively few nursing lecturers had a completed Masters degree, a basic requirement for teaching in the 'research based' bachelors degrees of today.

At first glance then, there are some clear challenges in the context surrounding lecturers in New Zealand nursing education. Christensen (1998), in a submission to the *Ministerial Taskforce on Nursing* (Ministry of Health, 1998), describes the context of New Zealand nurse education as the "turmoil of today" (p.23), and describes the challenge of negotiating it as "not an easy task", and one that has "never been more difficult" (p.23). This suggests a context that is more complex than it is straightforward. What else then can we learn about this context?

I will begin to address this question by turning my attention to political influences. Can we learn anything from the world of politics about the context faced by lecturers in nursing education?

## **Political influences**

Harris (2005) argues that neo-liberalism, the dominant political ideology in western liberal democracies over the past twenty-five years, has extended into "every area of life". (p.421). Neo-liberalism is important to this thesis because of its fundamental role in threatening academic identity (Malcolm & Tarling, 2007). Given this backdrop, I argue that neo-liberalism will inevitably have some influence to bear on the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education. I address this below, but begin by introducing neo-liberalism's defining features.

In broad terms, neo-liberalism defines the relationship between the state and its citizens to be an economic one (Biesta, 2004). Whilst espousing notions of

the freedom of the individual, the state is in fact seeking to “create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur” (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p.315). Neo-liberals consider the best way to promote freedom for the individual is through opportunities arising in a free economic market. Olssen and Peters suggest that neo-liberals view the market as the most efficient and morally superior mechanism. They argue that because the market is self-regulating, it will regulate itself better than the government or any outside force.

In the 1970s, Berg and Roche (1997) chart how the interventionist Keynesian economics of the welfare state prevailed, and the New Zealand government responded to an economic crisis by increasing state intervention in the economy. Berg and Roche suggest this response may have exacerbated a subsequent fiscal crisis facing New Zealand. Adding weight to calls for political and economic change, Kelsey (1995) observes that by the 1980s the ‘public sector’ in New Zealand had become a symbol of oppressive bureaucracy and over-zealous government interventions.

In 1984, in a similar way to how Thatcherism and Reaganomics had come to dominate economic policy in Britain and America, so Rogernomics, named after the then Minister of Finance Roger Douglas, was introduced in New Zealand (Berg & Roche, 1997). Previous reliance on community and collegiality in tertiary education was replaced by individualism, where economic competition is valued over collegiality, and individuals are seen as self-interested subjects, rational optimisers who are the best judges of their own interests and needs (Olssen & Peters, 2005). There was, Biesta (2004) contends, no longer a freedom of the individual, based on a democratic public deliberation over the common good (as had been the case in New Zealand prior to 1984, due largely to the welfare state and political consensus between the major political parties). Instead a freedom of choice for self-interested subjects whose aim was to satisfy his or her own needs as a consumer in the marketplace prevailed.

I was unable to locate articles that specifically examine the extent of neo-liberalism's influence in New Zealand nursing education. However, Berg and Roche (1997), writing about New Zealand tertiary education, in a general sense, argue that increased economic competition in universities has produced an academic landscape where universities are constructed as 'knowledge businesses' and students as 'consumers'.

They consider this a wholly inappropriate model for university education, and argue for a return to a more collegial approach, where students are conceived as junior members of a community of scholars. They question the 'unreflective adoption' of the competitive market model, and argue that neo-liberal education policies "need to be contested at every turn if academics are to defend the integrity of a more broadly conceptualised and inclusive tertiary education" (p.157).

What does this neo-liberal context mean then for the experience of lecturers working in the field of nursing education? Gordon and Wimpenny (1996) reflect that lecturers in nursing education value cost-consciousness, but not to the extent that it becomes "the ideological base from which to develop their practice" (p.480). They are concerned about a business management philosophy underpinning a complex human service organisation like the British National Health Service, and argue that this produces relationships in nursing education characterised by emotional distance, superficiality and personal detachment. Gordon and Wimpenny argue that the work of lecturers has been "reduced to jargonised measurables described on reams of documentation that in themselves are viewed as representing and justifying the activities of the workforce" (p.481); lecturers are left "frustrated and disappointed" (p.481).

Gordon and Wimpenny (1996) suggest that a lot of their discontent as lecturers in nursing education is to do with new managerialism's inability to acknowledge the importance of personal relationships. They experience the 'antithesis' of their person-centred value system.



There are however arguments in favour of the neo-liberal reforms. Koch and Fischer (1998) observe that neo-liberalisms prevailing managerial system, Total Quality Management (TQM), was often favoured by nursing education in the 1980s and 1990s because it provided a “process-oriented, egalitarian approach to increasing productivity, decreasing costs and improving quality” (p.661). However, Vazzana, Elfrink and Bachmann, 2000 and Koch and Fisher question the supposed effectiveness of TQM in tertiary education. Koch and Fisher argue that whilst TQM has had some success in reforming service systems such as campus copy centres, it has been ill fitting when it comes to the core business of tertiary institutions: learning.

Nevertheless, there are different perspectives and I argue that it follows that different responses to neo-liberalism are also likely to occur inside nursing education. Some nursing departments inside tertiary institutions may push to retain their collegial culture, whilst others may focus more solely on economic outcomes. I am therefore also mindful that a broad range of experience could emerge from this for lecturers, depending on where the political emphasis in nursing departments is.

Next, I pay particular attention to one area of New Zealand nursing education, cultural safety, that I argue is similarly influenced by where the political emphasis in nursing departments is. Cultural safety in nursing is unique to New Zealand and is informed by The Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand’s founding document (Richardson & Carryer, 2005). The Treaty of Waitangi is a contentious subject in New Zealand society, as is cultural safety in nursing education.

### **The Treaty of Waitangi and cultural safety**

The Treaty of Waitangi is another important area of context for this thesis, because social consequences of the historical events surrounding the Treaty of Waitangi continue to be felt today, including the area of cultural safety in nursing education.

King (2003) describes the Treaty of Waitangi as a covenant between the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, and the colonising British settlers. It was signed by representatives of the British Crown and Maori Chiefs of the indigenous people of New Zealand in 1840, and laid the way for a relationship based on partnership, participation, and protection. However, King argues that there were many transgressions of the covenant by the colonising British that have had devastating effects on the Maori in the period between the signing of the Treaty and today. Examples of this include the mass confiscation of Maori land, the decimation of the Maori population through wars, and also through diseases that the British brought with them. Many areas of Maori cultural life were oppressed. For example tohunga (Maori health specialists) were made illegal in 1907, and Maori children were punished if they spoke Maori in school. Amidst numerous other examples of this nature, the Maori people suffered, and according to King continue to suffer.

The Waitangi Tribunal was set up by the New Zealand government in 1975 to address grievance claims pertaining to these past injustices, leading to some redress for Maori. Statistics however continue to show relatively poorer outcomes for Maori in regard to a number of areas of social wellbeing, including health and education, and the issues concerning the Treaty of Waitangi remain highly contentious in New Zealand society (King, 2003).

Cultural safety in nursing education is therefore one such area of contention. Richardson and Carryer (2005) define cultural safety as an approach that prepares nursing students to develop culturally safe nursing practice in the New Zealand health care environment. They highlight how contentious the inception of cultural safety was in New Zealand nursing education, not least because it occurred in the turbulent period of neo-liberal political reforms of the 1970s and 1980s. According to Richardson and Carryer cultural safety was contentious because it focused on nurses empowering people who had previously been marginalised by the state and social institutions. Cultural safety therefore challenged dominant discriminatory and racist practices at all levels of New Zealand society, and Richardson and Carryer argue that this

had an impact on nursing education, where accepted constructions of nursing knowledge and practice were also challenged.

The Treaty of Waitangi remains significant in the context faced by lecturers in New Zealand nursing education today.

*The Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Nursing* (Ministry of Health, 1998) provides examples of issues faced by Maori in New Zealand nursing education.

The recruitment of Maori nursing students is an identified area of concern. For many Maori women, already balancing complex life issues, the prospect of moving to distant urban centres to study nursing, away from whanau (of paramount importance to Maori), is often “not a viable option” (Ministry of Health, 1998, p.82).

Retention of the Maori students who do start nursing programmes is a further area of concern. Maori can experience a loss of identity on entering the dominant western paradigm of the education system. This paradigm gives “little or no recognition to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) and therefore lacks relevance for Maori” (Ministry of Health, 1998, p.82). The report continues that Maori lecturers are few in number and carry high workloads that often involve re-teaching content outside their subject areas. This is a reflection, the report argues, of the current system’s failure to recognise the Maori ‘world view’, and distinct learning style.

In nursing education, cultural safety has been at the forefront of efforts to address the issues raised above. *The Guidelines for Cultural Safety, The Treaty of Waitangi and Maori Health* (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2005, p.4) define cultural safety as “the effective nursing practice of a person or family from another culture, and is determined by that person or family”. A culturally safe nurse is one that “can understand his or her own culture and the theory of power relations” (p.4). In this view, cultural safety is embedded in human relationships, with the “self as a cultural bearer” (p.3). Unfortunately however, a “checklist approach” can often be used instead, one that “makes

the assumption that cultures are simplistic in nature” (p.4). With regard to Maori, Ramsden (2005, p.13) has likened this to treating Maori as “exotic” and lacking relevance “to the ill health or otherwise of Maori people”. The literature therefore suggests a context in nursing education that ranges from a complex response to Maori that includes power relations, to a checklist approach that lacks relevance.

Cultural safety is concerned with relationships that include Maori, Pakeha and other ethnic groups in New Zealand. It also “extends beyond ethnic groups to include age or generation, gender, sexual orientation, occupation and socioeconomic status, ethnic origin or migrant experience, religious or spiritual belief, and disability” (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2005, p.3).

A wider focus for cultural safety is also called for in interprofessional relationships. Papps (2005, p.27) argues that cultural safety’s focus on nursing people “needs to be extended to respecting differences among and between health professional colleagues”. I will also therefore be interested to find out if this bears relevance in the experience of lecturers in nursing education. Next however, I will turn to another area of context, one more obviously associated with the lived experience of lecturers, namely the pedagogical context in which nursing education takes place.

## **Pedagogical context**

This section introduces the pedagogical context faced by lecturers in nursing education. There are different approaches to teaching nursing students, with narrative approaches gaining prominence alongside conventional approaches in recent years (Ironsides, 2001). Lecturers face complex challenges regarding how and what to teach, such as whether they should base their approach on enabling students to learn from their experiences, as in a narrative approach? Or whether they should teach their students ‘content’ or ‘what’ they need to know, so this knowledge can be applied in clinical practice, as in a conventional pedagogical approach?

The *Strategic Review of Undergraduate Nursing Education* (KPMG Consulting, 2001) identifies a tension in New Zealand as to whether nurses are to be educated as beginning practitioners with a broad range of skills, including critical thinking skills, or as practitioners who possess basic nursing skills. Ironside (2001) illustrates how conventional pedagogy lends itself to the latter of these with its focus on skill gain, outcomes and competencies, whereas alternative pedagogies such as narrative pedagogy lend themselves to the former, focusing on areas such as dialogue, reflexivity and empowerment.

Ironside (2001) observes that alternative pedagogies are frequently located in opposition to conventional pedagogy, although this opposition “defines conventional as any approach that is not located in the proposed alternative”. (p.74). Ironside continues that this oppositional understanding is insufficient as it emphasises a description of conventional pedagogy based on what it is not, thus “privileging the description of the alternative”. (p.74). With this in mind, I will outline what I believe are the main features of conventional pedagogy.

Conventional pedagogy is defined by Ironside (2001) as “an outcome-oriented, problem-solving approach to schooling that emphasises the effective and efficient provision or accumulation of information”. (p.75). Conventional pedagogy assumes that the mind can reason, set apart from the body, towards an objective truth. Content can be learnt in the classroom and applied later in practice, and the ability to apply content is seen as evidence of the student’s thinking abilities (Ironside, 2003). The linear nature of this process has been applauded for its efficiency in handling large student-teacher ratios in times of diminishing resources, and for providing the mechanisms for evaluating student achievement (Ironside, 2001).

Proponents of alternative pedagogies have questioned the assumptions about knowledge in conventional pedagogy. A key difference between the philosophical positions underpinning the different pedagogies is the inclusion of the body in the alternative pedagogies’ assumptions about knowledge. For

example, Thayer-Bacon (2000) challenges conventional pedagogy's assumption that the mind can objectively reason in the absence of the person, their body and relationships. She argues "it is impossible to not include people in a description of knowledge, for the two cannot be separated. To try to separate the two is a dangerous delusion. Knowers are deeply embedded in knowledge claims" (p.139). Ironside (2004) argues that in attempting this separation, conventional pedagogy has in fact produced courses that students find boring and alienating, preventing them from developing higher order thinking capacities.

For the alternative pedagogies, I focus on narrative pedagogy (Diekelmann, 2001). Narrative pedagogy is particularly relevant for nursing education, because, unlike the other pedagogies, it has developed from within nursing education (Ironside, 2001). Narrative pedagogy is about creating places for thinking about the meaning of content being learnt and its significance to the student's emerging practice (Ironside, 2004). According to Diekelmann (2001), "narrative pedagogy as sharing and interpreting contemporary narratives is a call for students, teachers, and clinicians to gather and attend to community practices in ways that hold everything open and problematic". (p.55). In sharp contrast to the assumptions about knowledge in conventional pedagogy, that exclude the body, the person and their relationships from teaching-learning processes, in narrative pedagogy these are included for students, teachers, and clinicians, and are integral to the approach.

Following her twelve year phenomenological study, Diekelmann (2001) identified the practices in narrative pedagogy that include the shared experience of students, teachers, and clinicians. Diekelmann refers to these as the 'concernful practices of schooling learning teaching'. The concernful practices of schooling learning teaching are as follows: *gathering*, bringing in and calling forth; *creating places*, keeping open a future of possibilities; *assembling*, constructing and cultivating; *staying*, knowing and connecting; *caring*, engendering community; *interpreting*, unlearning and becoming; *presencing*, attending and being open; *preserving reading, writing, thinking, and dialogue*; *questioning*, meaning and making visible.

Narrative pedagogy does not preclude conventional, critical, feminist, and postmodern approaches. Instead, Ironside (2001) contends, narrative pedagogy creates a place where these approaches can converge in unending conversation, “by holding open and problematic the shared practices of schooling, learning, and teaching, narrative pedagogy creates possibilities for new understandings to emerge” (p.81).

In a similar vein to Ironside’s (2001) contention above, the pedagogical context that I have laid out above is not designed to uncover the ‘right’ approach, conventional or narrative, in a dualistic sense. It is the tension between the two that is relevant as part of the context that lecturers face. Amidst this tension the assumptions of both approaches will be at play in the lived worlds of the lecturers, whether they position themselves more firmly with one or do not.

Emphasis on these lived worlds will be evident in Chapter Two which presents a systematic review of previous phenomenological studies into the lived experience of lecturers in the field of nursing education. Before that however, I introduce the outline, structure, and style of the thesis as a whole.

### **Outline, structure and style of the thesis**

There are five chapters in this thesis. The chapters are divided into sections to assist with the organization of both the chapters and the thesis as a whole. The thesis is synthesized in style as it draws together the key research processes and a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the five lecturers who are the research participants. It is written mainly in the past tense, as an account of research processes and experiences of lecturers that are now in the past. There are some parts, however, where I write in the present tense, as a way of capturing experience more immediately in the writing.

In this chapter, I have provided an introduction to the study that philosophically links my early inquiry into the world as a child, with my

eventual justification for using phenomenology as a methodology to study the lived experience of lecturers in the field of nursing education. The research question and purpose of the study have been presented, and I have given a description of the current political and pedagogical context faced by lecturers in New Zealand nursing education.

In Chapter Two, I present the literature review. The chapter provides a review of previous phenomenological studies that have investigated the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education.

The methodology, method and design that informs this research are presented in Chapter Three. It includes an overview of phenomenology, an account of how and why I decided upon Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology for the study, and a specific breakdown of the study's method and design. Ethical considerations, rigor, and reflections on the research process are also included.

In Chapter Four, the phenomenological themes that represent the study's findings are presented. There are four themes: 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering', 'commitment amidst uncertainty', 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security' and 'being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space'. A summary of the themes is also presented.

In Chapter Five, a discussion about the significance of my findings is presented, contemporary issues and challenges faced by lecturers in New Zealand nursing education are identified, and recommendations and arguments for meeting those challenges are made.

## **Summary**

Motivated by my desire to make sense of what for me had been an uncertain and sometimes overwhelming experience of becoming a lecturer, I began searching the CINAHL, ERIC, and Academic Search Elite databases.



Literature focusing on the 'unknown' in nursing had given me the impetus that eventually led to me deciding to propose a phenomenological study into the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education. The chapter has also revealed that a dynamic and challenging political and pedagogical context exists for lecturers in nursing education. Next, in Chapter Two I turn to lived experience and give a systematic review of previous phenomenological studies into the lived experience of lecturers in the field of nursing education.

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

In Chapter One, I described the political and pedagogical context faced by lecturers in New Zealand nursing education. I now turn to experience and provide a review of previous phenomenological studies into the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education. Whilst I intend these phenomenological findings to be illuminated by the context I have already described, my writing in this chapter is motivated by the need to describe lived experience and reflect the 'free act of seeing meaning' that van Manen (1997a) says defines phenomenology. I shan't therefore be concerned with theoretical considerations such as the merits of different approaches, just the experience of the lecturers involved. Studies that explicitly report on the lived experience of lecturers implementing narrative pedagogy will not be ranked or categorised according to their theoretical qualities or considered separately from studies that do not overtly distinguish between approaches. They are presented alongside each other and for the lived experience that they reveal and nothing more.

The chapter begins with an account of how I went about the search, before I present the previous findings.

### **Conducting the search**

I began the search for relevant literature by using computer-assisted searches of several health and education related databases. These included the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Review (CINAHL), and Academic Search Elite, a multidisciplinary database. I had already used these databases to help establish a suitable methodology for the study. The key words: unknown, experience, and research question had yielded literature about the 'unknown' in nursing that had given me the impetus to eventually locate phenomenology as my chosen methodology, which I addressed in Chapter One.

Literature related to the context in which nursing education takes place was located using the key words: politics, pedagogy, liberalism, higher education,

managerialism, curriculum and accountability. Further literature pertaining to this context was located by searching the Ministry of Health and Nursing Council of New Zealand websites, and then more still following a trawl through the shelves of the library at my workplace.

Literature for the review of previous phenomenological studies into the lived experience of lecturers in the field of nursing education was found using the key words: phenomenology, teacher, lecturer, nursing, higher education and novice faculty. I limited the search to the past 20 years and only focused on works published in English. Other sources included articles given to me by colleagues, and articles found by searching the references at the end of articles I had already sourced.

## **Setting the scene**

Given that I only found one previous study that focused solely on the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education (Siler & Kleiner, 2001), and eight others that focused on the lived experience of lecturers as it pertains to the enactment of narrative pedagogy, these are therefore the studies I focus on in my literature review.

I also include material from two other sources (Sumsion, 2001; King, 2005) in which the focus is on teachers working in areas other than nursing education. These are included because with little research around them they add depth to the literature review. Their transferability to the lived worlds of lecturers in nursing education is open to question, but I argue there is no reason not to include these sources. Whilst not about the lived worlds of lecturers in nursing education, they add to what is known because some of the experiences in these educational environments are often reflected in nursing education.

With the aim of a coherent and systematic review of these findings, I have organised the literature review under the following headings: 'Reflecting about the job', 'Relationships in work', and 'Teaching the students'.

First then, previous findings are presented where the focus is on lecturers' lived experience of their jobs.

