Hope Seen Through the Eyes of Ten Australian Youth

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Deakin University

Candidate Declaration

I certify that this thesis entitled *Hope Seen Through the Eyes of Ten Australian Youth* and submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis has not been previously submitted, either in whole or in part, in respect of any other academic award.

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I also certify that any material in this thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any institution is identified in the text.

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Signed…………………………………………………………………………

Date…………………………………………………………………………
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Of all ills that men endure
Hope is the only cheap and universal cure
Anon

Introduction
In this study I explored the phenomenon of hope, seen through the eyes of ten Australian youth. Specifically, the participants of this study were self-identified Spirit-filled Christian youth residing in Melbourne and youth who were marginalised and disenfranchised from mainstream society and receiving care and supportive services within an outreach organisation located in another state in Australia at the time of their interview. The rationale for the selection of these youth for inclusion in this study is contained in this thesis in Chapter 4, The Study Method. A phenomenological study, using the philosophical underpinnings of Hans Georg Gadamer (1989), was selected to explicate the meaning of and to distil the essence of hope seen through the eyes of these participants, and is the main aim of this study.

This study is particularly relevant and timely, for, as the literature review reveals, many youth in Australia are facing severe challenges to their physical, emotional, social, psychological and cultural integrity. One way some of Australia’s youth are responding to life challenges is to choose suicide as a means of escaping the burdens of life. It is both alarming and frightening to note that the youth suicide rate in Australia has reached endemic proportions. When suicide is seen as the only alternative to life, this demands that hope-facilitating strategies be placed on the agenda at all levels; that is, within federal, state and local government initiatives, school curricula, health care initiatives, community action initiatives and within family units.

Providing an in-depth description of hope from the unique perspective of the participants of this study has the potential to improve the lives of the youth of Australia. It also has the potential to improve practice of health care professionals, particularly registered nurses’ caring practices. Registered nurses are key health professionals to work with youth after incidents such as assault, accidental overdose,
substance abuse, road trauma, failed suicide attempts and acquired infectious
diseases. A number of authors whose work will be explored in the literature review
believe fostering hope is intrinsic to the role of the nurse; therefore, developing an
understanding of hope, as seen through the eyes of youth, is crucial to expanding the
capacity of nurses and other health care practitioners to care holistically.

**Contextual Features of this Study**
Throughout the time I was engaged in this study, and in fact for a considerable
period of time prior to commencing, I gave careful consideration to a number of
issues that directly and indirectly affected the context in which this study was
conducted and I made decisions regarding them. As these are contextual features of
this study I take this opportunity to explicate them, in the belief they will enable the
reader to develop an appreciation for attitudes I adopted in the conduct of this study.

The first decision I made was to write this thesis using the first person singular
pronoun. Although this decision represented a significant departure for me from my
normal style of writing academic works, it is consistent with the intent of this study
and the methodology I selected. My second decision was to abide by principles that
fostered a climate of equality and mutual respect throughout the conduct of this
study. These principles, which were adapted from the work of Ramos (1989), were
as follows.

- Interviews were conducted in an interactive dialogic manner to foster a
  balanced relationship between myself and my participants.
- Several meetings with my participants occurred to facilitate collaboration and
to promote a willingness to share that which is normally considered personal
  and private.
- Individual reality, with an appreciation of subjective truth, was valued.
- Confidentiality was at all times maintained.
- Openness on the part of both myself and my participants was fostered.
- If doubt existed about public vs private information, my participants decided
  on the matter.
• A relationship of trust, respect and openness was offered to enable my participants to feel that what they shared was valued and worthy of consideration.

• I openly disclosed my own thoughts on hope to my participants. However, in doing so, I made it clear I was not the final arbiter on the matter and mine was just one of many opinions on the topic of hope.

• I lived out of the belief that the singular as well as collective voice of my participants was worthy of my utmost respect and consideration.

I have used non-sexist language throughout this work, except in instances where I was directly quoting or referring to the work of another whose gender was known, or in instances where it was clear I was writing about a particular male or female participant of this study. Thus I have used “they or their” throughout this thesis in place of “his and her”. Whilst reading this thesis this convention may seem awkward at first or even grammatically incorrect; however, this choice is consistent with requirements of Deakin University for the adoption of a non-sexist approach in academic writing. Additionally, as I live and work in Australia, I have used English (Australian) for the production of this work, except in instances where I am quoting the work of others who used English (American) to report their work. Further, to fulfil the requirements of the School of Nursing, Deakin University, conventions cited within the 5th edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2002) were adopted throughout the entirety of this work.

Another decision I made was to ensure the philosophical ideology of Hans Georg Gadamer (1989) permeated every aspect of this work, including my presentation of a new method of data analysis. I have used the language of Gadamer extensively throughout and sometimes these terms are outside the context of everyday or ordinary usage. Therefore, to enable the reader to understand the particular meaning and nuance of terms that I have used, a glossary is included (Appendix A).