## **Reflecting about the job**

These findings are about the lived experience lecturers in nursing education where they reflect in an overall sense on their 'job'. Siler and Kleiner (2001) investigated the lived experience of new lecturers in nursing education. Their theme 'expectations' concerns the expectations of new lecturers as they go into their new job, and whether these expectations are realised in their new environment. The new surroundings are clearly experienced as unfamiliar by the lecturers in Siler and Kleiner's study. Here, one of the lecturers, Mary Ellen, sums up her experience:

everything that I've done in the last 20-30 years. I was prepared from job to job to job to job...I was used to being able to step into a new job and utilise my previous experience. In this job I didn't feel that way. I felt like everything was new. The University was new; the faculty was new; the students were new; the facilities were new; the doctors were new; everything was new. The lecture material was new. And I realised that I hadn't had a job for 20 or 30 years where everything I stepped into was new (p.399).

New lecturers in Siler and Kleiner's (2001) study also experienced incongruities in regard to their expectations. Faculty workload was more than they expected. Lecturers were assigned primary responsibility for managing a course or courses during their first year, although they possessed little or no teaching experience. In addition to hours spent preparing for class, they were also assigned committee work in their first year, with most also becoming involved in special projects. One lecturer, Sally, described this experience as "like knitting the endless sweater. You're never finished" (p.400).

The fact that lecturers are prepared to take on these significant challenges might suggest they are committed and dedicated to their jobs. Ironside (2001) found this commitment to be more deep than temporary or transitory. In the

process of conducting an interpretive review of conventional and alternative pedagogies, Ironside reports from her attendance at an all-school meeting, where students and teachers were sharing accounts of their year together in the context of narrative pedagogy. A lecturer at the meeting, Marena, reflects on her experience of trying to make a particularly challenging course for lecturers and students alike, nicknamed the 'killer course', more achievable for students and less painful for all concerned. Marena has "tried everything to make it easier" (p.82), she rearranged the lectures into fifteen minute sections, and would practice and time herself delivering them in the small hours of the night, "I get up at four a.m. and go into the kitchen and give my lecture. My husband gets up at five a.m. so I knew I had to be done by then" (p.82). Marena receives a loud round of applause from the audience of her peers and students when she has finished talking, an audience that is clearly impressed by her commitment and dedication to her job.

Elsewhere in the literature, it is not only the demanding nature of experiences such as those described above, but the fact that the job is becoming more and more demanding all the time. In a study that investigated the lived experience of public school educators in Vermont, Canada, King (2005) found the ever increasing demand to teach more content is not welcomed by teachers. One teacher, Naome, experiences foregoing her preferred practice of teaching creatively and with pedagogical tact, as this takes time away from teaching the extra content she "needs to". Naome continues that "it has gotten a little overwhelming!" (p.61).

Another teacher Kristen adds "there's always more to do, you never feel like you've done the greatest job" (King, 2005, p.62). The authors question whether emphasis in the job on efficiency (in delivering more and more content), rather than creativity, may cultivate students with narrowly focused minds rather than broad open ones.

These contemporary experiences and issues faced by teachers may well be transferable to the world of nursing education. Ironside (2004) contends that for over twenty-five years, reliance on 'what' needs to be taught in nursing

education, based on a conventional pedagogical approach, has led to increasing amounts of ever more complex content in nursing curricula. Lecturers have been left wondering what to include and what to leave out, in a culture of expectation that they include everything; this 'problem' for nursing education has become known as the 'additive curriculum' (Ironsides; Diekelmann & Smythe, 2004).

The literature also suggests that the particular demands of teaching as a job can be all consuming, both in the working lives and home lives of educators. In an Australian phenomenological case study about the career of an early childhood educator, Sumsion (2001) reported on the blossoming, wilting, then eventual decision to leave the field altogether, of one educator's career, all in the space of five years. In her first year, the educator, Sarah, experiences intense enjoyment of her job, in a period when her primary focus is on the personal-professional world of the classroom. Unlike the new lecturers previously discussed, who often arrive in nursing education without prior teacher training, for Sarah her first year in practice is an enjoyable progression from her two year pre service training (Sumsion).

In her second year, Sarah begins to experience some disillusionment, when her focus is turned more to the communal-professional world of the school community. Sarah likens this communal-professional world to the metaphor of a garden, where, for Sarah, if you come across something in poor repair, such as a footbridge, you don't ignore it, you repair it, and you make sure it is repaired so that it "blends in with the beauty of the rest of the environment" (Sumsion, 2001, p.13). Sarah has found however, that in her school, some teachers "choose not to do that", and some "don't even see there is a problem" (p.13). Sarah observes that many of her colleagues have entrenched practices, lack passion, and are disinterested in professional renewal. Further, she experiences "working with people who don't care about new and exciting things" (p.14).

By the time Sarah reaches her fourth year, she experiences the enjoyment of her job being outweighed by the negative things. Workload is one of her main

concerns, “it eats so much into your life”, she reflects, “no matter what anyone says, if you’re a dedicated teacher, then you are going to have a massive workload” (Sumsion, 2001, p.17).

In her fifth year, Sarah takes a new post where she is expected to act as a change agent. She experiences the time frame that she has been given for change as unrealistic, and meets fierce resistance from a colleague who is particularly entrenched in her ways. Sarah then resigns her post in a state of emotional and physical collapse, and leaves education altogether.

Overall therefore, these findings suggest that at least some lecturers in nursing education experience their jobs as demanding, unfamiliar, and with a lack of clarity as to what is expected of them. Findings from other teaching contexts, such as schools, lend support to what has been found in the studies that pertain specifically to nursing education, and also add greater depth to the discussion. For Sarah, the early childhood educator in Sumsion’s (2001) study, teaching had a major impact on her whole life, leading to emotional and physical collapse, and her eventual decision to leave her chosen field of work altogether. In such clearly challenging working environments, it would appear necessary as part of a comprehensive review of literature into the lived experience of lecturers in nursing education, to consider lecturers lived experience of relationships in work. Sarah, for instance, had clearly sought to draw strength from relationships in work, but instead found them draining.

What then is known about the experience of relationships in work for lecturers in nursing education? Are they a source of strength? Or do they serve to deplete emotions and energy, as was the case with Sarah?

The next section focuses on relationships in work for lecturers in nursing education.

## **Relationships in work**

Lecturers in nursing education experience many different relationships in their work worlds. Van Manen (1997) emphasizes the importance of ‘lived other’ or

‘relationality’, and the literature that is presented here reports on this lived, relational space, as it is experienced between and amongst colleagues in the workplace.

In the previous section, new lecturers in Siler and Kleiner’s (2001) study often found nursing education unfamiliar and incongruous with previous expectations they had about the job. To cope with these challenging new working conditions, the new lecturers turn to the relationship with their senior colleagues for support and advice, although they find the response isn’t always helpful.

Whilst the experience of new lecturers is of getting assistance with course related tasks, such as putting together a syllabus or setting up clinical arrangements, there are other areas of their work where they find themselves struggling to figure things out on their own. Coming from clinical environments where they were precepted or mentored closely by their senior colleagues, these new lecturers are amazed at how much they are expected and entrusted to do on their own (Siler & Kleiner, 2001).

While new lecturers in Siler and Kleiner’s (2001) study are all assigned mentors, their experience of the mentoring relationship is often of a relationship that doesn’t flourish “because of scheduling conflicts, personality differences, or other reasons” (p.400) . Siler and Kleiner found that the new lecturers are particularly resourceful in seeking out assistance, whether this be from their formal mentors or more informally from other colleagues. However, when they do find a listening ear they experience difficulty in knowing what to ask, and also difficulty in articulating about what they do not know. Consequently it is hard for their experienced colleagues to offer support, as they too are then unclear about what it is the new lecturers need to know (Siler & Kleiner).

When the new lecturers are successful in working out the questions they need to ask, they then experience difficulty in finding answers to those questions. One lecturer, Jan, for example, expects her senior colleagues to be able to



answer questions about the 'big picture' in her department, so she can see where she's "supposed to fit in" (Siler and Kleiner, 2001, p.400). Jan is then surprised when her colleagues are unable to do this.

The experience of another new lecturer, Sally, suggests it may be less about senior colleagues being 'unable' to provide answers, and more to do with them providing 'lip service' to their new colleagues... "people pay lip service to letting you be new for a while" (Siler & Kleiner, 2001, p.400). Sally does however also suggest that this may not be quite as intentional as it may sound, it may be that more senior colleagues forget they are alongside new colleagues... "once they're used to seeing your face around for a while, I think people forget that you're new" (p.400).

Overall, the new lecturers in Siler and Kleiner's (2001) study don't experience the nurturing and support that they had expected to when they came into their jobs. The support and nurturing needed by lecturers is only available to them in a partial and fragmented way. It also appears however, that although challenging and draining, the experience of these lecturers doesn't appear to be as comprehensively deflating as it was for Sarah, the early childhood educator in Sumsion's (2001) study (see previous section), who eventually left her chosen field of work altogether.

It is not surprising that the lived experience of relationships between colleagues in nursing education can vary. Whether due to the personal characteristics of the lecturers, or the culture of the particular department where the lecturer works, the literature suggests that the experience of relationships in work will indeed not be a uniform one, but one that will differ for different lecturers working in different work environments.

In her study that investigated the lived experience of public school educators in Vermont, Canada, King (2005) uncovered some markedly different experiences of relationships in work amongst her participants. One educator, Melanie for example, is left feeling drained of energy as a result of her relationships with teachers and administrators at her school. She experiences

a lack of common purpose and conflicting education goals in the dynamics at her school.

In sharp contrast to Melanie's experience, Elizabeth's colleagues at her school invigorate her. She sums up the experience of relationships in her workplace: "The people who work here are really wonderful. It is just an amazing collection of people. There is not one in the whole school that is backstabbing or gossiping" (King, 2005, p.75).

The literature has so far revealed some intense and challenging experiences for lecturers; this was linked to their job in the previous section, and to their relationships with colleagues in work in the current section. With all this before them, lecturers still need of course to focus on their core business of teaching students. Research pertaining to lecturers lived experience of teaching is presented next.

## **Teaching the students**

Earlier I noted that there is an increasing emphasis on the practice of narrative pedagogy in nursing education (Diekelmann, 2001; Ironside, 2001). However, narrative pedagogy does not preclude other approaches such as conventional pedagogy. According to Ironside narrative pedagogy creates a place where different approaches can converge in unending conversation, "by holding open and problematic the shared practices of schooling, learning, and teaching, narrative pedagogy creates possibilities for new understandings to emerge" (Ironside, p.81).

The above position taken by Ironside (2001) is helpful for this current review of previous research about lecturers lived experience of teaching. Any review of lived experience starts with where a lecturer is 'at', not in what that lecturer may change 'to'. The lived journey from one pedagogical approach to another, or lived experience where a lecturers current approach remains the same or is adapted in some way, is therefore open to discovery in the lived worlds of

lecturers, in a similar way to how everything remains open and problematic in Ironside's argument.

In acknowledging Ironside's (2001) argument, my intention is to my earlier stated wish to write a review that is about the lived experience of teaching, rather than be led by compelling arguments about what is considered to be the best way to teach.

Lecturers in Siler and Kleiner's (2001) study, who are in their first year of teaching, experience a considerable amount of worry over whether they possess the necessary abilities to perform their roles effectively. Mary Ellen, for example, recalls how she used to be over prepared in a bid to anticipate any possible question from her class. Then a question would be asked that she couldn't answer, leaving her feeling "mortified". Mary Ellen continues "I felt like I should know everything, and I didn't" (p.400).

Siler and Kleiner (2001) found that new graduate nurses who have had student clinical experiences are more prepared to function in their role than new lecturers who often have no prior experience of lecturing. The arrival of new lecturers into teaching is therefore tough, although Siler and Kleiner also point out that the experience becomes more manageable as the lecturers first year progresses. They further report that greater control over the processes involved in teaching often result from the pragmatism of new lecturers, rather than pedagogical guidance from mentors or senior colleagues. Later on in their careers, the difficult nature of this early experience of teaching can be so awful that it becomes ingrained in the minds of lecturers. Mary Ellen recalls a senior colleague who found it 'hard' even to think back to their first semester. This colleague had forgotten "how awful that first semester was for me teaching" (p.401).

The experience of these new lecturers in nursing education, who are given large workloads and asked to teach classes with little or no prior teaching experience or training, differs from the experience of teachers elsewhere in the teaching world, who undergo (although not always) a formal professional

training prior to commencement in their role. Although Sarah, for example, the early childhood lecturer in Sumsion's (2001) study, eventually leaves her job deflated by the entrenched uncaring practices of her colleagues, her first year in the classroom (after her formal professional training) is characterised by "an intense enjoyment of her work" (p.13).

Questions are therefore left unanswered for lecturers in nursing education about mentorship, support, adequate training and preparation to be a teacher, and workload; and, Siler and Kleiner's (2001) findings suggest that any shortcomings are most keenly felt at the coalface for lecturers, when they are in the classroom teaching their students.

Although the experience of teaching becomes more manageable as lecturers work their way through their first year (Siler & Kleiner, 2001), they are still left with a complex array of considerations and challenges, as they continue to learn about teaching.

One area of the lecturers lived experience, where this complex array of considerations and challenges is felt, is in that experience (introduced earlier) where narrative pedagogy may or may not arise out of conventional pedagogy. Next therefore, previous findings are presented into this area of lecturers experience.

In their study that investigated the lived experience of new lecturers, Young and Diekelmann (2002) present the theme 'learning to lecture'. They begin with the lived experience of Darla, who relies on the principles of conventional pedagogy, that content builds sequentially on previous learning, to construct a quiz for her students in order to assess their prior learning. The quiz is on blood gases, a subject that Darla expects her students to already know. The students, it turns out, don't know the subject however, there are "sighs" from the students and they complain "this is terrible, this is awful" (p.407) as they are completing the test.

Darla later reflects that she “didn’t know that they didn’t know”, and has to “go back to the drawing table” (Young & Diekelmann, 2002, p.408). At her next class, when Darla is intending to implement her revised plan, she is not having a good morning. The light bulb in the overhead projector is broken, and she is forced to abandon her plan and ad lib. She decides to teach the students the material they ‘don’t know’ by drawing a diagram on the board. She draws an oxyhaemoglobin curve and takes blood gases and their numbers, and keeps “throwing them out” to the students. Suddenly there’s excitement as the students are “plugging them (the numbers) into the little formula I had there”, and “then a lot of them were finally getting it”. Then Darla, perhaps buoyed by this, moves straight into a new topic, and once again her students are lost, sending her back to the ‘drawing table’ once again! (p.408).

One view of Darla’s experience presented above is that she is enacting several of the characteristics of narrative pedagogy. She presenced herself as she listened and attended to the student reaction to her quiz. She was open and reflected on what was happening in the communal space she was in. In the next class, when she had drawn the oxyhaemoglobin curve and ad libbed, Darla found herself in dialogue with her students, and they connect when the students ‘finally get it’.

However, another view is that at a fundamental level Darla has continued to subscribe to conventional pedagogy. She is not actually concerned about challenging the assumptions of conventional pedagogy or exploring new pedagogies, she is concerned about her students and about reflecting on her teaching, but the fundamental tenets of her pedagogical approach don’t seem to concern her.

For instance, if Darla was concerned about this, she may have begun to question her own use of a quiz. In nursing education, the use of quizzes in conventional pedagogy has been criticised for revealing less about what students know and more about what they don’t know (Young & Diekelmann, 2002), and elsewhere Boice (1996) argues that quizzes leave students feeling

isolated and create mistrust in the relationship between lecturers and students.

With regard to narrative pedagogy arising out of conventional pedagogy in nursing education, challenging the assumptions of conventional pedagogy, perhaps more telling findings about this can be found in Ironside's (2001) study where a lecturer reflects on her experience of using tests. The lecturer captures the mood of an audience of her peers and students, when she reflects aloud that students are always testing themselves, and lecturers are setting tests more and more often. She is met with loud applause when she concludes... "I think it's all this testing that's gotten out of wack. We need less testing!" (p.83). This observation is then followed by that of another lecturer who argues that tests are in fact a 'barrier' to learning.

Whether a barrier, or a constraint of some kind, conventional approaches have also become a source of boredom for lecturers in Young's (2004) study. In Young's theme 'Trying something new: Responding to boredom', the something new for the lecturers is narrative pedagogy. Lecturers in the study report feeling "so tired" of the "same old" course, to the extent that one lecturer, Zahra, comments "I don't like what I do" (p.126). Narrative pedagogy makes Zahra's job "more interesting" (p.126), but she also experiences this as a risk, when out with students who are on clinical placements, she no longer knows what she is supposed to be doing: "the only kind of 'supposed to' I had to go on was what I had always done before" (p.128). Zahra experiences concern at how her new approach may be viewed by her clinical colleagues, whether she will be seen as "lazy", or as "distancing" herself from the nursing aspect of teaching a clinical course (p.128).

Jai, a lecturer in Ironside's (2004) study, experiences a gentler, more gradual evolution into her practice of narrative pedagogy, than was the case for Zahra above. This may be because Jai's changes in her practice take place in the personal-professional world of the classroom, rather than the more public arena of clinical environments, where she may have been more exposed to the concerns that Zahra had experienced.

Jai also experiences being bored with aspects of conventional pedagogy: “I don’t want to lecture. I don’t think this is the best way to use the time. It’s really boring for me as well as for them [the students]” (Ironsides, 2004, p.8).

Jai’s experience of reforming her teaching begins when she decides to change what she has done until now, by providing the students with handouts where they will need to fill in the blanks related to content they are covering in their readings. Whilst as Ironsides (2004) points out, this does nothing to challenge the assumptions of conventional pedagogy, in Jai’s lived experience of reforming her teaching, it is significant. “It (teaching) improved from there”, Jai comments (p.8).

Jai goes on to describe her experience of narrative pedagogy beginning to arise out of conventional pedagogy in her subsequent classes. She begins to hear questions that relate to students’ experience of their own lives, as well as experiences they have had on previous clinical placements. The students become much more “enthusiastic” and it is much more “interesting” for Jai (Ironsides, 2004, p.9).

Jai continues that over the next semester, as she becomes more confident in enacting narrative pedagogy, she begins her classes with student stories, instead of content. Jai is pleasantly surprised at how students “get involved in the class, share their experiences, and begin to ask questions of each other, as well as her” (Ironsides, 2004, p.9/10).

Elsewhere, lecturers in Andrews et al’s (2001) study are careful to point out however, that their experience of enacting narrative pedagogy is not about disregarding content, but decentring it. In their theme ‘Enacting narrative pedagogy: Decentring skill acquisition and content’, lecturers experience is of questions such as ‘what does this do?’ living alongside situated, contextual questions such as ‘what is this experience like for patients?’

“What really matters” to students about their, and their patients world of experience is effectively therefore a “leaping off point” for clinical learning (Andrews et al., 2001, p.255). Lecturers experience is of cultivating discussion that includes knowledge and skills, but also moves beyond knowledge and skills to include the interpretation of experiences (Andrews et al.).

One more important area of lecturers lived experience, concerns the commitment and dedication of lecturers, already discussed earlier as it pertained in an overall sense to their feelings about their job, but also relevant here as it pertains to the lecturers lived experience of teaching their students.

In Diekelmann’s (2001) study for example, a lecturer demonstrates her commitment to her students when two of them who are passing academically and doing well in clinical practice, suddenly fail a clinical test. The students failed to regulate a drip properly, something they have already shown they can do successfully on previous clinical placements at the hospital. The consequence of failing the test for the students is that they will have to repeat the semester.

In a department where colleagues are always ‘sniping’ at each other, the lecturer is concerned that the decision to fail the students is unnecessary and oppressive. The lecturer talks to a couple of colleagues about the ‘insanity’ of a policy that eliminates good students for such a ‘ridiculous reason’, and then supports the students to file a grievance and be retested (Diekelmann, 2001).

The seemingly oppressive practice of the lecturer who has failed the students only continues when, after the students both pass their retest, he/she refuses to change the grade. Prior to an emergency departmental meeting to consider this issue, the lecturer who has advocated for the students distributes an article about alternative pedagogies to his/her colleagues. The reaction to the article is “overwhelmingly positive”, colleagues can relate to “every single excerpt” (Diekelmann, 2001, p.64). The department goes on to change their policy on testing, so students now approach the lecturers when they are ready to be tested. Both the affected students receive passing grades and the



lecturer who has advocated for them reflects that “we had the most collaborative and productive meeting any of us have ever seen” (p.64).

The lived experience of the lecturer in the above example is illustrative therefore of an engagement with the academic community in dedicated and committed work with students, resonating with Diekelmann’s (2001) concerned practice of ‘engendering community’. It may also be realistic however, not to always expect such committed responses. Martha for instance, a lecturer in Young and Diekelmann’s (2002) study is closed to developing her teaching through reflection. She makes her tests easier for the students, just to please them and make her feedback positive in student evaluations. Martha’s commitment is to herself, not her teaching, she is only concerned to get a big grant to do research, “it’s all in how you play the game of getting tenure”. And with regard to teaching she adds “there will never be time for me to spend on teaching” (p.408).

## **Summary**

The literature has revealed that novice lecturers experience their new jobs as demanding, in an environment where they are unclear of what is expected of them. When they turn to senior colleagues for support, the support they need is often not available. Teaching students in the classroom has also been found to be particularly challenging experience, involving complex decisions based on both conventional and narrative pedagogical approaches.

Given that the literature focuses on the experience of novice lecturers and lecturers enacting narrative pedagogy, a gap exists in the literature with regard to the lived experience of more experienced lecturers. The review has identified studies undertaken in Canada and the USA and highlighted the dearth of similar investigations in the New Zealand context.

Later, I consider the relationship between my own findings and the literature presented here. Next however, in Chapter Three, my attention turns to finding a suitable methodology and method for the study.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

In Chapter One, I introduced the reader to several factors that influenced my decision to use phenomenology as the methodology for this study. These factors related to my own experience and philosophical 'wondering' in the world that led to a genuine interest and engagement with the research question 'what does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nursing education?' Further, the process of engaging with the literature introduced me to the argument posed by Cayne and Loewenthal (2004) that it is the 'unknown', rather than theory, that is required for generating and informing research ideas. I believe that my own philosophical wondering about my experience and the philosophical position of Cayne and Loewenthal are complementary to each other. My philosophical wondering supports the notion of generating research ideas from an 'unknown', rather than a theoretical starting point, and Cayne and Loewenthal's argument about generating research ideas lends support to my own deep wondering in return.

The decision I made in Chapter One to use phenomenology was my first decision concerning the methodology, method, and design for this study. Next, I needed to decide on the particular phenomenological arguments that would inform my study's methodology and method. I also needed to establish a research design that would provide a congruent structure for conducting the research.

I begin the chapter by presenting the philosophical arguments of key figures from the phenomenological tradition. Based on my analysis of these arguments I explicate the methodological approach taken in this study. I then introduce my relational approach to ethics in the study and discuss specific ethical considerations that I have addressed. The method is then presented which includes sections on preparing and conducting the research interviews, background to the analysis of the data, isolating thematic statements, and the framing up of phenomenological themes. This is followed by the approach

taken to ensure the study was rigorous and my reflections on the research process.

I start therefore by considering how I distilled my study's methodology and method from arguments inside the phenomenological tradition.

## **Phenomenology**

Van Manen (1997a) in exploring the history of hermeneutic phenomenology recounts the story of Diogenes, a Greek philosopher living in the fourth century BC. One day Diogenes was reported to have gone about the streets in clear daylight with a lit lantern. He looked about the place as if he had lost something and when people came up to ask what he was trying to find he replied: "even with a lamp in broad daylight I cannot find a real human being" (p5). When people pointed to themselves as real people Diogenes chased them with a stick shouting "it is real human beings I want" (p5). What is philosophically significant to the phenomenological tradition that came later is Diogenes challenge to those who seek an easy answer to the question of what it means to be human.

The phenomenological tradition further emerged in pre World War 1 Germany out of a more general attempt to develop "a widened conception of experience than a sensation bound positivism allowed for" (Spiegelberg, 1983).

Phenomenology therefore sought to release experience from its relatively confined position within the laws and concepts of science. This was certainly true in the work of Edmund Husserl whose stated aim was the "avoidance of all conceptually bound and constructed beginnings" (Ray, 1994, p.119).

Husserl was the first key figure in the history of phenomenology, and his philosophical position is the first of four to be analyzed next. Husserl is then followed by Martin Heidegger, Hans Georg Gadamer and Max van Manen.

## **Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)**

Consciousness is central to Husserl's phenomenology and he began his work by building on the earlier work in this area by Brentano. A psychologist, Brentano (as cited in Cohen, 2000) introduced the notion of the intentionality

of consciousness, the idea that consciousness is always directed toward something. In turn, because consciousness is in the world where experience occurs, the study of experience is seen to reveal consciousness.

Husserl broke away from the main body of psychological thought after this link with Brentano, the main point of divergence being Husserl's move away from traditional scientific thought, a move that wasn't made by the psychologists. Husserl recommended to the psychologists a return to the "concrete, living, experience (*konkrete lebendige Erfahrung*) of the world of life" (as cited in Spiegelberg, 1983, p9).

Husserl claimed that consciousness is a realm of absolute being, termed *epoche*, where the starting point for philosophical reflection in the most immediate way, is not theory or history, but a "description of the presence of man in the world, and the presence of the world for man" (Stapleton, 1983, p9).

Husserl's philosophy has been criticized by Luft (2004) on several fronts. First for what Luft refers to as his 'epistemological problem'. This relates to Husserl's defining transcendental philosophy, the phenomenological reduction, which attempts to suspend consciousness to establish true knowledge in the form of 'concrete living experience'; the criticism is about the commencement of the philosophy, a problem described by Luft as being about "how to begin with philosophy", beginning with "something peculiar" rather than the "normal execution of life" (p.200).

Second the phenomenological reduction is also criticized for leaving 'loose ends' (Luft, 2004). The first loose end concerns the reduction's emphasis on the Ego of the philosopher who is then in the position of "accounting for this transcendental life", which he merely "partakes of" (p.221). Luft suggests this is Cartesian, "just another scientific job" (p.222). A further strand in the philosophy of the reduction argues that transcendental achievements also involve transcendental intersubjectivity, therefore including the lives of others, not just the life and Ego of the philosopher. These two strands represent loose

ends because they are philosophically set squarely against each other, they pursue separate agendas and therefore have been unable to unite (Luft).

In order to meet the philosophical challenges of the epistemological problem and the phenomenological reduction, phenomenology would turn to ontology, the nature of reality, or in other words the 'normal execution of life' that was referred to above. This next and significant turn for phenomenology was led by Martin Heidegger, the second key figure in its history.

### **Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)**

Heidegger (1962) moved phenomenological inquiry from an epistemological question to an ontological one. Heidegger questioned the philosophical basis of the phenomenological reduction. Whilst Husserl was concerned with suspending consciousness to reveal something known to us as persons, an epistemological question, a question about knowing, Heidegger asked about our Being in the world, a question about existence, about the nature of our reality, an ontological question. This argument is taken up by Gelven (1989) who states that

The question is not whether something does exist or how to characterize the existence of particular kinds of things, like material things or mental things, but simply to ask about the very meaning of Being. In raising this question, one notes a subtle shift in what is being asked. If I am concerned with entities, such as God, minds, bodies, the earth, this page, I seem to ask two questions: Do such things in fact exist? and if so, What kind of things are they? But what can I possibly ask about Being itself? I surely cannot ask whether Being exists, nor can I ask what kind of thing it is...there is, however, one question I can ask about Being: What does it mean? Indeed, if we reflect upon it, it appears that this is the only question we can ask (p.7).

What does it (Being) mean? or what does it mean to be? could be construed as a vague and abstract question. Gelven (1989) argues that it is "in no way

abstract: it is rather the most concrete and immediate of all questions.”(p.8). Gelven uses the example of a jail to explain this argument. The person's Being is fundamental as it comes first. A jail is built as a response to the Being of the person. It is ludicrous to imagine human beings evolving into the world to make sense of prison buildings. In Heidegger's philosophy therefore entities such as jails are preceded by what it means to be.

Heidegger (1962) described three distinct ways of interacting with the world in his philosophy. The present-at-hand mode of engagement involves standing on the outside of activities and objectively reflecting on them. Unready-to-hand relations occur when things go wrong, best laid plans falter or circumstances change unexpectedly. The ready-to-hand mode of engagement is the most important mode of the three for Heidegger; he sees it one of our fundamental ways of being in the world, characterized by a transparent involvement in the environment. In his seminal work *Being and Time*, Heidegger illustrates the transparency of the ready-to-hand mode of engagement by using the metaphor of the craftsman...

In our 'description' of that environment which is closest to us-the work-world of the craftsman, for example,-the outcome was that along with the equipment to be found when one is at work, those Others for whom the work is destined are 'encountered too.' If this is ready-to-hand, then there lies in the kind of Being which belongs to it (that is, in its involvement) an essential assignment or reference to possible wearers, for instance, for whom it should be 'cut to the figure.' Similarly when material is put to use, we encounter its producer or 'supplier' as one who 'serves' well or badly. When, for example, we walk along the edge of a field but 'outside it', the field shows itself as belonging to such-and-such a person, and decently kept up by him (p153).

Material and equipment goes relatively unnoticed when we compare the above with how the world of the craftsman might usually be explained in a more objective frame of reference (e.g. what he does, the tools he uses, what he likes/dislikes about his job and so on). The absorption and transparency of

the material and objective, in the ready-to-hand mode of engagement, is therefore indicative of a deeper and more experientially full understanding about existence. This is supported by Packer (1985) who argues that the ready-to-hand mode of engagement offers “the most primordial and direct access to human phenomena” (p.1084).

A key consideration for Heidegger is therefore about Being, and whether Being is or is not covered over in philosophical inquiry. Emphasis on existentiality in this view did not however prevent Heidegger from including the hermeneutic circle in his philosophy. The hermeneutic circle was originally an insight of Schleiermacher, as discussed by Palmer (1969). Schleiermacher put forward the circle as a dialectical interaction between the parts and the whole of a text, when understanding is being sought; an example occurs when a single sentence might suddenly illuminate the whole text of a book. Palmer contends that the circle operates at both a linguistic level, and at a level concerning the ‘matter’ being discussed. In emphasizing Being and existence, Heidegger is arguably more immediately concerned with the ‘matter’ being discussed. Hans Georg Gadamer, phenomenology’s next key proponent, would also go on to utilise the hermeneutic circle in his philosophy. Gadamer, however, would emphasize the linguistic side, presenting language as a cornerstone of his hermeneutic philosophy.

## **Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002)**

Gadamer is most widely known through his book *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 1975). It is ironic that many were attracted to the book because its title suggested it provided a method for phenomenology, when in actual fact the philosophical arguments in the book are diametrically opposed to this.

Gadamer’s emphasis on language was also not the departure that it may first seem from Heidegger’s philosophy. Gadamer, of whom Heidegger was the mentor, was in agreement with the fundamental tenets of Heideggerian hermeneutics. In fact, both Heidegger and Gadamer considered language and Being as fundamental in their philosophies. What then were the philosophical implications of Gadamer placing greater emphasis on language?

Language, its text, and a process of interpretation that is simultaneously arising from and reconstituting the text, are of central importance in Gadamer's philosophy. He also emphasizes that history and tradition are informing the text as understanding is being sought, similar to a common language that is shared between people as they seek to understand each other in a conversation; yet according to Gadamer, there is nothing definitive to rely on in this process, since interpretation is always 'on the way' in a process where subject and object seek to "mutually determine one another" (Gadamer, 1987, p. 320).

The overt inclusion of prejudice in the act of understanding further defines Gadamer's philosophy. Unlike Husserl, whose phenomenological reduction sought to suspend the consciousness of the philosopher to reveal the true essence of experience, Gadamer saw the prejudice of the philosopher when interpreting a text as inevitable and necessary, "to try to eliminate one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible, but manifestly absurd" (Gadamer, 1975, p.358). He adds that this is "not just for the one for whom one is interpreting, but also for the interpreter himself in the explicitness of linguistic interpretation" (p.359).

Prejudice and the process of interpretation that I have discussed, are integral to the 'fusion of horizons', a final key feature of Gadamer's philosophy that added to concepts originally put forward in Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle. Horizon refers to the "wide, superior vision that the person who is seeking to understand must have" (Gadamer, 1975, p.272). The fusion of horizons concerns the fusion of the prejudice of different vantage points, horizons both past and present, in seeking this superior understanding. Gadamer, in the following quotation, gives consideration to the fusion of horizons...

In fact the horizon of the present is being continually formed, in that we have continually to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing is the encounter with the past and the understanding of the



tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves (p.273).

Drawing on these arguments, Annells (1996) specifies that hermeneutical inquiry “should aim for a fusion of horizons of the interpreter and the text” (p.707).

Threads of Husserl- lived experience, Heidegger- ontology, and Gadamer- dialectic between understanding and text, are discernable in the philosophy of a final key figure in the history of phenomenology, Max van Manen.

### **Max van Manen (1942-)**

Max van Manen is a contemporary hermeneutic phenomenologist from the group of phenomenologists known as the Dutch School. Referring to his book *Researching lived experience* (Van Manen, 1997a), van Manen suggests the book can be read as a methodology, or “as a set of methodological suggestions for engaging in human science research and writing” (p.1). As such, van Manen offers something different to the predominantly philosophical arguments of Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer before him; he presents a framework for conducting phenomenological research.

*Researching lived experience* (Van Manen, 1997a) is far from an abandonment of philosophical thinking however. In his writing about both methodology, which he views as the theory behind the method, and the method itself, which he defines as the ‘way’ the study is conducted, van Manen includes a plethora of deep philosophical considerations. In providing a framework for conducting phenomenological research therefore, van Manen has retained phenomenology’s philosophical tradition. Further, he stoically distances himself from presenting an objective framework in any traditional sense, touting Gadamer’s claim that “the method of phenomenology and

hermeneutics is that there is no method” (Gadamer, as cited in van Manen, 1997a, p.30). So what then are some of the central ideas in what ‘methodology’, or the ‘pursuit of knowledge’, as he terms it, are about for van Manen?

In the process of writing, and engaging the reader with his methodology, van Manen (1997a) includes pedagogic reflection on “how we live with children as parents, teachers, or educators” (p.1). Including pedagogic reflection in this way lends support to Gadamer’s (1975) argument about the inevitability and necessity of including the prejudice of the philosopher. One perspective about van Manen’s work is therefore that it enables the practical application of Gadamer’s arguments about prejudice in the worlds of parents, teachers, and educators.

Van Manen (1997a) sees theory as enlightening the practice of teaching and parenting, and echoes the ontology of Heidegger when he states “practice (or life) always comes first and theory comes later as a result of reflection”(p.15). At a fundamental level, van Manen is more inclined towards the Heideggerian hermeneutic philosophy shared in a large part by Heidegger and Gadamer, although he does acknowledge and champion his particular understanding of the notion of lived experience that had originally interested Husserl. The role of language and lived experience in van Manen’s philosophy illustrates the use of etymology to uncover a deeper understanding of the lived experience of a parent bringing a newborn child into the world.

Van Manen (1997a) gives the example of the parent who feels pride at bringing the newborn child into the world. The parent may feel a sense of pride tinged with a feeling that parenting this child as he or she arrives into the world, is actually not totally down to them- the parent, but part of something altogether bigger that is beyond the parent’s grasp to understand. To parent (*parere*) means to originate, and the child’s origin is about the physical and emotional experience of childbirth, termed ‘giving birth’, but the child’s origin is also about something “other and larger than me that made it possible for me to have this child in the first place (p.59)”, deeper experience termed ‘bringing

forth'. This has the effect of revealing deeper meaning when the parent replaces the sense of this experience being 'beyond my grasp' with an understanding that "parents bring forth children, but the child must be born in the dual sense of bearing and birth, bringing and awakening to the world" (p59). In this way, meaning is uncovered, where the arrival of the child may also be experienced as a 'gift' by the parent, as well as a life that has been 'born' in the more immediate physical and emotional sense. Van Manen, by inquiring in this way, is seeking to "put us in touch with an original form of life where the terms still had living ties to the lived experiences from which they originally sprang".(p.59).

The inquiry into the lived experience of parenting also serves as an illustration of another key principle in Van Manen's (1997a) methodology, namely the necessity of remaining oriented to the original phenomenological research question. The original question is about the lived experience that makes it "possible to ask the 'what is it like?' question in the first place" (p.42), so continued orientation to the original question is integral to the research remaining phenomenological in its approach.

In spite of van Manen aligning himself with the position that 'there is no method', as stated earlier, he does offer a framework for conducting phenomenological research. Van Manen's (1997a) framework consists of the following six research activities:

*First: Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world.* This refers to the researcher's commitment to the phenomenon under investigation.

*Second: Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it.* This concerns Heidegger's (1962) ontological question about Being in the world, as opposed to an epistemological question about knowing.

Third: *Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon.* This refers to the process of dwelling on the experiential material, uncovering, discovering phenomenological themes.

Fourth: *Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.* This is about putting the experience onto paper, ongoing reflection, dwelling on words and unfolding meaning.

Fifth: *Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon.* This involves the researcher staying dedicated to this aspect of the method. The researcher asks if their interpretations are continuing to remain faithful with the overall context of the text.

And sixth and finally: *Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.* This concerns the subtle and creative process of moving between the parts and the whole of the text to uncover the deepest available phenomenological meaning.

My consideration of the key philosophical ideas in the history of phenomenology, culminating in the six research activities of van Manen's (1997a) framework for conducting phenomenological research, brings this current section to a close. A key philosophical point of difference between Husserl and the work of Heidegger, Gadamer, and van Manen concerns the relationship between lived experience and text. Husserl believed that the true essence of lived experience is found when experience is 'bracketed off' from its text or context surrounding it. Although each presented their unique philosophical arguments, Heidegger, Gadamer, and van Manen all believed that text, such as that derived from language and history, is intertwined in a deep relationship with experience, is key to help illuminate it, and should not therefore be separated from it. In the forthcoming sections, analysis of these arguments will continue to inform the discussion when I present the particular methodology and method that was chosen for my study.

## **Deciding about methodology and method**

With the main philosophical arguments from phenomenology's history before me, I needed to explore and arrive at an understanding of how the methodology and method for my study would be framed. It was the ontology in Heidegger's philosophy that would prove particularly influential regarding this. In echoing the argument that an entity such as a jail is in response to a more direct question about what it means to be, Leonard (1994) argues with regard to choosing a research methodology, that it is again first important to ask what it means to be, and then to ask research questions in response to this

Too often, researchers facilely seize on a method without considering the more profoundly important philosophical assumptions that undergird the method and whether those assumptions are consistent with the researcher's own view of what it means to be a human being (p.44).

I was drawn to the support this argument gave to the importance of the situatedness of the researcher, something which had also shaped my own inquiry to this point (see Chapter One). I decided to situate the study in Heideggerian hermeneutics, which I inferred to mean, based on the arguments above, that I would need to propose a methodology and method for my study, as a response to my own view of what it means to be (a lecturer in the field of nursing education). In taking this approach, I was, temporarily at least, remaining open to different philosophical arguments. I was not unreservedly subscribing to one philosopher; I was going to see which arguments inside Heideggerian hermeneutics resonated with the question and with me, and then proceed from there.