Also, I decided to place all direct quotes from my participants in italics, without reference to the place within their dialogue from which this material was extracted. As I thought through this decision, I realized I have always found it more of a distraction or hindrance than help when reading works that contain references in situ.
Therefore I have abandoned this tradition, but give my personal assurance that my supervisor has been both diligent and thorough in the supervisory process.

Finally, although I will address concepts such as goodness and trustworthiness within this thesis, I have decided not to have a separate section within this thesis that talks about the veracity or validity of the findings, because I believe very strongly, that issues such as dependability, validity, trustworthiness, auditability, confirmability and integrity must be demonstrated at every juncture of the research process. In the words of Emden and Sandelowski (1998) “goodness is as much about where and how researchers derive their beliefs, assumptions, motivations and ways of working, as about judgement on research procedures and findings reached via the application of specific criteria” p.207). Or, in my words, the literature review must be thorough and clearly identify the body of work germane to the conceptual framework of the study; the philosophy that guided the study must be clearly articulated and reflected in the methods; the ethical issues that are identified must extend beyond those of informed consent and confidentiality, identifying real and potential problems that may have existed; the method of data analysis must be true to the intent of the study as well as to the study’s philosophical underpinnings; and the discussion must demonstrate the capacity to juxtapose the findings of the study, the literature and new ideas that have emerged. In all of these aspects it is my direct intention to demonstrate their achievement throughout every aspect of this thesis.

**Acknowledgement of my Participants**

This thesis is a testimony to the indomitable spirit of the ten individuals who were the participants of this study. It speaks of the courage, wisdom and fortitude they possessed in living the everydayness and the extraordinary moments of their lives. It was and is a privilege to learn of their stories and to be deeply affected by what they had to say. Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, said that an unexamined life is not worth living (Britannica CD, 1997). I would posit that the people who were the participants of this study examined facets and aspects of their lives with great aplomb. In fact, I am grateful I was not a participant of this study, for I am not sure I would have had the sagacity to speak as eloquently as they did. As I discovered, when it came time for me to articulate my views on hope, I found this an extremely
difficult and at times emotionally exhausting task. I realized that I had never really thought about hope to any great extent, instead, taking its existence for granted.

I am deeply indebted to my participants whom I hold in the highest regard. To each of them I extend my warmest thanks and appreciation for baring their souls and sharing with me their private thoughts and wisdom about hope and what it meant to them on a personal and private level. To each of them I say: thank you, you are legends.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction
This chapter identifies a rich body of literature that is relevant to the topic I selected for the conduct of this study. To accomplish the literature review I used a variety of search techniques and approaches, including using the CD-ROM databases Medline, CINAHL and ERIC and the electronic databases OVID and EBSCO. Search terms, which were combined with each other, included hope, hope facilitation, hope-facilitating strategies, hope and health, hope and illness, hope and spirituality, hope and evil, hope and caring, hope and ageing, hope and youth, youth, youth and Australia, caring, presence, wishing, dreams, resilience, optimism, suicide, despair, hopelessness, helplessness, theology of hope, psychology of hope, sociology of hope and Christian hope. I also manually searched reference lists from identified studies, as well as perused the stacks in the nursing section of the Deakin University library. These search techniques produced a wealth of materials and together these diverse areas laid the foundation or conceptual framework for the conduct of this study.

This literature review commences with a brief exploration of Australia, raising questions about forces that have shaped its national identity, and progresses to discussion about youth in Australia today. Problems youth face in respect of their identity and acceptance in mainstream society are explored, highlighting many struggles youth face in contemporary society today. The literature review then progresses to identifying authors’ representations of hope – what it is and what it is not. Related phenomena such as wishing, dreams, optimism and resilience are briefly explored, noting often that there are not clearly demarcated lines that separate these concepts from each other. Hope and spirituality and hope in illness states are explored and the relationship of hope to hopelessness and despair is then highlighted, making the point that these two seemingly opposite ends of the spectrum may perhaps be closer than we expect. Questions are raised regarding whether hope should be regarded as the evil that remained in Pandora’s box. Hope and its relationship to caring is explored and finally hope-facilitating strategies are examined, identifying ways health care professionals, particularly registered nurses, conceive their role as facilitators of hope.
Australia

As mentioned previously, this study explored the phenomenon of hope seen through the eyes of ten participants. It raised, in direct ways, questions about the youth of Australia – who they are, what their issues and concerns are, as well as the contexts of their lives and experiences. It also raised questions about Australia – who we are and the nature of the forces that shape our national identity. These issues are briefly explored because they are contextual features of the present study; therefore, this discussion commences with a brief description of Australia.

Australia is a continent that has been settled by successive waves of immigrants and its history cannot be understood without reference to its tradition of immigration. Archaeological evidence indicates the indigenous people of Australia occupied the land for more than 120,000 years prior to settlement by other national groups, and although it is not certain where these first inhabitants came from, it is believed “…they travelled over a land bridge from southern India and then crossed uncharted waters in canoes” (Bessant & Watts, 1999, p.200). The first European migrants came to Australia on a fleet headed by Governor Phillip in 1788, although it should be noted that centuries before these immigrants arrived, Australia was visited by the Greeks, Arabs, Chinese and Indians (White, 1981). “Between 1788 and 1852, approximately 170,000 convicts were sent from Britain to the colonies of Australia” (Bessant & Watts, 1999, p.211). Since then successive waves of immigration have occurred and modern Australia is now said to be one of the most multicultural countries in the world (Costello, 1998). Further, according to Burnley, Murphy, & Fagan (1997) Australia is second only to Israel in the number of migrants in its population, with over one hundred cultural and national groups represented, making Australia one of the most polyethnic countries in the world (Wyn & White, 1997). The Commonwealth Government, in recognition of Australia’s multi ethnicity, formulated in 1989 the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, recognising the rights of all Australians to “…express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion, and the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity irrespective of race culture, religion and gender” (Jensen, Barnett, Newman, & Raiter, 1999, p.58).
Settlement within Australia has mostly occurred within the outer borders of the continent. The interior, the unpopulated regions and areas of dense native vegetation of Australia are often referred to as the “outback” or the “bush”. Basically these terms indicate a region that is either sparsely populated because of the overwhelming presence of the desert, extreme climatic conditions and a paucity of rain; or a region which is undeveloped, maintaining its original characteristics and vegetation. However, when Australians use these phrases, they are often used to convey a nationalist folk image (Tacey, 1997) of an Australia that is resourceful, rugged, filled with social ideals and, really, the only place in the world where anyone would want to live! It is eloquently argued by Tacey that our view of the bush and the outback is constructed to fit purposes in time. That is, Australians either enshrine the bush, projecting it as “…a rural paradise of Arcadia” (p.54) or see it as an “…unthinkable desert land that is pure horror” (p.111). He further argues that our cultural appropriation of either view has been largely influenced by well known Australian authors such as Gordon, Lawson, Paterson, Collins, Wentworth and Stevens to name a few and a persistent desire to romanticize our view regarding how Australia is seen and projected to the outside world. Regardless of the cultural appropriation that one adopts, it is fair to say Australians regard the bush or outback in unique and distinct ways that enable common bonds to be formed across a diverse range of people. Having “gone bush” during the time I was writing this thesis, I now have a greater appreciation for the mystique and lure of the bush, which is harsh and formidable whilst simultaneously being endearing and refreshing.

The story of Australia’s past is tinged with great sacrifice as the early immigrants struggled to withstand searing heat and dryness followed by sudden and unpredictable torrential rains (Costello, 1998). The topography, and climate of Australia were markedly different to those of the country of origin of the early settlers and undoubtedly many faced and experienced emotional traumas and upheavals as a consequence of migrating. As Tacey (1997) says, “Transplanted colonial societies always experience destabilisation in the psychological sphere” (p.35). While it is not possible adequately to describe the myriad of reactions of immigrants and migrants to Australia, suffice to say they have profoundly influenced, shaped and developed Australia, as we know it today. In the words of Tacey, “Australian society in particular can be illuminated by viewing it as a
basically migrant society, which is still involved in the ongoing psychodynamic problems wrought by migration.” (p.36).

A number of factors influence and create cultural values within a society and although it could be argued the early consciousness of Australia was transplanted, some writers suggest that over time there emerged a strong nationalist character (White, 1981). According to White, “The favourite images of nationhood were of an Australia reaching adulthood, joining the family of nations, cutting the painter, establishing a new branch of John Bull & Co.” (p.113). White suggests that in early formative years, Australian parents were encouraged to foster an Australian patriotic sentiment in their children to further the interests of nationhood. Further, labour activists stressed Australia was under threat from outside and:

…that all groups had a common interest in the protection of Australia’s innocence. Protection, not only of local labour and industry from foreign competition, but also of the nation generally from foreign aggression and assaults on its unity or its racial or moral purity…

(White, 1981, p.115)

Australia has been depicted as a country of sunshine, good health and wholesomeness where purity, virtue and moral soundness were highly valued (White, 1981). However, despite the portrayal of Australia as wholesome and full of virtue, it is said that “Our heroes are magnificent failures like the Anzacs at Gallipoli, the bushranger Ned Kelly, and the explorers Burke and Wills” (Costello, 1998, p.147). This statement illustrates a point of view about the nationalist character of Australia, as do the works of Banjo (Andrew Barton) Paterson who wrote the legendary poems The Man from Snowy River, Clancy of the Overflow and The Man from Iron Bark (Tacey, 1997). As stated by Tacey:

His portrait of the Bush as an ego-syntonic field so completely met the needs of a vulnerable, nascent consciousness that the folk quickly adopted Paterson, who was a solicitor, poet, writer and farmer among other things, as their hero and enshrined him as the ‘Banjo of the Bush’.