Further to the above, as a beginning researcher this supports me to refine and develop my understanding of Heidegger, Gadamer, van Manen, and even others as I become more experienced as a researcher. For now the position I had taken worked well for me, I could feel my way into these complex and

challenging philosophies and arrive at a methodology and method that would effectively support my research inquiry.

My initial response as I 'felt my way in' was of being attracted by the ontology in Heidegger's philosophy, as well as the transparency in his ready-to-hand mode of engagement. I was also struck by Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' and the deep philosophical writing of van Manen, in particular the way he talks into the world of teachers, which is at the heart of my study. Links to these methodological tenets will be made explicit in the forthcoming sections that present the method of my study.

Apart from the allure of his deep pedagogic philosophy, since van Manen (1997a) provides a framework for conducting phenomenological research, I will use his ideas as an anchor for the explication of my method. As I have stated above, this does not mean I am subscribing unreservedly to van Manen or any other philosopher, but his framework is a valuable guide as I continue to develop my understanding of phenomenological research.

Before I present the method, I explain my approach to ethics in the study and detail how specific ethical considerations were addressed.

## **A relational ethical approach**

Hartrick Doane (2002) argues that traditional understandings of ethics have operated from the premise that human beings are intrinsically separate individuals, with morality also conceived of separately, as duties to be followed by these separate individuals. In her writing about ethics in nursing, Hartrick Doane challenges this traditional view, arguing that instead of ethics being about something fixed that is to be followed, to do with 'personal goodness' in the intrapersonal world of the nurse, in the reality of nursing situations, ethics in fact occurs at an interpersonal level, it is fluid in nature and is experienced subjectively.

Hartrick Doane (2002) makes the contention that ethics is a "deeply personal process that is lived in the complexity and ambiguity of everyday nursing

work” (p.633). The ‘deeply personal process’ referred to here, is lived by me as a nurse, but also in various other areas of my life. It is lived by me in the deep wondering that has characterized my own philosophical journey in the world, including that which led to this research study, as described in this chapter and Chapter One; at other times, the ‘deeply personal process’ is also lived by me as a parent, as a lecturer, or, as I argue in the case of this study, as a researcher.

That ethics is lived by me as the researcher, is of course subjectively about me as the researcher, but subjectively also includes these other areas of my life. So, in my study, when I addressed ethical considerations, I did so as the researcher, but the ‘deeply personal’ ethical subjectivity from my own philosophical journey in the world, from me as a nurse, from me as a lecturer, and from me as a parent, was also included in the processes surrounding ethical decisions in my study. Subjectively, I was also there as me, as nurse, as lecturer and as parent, these other areas of my life did not cease to exist because I was there as ‘the researcher’. In the deep subjective field of phenomenological research, these other areas were bound to significantly contribute to the ethical decisions that I made about this study.

As indicated above, ethics is not only lived at an intrapersonal level, it is lived relationally, at an interpersonal level. In the process of conducting my study, I learned to consciously “pay attention to... relational experiences and the contextual forces affecting them” (Hartrick Doane, 2002, p.633/634). I positioned myself as a ‘moral agent’, to see ethics as something ‘it is’, rather than something to be followed, as in the traditional view.

Having established a relational ethical approach to this research, next I addressed specific ethical considerations that pertained to the study.

## **Ethical considerations**

I gained ethical approval for the study from the Human Ethics Committee (HEC) of Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) and began to put the ethical considerations from my application to the committee into practice.

I established the participants for the study by sending flyers about my research to nursing departments inside tertiary institutions in the North Island of New Zealand. Five lecturers came forward and gave their informed consent to participate. This involved me fully informing them about the implications of their participation in the research. I provided a participant information sheet and clarified with them any areas of uncertainty.

Participants were informed they would take part in a one hour interview at a time and place convenient to them. They would be asked to reflect on challenging or meaningful experiences in their role as lecturers in nursing education. The interviews would be audio taped and transcribed by me, and the transcripts kept in a secure place to protect participants' confidentiality.

Since there are relatively few lecturers in nursing education in the North Island of New Zealand, and given the in depth nature of the interview material, lecturers were informed that some risk of being identified from their participation would exist. They were also informed that any identifiers would be removed from the transcripts to minimize the risk of identification.

Once this information had been fully explained, the lecturers were asked if they would give their consent to participate in the study by signing the research consent form. The lecturers were also informed that if they gave their consent they could withdraw their participation at any time up to the time of data analysis and data synthesis.

In summary, I had established a relational ethical approach to my research and gained ethical approval to conduct the study by addressing the relevant ethical considerations. I had gained the informed consent of five participants



to participate in the research. Next, I present the method that was used for the study.

## **Method**

Next I say how I decided to go about the research. I present the method that was used to answer my research question ‘what does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nursing education?’

I begin with some background to the research interviews, before describing my approach to preparing and conducting them. I then give some background to the analysis of the data, detail the process used to isolate thematic statements, and finally say how I planned to frame up the phenomenological themes.

Later, when I reflect on the research process I consider how the research went in action, whether the method presented below worked or if anything unexpected resulted from the process of conducting the study.

I start therefore by presenting some background to the research interviews.

## **Background to the research interviews**

Van Manen (1997a) refers to two main acts that are carried out in the process of doing phenomenological research. These are *gathering* and *analyzing* experiential material. Van Manen also points out that as with all parts of the research process these acts are not really separable and should be seen as part of the same process.

For my study, I decided to gather and analyse experiential material using individual face to face interviews that would be audio taped and then transcribed. I will attend more fully later to the process of analyzing the material. Firstly however, I am going to concentrate on the process of gathering experiential material in the research interviews.

Van Manen (1997a) emphasizes the importance of the interview process being “disciplined by the fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview in the first place.” (p.66). The fact that I had thought in some depth about my research question: ‘what does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nursing education?’, I decided would assist me in staying strongly oriented to uncovering deeper meaning in regard to the phenomenon under investigation. If I hadn’t thought through my question, I would be more prone to confusion in terms of what I am looking for, and how to look for it.

I also considered that the depth and openness of this inquiry is likely to be enhanced by the use of face to face interviews. My phenomenological orientation to the original question would not be as effective if an activity such as journaling was mediating between me, as researcher, and the study participants. As an open process between researcher and participants, face to face interviewing was therefore proposed as the richest potential source of experiential material.

Having now discussed some background to the research interviews, I will now discuss the questions I was going to ask, and how I decided to go about the interviews in a more practical vein.

## **Preparing for and conducting the research interviews**

An initial consideration in carrying out the research interviews is the location of the interviews. Since there was likely to be some geographical distance between myself and at least some of the participants, I decided to work by phone to establish a timetable for the interviews. My aim was to make efficient and realistic arrangements.

I decided to hold one interview of an hour’s duration for each participant. I chose an hour’s duration to allow time for rapport and trust to develop in the research relationship. My expectation was that the development of trust would assist in eliciting richer experiential material, as well as helping support the study’s ethical processes.

As mentioned earlier, van Manen (1997a) proposes that phenomenological research is concerned with gathering and analyzing experiential material, and that both these processes are likely to also be occurring simultaneously. In the interviews with participants, my aim was to put these processes into practice by remaining oriented to my original research question, and the purpose of my study. I decided to start the interviews with “a mere chat” (p.98). The chat would begin the process of asking the person to think about their lived experience of being a lecturer in nursing education. As part of the chat I would say that the aim of my research is to find out what it is like to be a lecturer in nursing education. I would ask the person to think about the different contexts they find themselves in as a lecturer. For example, teaching in the lecture theatre, teaching in tutorials or groups, teaching in clinical practice. I would then invite the person to give an example of one of these. In doing this, my intention would be to encourage the person to reflect on their world as a lecturer.

Next, I would probe further by asking a question such as “while you reflect on this, I wonder if you could give me an example of a teaching situation you found challenging or meaningful in some way?” As the person talks, they are encouraged to reflect more deeply into their experience, they would be asked to remind themselves more about the experience; for instance, I may reflect with the person about who else was present at the time, what was happening in their life at that time, how they were feeling about their teaching. By dwelling with the person in this way, they are encouraged to stay in the midst of their reflection about their experience.

In the process of gathering (and analyzing) experiential material, I also decided that I would be guided by the four lifeworld existentials that van Manen (1997a) proposes to be “productive categories for the process of phenomenological question posing, reflecting and writing.” (p.102). Lifeworld existentials are the fundamental experiences that take place in the lifeworld, “the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations” (p.101). The four lifeworld existentials are lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived other (relationality).

Given the open ended, and therefore largely participant centered, nature of the interviews I was proposing, I didn't know the extent to which I would eventually use the lifeworld existentials in the research interviews; nevertheless, I decided to enter into the interviews with a readiness to do so. I felt greater certainty that they would figure in the analysis of the data however, perhaps because, as the researcher, the research activity would be centered more around me. I would therefore be more at liberty to use the lifeworld existentials for analyzing the data, than would be the case in the interviews, when the research process would be centered more firmly on the participants. A description now follows of the main features of the four lifeworld existentials.

The first of van Manen's (1997a) lifeworld existentials 'lived space' (spatiality) refers to our subjective experience of space as opposed to our more usual construction of space based on objective dimensions such as length, width, height. An example that I decided I might give to participants, to make spatiality more meaningful as a guide to reflection, comes from my own early experience of teaching. I remember walking towards the classroom, trying to read the sensation in my body about how the classroom was going to be experienced by me when I got there. When I was twenty metres or so away, I would know (nervous or 'feeling capable today' etc.). I also remember as I became more confident in teaching, I would be further away, in the car park, and I would feel freed up from the pressure of this experience, I would already feel ok about the space I was walking towards.

Van Manen's (1997a) second lifeworld existential 'lived body' (corporeality) refers to the fact that we are always bodily in the world. Van Manen observes that "under the critical gaze the body may turn awkward, the motions appear clumsy, while under the admiring gaze the body surpasses its usual grace and its normal abilities." (p.104). An example I decided I might give here from my own experience, concerns the experience of being aware of my body in the classroom. I remember wanting my body to be in a certain way to convey confidence, and then having to let go of this aim in the room, as I felt I didn't have the strength to be in the way I wanted.

The third of van Manen's (1997a) lifeworld existentials, 'lived time' (temporality) is concerned with the subjective experience of time, as opposed to the more usual numeric and logical construction that is given to time. An example for this was when I first experienced the long period of summer annual leave that is afforded to lecturers at my workplace. I remember feeling that I had a lot of time, but I also felt that the sands of time were disappearing fast before the next academic year. I felt an urgency to do with this time disappearing through my fingers (to do with preparing myself effectively for the next round of teaching); the feeling of there being a lot of time, was replaced with a feeling of there being not much time. This was in spite of the objective picture in which I had six full weeks of annual leave before I needed to return to work.

In the final of his lifeworld existentials, 'lived other' (relationality), van Manen (1997a) refers to the "lived relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them." (p.104). There is a lived process that is to do with being in relation with the other. An example of this was when I started to feel hope and joy when I was with students, and I felt I was actually helping them learn. This was a felt sensation that I started to experience when I was sharing interpersonal space with students.

As stated earlier, I decided that I would use the four lifeworld existentials for gathering (and analyzing) experiential material. Heidegger (1962) had previously written about the lifeworld, and I decided to incorporate Heidegger's ideas on lifeworld in my method as well. I would sit the transparency of Heidegger's ready-to-hand mode of engagement with the lifeworld existentials. This represented the deepest mode of phenomenological reflection that I considered to be available to me. For phenomenological reflection, I considered that the lifeworld existentials would take me to a deeper understanding about 'parts' of the lived experience of lecturers in my study, bodily, spatial, temporal and relational, but if I could stay mindful of Heidegger's ready-to-hand mode, I would somehow maintain and

sustain a deeper link to the 'whole' in terms of the lived experience of the lecturers in my study.

Following these research interviews, the audiotapes of the interviews would be transcribed, and the resulting data would then be ready for formal analysis.

## **Background to the analysis of the data**

The analysis of experiential material, or data, in phenomenological research is primarily concerned with uncovering phenomenological themes. Themes are defined by van Manen (1997a) as "structures of experience" (p.79).

Van Manen (1997a) argues phenomenological reflection can be both easy and hard. It is easy for example to grasp the notion of what a teacher is: "I see a person who differs from other men and women precisely in that respect which makes me talk of this person as a teacher." (p.77). Van Manen argues however that it is much harder to come to "a reflective determination and explication of what a teacher is." (p.77). This is the role of the phenomenological theme, and the process of thematic analysis.

A distinction is made by van Manen (1997a) between the more logical and deductive construction of theme, as in literature where a theme is seen as "an element (motif, formula or device) which occurs frequently in the text." (p.78), and theme in phenomenology which is "more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure-grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning." (p.79).

Ultimately however, a theme is unable to "unlock the deep meaning, the full mystery" (Van Manen, 1997a, p.88). Pre-reflective experience, that is experience before any interpretation is placed on the experience, may be sought, but this is hard if not impossible to describe, since any description represents an interpretation that renders the experience no longer pre-reflective. Van Manen suggests a theme is "always a reduction of a notion" (p.88).

I have found the dialectic put forward by Gadamer, between understanding and text, where interpretation is always 'on the way' as important in developing my own understanding of what this philosophical space is about. As discussed earlier, Gadamer describes a process where subject and object seek to "mutually determine one another" (Gadamer, 1987, p. 320).

In my own words, I decided to stay open to uncovering deeper prereflective experience, and to do so with a desire to understand and in a spirit of discovery, but I knew interpretation in the act of understanding would be playing a part too. I decided this was inevitable, that I need not worry about it, acknowledge it and remember interpretation is also fundamental to Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. There was no need to slump the shoulders and conclude I was falling short of what was required. The fact that I was aware of these considerations would help minimize any departure from the insightful invention and discovery that I was seeking.

I also concluded that my desire to understand and spirit of discovery, referred to above, would be of vital importance to my method. Van Manen (1997a) discusses the importance of having a "desire to make sense" (p.79) and refers to the original meaning of the word desire "to expect from the stars." (p.79). Whilst not the traditional concerns associated with research method, I decided that it was important for me to foreground such considerations if I was to gain a deeper understanding of lived experience.

Next, I explain how I went about isolating thematic statements.

### **Isolating thematic statements**

The process of thematic analysis is identified by Cohen (2000) as based on the Dutch school of phenomenology. Perhaps not surprisingly then, van Manen, a leading figure of the Dutch school, has again provided valuable insights on my method in this area.

I decided to use van Manen's (1997a) three approaches towards isolating thematic statements. The three approaches are: the wholistic or sententious approach; the selective or highlighting approach; and, the detailed or line-by-line approach.

The wholistic or sententious approach involves reading through an entire transcript, and then making a judgment call regarding the themes that are discovered from within the text.

The selective or highlighting approach again involves reading through the transcript. This time however sentences or part-sentences would be highlighted that seem thematic to the lived experience of being a lecturer. In order that I could move between these emerging thematic parts, and the whole text in my analysis, I decided to organize the notes and emerging themes that arise from this in a book, where I can turn to, for instance page one, paragraph two, and make an entry regarding the corresponding section in the text.

A book would also be used in the detailed or line-by-line approach for notes and emerging themes. This approach involves numbering every sentence and looking at each sentence individually to discover themes.

Since I would be new to conducting thematic analysis, I decided to initially move from the first of these approaches, to the second, and onto the third, in a linear way. I would then take from this experience and begin to move between the approaches in a more creative way. I decided that by taking this approach I would be able to 'feel my way into' deeper structures of experience.

Working in this way, I was intending to honour an integral part of phenomenological inquiry, where the researcher moves from analyzing one part of the experiential material to considering all the material as a whole, then back to a part, and so forth.



## **Framing up of phenomenological themes**

My next task was to decide how I would frame up the phenomenological themes that I would arrive at. I decided to be guided by Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' in regard to this. Drawing on a similar attitude to that which included Heidegger's (1962) ready-to-hand mode of engagement with van Manen's (1997a) lifeworld existentials a little earlier, I sought an understanding of the 'whole' which made me deviate from what van Manen proposes about this aspect of the method.

Van Manen (1997a) suggests a distinction should be made between incidental and essential themes. The fundamental link between the theme and the phenomenon is examined, to ascertain whether the extraction of the theme from the phenomenon means that the phenomenon changes from what it currently is. If it does then van Manen considers the theme to be an essential theme, as it is essential to the phenomenon under investigation.

An incidental theme, on the other hand, is not essential to the phenomenon under investigation. If it is taken away from the phenomenon under investigation, the phenomenon itself remains unchanged.

I decided however that the 'fusion of horizons' would best enable me as the researcher to frame up my themes. I welcomed the philosophy of language, history, tradition, different vantage points fusing and achieving a superior (although I was not entirely comfortable with this word) level of understanding about experience.

As a novice researcher who was 'feeling my way' with Heideggerian hermeneutic research, I found myself leaning towards finding out about the 'whole', and this made me less motivated to try and uncover incidental (or sub) themes. This was the position I decided to take towards this aspect of the method, again informed by the importance attached by Leonard (1994) to the method being underpinned by the researcher's "own view of what it means to be a human being" (p.44).

Next I turned to ensuring my study would be rigorous. I sought an approach to rigor that would support the subjectivity in my research, but would also guide it and keep it systematic.

## **Rigor**

Rigor in postpositivist research methods has been determined by validity and reliability, otherwise referred to as the accuracy and consistency of the methods used in a particular study. Validity and reliability have therefore been used to support the robustness of objective data using postpositive research methods.

Rigor in this study is concerned with supporting knowledge that is derived from a subjective rather than an objective vantage point. Rather than validity and reliability Emden and Sandelowski (1999) suggest the term 'goodness' for approaching the use of qualitative methods such as the ones proposed here. Emden and Sandelowski emphasize the philosophic relevance of acknowledging uncertainty in qualitative research as "claims about our research outcomes are at best tentative and there may indeed be no way of showing otherwise." (p.5). Emden and Sandelowski further suggest that "to openly declare the uncertainty of one's work is to acknowledge the current state of play of knowledge development." (p.5). Emden and Sandelowski refer here to the way knowledge is deconstructed by postmodern thinkers to leave us without tangible outcomes or givens to work with.

Given that phenomenology seeks to understand deep pre-reflective experience where interpretation is 'always on the way,' uncertainty also characterizes knowledge in phenomenology. Van Manen (1997a) offers support to this when he argues "phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world." (p.9).

For my study to be rigorous, I decided that I would need to honour the subjectivity and uncertainty that is characteristic of the field of inquiry in

hermeneutic phenomenological research, by referring to 'expressions of rigor' (van Manen, 1997b) rather than the narrower term 'criteria of rigor' used in traditional research methods. Van Manen argues that this is a change in our orientation from 'what does the text speak about?' to 'how does the text speak?'

Van Manen (1997b) presents the particular features of this approach. First, lived throughness refers to the phenomenon being placed concretely in the lifeworld so the reader can experientially recognize it. Second, evocation involves experience being brought vividly into presence so we can phenomenologically reflect on it. Third, intensification means giving key words their full value to add to phenomenological meaning. Fourth, tone is about letting the text speak to us, so its deeper meaning has a noncognitive effect on us. Finally, epiphany requires the text to bring about a transformative effect, it's depth engaging with the self of the reader.

Further to the above, I decided that I would need my research to be open to scrutiny to be rigorous. At the commencement of my research, the participants would be fully informed about what the research entails, the interview process, any risks involved, how confidentiality will be maintained, their right to remove their input into the research up to the time of data analysis. Participants would then be asked if they would give their informed consent to participate in the study. Koch (1994) emphasises the importance of scrutinizing these processes on a continued basis throughout the research process, I would need to be ready for those who read my thesis to audit my actions as a researcher (Koch). In order to prepare for this, I decided that I would be open at all times with my more experienced and knowledgeable research supervisors, highlighting to them the progress I am making and any potential decisions that I may need to make.