(p.55)

Having made these points, however, given our long standing history of migration and multiculturalism, it is timely to question whether folk heroes of days gone by “speak” to the heart and soul of people residing in Australia today, creating a unifying cultural sentiment. It is also pertinent to consider whether we possess a
national identity and whether we embrace our status as a multicultural society and are accepting of other races. These factors are particularly important to consider in light of the maiden speech given in Parliament in September 1996 by Pauline Hanson, an extreme right wing politician and co-founder of the One Nation political party. In her speech Hanson claimed among other things that Asians were overwhelming Australia and the Aborigines received unfair advantages from government (Bessant & Watts, 1999). Both these statements highlight racial tensions that exist in Australia today and further testify that “Immigration and ethnicity are highly controversial because they are intimately connected to issues of identity” (Bessant & Watts, 1999, p.199). Further, the persistent refusal of the Australian Prime Minister, the honourable John Howard to say “sorry” from the seat of government to the Aboriginal people of Australia and the stolen generation highlights racial tensions within and fuels the polarization of the nation over the issue of reconciliation. Reconciliation looms large in the heart of many but not all Australian people, who feel adamant government should acknowledge the heartache and pain caused to countless Aboriginal families whose children were forcibly removed from their homes and relocated with white families as part of a social welfare intervention scheme in the 1970’s (Mackay, 1993; Warrawee’a, 2002). This scheme had at its roots an intention of good, in that it would provide opportunities for Aboriginal children to experience a dramatically different (read better) way of life than that which they were living. However, what this plan did not acknowledge was the primacy of family and the importance of indigenous peoples being able to live out of and within the roots of their cultural heritage. For many Australians, it is felt the shame of this act can only be obviated when the government that perpetrated it gives public acknowledgement of its wrongdoing. As pointed out by Raiter (1999), “…multiculturalism is more than the recognition of observable differences between cultural groups. It also carries with it philosophical baggage” (p.59).

The Australian people have accepted a call on numerous occasions to fight to preserve the freedom of the Western world through engagement in foreign wars. Consequent to their engagement in World War I “The digger emerged as the national hero” (White, 1981, p.125) and Australia achieved status as a civilized nation. In this and subsequent conflicts Australia lost its innocence and status of wholesome, young, white, happy and in need of constant protection (White, 1981).
The metaphor that portrayed Australia as a child growing up was replaced, as it was realized Australia had come of age (White, 1981).

There is evidence to suggest that forces operating upon Australia and other parts of the world have caused Australians to look beyond their immediate spheres of interest to shape and frame their identity and ways they respond to the world around them (Bessant & Watts, 1999). This was particularly evident in news reports regarding the bombing of the Sari Club in Bali on October 12, 2002. While some reports claimed that the Australian mantra “no worries mate, she’ll be right” was destroyed and that “Australian defence spending will certainly increase, with little effect on Australia’s stature as an ally and policy maker but with crushing impact on the Australian people” (Greer, 2002, p.15) others cautioned Australians to question gut responses of retaliation and/or revenge, pointing out that “Portraying the tragedy as a war between civilisation and evil divides the world into friends and foes, with no possibility of neutral ground” (Burchill, 2002, p.8). Still others highlighted statements made by the Foreign Minister Alexander Downer that “Australia would stand by the United States in the war against terrorism even if it took years” (Forbes, 2002, p.8). Thus, although Australia enjoys geographic isolation from the rest of the world and a war has never been fought on its own shores, increasing tension on a global scale related to the “war on terrorism” coupled with justified shock and anger at the Bali outrage, make it clear Australia may find itself drawn into conflict on a global level (Butler, 2002).

In more recent times Australia has been globalised and modernised, in terms of competition, innovations, spread of technologies, economic activities, and communication systems (Waters, 1997). Mackay (1993) argues that Australia has been “…plunged into a period of unprecedented social, cultural, political, economic and technological change in which the Australian way of life is being radically redefined” (p.6). Changes taking place in Australia have the capacity to greatly influence ways we see ourselves as a nation and ways we respond to the world around us. Bessant and Watts (1999) point out that although globalisation is part of a historical process, it is not a natural event; that is, it is shaped by conscious political decisions to integrate Australia into the global economy. Whilst it is outside the ambit of this study to comprehensively identify ways in which globalisation
influences the people of Australia, one only needs to look at emerging practices, for example economic rationalism, deregulation of the marketplace, and privatisation, to become aware of its influences and capacity to generate change (Bessant & Watts, 1999).

**Youth in Australia**

The focus of this discussion now shifts to youth within Australia, considering issues and forces that surround their day-to-day existence and have the potential to shape the way they think, respond and act in any given situation. According to Bowes, Suris and Buhlmann (1995) youth are individuals who are between the ages of 15 to 24. Early literature on adolescence defined this period as a time of transition and change, where youth developed their self-image and gained independence, as well as encountered developmental tasks concerned with choice, control and controversy (Cantwell, 1976; J.C. Coleman, 1980; Hurrelmann, 1989; Seigel & Shaughnessy, 1991; Slee, 1993). During these formative years, a number of challenges are faced by youth, such as learning to be independent from the family, developing a system of values, developing a mature human personality, establishing relationships and deciding what vocation will be pursued (Woolfield, 1994). It is noted that traditionally this time is marked by many firsts, such as securing gainful employment, buying a house, finishing a university education or entering into marriage (Seigel & Shaughnessy, 1991). It is also noted that frailty and uncertainty, as exemplified by the following statement, mark this time. “Life is forever starting in the middle of things. Causes are hard to trace, resolutions are frail and distant, life is an endless middle of unknown cycles” (Rowe, 2000, unpaged).

When considering recent literature concerning youth, it is evident that a shift has occurred in defining their characteristics and experiences. For example, it is suggested youth can no longer be defined by age parameters. Rather it is felt “…youth is most productively conceptualised as a social process in which the meaning and experience of becoming adult is socially mediated” (Wyn & White, 1997, p.4). This suggestion takes on particular significance when one considers that features of the lives of Australian youth include “Increasing educational participation, prolonged youthful dependency, [and] longer periods of living in the
parental home…” (Abbott-Chapman, 2000, p.21). Further, as noted by Abbott-Chapman:

Instead of progressions through the ‘life course’ over time, between clearly distinguishable markers of youth and adulthood and the stages of the family cycle, young people are confronted, especially through the media, with uncharted pathways into an increasingly unknowable future…

(p.22)

Thus, defining the transition from adolescence to adulthood as a social process is not without its problems. As Abbott-Chapman states:

The usual problems young people face in making life choices are exacerbated in a rapidly changing world, and the tensions between their struggle for autonomy and control and the constraints of overarching, frequently unmediated, structures on their lives often create feelings of powerlessness and alienation.

(p.21)

In considering issues related to advancement and opportunity and making the transition from youth to adulthood, Australian literature is quite revealing. For instance, class and racial differences in schooling are wider than ever. Year 12 retention rates for indigenous young people in Australia are only thirty percent, less than half those for non-indigenous young people (Schetzer, 2000). Children of low-income families leave school earlier than those from higher income families (Lamb, 1994); retention rates in non-government secondary schools are significantly higher than those of government-funded schools (National Youth Affairs Research Scheme/Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993); and for the elite private schools there is virtually total retention (Batten & Russell, 1995). These facts suggest that some parents have the capacity to purchase a certain outcome for their children and that the transition into adulthood is easier for some children than for others.

To further elaborate on the situation of youth in Australia, it should be noted that forces are operating on a global level that are outside their control and influence; yet these forces markedly influence their ability to achieve a desirable livelihood. It has been highlighted by the United Nations that youth are the biggest losers in the employment stakes (United Nations, 1993). Youth unemployment has burgeoned, with Australia experiencing the seventh highest rate of youth unemployment in the world (Schetzer, 2000). According to Sweet (1983), work available for youth is
mostly on a part-time basis. Ironically, within an economy that sees a significant portion of its youth unemployed, it is students, rather than the unemployed, who are favoured for hire by employers (McRae, 1992). Some authors claim youth in the 21st century will find it exceedingly difficult to attain a fulfilling and meaningful livelihood (G. Jones & Wallace, 1992; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1993) and in the stakes of gaining a livelihood Australian youth do not fare well. As so eloquently expressed by Wyn and White (1997), “Establishing a livelihood is more than getting a job – it is about establishing a sense of belonging, of engaging in the adult practices of one’s community” (p.46).

Who young people are – their positions in the world and their perceptions of their positions – is always complex and complicated and it is undoubtedly true that numerous forces shape their feelings about whether they belong to and within their community. According to Rolf and Johnson (1999), youth today are lacking in positive connections to family, school and community and “…connections to the community are defined more by individual consumerism than by citizenship distinguished by apprenticeship in adult roles” (p.229). Mitchell (2000) highlights the importance of youth experiencing feelings of connectedness:

…to key social institutions such as family, school and community as well as positive peers …[because they determine] health adjustment and the avoidance of a range of negative outcomes such as substance misuse, antisocial behaviours and mental health problems.