Next, I discuss the research process as it unfolded in action. Did the methodology, method and design achieve what it was supposed to, and how did the study fair in terms of being ethical and rigorous?

## **Research process**

This research project began in 2005 when I gained ethical approval for my study from the Human Ethics Committee at Victoria University, Wellington. Research interviews were then conducted with five participants who were employed at the time as lecturers in nursing education at tertiary institutions in the North Island of New Zealand.

The participant characteristics for the study required that lecturers needed to have between two and five years teaching experience. The snowball approach to sampling was used. I had sought six participants because my study was small yet needed to generate sufficient data to answer the research question. When only five participants eventually came forward, they provided enough data to answer the research question and so I decided not to re-advertise for a sixth participant.

As a beginning researcher, my initial approach to ethics and rigor had been to be fully aware of my ethical responses at a subjective and relational level, and 'do good' at every available turn in the research process.

An ethical issue that arose during the course of my study related to my assertion in my application for ethical approval, that stated every effort would be taken to ensure participants could not be identified from the research transcripts. However, I acknowledged that in a small country like New Zealand there is a small risk of being identified from the experiential material in the research transcripts.

When I analyzed the interview transcripts some of the experiential material included contentious issues such as complaints about lecturers by students, heated exchanges between colleagues, and strong opinions about perceived managerial failings. This made me feel concerned that participants may be more identifiable because of this material than I had originally thought, and that participants may feel uncomfortable about this. To deal with this, I sent material from the transcripts to the participants and checked if they had any

issues or were concerned about this. A change to the text in one of the transcripts resulted from this process.

Overall the research process went as intended. One aspect that didn't turn out as expected was the process of isolating thematic statements. I began by using the three approaches to this put forward by van Manen (1997a), but eventually found myself needing to immerse myself in the transcripts in a less systematic way than that proposed by van Manen. I read and re-read the transcripts and listened to the audio taped interviews over and over again. In time I virtually knew the transcripts off by heart, so was able to move between the parts and the whole with some ease. This made the process of isolating thematic statements more achievable for me than it had been initially.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I described how I developed a Heideggerian hermeneutic methodological approach for this study, underpinned by my own philosophical view about what it means 'to be'. I chose this approach because it made the most out of my own philosophical inquiry about what it means to be a lecturer from my own experience. Being able to draw on my own experience, one area as a novice researcher that I am experienced in, helped me make decisions about ethics, rigor, and the method I used.

Given that the research process went as intended, I argue that I developed a robust research design with the necessary structure for conducting my study. Next, in Chapter Four I turn to the findings that the study produced.

## **Chapter Four: Data Analysis**

This research is informed by Gadamer's (1987) argument about the dialectic between language and text where subject and object seek to "mutually determine one another" (p.320) The following phenomenological themes therefore include interpretation of participants' experience, but I approach the process of interpretation in a tentative manner due to the dialectic. I am influenced regarding this by van Manen's (1997a) argument that 'practice or life always comes first' (before theory or interpretation) and Gadamer's that interpretation is only ever 'on the way'.

This chapter presents phenomenological themes that emerged in the data analysis stage of the study. I present participants' experience in the present tense as I argue this makes it 'live' more for the reader, although because in reality the research has already taken place the past tense is also used in those places where the focus moves away from participants' experience. So that it is clear which participant's experience is being presented, I put the participant's name in brackets after quotations from that participant.

The chapter begins by introducing the study's participants, before going on to present the phenomenological themes. The four themes are 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering', 'commitment amidst uncertainty', 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security' and 'being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space'.

### **Introducing the participants**

I had initially aimed at recruiting six participants, however five eventually came forward. These five provided rich data to the extent that I decided not to pursue the option of re-advertising for a sixth participant. In order to minimize the risk of participants being identified as a result of their participation in the study, and in line with the study's ethical requirements, participants were invited to choose pseudonyms.

### *Jane*

Jane identifies as Maori and she has been teaching for four and a half years. She is softly spoken but no stranger to tough issues such as institutional racism for example, as she discusses in her interview.

### *Andy*

Andy identifies as pakeha (European) and he has been teaching for five years. Andy is precise and analytical. He's enjoying team teaching with a colleague who has recently been recruited. This has provided a boost for Andy as he's been feeling negative about his working environment.

### *Ann*

Ann identifies as pakeha and she has been teaching for five years. She's direct and to the point in regard to her feelings about her former boss who she felt treated her badly, but feels that her work environment has improved and reflects that after a tough start she is now enjoying success in her teaching.

### *Alice*

Alice identifies as pakeha and has been teaching for three years. Alice is assertive, articulate, and considerate of others. She can however stand her ground forcibly when the situation requires it, as is revealed in the chapter.

### *Janice*

Janice identifies as pakeha and has been teaching for two and a half years. She has a deep interest in improving nursing education, going back to her own student nurse days. She is positive and enthusiastic about her work

Two of these participants, Andy and Alice, work at the same tertiary institution, while the remaining three, Ann, Janice and Jane, all work at different institutions.

The first theme to be presented concerns participants lived experience of politics at work and is entitled 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering'.

## **Politics as destabilizing/Politics as strength gathering**

All the participants in the study referred to the political worlds inside their respective departments and institutions. I begin by introducing the participants lived experience of politics, before focusing on the interpretation of the phenomenological theme itself. I have decided to present 'destabilizing' and 'strength gathering' as part of the same theme as they share a dynamic interrelationship as part of the same structure of experience. I will explain what I mean by this, when I move into my explication of the theme.

Firstly then, I will introduce the participants' lived experience of politics. What, though, does politics mean? What are we looking for? The participants' experience that I have uncovered is less to do with politics, in the wider sense, as a way of achieving and using power in a country, although in saying that, Andy does reflect on wider politico-economic factors when he is describing his experiences. There are also times when such wider political agendas seem to echo in the background of the participants' experience; for example, Jane describes her experience as a Maori lecturer, and as I say, wider political issues for New Zealand in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi, seem to be echoing when Jane shares her experience. The prevailing meaning of politics, however, is to do with how power is shared in, and between, organizations and the ways it is affected by personal relationships between people who work together. Here, Janice discusses her experience of politics, politics were a dormant feature for Janice at first, something she puts down to starting in a new job

*When you first start in a new job you don't notice the politics for a few years, not unless you are one of those people whose extremely analytical about politics, but I was so glad to be away from the politics. I didn't notice them probably for two years. (Janice).*

At first, Janice thought she had come to a politics free environment. She was glad to be away from the politics of her previous role, but after a couple of



years as a lecturer, politics begins to enter Janice's world of experience. She becomes irritated by politics in her relationship with the hospital where students undertake their clinical placements, she experiences power as elusive to her in that she knows how things should be taught to her students, but as part of her relationship with the hospital, conveyed in her sense of irritation with the preceptors, things aren't being taught the way they 'should' be.

*I notice now the politics of the standards of some of the preceptors which can be irritating, the standard of some of the, I've gone back to the hospital I worked at though, so there's things that I now can see happening, that I knew that happened as a staff nurse and a manager, that I can see are being taught to our students, that I know shouldn't be happening... so that's the hospital politics side of it (Janice).*

Janice reflects on the particular issue of the use of pulseoxymeters in the nursing care of children. She argues against their use, pointing out research findings that show pulseoxymeters don't offer an accurate way of taking heart rates in children, who are often likely to be moving or wiggling about. Janice is frustrated by the staff nurses working with her students, who see her research based argument as unrealistic, and continue to advocate the use of the pulseoxymeters

*They (pulseoxymeters) are not designed for awake healthy children, but nurses just use them all the time in the wards as the ultimate heart rate... it's quite hard seeing that done and then trying to teach your students, who say things like "that's not how we're taught in class, so why can't we do it here?" and staff nurses saying "you're just taught to do things that aren't realistic", so you've got that dichotomy and that's quite hard. (Janice).*

Political issues are also at the heart of Andy's experience. Andy had been a student at the tertiary institution where he now works; he is clearly unimpressed with the place

*I don't like this institution, I never liked it as a student and I don't necessarily like some of their practices as a lecturer (Andy).*

Whilst Andy has these strong feelings about his workplace, the politics that impact on Andy in his work world relate to politico-economic forces beyond it

*It's all about bums on seats, it's not about, I don't think education in nursing per se, or education full stop, is about quality outputs, I believe it's more about financial FTEs first, I mean it is a business, we shouldn't dispute that (Andy).*

Andy experiences these political forces as immensely frustrating at the interface with nursing students, where his motivation is to prepare 'quality' nurses. Compounding things further, he experiences himself as relatively powerless in a political sense ("only a small part in a big cog") and stalked by the weight of expectation for results from the tertiary institution he works for ("they still want their dollar value")

*when you're only a small part in a big cog, say like this institution, they still want their dollar value So you can't afford to lose too many students. It's a bit of a problem actually, so what do you want? do you want to earn the money to run the school? Or do you want to turn out quality nurses at the end? And I just have this dilemma, where I keep on having a sore head by banging my head against a wall. I'm going 'can't do this' (Andy).*

The examples above from Janice and Andy introduce us to the participants' experience of politics. As in Janice's example above, politics may be experienced more immediately as part of relationships with colleagues or other institutions. Alternatively, as in Andy's example above, whilst politics is still experienced at the heart of the participants work world, participants may also be engaging with wider politico-economic agendas as part of their experience.

I will now turn my attention to the phenomenological theme I have uncovered in relation to the participants' lived experience of politics: politics as

destabilising/politics as strength gathering. As stated earlier, I decided to include 'destabilising' and 'strength gathering' as part of the same theme. Whilst these areas initially seemed quite distinct and separate, I began to notice they were part of the same structure of experience. I noticed that amidst the most destabilising political experiences the participants faced, they were also experiencing a process where they were gathering strength. They accumulated strength over the course of their teaching career, to the extent that the strength arising from this is revealed as part of their experience. This shift is linked, as part of the same structure of experience, to the participants' experience of 'politics as destabilising'. As the participants experienced greater strength in their role, the experience of politics as destabilising became less taxing for them. There is a see-saw effect, where strength is applied to one side of the see-saw and destabilisation is lifted from the other. By the same token, destabilisation can be strong in its own way to hold the see-saw down on its (the destabilisation) side, strength gathering may still be occurring, but destabilisation prevails in the participants' experience at this time. I will now give some examples to provide a clearer picture of what I am referring to here, as well as to give a full sense of what 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering' is about.

Firstly, I will consider Ann's experience. Ann shares in her interview about a time, in her early days as a lecturer, when she was directed by her Head of Department (HOD) to run a new course. Ann was open to the idea of running a new course, but was unfamiliar with the course's subject matter. Ann recalls the experience of putting the course together and delivering it as the....

*Hardest thing I've ever done (Ann).*

I asked Ann about the support she had received in regard to this tough assignment. Ann did not convey a sense of feeling supported

*No the head of the department at the time was... she'd fire off a shotgun and then walk away, not even bother to look at the damage, and so people would*

*be told 'ah Ann you're going to teach natural therapies', no argument, no discussion, nothing, you're just told you are going to do it (Ann).*

Ann then was clearly experiencing a destabilisation resulting from these sudden responses from her HOD. The experience Ann describes is also political, visible in the experience of conflict around issues I referred to earlier, but also in a well established history of experience in modern industrial societies, where relations between bosses and workers are seen as something political. Ann highlights further political issues related to her HOD. She experiences destabilising effects in what for her is a lack of equity in how her HOD has allocated workload to Ann and the lecturer with whom she shares an office

*Really does hang on the particular HODs. I mean I was teaching something like 27 hours a week classroom... Of front up classroom time, and there was another tutor who shared the same office with me, who only did 6 hours a week, and that was the imbalance of working. That caused resentment, caused a real disillusionment, if you like, with the whole process of teaching, and that was purely on the whims of the head of department, so teaching experiences are not just about what happens in the classroom (Ann).*

The destabilisation in Ann's experience also conveys a sense of disempowerment

*Tutor staff had absolutely no say in what happened at all, the head of department just scatter gun and didn't even think it out and we were just left carrying the can; it was very unpleasant in a number of situations I can think of (Ann).*

Given the nature of Ann's experience, just how can any of this also be strength gathering? Ann drew on her motivation she had for the challenge of teaching students

*I revelled in the challenge of taking this new group of nurses, potential nurses, and shaping and moulding their minds and thoughts for the future, that's a challenge I love and I still enjoy (Ann).*

Ann, buoyed on by her desire to teach, was gathering strength by overcoming the political hurdles that stood in her way

*It's that challenge of shaping and moulding them, so you tend to overcome a lot of difficulties and a lot of frustrations and problems because of that. You want to see those students succeed (Ann).*

Ann has learnt to overcome political difficulties and frustrations, therefore, as a way of making sure she provides quality learning opportunities for her students. Her negotiation with the destabilising politics, described earlier, is part of what has taken her to a place, after five years of teaching, where she feels in a position of greater strength at work

*Oh, I'm more confident in what I'm doing and that's because of the results I'm getting (Ann).*

Over time, therefore, Ann has gathered strength from within her experience of destabilising politics. This was also true for Janice, for whom the strength gathering experience of politics was also linked to a realisation, that negotiating with destabilising politics can have a big impact on her students. Janice describes her experience of this

*I think, as well, in your first few years there's so much to learn, that you're so busy concentrating on the students and how you can best give those students the knowledge that they need to be a staff nurse, that you actually don't want to concentrate on the politics if you know what I mean. Yeah, and it's only when you actually realise that the politics affect what you're doing, that you suddenly get involved with them a lot more, you know what I mean? (Janice).  
Ok, so the politics and how you respond to the politics have a big impact...(Interviewer).*

*On the students...yeah (Janice).*

Janice discusses these politics and her response to them. Janice gathers strength from more destabilising politics concerning issues about working with students from different backgrounds. At first, though, it is the experience of destabilisation that prevails. Here, Janice refers to processes for implementing the clinical standards against which the students are assessed. These processes may be clear for some, but for others they simply don't fit

*The processes of what students go through, some of it is very good, and I must admit actually I think the processes are...you know like I said about the way the clinical standards are set up for us to judge our students against, things like those processes are very clear, but then you will always have a student who doesn't fit within a process that you feel could be given a little bit of leeway, but there's not that leeway within the system or, you know, something like that doesn't work for some students (Janice).*

Janice shares her experience of where there is a distinct cultural gap between the student and the dominant western cultural context of the tertiary institution she works for. Janice reflects on working with Maori students, she finds the westernised processes can be a barrier for Maori students

*It's a barrier to some. I find the Maori students don't particularly fit in well to our curriculum, it doesn't suit them I don't think personally very well. There's a lot of barriers in the way, you've got to have the barriers, and I think you've got to have standards, and you've got to have well you need to do this and this and this, but for certain cultures that doesn't fit in very well. Particularly the Maori students, so those barriers at that point I find really frustrating (Janice).*

Janice gives an example of one such barrier, that one of her Maori students was facing. Janice noticed the complexity of the student's life pointed to a need for the student to be part-time as opposed to full time. The only way the

student could ever be part-time was if she failed papers, Janice experiences the processes, the barriers, however clear, as disadvantageous to her student

*There's no facility unless you fail the students to work part-time. It's happened with a Maori student that I had that you've got a student whose struggling with life, trying to get out of this rut, trying to struggle to work full-time as a student, which is over full-time isn't it when you're in clinical and trying to do papers and trying to get assignments in, it's well over full-time but yet with family commitments and everything else, and there's no facility for that student to work part-time as a student nurse unless you fail something, which is not what she wants to do or any of us wants to do, so the barriers there don't let them fit in very well, do you see what I mean? (Janice).*

Janice experiences the dawning in her of some huge political issues. The difficulties her Maori student faced evoke in Janice a sense that the institution she works for is set up primarily for white students

*The Maori student really made it hit home that it's very white orientated this tertiary institution (Janice).*

Janice seemed to be guided, and also comfortable, with the processes (barriers) at the start of her teaching career, but now after three years she is feels strongly about the political issues she has found on the other side of the barriers. Her gathering of strength can clearly be seen, as part of the example that follows, in Janice's sense of how things will be for her in the future. I have reflected with Janice how she seems to have shifted from practising from behind the barriers, to a place where the politics and the context of the student's world seems to be the most important thing. I ask Janice if she feels things will stay the same as they are now, or whether in another two or three years there will be more of a shift away from behind the barriers towards the politics and context of her students. In terms of Janice's lived experience, I am interested in her response here, is her experience more of being propelled towards politics? Or does her response convey a tentativeness in her lived experience, maybe she is only experiencing a temporary excursion away from

the safety of being behind the barriers? The experience of being propelled seems to hold sway, Janice is gathering up more and more strength in her political world

*I know myself too well, I know I will be getting irritated with the politics, and I'll be doing something to try and change them by then... I'll be so irritated with the politics... I'll be actively doing things to make sure that certain things can happen yeah (Janice).*

Politics sit in a different way for the different participants. For Janice there is in depth description of her experience of gathering strength, whereas for Ann this experience is described less comprehensively, as if it were something superficial. However challenging the destabilising politics discussed earlier were for Ann, she described the process of working through them almost as something tangible that needs to be sorted out, of needing to “overcome a lot of difficulties and a lot of frustrations and problems”. For Jane, politics once again sits in a different way in her experience. There is something veiled about how Jane presents her experience of politics. What I mean here is that Jane makes several references, when she is talking about her being Maori, to some deep issues that continue to resonate with the experience of people in New Zealand society. This resonance may also be particularly deep for Maori, who experienced devastating effects, when their well established society was colonised by the British, less than two hundred years ago. Initially, the references Jane makes, overtly recognise the destabilising nature of this recent history, and its effects, in tertiary education in New Zealand today. Here, for example, Jane discusses her experience of institutional racism in her early days as a lecturer

*Culturally, I'm just going to say this anyway, write it how you like, but I think that institutional racism is alive and well. I'll give you an example, when I first came here to teach, I was struggling in my new role, as a lecturer, new staff, having to get to know people, trying to keep my head above water as far as my teaching responsibilities were concerned, and at first I found it very hard to articulate what the difficulty was, and I went off to this contentious cultural*



*safety forum for Maori educators, and I came away from there being able to articulate what it was that I needed (Jane).*

Amidst these destabilising experiences, Jane has gathered some strength by attending the cultural safety forum. Jane discusses an area of her experience that the cultural safety forum has helped her articulate. It is to do with communication and communication systems at her place of work; they are not fitting culturally with her needs as a Maori lecturer

*Maori like, what we call, face to face interactions, and I found that really difficult when I came here, because to keep contact or maintain contact with some other lecturers, you had to e mail them, and that was a real foreign concept to me, I would much have preferred to have gone and knocked on their door, or made an appointment to go and speak with them, which I did anyway, you know, I thought 'nuh this just didn't seem right, I want you to know that I'll be here tomorrow... email it... why can't I just tell you in passing, or why can't I come to your office and just tell you', that's how it was, that was one of the cultural things I found difficult, being a minority, as a Maori (Jane).*

Jane is clear in her description of the issues that give meaning to her experience of institutional racism, issues that are destabilising for her in her work world. The issues are also political, as Jane's whole focus at this part of the interview is to do with reflecting on and articulating her experience of institutional racism. Later in the interview, however, these issues continue to be the focus for Jane, but something wavers. All of a sudden, Jane begins to add a sense that these issues don't, in fact, matter to her that much. Here, Jane recalls when her students were under the impression she was the new cleaner, but then they are surprised to find her at the front of the class teaching

*And then they'd come into class and I'd be at the front teaching. They'd make comments about me but I've had comments like that through the years, and it doesn't bother me (Jane).*