(p.14)

E. Cox (1995) also refers to the importance of connectedness in her discussion of social capital, where she argues for the primacy of high levels of involvement of people in social exchange in their communities. However, recent activities have taken place in urban Australia that cast doubt on societal views of the importance of connectedness of its youth. For example, White (1989) poignantly identified how youth in Australia struggle for the right to use space in our city streets which is controlled by private property interests and police. His claims are validated when one notes actions taken in various states of Australia to regulate use of public space by youth. In 1994 Western Australia enacted Operation Sweep, giving the police broad powers to move youth on from public spaces beyond a specified hour; in New South Wales the Children (Parental Responsibility) Act 1994 charged parents with the responsibility of keeping their youth off the streets beyond a specified time; and
in Queensland the *Southbank Corporation Amendment Act 1995* granted private security guards the right to direct youth to leave Southbank (which is public space) and to ban them from returning for twenty-four hours (White, 1997). Further, mandatory sentencing laws have recently been enacted in the Northern Territory, enabling first offenders of minor offences to be sent to prison at the age of seventeen (Schetzer, 2000). Clearly these acts have created spatial polarisation and marginalisation of youth, sending clear messages to youth that they are perceived to be a problem. They also raise serious questions regarding the extent to which human rights and connectedness for young Australians are a priority for our nation. As expressed by White (1997) from the University of Melbourne:

> Images of anarchy, 'ethnic youth gangs', juvenile crime waves and various moral panics over the state of youth today, have gone hand-in-hand with concerted campaigns to make many young people unwelcome in our city streets, shopping centres, malls and beaches. (p.30)

Ironically, amidst discussion on connectedness of our youth, there is also an imperative to discuss Australia’s disenfranchised youth, that is, those that have no fixed address and live more or less permanently on the street. These individuals, referred to as “street kids” are a growing phenomenon in Australia, although it is noted there are no hard statistics on the number of street kids living in Australia today. Mackay (1993) notes that increasingly:

> …street kids are regarded both as a menacing group in society because their despair leads them into crime, but they are also regarded as a reproach to a society whose values have eroded to the point where the phenomenon of street kids can emerge on a large scale. (p.15)

These sentiments attest to growing disquiet experienced in Australia today in relation to its disenfranchised youth, a phenomenon that clearly is not going away.

So, how are the youth in Australia who are alienated from mainstream society coping? According to Bessant and Watts (1999), a strong youth culture exists in Australia and identification with this culture enables youth to “… get together and express a range of expressive activities” (p.152). However, examination of literature on youth culture from an historic perspective reveals this phenomenon has not always been regarded in a positive light (Berger, 1963; J. Coleman, 1961; J.C.
Coleman, 1980; Parsons, 1963). These writers have all identified youth culture as both deviant and dangerous, a problem that requires handling and control in socially approved directions. Further, within current literature, the overall picture being painted about youth is grim, in that they are “…regularly represented as a major cause of crime, antisocial behaviour and drug abuse…and are…sources of social disorder” (Bessant & Watts, 1999, pp.155-6). Clearly these depictions do not send a positive message to youth about their importance or acceptance within society, nor, would I argue, do they accurately portray the majority of our youth in Australia.

Examination of statistics regarding youth in Australia and other parts of the world paints a stark picture. For instance, it is claimed that at any one time between one and three percent of young people suffer from a major depressive disorder (Burrows, 1994; National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], 1997) with between fifteen and forty percent of Australian youth reporting symptoms of feeling depressed. The World Health Organization predicts depression will be the greatest cause of morbidity and mortality in youth by the year 2020 (Howe, 1998). Further, it is reported that in the United States adolescents comprise the only group that have not had a demonstrated improvement in mortality and morbidity over the past thirty years, with primary aetiologies of illness and death related to motor vehicle accidents, suicides and homicides (Blum, 1991; Vernon, 1991). These statistics clearly demonstrate it is timely to focus on hope and hope-facilitating strategies in our youth, creating a national agenda that provides opportunities for youth to face the future with a degree of optimism and certainty that they have a place to claim and a contribution to make.

Whilst we have seen it is difficult to elucidate a dominant culture within Australia because of our multicultural and pluralistic nature, within the media there have been attempts to universalise youth culture and youth experience. For example, in the ’50s youth were equated with being vital, energetic and optimistic; however, by the later part of the ’50s juvenile delinquency was focused upon and in the ’60s the media constructed the generation gap (Wyn & White, 1997). In the late ’80s and ’90s youth were portrayed as being victims or a wasted resource – a “Generation X”, without any definitive features or presence (Irving, Maunders, & Sherrington, 1995). Rolf and Johnson (1999) consider mass media “…are providing youth with an over
abundance of role models for violence and risk-taking lifestyles” thus making it “…a tough time for growing” (p.229). Finkelhor and Dziuba-Leatman (1994) note that an epidemic rise in violence-related morbidity among American youth suggests that youth of today are experiencing stress of a magnitude prior generations have not had to negotiate. Whilst considering these issues it is important to remember that however accurate or inaccurate they may be, “The construction of youth identity is not something which is simply done to young people – it involves a range of resources, choices and pressures” (Wyn & White, 1997, p.86).