The wavering I refer to here continues into an area of Jane's experience that I consider to be about gathering strength in her political world. She alludes to the political significance of her role for Maori, being a leader in the field of nursing education, but then seems resigned to her role not having any particular significance, she feels the same old person she has always been

*People, when they find out that I'm a lecturer, say 'oh brilliant!' It's this huge great thing solely because I'm Maori, but it's not a big thing for me, I see myself as the same old same old...nothing changes (Jane).*

These issues do matter for Jane though, she breaks out from saying nothing changes, to speaking heatedly about her experience of what she refers to as "another issue". Jane is referring here to what she sees as the 'gate keeping' of knowledge by her colleagues

*Nothing changes, in fact I found, that's another issue actually: the gate keeping of knowledge here. I'm the type of person, as is our culture, you share...right, and the knowledge I had, and what I'd research, I had no problem sharing, but conversely when I wanted something, yes, all of those empty promises, and I very rarely did get information back, so I learned to gate keep myself. You share knowledge, that's what we were brought up to share it and then you have constant refusals to share from others. Well, I mean ok, and I don't blame them, but I shared with you, what's the problem? That was really something that I found difficult. You can gate keep your knowledge, I'll gate keep mine (Jane).*

I am interested to uncover an overall sense that these experiences of the political do matter to Jane. In her structure of experience, she is describing being Maori and being a leader in the field of nursing education. The politics related to this matters to her. With this in mind, when she refers to others seeing her leadership role as significant for Maori, gathering strength is sitting as part of her political experience. It may not sit in such an overt way as other parts of her experience that she describes, but nevertheless, it is there and being shared as part of her lived experience. However, since a 'wavering'

occurs for Jane in the significance politics carries as part of her lived experience, it is hard to see the full meaning that is carried in this for Jane. Overall, though, for Jane, she has gathered strength from her experience of politics. Similar to the participants' experience from earlier, Jane emerges from challenging political context, having negotiated all the destabilising politics, and has reached a positive place

*Anyway, most of the experiences I've had the last couple of years have been really positive (Jane).*

When I was introducing the participants lived experience of politics earlier, Andy was experiencing some destabilising effects related to his desire to engage in teaching processes that lead to the preparation of quality nurses, versus an economic imperative from his bosses that curtail such processes. Other destabilising effects for Andy included concerns about allocated workload, particularly for new lecturers who are yet to establish friendships or networks inside the tertiary institution. He feels a sense of risk for participants around being given extra work, not understanding what a 'normal' workload actually is, ending up isolated and ostracised

*you run the risk of being quite isolated and actually quite ostracised, you can get a lot of extra work and you don't actually understand what's normal, you know what is a normal workload, I would say that a lot of participants work over their 40 hours, some quite a lot. Some weeks I work most probably double that, other weeks I work under it, but they get more than their 40 hours a week out of you. That's not just from developing things here, but reading stuff, or looking on the web, or trying to redevelop courses, this paper that we've got now, four and a half years ago they decided to rewrite the curriculum, so we just rehashed the old curriculum and put it into the new one, and as such we're now trying to redevelop that, which requires an awful lot of work on top of your full time (Andy).*

The gathering of strength in Andy's experience comes in the form of a risk he has taken with a colleague, team teaching a paper where the weight of

political expectation is for lecturers to run separate papers as individuals. Andy is curious that neither he nor his colleague have been challenged about taking the new approach

*Now the interesting thing is that no one has challenged us yet, we teach, so instead of having one lecturer responsible for a paper, I'm responsible, but both of us teach in it. No one's ever come and said 'oy! that's not a good use of resources' or 'you know you're doubling up on your teaching' or 'effectively halving' or whatever way you want to look at it (Andy).*

Andy is experiencing the new approach as positive. Both in terms of feedback from others....

*It's really interesting now that people are saying we want to do what you do (Andy).*

And in terms of his own experience of the approach itself....

*So, effectively we choose to double our workload, because what happens is you come out with a far more robust system (Andy).*

The gathering of strength for Andy here is effectively about running this new approach and not having the approach curtailed or stopped by his managers. I wonder if things are even a little more hopeful for Andy in a political sense than he imagines. My sense is, after two years of using the approach, his managers would be aware of the team teaching approach. Perhaps his managers give political support to the innovation Andy and his colleague have introduced. At very least they may not want to curtail it, to do harm for harm's sake. Maybe Andy is experiencing the generation of some possibilities for working in a more collaborative way with his managers?

Politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering sits quite differently again, when Alice shares her experience. Amidst some very challenging political circumstances, Alice doesn't flinch; in fact, she retains a very firm

hold on what is happening around her. It is in those around her where much of the destabilising effects are felt. Alice, in the example that follows, shares her doubts about meetings for 'supporting' students that seem more to do with criticising students

*The systems that were set up here, like clinical practice reflection meetings, under the guise of support, was really criticism of students, and my participation in that wasn't really welcomed in the beginning. Well, I think if it says it's a support meeting, we should be looking about how to support, not how to criticize or dismantle students' behaviour, that's what I thought (Alice).*

However, it appears that Alice remains in a place of strength, gathering further strength, in her lived experience of politics, when potentially destabilising conflicts unfold out of the issues she refers to above. Alice tells her story about her experience of this

*There were a number of individuals who work here, who've been working here for a long time, that took me aside and had little talks about, you know, 'we do things like this here' and there was actually one particular individual, who still works here, who'd been a teacher of mine, and I remember a clinical support meeting that happened one day; students were out in practice, and we have three week placements here, and in the middle of the placement the participants got together and talked about students in practice, who was doing particular things, and there'd always be these so called 'problematic' students that would be discussed and dismantled, I'm sure lots of places do them, and I remember standing up in the meeting and thinking I've got loads of other things to do besides sitting here listening to these people criticizing the students, and so I said I wouldn't stay because if it was going to be about talking about the same issues with students, over and over again, I had better things to do really, and this particular lecturer made a comment to me that I would really need to make sure I knew how things worked around here, in order for me to be helpful for everybody, and supportive. I made a decision that day, I guess they were picking on me really, because I was new, and*

*maybe I was a bit different, I don't really think I am very different, but maybe I speak about different things sometimes (Alice).*

Alice is not entirely comfortable about addressing her issues with the lecturer who had made the comment to her, but she is remaining strong, and continuing to gather strength in her experience

*I spoke to that lecturer afterwards, and because that particular confrontation that happened in that meeting was at the end of a whole lot of e mails, little reminders about 'you need to do this', 'you need to do that', you know, 'you should say this', 'you should say that', it was an accumulation of things, and I said to her before I left the meeting 'could I have just a word with her outside the door?' And I'm not a particularly confrontational person normally, like, I may come across conflict, but I'm not very good at confrontations, you know what I mean, I said to her outside the door that 'if she singled me out again, or if she chose to narrow her focus down and kind of be doing that to me anymore, that I'd make a complaint about her, and it would be as simple as that', because she wasn't hearing me say that 'I wasn't interested in her guidance that she was offering' (Alice).*

As mentioned earlier, Alice experiences a position of strength here, gathering further strength, if anything. Whilst Alice may not feel she handles confrontations well, she seems to have a powerful presence in this one. It is politically a strength gathering experience, in that she is shaping her own way forward politically as a member of her team. Over time, the effects of Alice's firm response may also allow strength to be gathered by the colleagues around her; Alice is representing some views that seem very important, in an ethical sense, as part of lecturers' work with students. For now though, Alice is aware of destabilisation for others that has resulted from her firm response to this lecturer

*She backed off right after that, in actual fact so did a number of other people (Alice).*

The explication of the theme, 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering', has revealed some challenging experiences that are being faced by participants. It is, in part, from reflection on these experiences, that a second theme emerged. This theme, 'commitment amidst uncertainty', is visible in many of the examples above in 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering', yet it is neither a duplicate of this theme, nor is it presented as a sub theme of it. It is distinct from 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering', in how it represents commitment from the participants. 'Politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering' could, in fact, be seen as arising from 'commitment amidst uncertainty'. If the participants had not been prepared to stand in the committed way they did, the politics as presented above couldn't have been revealed. At very least politics would be presenting itself in a different way in the experience of the participants. 'Commitment amidst uncertainty' is the second phenomenological theme.

### **Commitment amidst uncertainty**

The commitment of the participants can therefore be seen in many of the examples of 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering'. For example, Alice exemplifies commitment when she is confronting the colleague who had been making comments to her.

It is clear from the experience of these participants that they are highly committed to their work. However, standing up to things in a committed way is not easy and one of the outcomes of being so committed is uncertainty.

The commitment of the participants is at different times more aligned to their own response to the challenges of their role, cultural factors, or the personal-professional world of their teaching. Without exception, the participants showed in their committed experience an obligation to 'do good' rather than surrender to an easier course of action.

Alice's commitment in her teaching is illustrated here when she reflects on her open, direct and honest approach to giving her students the feedback that she feels they need

*It's hard sometimes to tell people that they're making the same mistakes over and over again, it's quite hard to tell people that, and not everybody, particularly students who continue to repeat similar difficult ways of relating to people, or the same mistakes in terms of being quite restricted in their learning. They're not particularly receptive to hearing that 'had they considered this is the mistake they've been making for a long time?' (Alice).*

Alice is aware that her open, direct and honest approach brings uncertainty into her experience as well

*People don't always receive what they would see as criticism as critical feedback, they only hear the negative stuff. There's been a number of unhappy students, not a lot, but there's been some students who, well, have not complained, I don't think anybody has complained about me, but they've been quite resistant to that, and disruptive at times (Alice).*

Alice's commitment is further demonstrated by the dedication she has shown to researching the approach that she uses. Her experience of helping her students in whatever way she can is at the heart of who Alice is, taking the easier option of doing what she needs to 'get by' doesn't enter into things

*My way of teaching people is formed by doing research, doing loads of reading and talking with other people who do this sort of job, and talking to them about it, it's who I am, and it's because I want to be up front, so that they can find whatever use I might be for them (Alice).*

As was seen above, Alice's direct approach can bring uncertainty into her experience, but she is unflinching and ready for whatever the response of her students may be



*If they don't find much use from me, and they find use from other people, then that's great! (Alice).*

Andy's committed experience is more associated with the effort he puts into finding his feet in the organisation he works for, although he also experiences an underlying commitment to do good for others. Here Andy states his intention to do good

*I believe that we could change and I would like to be part of that (Andy).*

Andy demonstrates his commitment by staying with the uncertainties that the challenge of his job brings. He has experienced plenty of uncertainty in his role as a new lecturer

*When you're new there's all these things you've got to learn, the organisation has all these things they want from you in terms of some qualifications, some currency, some sort of credibility, produce all the reports that they want, all the grades, everything like that. And then the students have all this stuff they want from you. It's not like being a nurse, so you can go to work on a ward, or whatever, turn up, do whatever you need to do and then go home, this has actually got pressure from both sides, and then your colleagues, in the middle, pulling you out. It's very difficult to keep your handle round it, until you've been around a little while to see where you can exert some authority, or some pressure back, so you don't feel that tension (Andy).*

Andy is prepared to stay with the tension, the uncertainty that he has experienced. He too, like Alice has not surrendered to any easier option. He might have for instance decided to return to his accustomed role as a nurse in clinical practice, but has been committed and ridden through the uncertainties he has faced.

Janice's experience of being obligated to do good for others, in a similar way to Alice, can be seen in her experience of politics in 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering'. In effect, when Janice is reflecting

on her experience of herself as someone who will either stay behind 'the barriers' or as someone who will expose herself to 'the politics', her experience is of someone in the process of surrendering the chance of an easier option afforded by the barriers, exposing herself in a committed way to the greater uncertainty of the politics

*I know myself too well, I know I will be getting irritated with the politics, and I'll be doing something to try and change them by then (Janice).*

Janice delves further into her experience of commitment, when she reflects on the background to her current experience. She recalls how her high standards, and a sense that nurses aren't trained well enough, motivated her to go into nursing education

*There's a part of me inside, that wanted to go into education, because I've got a firm belief that a lot of nurses don't perform to the standard that I would expect. I've got really high standards but they're not given the opportunities to reach high standards, because they're not trained well enough (Janice).*

Janice reflects on a particular experience that drove her forwards into nursing education, an experience that clearly captures her sense of being obligated to do good for others. Janice recollects from her student nurse days, her experience of being incensed when her friend, who was also a student nurse, receives negative feedback. Janice puts the more positive experience she had, and the more negative experience of her friend, down to the quality of her preceptors.....

*I'll never forget working on one area, I was given a really good preceptor and that friend of mine didn't have the same quality preceptor, and there were a lot of criticisms about areas of her practice, but it was because she didn't know, she wasn't given the training that I was given when we first started on that area (Janice).*

Being just and fair, keeping people informed of important information, these considerations are all features that add a deeper meaning to Janice's experience of commitment in her practice. Janice reflects further on this

*I guess it's something that I've always been very conscious about in the back of my mind because I know I've made mistakes, numerous ones, because I haven't been fully informed, so I guess one of my things is at the back of my mind that I went into education was because I wanted to improve the standard of nursing, do you know what I mean? No not even improve it ... make sure people got the opportunity to have the best nursing training they can get (Janice).*

The deep sense of commitment revealed here by Janice carries into her current teaching experience. She is quite prepared to challenge her students; this is to an extent that allows in a potentially troubling level of uncertainty for Janice

*There's certainly been the down sides, like one student who I challenged, who didn't appreciate being challenged and threatened to take me to court, and everything like that, started blaspheming my name around the whole tertiary institution, including other students, other lecturers (Janice).*

It was obviously a tough experience for Janice

*It was hideous; it went on for probably 6 months with her blaspheming and threatening to take me to court (Janice).*

Ann has also experienced troubling uncertainty in her committed practice. Until recently her experience of commitment was of being

*The loving mother (Ann).*

The feelings that a mother might experience of absolute commitment to their child, potentially self sacrificing, focusing on their child achieving success and

the pride this will bring, these feelings have resonated with Ann's experience of commitment. This is reflected in the following example where Ann shares her experience of making herself available to her students

*You don't mind helping them, you don't mind going the extra mile for them, you'll do it, you'll make yourself available. I tell my students that I'm always available, and you sit there on stage when they graduate, and get their medals, and you feel a real pride (Ann).*

Ann's experience of being the loving mother is shaken though, when a student accuses her of sexual harassment

*This was a girl, who had a terrible lot of personal ill health, she was a solo mother, and her little child was crook, and she came sobbing, because she hadn't been able to meet an assignment deadline, and she hadn't asked for an extension, and I gently put my arm on her shoulder and said 'it's OK, I'll sort it out, go away, I'll give you a fortnight, an extension's normally only four days, but I'll give you a fortnight and you can sort it out'. I said 'that'll be OK love'. Well, in her distressed state, she said something to this other student, who then wrote and accused me in this course evaluation (Ann).*

As the loving mother, there is a sense in Ann's experience here of giving everything over to this student's need, of self sacrifice, as a mother would to a child. The experience of the mother is more prominent here than it would be in a more overtly professional discourse. The accusation of sexual harassment, however, shakes Ann's professional world back into her experience

*Oh absolutely! I no longer even just put a friendly touch on the shoulder of a student, I just won't touch any student now, in case, and I try to watch my language, but I use terms like love and dear and things like that as part of my normal conversations, it's quite hard, but I make sure if I do use those languages, it's where there's many people around, so it can't be misinterpreted, but I never ever see a female student on their own now (Ann).*

Ann's sense of being obligated to do good for the other is still part of her experience, but she is more the professional than the mother now. This is not surprising after the accusation of sexual harassment that she faced. Ann is now more careful about allowing uncertainty into her experience

*I safeguard myself now; I no longer think that I'm just going to be the big loving mother, kindly nurturing these souls along to state finals. I am a tutor, with knowledge to give, and I will impart that knowledge in a very professional way, and a very human way, but I don't get close to the students (Ann).*

Jane's experience of 'commitment amidst uncertainty', as a Maori lecturer, is influenced by her experience of the dominant western cultural context around her. Drawing from her experience in 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering', Jane had commented that

*Institutional racism is alive and well (Jane).*

Jane also experiences an expectation that she has to prove herself as a Maori lecturer, in a different way to her pakeha (European) counterparts

*I've had to prove myself, and I guess you've got to prove yourself as a new lecturer anyway, but I feel it's a bit beyond that, it is solely because I'm Maori, yep, I don't know why we have to prove ourselves, and go beyond everybody else to prove our ability (Jane).*

I argue that it is important to recognise that uncertainty is a feature of Jane's committed experience in a different way, because of her experience as a Maori lecturer. Because she is Maori in an institutional context that is dominated by a western worldview, Jane's experience of commitment is affected by this. She doesn't experience the same familiar reference points in the institution as those who come from a western cultural background. Cultural difference, and the experience of institutional racism in particular, makes an already uncertain environment for lecturers, an even more uncertain one for Jane.

The different experience Jane has, in regard to uncertainty, does not prevent her sense of being obligated to do good for her students, revealing itself in her work

*The students that I had in second year, they progress and you see them graduate, just watching the students in their progress, that has been a highlight for me, you get satisfaction because you know you had input into their education (Jane).*

Like the other participants, Jane isn't interested in easier options, such as providing brief and more factual responses to her students' questions. She allows uncertainty in, by remaining open to her students. Jane's reflections on her own student days and her early days as a lecturer illustrate this

*I don't know whether this is right or wrong, but I do spend a lot of extra curricula time, with the students who are having difficulties, because I know what it's like as a student to have difficulties. They really need that support and you get to know the ones that are struggling, and I guess it's only because I've been through that myself, and I felt I didn't have the support I needed when I started here, and I also believe I didn't have the support I needed when I was doing my post-grad study. I empathise with the students that struggle (Jane).*

The commitment in the experience of Jane and the other participants, as well as their experience of politics in 'politics as destabilizing/politics as strength gathering', point to a world of experience for the participants, in which the relational and the emotional seem central to what they face in their work. This is also true in the theme that now follows, 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security', yet this theme also considers the meaning of experience, in which the participants draw on the notion of something more fixed, teaching content, as a way of negotiating the challenges of teaching. When and how to respond in teaching situations, with content or with something more relational or emotional, is often unclear however. As might be

expected given this, the experience of participants when they are teaching is laden with complexities.

The theme 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security' is therefore presented next.

### **Content and process in the pursuit of teaching security**

The themes that have been discussed previously seem to leave the participants feeling challenged and, at times, emotionally depleted by the nature of the experiences they go through. A question therefore arises about the way participants negotiate their world given they are exposed to such testing circumstances. As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, teaching is a particularly challenging aspect of participants' experience. There is a complex interplay between what to teach (teaching content) and how to teach (teaching process), participants weighing up the responses they will make in the classroom based on any prior experience they may have, and knowledge of pedagogical approaches such as conventional pedagogy and narrative pedagogy.

The theme presented here 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security', explicates participants experience of this complex interplay between content and process. This experience is simultaneously also about the pursuit of security. The participants use content or process in their teaching to try and achieve a sense of emotional security. Also relevant to the theme therefore is experience where participants are trying to steer clear of unwanted or fearful experiences such as being exposed for a lack of teaching ability.

Here, Janice is referring to her experience of using content to pursue teaching security, staving off the unwanted experience referred to above

*I have to use overheads, or power point, or something, because if I don't, and they ask me a question, you freeze and you think 'oh shit!' But if you've got it all written down on power point, you know, like the notes at the bottom of power point, of what you know, when they ask you a question and you*

*suddenly think 'I haven't covered that', you can look back to your power point notes, and think 'oh yeah! of course, of course' (Janice).*

Having clear teaching content then, is an important part of Janice's experience. It is providing her with security. Here, Janice reflects on the teacher training that the tertiary institution she works for has provided. Again, Janice prefers to rely on set content, rather than the fluidity of process

*What the teacher training taught me basically was to recognise 'are you one of those people who can ad lib?' or 'are you one of those people who need to have everything written down?' you know, so you don't forget, and I'm definitely the latter (Janice).*

Having the content and relying on content alone may not always be enough. Here Jane experiences concern about her teaching. She is clearly focusing on the content in her teaching, and pursues teaching security by continuing to ask questions about this

*I think it was the not knowing, I felt that I didn't know enough, had I covered enough content? Was it comprehensive enough? That was really difficult, and no feedback, there was no feedback (Jane).*

Jane conveys uncertainty and worry in her experience here, suggesting that content is not providing her with the teaching security she is looking for. Perhaps here, Jane would have been helped more by reflecting on the possibilities that may lie in the process of teaching?

Andy certainly turns to the process of teaching to promote well-being in his teaching world. Andy's experience suggests that teaching content is not necessarily always what the dynamics in the classroom require. Here, Andy reflects on the process he has used to evoke a whole discussion from a student's off handed comment, whilst leaving content, which he refers to as 'stuff' until later on



*You've got to feel confident and comfortable about saying, 'well, this is actually a good teachable moment, let's go down that track, and I'll do this stuff later on' (Andy).*

An important part of 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security' also seems to be about being able to return to the safe base offered by content, weaving between the facts and the experience of the students, exploring, but being able to bring the process back to where the students are at. Andy refers to this as

*Having the skills, somewhere along the line, to tie back where we were (Andy).*

The decisions for participants about staying with content, or going with process in a 'teachable moment', are not straightforward ones. Andy discusses his sense that the students are generally appreciative of his efforts, but he refers to the complexity experienced by participants in these situations

*I think that the students are appreciative of that, except for those who like structure, so if you said you were going to do this, this, and this, and suddenly you go off here, you get a bad bloody feedback. It's really hard to meet both groups, so I think as you get more comfortable, and you have the ability to 'wing it' for want of a better word, but still be able to bring it back and tie it back in somewhere (Andy).*

Andy's experience, therefore, points to skilful teaching, where he is flexible, and able to move between content and process. Apart from a few bumps here and there, his pursuit of teaching security seems to be proceeding smoothly. Security is harder to come by for others however. There is a distinct feeling for some, of process being experienced as something unsafe, leading to a lack of security. For some, this experience is about a not being ready for processes that they were facing. This crops up for Janice

*Doing lectures on pathophysiology, when it wasn't something I felt an expert on, was quite hard, and I was always scared of people asking me awkward questions, and you know, the confidence that what I was teaching was actually to the level that they needed (Janice).*

There are times therefore, when the unwanted or fearful experiences that participants try and steer clear of in their pursuit of teaching security, threaten to overwhelm them. At such times, in order to inform their own teaching process (and the content they use), the participants reach out for the knowledge and support of their assigned mentors. It's a hard road though, because the assigned mentor isn't necessarily going to be available or helpful. Jane, for instance, recalls her experience of her assigned mentor when she was a new lecturer

*I was mentored by someone who um, oh how do you say...there was no mentoring (Jane).*

Jane found it unhelpful being given teaching assignments that she didn't feel capable of at the time

*I found myself put into certain places, to teach this, teach this, teach this, and certainly at the start, I didn't know how to do that (Jane).*

Fortunately for Jane, someone did give her some support; it wasn't her assigned mentor though

*In saying that though, there's another lecturer here, who wasn't in the formal role as my mentor, but he was absolutely awesome, he was good support (Jane).*

Janice's pursuit of teaching security is assisted by processes she initiates with her students to ascertain their feedback. Janice does experience the backing of her teaching team colleagues with this, on Janice's behalf they ask for a

quick written feedback from the students, and when she reads this she feels a greater sense of security, now aware that

*I was never going to be able to please everyone all of the time anyway (Janice).*

The experience of pursuing teaching security by using content and process is not always a 'nice' one however. There are times when content and process, or any kind of teaching craft for that matter, are bulldozed out the way. I am reminded of Ann's boss from earlier in 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering' to illustrate the experience of this

*She'd fire off a shotgun, and then walk away, not even bother to look at the damage, and so people would be told 'ah, Ann, you're going to teach...' no argument, no discussion, nothing, you're just told you are going to do it (Ann).*

The carpet is well and truly taken from under Ann's feet here, but all the participants show a pragmatism and 'never say die' attitude to what they face, they continue to pursue teaching security. As discussed earlier in relation to her experience of politics, Ann eventually finds her confidence, even in the face of what is being hurled at her in the excerpt above.

Alice demonstrates a defiant pragmatism in her insistence that the necessary content and process is a feature of her class. Pursuing teaching security and then achieving it is the only agenda that is open in Alice's experience! Here Alice negotiates with her students about not doing set pre-reading to prepare for critical discussion in class. Alice shares her frustration about this with the class, and reminds the students of their earlier agreement to do the pre-reading

*I expressed to them that I was frustrated, that we had an agreement that this would occur (Alice).*

The students were also able to be frank in their reply

*The students said quite openly, 'well, we don't really want to read the stuff before we get here', some of them said 'we've got other stuff', some of them said 'well, we forgot', or some of them said 'I find that if I go and read the article after we've had the discussion, that I actually learn much more about it... and that works better for me' (Alice).*

Alice and her class went on to agree to dedicate some time in the classroom for reading, as well as keeping open space, for the ones who liked pre-reading, to bring their thoughts along to class. Alice had taken a pragmatic move forward here, and had come out with some important learning about how teaching security for participants involves a complex interplay between content and process, involving negotiation and renegotiation with students, an openness to different learning styles, and the willingness to relinquish power so things that are new can be tried.

Not surprisingly therefore, pursuing teaching security in Alice's experience included some complex pedagogical considerations

*I showed them that I could be flexible, that there needed to be some sense of reciprocal nature happening between us, for it to work. And that was a bit of a moment, where I kind of realized, that how I'd learnt in the past, or how I learn, or what's useful for me, isn't necessarily what's useful for other people, and just the variety of different ways that people actually do soak up stuff really, or contribute stuff, or bring in an angle that I hadn't considered before, really needs to be almost negotiated each time you meet with them, that just because last week we said yes we want to collaborate here, and do some work together, and talk with each other, that this time next Monday, they may not be in that same enthusiastic space, so just revisiting, I guess, that contract that I might set with them (Alice).*

The participants' experience of working with content and process is therefore complex and characterised by skilful work, where they are continually trying to foster a feeling of security in their teaching encounters with students.

In the themes presented so far, participants are negotiating relationships with themselves, relationships with their students, and the challenges are unrelenting, coming at them in unpredictable ways, in the classroom, and outside of it. The complexity and unpredictability, experienced by the participants, takes on an even deeper hue, when the participants experience from 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering', 'commitment amidst uncertainty', and 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security' are put together, and considered as a unified body of experience. The participants, in a final theme, 'being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space', are experiencing feeling included or excluded, in this deeply complex, and unpredictable, work world.

### **Being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space**

This theme is concerned with the participants' experience of themselves in their challenging world. The theme uncovers the feelings people have, in different situations, of feeling included, accepted, what I have termed 'an insider', and of feeling excluded, unaccepted, what I have termed 'an outsider'. One way of understanding this is to look for experience where the person metaphorically feels 'left outside in the rain' or 'inside, next to a lovely warm fire'. It will be revealed, that the complexity and unpredictability of the participants worlds, make any sojourns either inside, by the warm fire, or outside, in the rain, highly changeable. Ongoing changes in what the participants are experiencing, in their unpredictable world, mean they go through an ever shifting flux, a shifting space, between these insider and outsider positions.

The 'shifting space' that the participants experience, is captured in the changes that occur as part of Ann's experience. She feels the warmth of inclusion, when she is selected at interview, not only as a generalist tutor, but for a tangata whenua (people of the land) position, as well

*I think the thing that threw me most of all was that no suitable applicant for Maori had applied. They'd wanted a generalist tutor and a tangata whenua*

*tutor. The kuia [female elder] on the interview panel had enough faith in the interview to say, 'people they've had for the tangata whenua position aren't suitable, but I believe Ann could do the job', so I got put forward to do that job as well (Ann).*

Ann clearly feels included, and there is some pride in her experience

*This was quite a shock, and an awesome responsibility, because there are many iwi there, and if I was going to be teaching cultural safety, and be responsible for that across all the three years in the Bachelor of nursing programme, that was one hell of a responsibility for a non Maori lecturer (Ann).*

It was a different story for Ann when she was accused of sexual harassment, which was discussed earlier in 'commitment amidst uncertainty'. The response Ann got from her head of department, and the institution she works for, left her feeling very much the outsider, out in the rain

*That student, who wrote those things, got away with it, no disciplinary action being taken against her at all, no warning, nothing, and I felt totally unsupported, and let down by my head of department, and by my institution (Ann).*

Ann hasn't found an answer to achieving greater stability, a less dramatic shifting from inside to outside, but she uncovers some clues into making sense of her experience. She sees the HOD as key to the kind of experience lecturers will have. Earlier, in 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering', Ann shared her experience of destabilisation related to the responses of her HOD. A new HOD brings into her experience some sense that how participants experience their world, can be influenced in more helpful ways. I wonder if Ann is experiencing some shift, in her experience overall, towards an insider space, into the warmth more

*It's a different system now of course; we're actually asked 'do you like teaching in the paper?' 'do you want to change anything from the paper', and so on, so it's a quite different approach, and I think HODs have a lot to answer for, as to how staff feel, and how comfortable they feel (Ann).*

Janice experiences being an insider, in an environment that is very familiar to her, because of her previous work role

*Actually, it was very much what I'd have expected, to tell the truth, because I started off doing clinical lecturing, you know, out in the hospitals doing clinical lecturing, which wasn't at the hospital I'd been working at, but there's stuff in nursing that's really basic, that you're teaching students on the ward, when you are a staff nurse, and so it was very similar to doing that really, it's just I was able to do it full time, instead of trying to fit it in between other nursing roles (Janice).*

Janice found it

*Very little different, as a manager, wandering in and out, and just saying 'hi' to staff, as opposed to a lecturer, wandering in and out, and saying 'hi' to staff (Janice).*

Janice has experienced an easy transition, therefore, from her role as a manager to that of lecturer.

For Janice, I suggest that it is her growth and development as a lecturer that reveals to her the experience of being in a shifting space. In her early days as a lecturer, as previously discussed in 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering', she feels reassured by having clear standards to assess her students against. At this point in her career, Janice is in the warmth of the experience of an insider, happy that the standards are

*All spelled out for me (Janice).*

Janice's experience of growing and developing as a lecturer, however, leads her to question her earlier reliance on standards. Janice is moving away from the hospital environment where objective standards are highly valued, and she has already experienced being an insider. She is now in an academic environment where standards are questioned more for their fit with a complex array of teaching-learning and social considerations that relate to a diverse student population. Janice is no longer simply reassured by the standards, having it 'all spelled out'. Janice begins to experience the standards as barriers to responding effectively to the complex and more subjectively defined needs of her students. I reflect to her that it seems there is now a part of her that needs the standards there, but there is another part of her that is saying 'take them away', to which Janice replies

*Take them away, yes, I know (Janice).*

As a consequence of the experience she has collected as a lecturer, she has experienced a shift towards being an outsider in the environments where the objective standards are more highly valued. She has simultaneously experienced a shift towards being an insider with her colleagues in an academic environment that values a more in depth consideration of the context a student faces.

Jane experiences being the outsider as someone who is Maori, but knows one thing she needs to assist her to move towards the warmth of being an insider. Just having somebody else, who is Maori, in the department, to talk with, would help

*Being a minority as in a Maori lecturer, it's not that I didn't feel safe, I would have liked to have had another Maori lecturer here, or someone I could talk to (Jane).*

Over time, however, Jane has some experience more reminiscent of an insider. She reflects with appreciation, for the warm and supportive response



of her Associate Head of School, when she makes the mistake of preparing an exam for her students, with a page of questions missing

*The Associate Head of School was so supportive, yep, he just calmed it all down, he's an excellent support person (Jane).*

Alice doesn't like confrontation, but is a good exponent of it in interpersonal communication. Perhaps because Alice handles confrontation in such an effective way, her experience of being the outsider may be a more fleeting one than some of her colleagues. After confronting a colleague, who has now 'backed off', she is quickly shifting towards an insider space. She begins by asserting her right to be different, and to be accepted for that

*There's a difference between being different to other people, but not being right or wrong in comparison to them, just being different, and I wasn't saying what I did was better than what they were doing, it's just something different, and I should be equally accepted for the difference, really (Alice).*

She then makes sense of her previous expectation that education would be more inquiring, beyond the annoyance of niggling politics

*I had this naïve idea that education was beyond the everyday annoyances, of, you know, politics that happen, maybe in hospital settings, or clinical practice at times, that people didn't have time to waste being bitchy to each other, and stuff like that (Alice).*

Alice's experience here, of making sense of these issues, contributes to her shifting towards the experience of an insider. She reflects on the confrontation, and the niggling politics in the environment, and comments

*But that was OK, because once I understood the politics, then I could work with that as well, it wasn't really a point of frustration after that, once that particular relationship had been sorted out (Alice).*

Alice moves still further towards the warmth of an insider space, she is through with the confrontation she faced, and is now increasing in both knowledge and authority as an insider in the academic world

*After that, I thought too that it'd be helpful for me, if I became a bit more informed about how things work, not just told how things should work, but actually became informed about what is the stuff that underpins the curriculum, where is it coming from, how long has it been around, who wrote it, and that kind of stuff (Alice).*

Andy has also shifted towards an insider space. He too, felt very much the outsider at the start, mentioning earlier in his experience of 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering', that

*I don't like this institution, and I don't necessarily like some of their practices as a lecturer (Andy).*

Andy's shift towards an insider space is influenced by a colleague who joins his team. Andy wasn't happy at the time, but the new colleague helps Andy gain the confidence he needs to shift towards the warmth of an insider position

*I wasn't happy, but didn't know how to get out of it, she wasn't happy when she came in, and said 'hey, how about giving this a go?', and that was the door I needed, I needed someone who would support me to go forward (Andy).*

Things get better for Andy, he is even able to make sense of his feelings towards his previous lecturers

*We built a relationship very quickly. For me, it took a long time, a lot of people had been my lecturers before, so when I did my training, they were still here, and I had opinions of them already, you see, but my role has changed a lot, so I've now got more comfortable, I've started to spread out, and I'm on a few*

*committees that have nothing to do with nursing, and looking to spread out a little bit more inside the organisation (Andy).*

The experience of being an insider, is, therefore, enabling Andy to think in more positive and creative ways about his work. Andy seems to almost be experiencing being at home, as an insider might by the nice warm fire. He enjoys the warmth of relating with staff he has got to know, like the librarian

*To be able to get in touch with the librarian to do something for you, they're more than happy to do it, and you're walking through there and they say 'hi, how's things?', there's engagement with people (Andy).*

The participants, therefore, are all experiencing ongoing flux and shifting between being in the rain, outside, and being inside, in the warmth. Given the complexity of their worlds of experience, it is perhaps unsurprising that they experience such a dynamic, rather than a static process.

## **Summary of themes**

The above explication of themes has uncovered a deeper understanding of what it means to be a lecturer in the field of nurse education. A lay perspective may have taken us, to some understanding of the participants' world, as being complex, challenging, and unpredictable. Viewing the participants experience through a phenomenological lens, has revealed the depth to the complex, challenging, and unpredictable experience the participants face.

In 'politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering', tough emotional and relational challenges were revealed, that the participants go through in their experience of politics. The participants experience politics that is destabilising for them, but also go on to experience politics as something in which they are gathering strength, a vehicle to their growth and development as lecturers.

In 'commitment amidst uncertainty', the participants experience is of being committed, obligated to do good for others, in their work. The commitment from the participants is such, that, they are prepared to surrender responses that might bring them an experience of more immediate comfort, their obligation to do good means they forego their own comfort, for the benefit of the other. This means the participants are open to allowing uncertainty into their own experience, as they forego their own comfort, for the other. This committed response though, is not to the extent that the participants will knowingly allow their survival in their work role to be threatened. In other words, they are not prepared to lose their jobs, for the sake of their commitment to others.

The experience of the participants in 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security' is of teaching by using both teaching content and teaching process, often involving a complex interplay between the two, in an ongoing pursuit of teaching security. Teaching security is primarily concerned with an emotional well-being sought by participants in their teaching encounters with students. Experience where participants are trying to steer clear of unwanted or fearful experiences such as being exposed for a lack of teaching ability, is also relevant in the theme.

Finally, in 'being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space', the participants are amidst all the complexity and unpredictability, introduced in the three themes above. At a fundamental level, the participants are wishing to experience feeling included, accepted, a feeling akin to being inside, in the warmth, by the warm fire; this experience is referred to as being 'an insider'. The participants are also negotiating a potentially more uncomfortable experience, of feeling excluded, unaccepted, akin to being outside in the rain; this experience is referred to as being 'an outsider'. It is not surprising, given the complexity and unpredictability of the participants worlds, that they do not experience being inside, or outside, as a fixed state. They experience a shifting between these two positions, an experience that is dynamic and in a constant state of flux.

## **Conclusion**

The findings presented in this chapter have revealed these participants to be committed, politically astute, and weaving their way through the complex challenges of teaching, sometimes with and sometimes without support. They experience being insiders one minute, and outsiders the next, in the complex and dynamic shifting space of their work worlds.

Next, in Chapter Five, the significance of these findings for lecturers in New Zealand nursing education today will be the focus for a discussion.

## **Chapter Five:           What has been revealed and where to next?**

This research has given me the chance to learn and grow as a beginning researcher, amidst the philosophical complexity of Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. My intention in conducting the study was to investigate the research question ‘what does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nursing education?’ By gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experience of lecturers, I sought an understanding of how lecturers are negotiating an intensifying political climate.

The research was guided by the ideas of key philosophers from the Heideggerian hermeneutic tradition, most notably the ontological arguments of Heidegger about what it means ‘to be’ (Heidegger, 1962), the deep pedagogic philosophy and framework for conducting phenomenological research of Max van Manen (van Manen, 1997), and the role of text, language and the process of interpretation in Gadamer’s (1975) ‘fusion of horizons’. My study was therefore underpinned by the philosophical position of Heidegger, Gadamer, and van Manen that text, such as that derived from language and history, is intertwined in a deep relationship with experience and should not therefore be separated from it.

In this chapter I discuss the significance of my research findings from a vantage point that is informed by this philosophical position. I begin however by returning to where I started: wondering about the experience of ‘becoming’ a lecturer in nursing education. I had begun my research inquiry with an interest in ‘becoming’, but then discarded it for a deeper one asked by van Manen (1997a) about ‘being’ a teacher. However, as I reflected on my research findings and gathered myself for this discussion, ‘becoming’ a lecturer emerged as significant for me once again. The relevance of this to my discussion is introduced next.

## **‘Being’ and ‘becoming’ a lecturer in nursing education**

I began this research project by wondering what it means ‘to become’ a lecturer in nursing education after going through this experience in my own working life. It was after engaging with van Manen’s (1997a) argument about the fundamental nature of the question ‘what does it mean to be a teacher?’ that I decided to ask a phenomenological question about ‘being’ rather than ‘becoming’ in my study. I considered that this was a deeper question about experience than the one I had begun to ask about ‘becoming’, which I concluded was limited to one area of the experience of ‘being’ a lecturer.