Perhaps what is most important to remember is that the transition from youth to adulthood is far more complicated today than it was in previous generations. Moving out of the family home, completing a university education, getting a full-time permanent job, buying a house, starting a family and raising children, have in the past served as landmarks of the transition from youth into adulthood. However, in today’s terms, for many youth they are not reasonable or acceptable markers for measuring their progression towards adulthood. Because many of these challenges are beyond the reach of today’s youth, they should not be blamed for failing to achieve them (Wyn & White, 1997). Rather, “…we must seriously tackle the question of the responsibilities of society and the state to the wellbeing of youth and in fostering the incorporation of young people into the mainstream of social life” (Wyn & White, 1997, p.146).

Recalling that earlier a claim was made that youth is a social process, it must also be emphasized that youth is a relational concept which is constructed in relation to childhood and adulthood and the achievement or otherwise of life’s goals. Non-achievement or delayed achievement does not equate to a delay in the onset of adulthood. Rather, it signifies a challenge to stop thinking of adulthood as a point of arrival characterised by achievement of life’s goals. Thinking this way obfuscates the real issue of youth of today – that they live within a highly complex society, have a right to establish a legitimate livelihood and to belong to a society where there are many choices and options available (Wyn & White, 1997).
Problems Facing Youth Today

Having considered the nature of youth – who they are and the challenges they face – our considerations now turn to some common problems facing youth in Australia today. A number of significant and real problems have emerged, among them being an increase in suicide. It has been found suicide is the second most common cause of death among young men in the Western world (Pritchard, 1996). Further, it is reported that youth suicide has reached epidemic levels in some parts of Australia (Burnley & McGlashan, 1980; M. J. Dudley, Kelk, Florio, Howard, & Waters, 1998; M. Dudley et al., 1997; Mann, 1997) and “Recent surveys across 14 industrialised nations have found Australia to be the world leader in suicide rates among 15 to 24 year olds” (Lewis, 1994, p.84). As an acknowledgement of this problem, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) have recently undertaken a number of government-funded initiatives, such as the Here for Life Campaign and the preservation of dedicated research funds in 1999 and 2000 for research into suicide prevention. Additionally, within the State of Victoria, Australia, the Victorian Office of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care invited proposals in July 2001 under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. This funding initiative aimed to facilitate the creation and testing of models for more effective and assertive follow-up of suicidal people presenting at hospital emergency departments. It further claimed that this population group represented one of the highest risk groups for further suicide attempts and stated that in Victoria approximately $1.3 million would be made available over three years to support such developments. However, the extent to which these initiatives will influence and reduce suicide rates remains to be seen.

Evidence suggests many Australian youth are in crisis and this evidence is both striking and startling. Examination of key reports that detail the incidence of youth suicide, early drug-taking behaviours, homelessness, self-harm behaviours, joblessness, depressive disorders, youth crime statistics and alcohol abuse suggest many of today’s youth have lost resilience as well as vital connections to their community (National Mental Health Strategy, 1998; Australian Health Ministers, 1992; Burdekin Report, 1989; Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 1998; Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, 1996, 1997). Whilst each of these reports focuses on different aspects of problems facing
Australian youth, within their findings and recommendations they commonly acknowledge the importance of society and the community as a whole responding to the problems facing Australian youth today and working towards building hope within our youth. Our youth are the future of our nation, therefore their problems should be everyone’s concern (Heckler, 1994). Further, it is asserted by Hollar (1997) that “If we do not invest in them (our children) none of us should expect our own futures to be safe” (p.27). This statement takes on particular significance when literature on such a phenomenon as hopelessness in youth is explored. Research undertaken in the early ’70s (A. Beck, Kovacs, & Weissman, 1975; Minkoff, Bergman, Beck, & Beck, 1973) reinforced by studies carried out in the ’80s (A. Beck, Steer, Kovacs, & Garrison, 1985; Bonner & Rich, 1988; Petrie & Chamberlain, 1983) and more recent studies (A. Beck, Brown, Berchick, Stewart, & Steer, 1990; Heckler, 1994; Lee, Phoenix, Brown, & Jackson, 1997; Weisharr & Beck, 1992) demonstrates a strong correlation between hopelessness, depression and attempted suicide. As Rowe (2000) so poignantly says, “Without a belief in the future, adolescence can be a difficult time for young people, whether they have an idyllic childhood…or come from an abusive, depressed or drug-affected family…” (unpaged).