Recently however, as I reflected on my research findings for this discussion, the experience of a new colleague joining my workplace alerted me to the continued significance of ‘becoming’ a lecturer in the experience of ‘being’ one. I was reminded of my own experience of ‘becoming’ a lecturer when I saw my new colleague encountering challenges that I have now overcome. I then considered that after seven years of being a lecturer, I am still encountering new challenges in the job. I noticed that my experience of ‘becoming’ is not ‘done with’ because time has passed by; there is new experience of ‘becoming’ to replace the old all the time. ‘Becoming’ seemed important after all, but how important? I began to consider the significance of my findings with these thoughts about ‘becoming’ in mind.

As I reflected on my findings, sometimes the experience of becoming seemed integral to the experience of ‘being’ a lecturer and sometimes this was not immediately clear. In ‘politics as destabilising/politics as strength gathering’ it was, because in this theme politics is experienced as destabilising, yet there is a shift for lecturers over time where their experience becomes more about gathering strength. However, in ‘commitment amidst uncertainty’, ‘content and process in the pursuit of teaching security’, and ‘being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space’ the experience of participants is shifting and dynamic, but whether this experience is of ‘being’ or ‘becoming’, or both, is open to question.

At first, because of my lack of clarity over this, it seemed like I had arrived at an impasse in terms of productively discussing my findings or answering my research question of 'what does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nursing education?' On further reflection however, I realised that my discussion and my answer to the research question was already in the palm of my hand. Heideggerian hermeneutics is informed by distinct but not separate vantage points such as Heidegger's (1962) ontology of Being and Gadamer's (1975) 'fusion of horizons'. I didn't need to decide whether my findings were about 'being' or 'becoming' because both of these are fundamental to Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology. The experience of my participants is of 'becoming' when viewed from Gadamer's (1987) position that interpretation is 'always on the way' and of 'being' when viewed from Heidegger's (1962) philosophical argument about the ontology of Being.

I argue that both these vantage points, one more resonant with 'being', the other more resonant with 'becoming' are important for determining the significance of my research. Both are seeking to determine the other in Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, and my discussion draws on both before I reach my conclusion about what it means to be a lecturer.

Gadamer (1987) argues that an understanding of experience is never fully available to us because interpretation is always 'on the way'. According to Gadamer, factors including language, text, and history in the process of interpretation always interrupt a pre-reflective understanding of experience. I argue that the context surrounding lecturers will therefore be important to the process of interpretation that they undertake. Van Manen (1991) argues that being a teacher requires an ongoing process of renewal, because it takes place "in a world that is constantly changing around us and is continually being changed by us" (p.3). The changing world around lecturers becomes my focus next. I reflect on my research findings and present some key issues that are faced by lecturers in the context that surrounds them. I then go on to make some recommendations in response to these issues.



My turning to these issues and recommendations does not however mean that I have foreclosed on the question of what it means to be. I am merely turning to the Gadamerian vantage point. I argue that the deepest explication of what it means to be is served by an understanding of the issues that lecturers are interpreting in their lived experience. Then I argue that I will be in the best position available to me to look back over my research findings, the issues that lecturers face, possible responses to those issues, and my own experience and ask from Heidegger's (1962) vantage point of Being 'what does it mean to be a lecturer in nursing education?'

First however, I reflect on my research findings and identify some key issues. The identification and discussion of these issues is informed by my four phenomenological themes. I begin with the intensifying politics of the lifeworld, then discuss commitment, teaching, and the shifting space.

### **Intensifying politics of the lifeworld**

The lived experience of my participants engagement with politics is contrasted with the more implicitly expressed experience of politics in the previous phenomenological studies that were reviewed in Chapter Two, and this suggests that politics has intensified as an issue in New Zealand nursing education today.

In previous studies, political issues such as workload and a lack of support for the lecturer role were tabled. The politics in this study is much more explicit, illustrated by the language used by participants such as 'institutional racism' (Jane), the 'scatter gun decision making' of a boss (Ann), and 'I don't like this institution' (Andy).

The fact that there is a more intense ring to my participants' language concerning the experience of politics is not surprising given that Easton (2008) identifies that New Zealand nursing education faces an intensifying political climate. I argue that the political issues that lecturers face arise from the neo-liberal reform agenda in nursing education from over the past twenty five years, as discussed earlier in Chapter One.

In practical terms, Lafferty and Fleming (2000) observe that these changes mean that lecturers now face a centralising of managerial control through the utilisation of line management principles, the introduction of performance management schemes, the erosion of academic tenure that allows easier dismissal of tenured academic staff, the elimination or reduction of organisational units deemed financially unviable, and an increasing emphasis on competitive marketing of both universities and individual university departments or faculties.

Lafferty and Fleming (2000) argue that a key strategy in the centralisation of control is to ensure a situation of “virtually constant change (e.g. through periodic restructuring), unmanageable workloads and the confinement of knowledge and substantive decision-making to the centre”. They argue further that in this context of constant top-down organisational change, staff and individual departments are encouraged to take responsibility for organisational problems, as part of a “devolution of blame”. In addition, performance management is implemented most vigorously for staff at these levels. Student evaluations of staff have assumed great prominence in decisions on individual careers, at the same time as staff attempt to negotiate their work, in a context of large increases in student numbers.

I argue that these are challenging political issues that lecturers face and resulting pressures are felt in other areas of their experience. One such area is the politics of interpersonal relations between colleagues, which was a characteristic of politics in my research findings.

Another is lecturers lived experience of issues arising from the Treaty of Waitangi. As a pakeha (European) lecturer, Janice experiences an unhelpful gap between the westernised processes of the institution she works for, and the needs of her Maori students; and Jane, a Maori lecturer, experiences institutional racism in her workplace, at one stage being mistaken as the ‘cleaner’ by her students.

In a New Zealand evaluation study, McEldowney et al. (2006) found cultural safety educators currently face complex challenges in providing students with a 'safe space to be unsafe', and in working with students experiences of both 'power and powerlessness'. There is clearly a need to be responsive to difference in responding to challenges such as these, but the neo-liberal reforms are top-down and uniform in nature, and therefore at odds with the complexity of cultural safety.

A question therefore arises about the kind of experiences Janice and Jane have above. In an intensifying political climate, concerned with uniformity rather than difference, there may be little hope of reversing the institutional racism Jane refers to, and it is also hard to see a way forward regarding the lack of responsiveness in the westernised system for Janice's Maori students?

Next, I turn to issues arising from lecturers lived experience of commitment in my findings, reflecting on the theme 'commitment amidst uncertainty'.

## **Commitment**

Participants' experience of commitment in my findings is concerned with standing up for what they consider to be right for their students, in their teaching and in their relations inside the organisations they work for. Participants also experience uncertainty when they remain committed to doing good in situations, when they could take easier more expedient options. The uncertainty can be experienced to an extent that it is troubling for the participants. Ann, for instance, went through tough times when a student accused her of sexual harassment, and it was a 'hideous' experience for Janice when a student threatened to take her to court.

The commitment demonstrated by the participants is a cause for celebration in New Zealand nursing education today. Such commitment is a valuable resource for future developments in nursing education, but it is also a matter of concern too. When lecturers reach a point where they can no longer sustain the energy levels that such committed responses require of them,

several possibilities will be open to them, including leaving their jobs or staying and being less committed. However, some may decide they need to keep trying to find extra capacity from inside themselves to maintain their current level of commitment, leaving themselves vulnerable to the effects of stress.

The literature already suggests that burnout, a stress response seen in people working in the helping professions, is well established as a concern for lecturers in nursing education (Cam, 2001; Talbot, 2000), so what then happens when the stress intensifies, as seems inevitable in the intensifying political climate that is being described?

In a New Zealand study, Budge, Carryer and Wood (2003) investigated the effects of a professional nursing practice environment on the health status of its nurses. The study found that positive experience of professional autonomy, control and professional relationships were correlated with less burnout in the nurses. When these findings are considered in relation to the world of nursing education, it is noticeable that autonomy, control and professional relationships are the very things that are being eroded by the political reform agenda that has been described. I therefore argue that lecturers are at risk of burnout in the current environment.

With regard to their committed practice therefore, lecturers are delicately placed, facing tough challenges. Next, I turn to the world of teaching and the classroom, and discuss issues arising from 'content and process in the pursuit of teaching security'.

## **Teaching**

My findings also show lecturers experience some vulnerable times in the classroom, as they draw on both teaching content and teaching process in their pursuit of a feeling of security in the classroom

Negotiating with the content and process of teaching, in order to sustain a feeling of security, takes time. When Janice refers to being able to refer to 'the

notes at the bottom of the power point' as part of her experience of pursuing security in her teaching, time will have gone into the planning to have those resources there 'ready'. When Andy reflects on the pedagogical complexity of following 'a good teachable moment' and then returning to the content later, Andy will surely have needed time to reflect on the complexities of the process of teaching? When the lecturers need to draw on support from their colleagues to help sustain their security in the classroom, this also takes time, including the time taken by the lecturer or lecturers who give the support.

The question arises that in the current intensifying political climate of ever increasing student numbers and unmanageable workloads, that time will surely be less available for these things, if indeed it is available at all? If this is an example of the direction the academic world is heading, then how, if at all, can lecturers sustain a feeling of security in their lived experience of teaching their students?

The issues arising about politics, commitment, and pursuing teaching security converge in the final overarching theme from my findings, 'being an insider and an outsider as a shifting space'. I argue that the shifting space is where the issues that have been raised are most complex, as lecturers negotiate between all of their experience and seek the warmth being 'an insider', as opposed to the harsher experience of feeling excluded as 'an outsider'.

I return to 'the shifting space' later when, guided by Heidegger's ontology of Being, I reflect on my research findings, the context that lecturers face, and my own experience and ask 'what does it mean to be a lecturer in nursing education?'

Next, I present my recommendations for lecturers to respond to the issues that have been raised.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations I now make about curriculum development, establishing a learning community, professional supervision, and lobbying

policy makers at local and national level, are not things that individual lecturers can always just immediately 'do'. Lecturers would require the support of their departments for implementing these suggestions, and my findings have shown that this isn't necessarily always available. For many lecturers therefore, the following recommendations may be available at a theoretical level, but experienced as 'out of reach' in a practical sense.

My first recommendation concerns curriculum development. The 'problem' of the additive curriculum (Diekelmann & Smythe, 2004; Ironside, 2004) was introduced in Chapter Two, in which more and more content is added to curricula, while little if any is taken out. I argue that this is something lecturers could address, as long as they are afforded full and meaningful participation in their institutions curriculum renewal processes. They could for example ask what would potentially be the most meaningful and useful content to include, based on the time available to teach it, and the philosophy of the curriculum and the course in question?

Following the *Strategic Review of Undergraduate Nursing Education* (KPMG Consulting, 2001), the Nursing Council of New Zealand released standards for education programmes (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2005). The standards stipulate that nursing curricula need to be structured and include content that enables students to achieve programme outcomes such as the competencies within their scope of practice as a registered nurse. I argue however that these standards still allow a considerable amount of academic freedom for lecturers to engage in the curriculum development I refer to.

Based on the ideas presented earlier about the student's experience being central to learning in narrative pedagogy (Diekelmann, 2001, Ironside, 2001, and Ironside, 2004), lecturers might ask for content to be decentred in the design of future curricula? As long as the necessary structure is evident and the outcomes are being met, I argue that there is no reason why possibilities such as this shouldn't be explored in nursing curricula.

As already highlighted, lecturers would require time to participate in involved processes like curriculum renewal, and a sizeable amount of time too it would seem when what is involved in curriculum development is taken into account. Iwasiw, Goldenberg, and Andrusyszyn (2005) suggest that curriculum development in nursing education is more akin to art than science. They identify it as being characterised by interaction, co-operation, change, and possibly conflict; the result of overlapping, interactive, and iterative decisions; shaped by contextual realities and political timelines; and also influenced by personal interests, philosophies, judgments and values.

If time can be found by lecturers to participate in this process, then it has the potential to help lecturers and enhance their lived worlds, as well as those of others. Iwasiw, Goldenberg, and Andrusyszyn (2005) suggest that curriculum development provides an opportunity for lecturers to develop and implement new perspectives on the education of nursing students and to influence the culture of the school of nursing. They continue that curriculum development also provides an avenue to strengthen the school's impact on the community and gain support from members of the educational institution.

It is not only the process of curriculum development that holds possibilities for lecturers to participate together in a deep engagement with the possibilities that there might be for their academic worlds. A second possibility that lecturers might explore is the establishment of 'learning communities' in tertiary institutions (Lieberman and Wehlburg, 2001; Smith and McCann, 2001). Boyer (1987) describes the ideal learning community as purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and celebrative.

In support of the above, Senge et al. (1994) proposes a realistic way of creating significant and enduring change is through team involvement and team learning, which starts through dialogue. Senge argues team members need to find a way of suspending their assumptions, so they can enter into genuine thinking together. Lueddeke (1999) adds that culture in higher education can only be changed when 'implicit and silent assumptions' are brought to the surface and confronted. Rather than sweeping differences

under the carpet as undiscussable, good strategic thinking uses them to catalyse the imagination and innovation (Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2005).

A third possibility that lecturers might explore is the establishment of professional supervision. Lizzio and Wilson (2001) define professional supervision as a mutually empowering and systematic learning process for both a supervisor and a supervisee. They say the aim of professional supervision is for the supervisee to develop professional competence and a coherent sense of their professional identity.

Oberg (2004) argues that supervision is a creative activity. She emphasizes “the creation rather than the discovery of meaning” (p.227). Oberg argues that supervision is not about uncovering something implicit in teachers practice, but is about exploring “the opportunity supervision provides for educators to remake their image of themselves and of their professional practice” (p.227). Rolfe and Gardner (2006) argue that when supervision deviates from this approach it runs the risk of degenerating into ‘a subtle but persuasive exercise of power’. Given this, I argue that it is important to ensure the process of supervision is creative, and mindful of my findings about intensifying politics, I also argue that the dynamics between supervisor and supervisee are important if professional supervision is to be effective. It may for example be more effective for your supervisor to be a peer who you can trust, than your manager for whom a conflict of interest may exist.

Professional supervision therefore has the potential to enhance lecturers’ professional practice, but this requires careful attention to inter professional dynamics and the creative processes that define it as an activity.

The fourth and final suggestion I will put forward to lecturers is to take an active political role in lobbying nursing education’s policy makers, at both a local and national level.

With reference to Florence Nightingale’s legacy of political action, Falk-Rafael (2005) argues that there is a moral imperative for nurses to participate in



socio-political activities. Ballou (2000) associates this moral agenda with nursing's privileged position in bearing witness to human suffering, although sadly given their potential capacity to act as political advocates for their patients, she also found relatively few nurses actually do participate in socio-political activities. This is in spite of the fact that in New Zealand professional bodies provide a structure for this. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation and the College of Nurses Aotearoa are both examples of professional bodies that provide networks for their members and make submissions on their behalf.

Hughes (2005) calls on nurses to get more involved in policy development, and echoing the sentiments from above, she argues that nurses need to do this "because our consumers, patients and clients need us to" (p.331). Hughes suggests nurses who have been involved in lobbying, drafting submissions, analysing options for solutions to key health problems, or participating in government committees, will tell of the complexity and frustration in the work, but, as well "the delight when articulation of issues, responses and strategy results in positions, policies, regulation and legislation being changed for the better".

Most of all, Hughes (2005) considers policy development to be "a practical tool for change for nurses in practice, education and research" (p.331). She identifies possibilities for its synergy with other aspects of leadership and development in nursing, an argument I will extend to the four possibilities for lecturers in nursing education that I have discussed here. A synergy of curriculum development, learning community, clinical supervision and increased lobbying of nursing education's policy makers would surely have a greater impact than if only one or two of these suggestions were implemented.

However, apart from those phenomenological studies that were reviewed in Chapter Two, where the lived worlds of lecturers enacting narrative pedagogy were the main focus, the possibilities that I have put forward for lecturers in nursing education seem to be largely dormant features of lecturers' lived worlds.

As previously mentioned, these possibilities may be available to lecturers at a theoretical level, but at a practical level they may be experienced as 'out of reach'. Lecturers may wish to explore one or more of the possibilities that have been suggested, but find that this is not possible, due perhaps to other priorities taking precedence in their departments? Given the intensifying neo-liberal political climate described earlier, these priorities could be narrower in focus, perhaps financially driven, rather than the broader moral and pedagogical priorities that characterise the suggestions I have made.

I conclude my discussion of recommendations at this point. I have determined that the context surrounding lecturers is a shifting one, and that 'being' a lecturer includes experience of 'becoming' because of this ever shifting context. I turn next to the vantage point offered by Heidegger's ontology of Being as I reflect on all my own experience, my research findings, the issues and recommendations I have made. I am now asking 'what does it mean to be a lecturer in nursing education?' I am engaging in the 'free act of seeing meaning' that van Manen (1997a) refers to, but I am aware that the context I have discussed in this chapter will also influence the understanding I arrive at.

### **What does it mean to be a lecturer in nursing education?**

My initial response to this deeper question is 'why do lecturers continue in their roles amidst so much uncertainty, a lack of support, an intensifying political climate. What is it that keeps them going in the complex shifting space of their work worlds?

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I argue that when it comes to my participants it is their commitment that determines their 'being'. They are involved in an ongoing experience of 'becoming' in a changing world that surrounds them, but this shifting and challenging context is not preventing them from continuing in the committed way they have come 'to be' as lecturers. Nuzzo (2007) argues that "Being is saved from the whirling flux of becoming by being rooted or positioned in a certain place" (p.136). I contend that commitment is 'the certain place' that saves my participants from the world that whirls around them.

I argue that the commitment my participants is linked with the subjective experience of teaching that van Manen (1997a) says is shared with that of parenting. I argue that because teaching is part of the same structure of experience as parenting then lecturers won't be about to let go of their commitment. Whatever is happening in the context that surrounds them won't deter them. This is the experience of parents to their children.

Of course, being a parent and being a teacher has its differences, but I argue there is experience fundamental to both that explains the commitment of my participants in such challenging circumstances, and gives us the deepest insight into what it means to be a lecturer in nursing education.

The defining role played by commitment and the connection with parenting makes me reflect that 'being' a lecturer is also something spiritual. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2008) comment that spirit at work involves profound feelings of well-being, a belief that your work makes a contribution, a sense of connection to others and common purpose, an awareness of a connection to something larger than self, and a sense of perfection and transcendence. When things 'come right' for my participants and when they are working in committed ways to make things 'come right', I argue that their experience is spiritual at these times.

This experience of the spiritual resonates with my own experience. There were times as a lecturer when I concluded that the rational thing to do would be to get another job because I wasn't happy as a lecturer, but something kept me going. I now reflect that I was kept going by a deeper sense of purpose in the work. I was aware that the work was important human work linked to the health and well-being of others. I was committed in my work and I wasn't about to budge out of the way because I wasn't happy or things were getting too hectic or challenging.

## **Concluding comment**

Whilst it might not be the same for all lecturers in nursing education, the 'being' of my participants is determined by these inner forces of commitment, that I argue is spiritual experience that teachers share with parents. The 'being' of lecturers is simultaneously experience of 'becoming', constantly renewing themselves amidst a complex shifting space of challenging issues. The experience of my participants suggests that whatever is happening in the context surrounding lecturers, they have the potential to respond in committed ways. Their commitment determines their 'being' rather than destabilising forces that surround them. I therefore argue that the recommendations made earlier in this chapter are not beyond lecturers to act on and achieve in their workplaces. In today's intensifying political climate there may be a bright future after all.

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# Appendices



## MEMORANDUM

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Email Allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz

TO	Mark Kingston
COPY TO	
FROM	Dr Allison Kirkman, Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	July 1, 2005
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	<b>Ethics Application: No 51/2005 - What does it mean to be a lecturer in the field of nurse education?</b>

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved and this approval continues until 28 February 2006. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Allison Kirkman  
Convener

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