**Hope and Related Phenomena**

Given the burgeoning problems facing youth in Australia today, it is timely to capture in rich detail what hope is – that is, how it is experienced, what it means and if and how it resonates within youth of Australia today, as well as how it is differentiated from other concepts such as resilience, wishing, optimism and dreams. Hope as a phenomenon, experience and concept has been studied rather extensively from philosophical (Day, 1991), theological (Moltmann, 1965; Welch, 1990), psychological (Kaplan & Schwartz, 1993; Stotland, 1969), Christian (Junker-Kenny, 1995) and sociological perspectives (Desroche, 1979) as well as measured by instruments specifically developed for this purpose (Herth, 1991, 1992; Miller & Powers, 1988; Nowotny, 1989). The many constructions of hope advanced in the literature indicate that hope is:

- futuristic (Holt, 2000; Lynch, 1965; Moltmann, 1965)
- motivating (Stotland, 1969)
• self sustaining (Hall, 1990)
• pervasive (J. Cutcliffe, 1997)
• action or goal oriented (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995; Fromm, 1968; Menninger, 1987)
• necessary to life (J. Cutcliffe, 1997; Obayuwana, 1980) and
• involves expectancy (McGee, 1984).

However, although hope involves expectancy, it should be noted that to hope does not demand immediate results; that is, hope enjoys the freedom of letting events unfold in their own time (O'Hara, 2000). Hope is claimed to be the emotion on which all other emotions of elation are grounded (Kast, 1994) and is considered to be a stress buffer (Irvin & Acton, 1997). Hope is also considered to be an essential component of human development that is made possible through the development of trust (EH Erickson, 1964; McGee, 1984) as well as a state that gives meaning and value to life (Crumbaugh & Maholic, 1964; Frankl, 1959; Travelbee, 1971).

Although the way in which hope is conceptualised varies, common to many understandings is an expectation that what is desired is also possible (Lynch, 1965; Obayuwana, 1980; Obayuwana & Carter, 1982). In other words, as we hope we are confident of and expect a good outcome (Lynch, 1965; O'Hara, 2000). Hope is described as a state of being that is paradoxical (Farran, Salloway, & Clark, 1990) in that it is neither passive waiting nor forceful manipulation to achieve one’s desired state (Fromm, 1968). However, it is noted that hope and help or help seeking are aligned (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Van Hattum, 1997). Hope has been described as one’s future imagined reality (Hickey, 1986; Kast, 1994; Stotland, 1969) that “…draws its persuasive power from a vision yet to be unveiled” (Kast, 1994, p.136). Another way of seeing the concept of hope as one’s future imagined reality is to regard hope as a waking dream (Desroche, 1979). Hope is also described as a universal concept and intrinsic element necessary to human life (Hall, 1990; Hinds, 1984; Miller, 1989) and from the perspective of depth psychology theory, hope is viewed as an expression of an individual’s trust in life (Kast, 1994).

Hope and its relationship to bereavement (J.R. Cutcliffe, 1998), enduring (Morse, 1999), self-sustaining processes (Artinian, 1984), and being (Vaillot, 1970) have also
been explored, affirming a belief that hope is integral to the human condition. Further, a link between hope and help has also been proposed (Vaillot, 1970). Within the literature there is discussion about hope and hopefulness and its relationship to healing in adolescents generally (Hendricks, 1998) and healing of adolescents who have been exposed to violence (Nelson, Roberts, & Snyder, 1996), healing of chronically ill elders (Beckerman & Northrop, 1996) and healing of those receiving palliative care (S. Jones, 1989). Hope has been linked to survival (CR Snyder, 1995) with Kastenbaum (1971) noting hope is necessary in the caring environment. Vaillot (1970) sees hope as necessary to the restoration of being following periods of stress, as do Flach (1988) and Obayuwana (1980). Further, hope has been linked to a capacity for crisis resolution (McGee, 1984) and coping (Kim, 1989; Korner, 1970; Miller, 1989). Each of these studies, whilst exploring different human conditions and circumstances, points to the importance of attaining and maintaining hope during periods of departure from optimal states of being. However, within many of these studies, the manner in which hope is or should be maintained is not explicated through a strong research base.

Definitions of Hope
In addition to the plethora of literature on hope that has identified its characteristics and essences, a number of definitions of hope are advanced within the nursing literature. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) observed thirty-five elderly cancer patients over a period of two years and tested concepts explicated on another population to derive a definition of hope. In this seminal work hope was conceptualised as “…a multi-dimensional dynamic life force characterized by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving good, which to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant.” (p380). Further, they indicated that hope is multidimensional and is composed of two spheres: generalised and particularised, and six common dimensions: affective, cognitive, behavioural, affiliative, temporal and contextual. Generalised hope, which is broad, abstract and future-oriented, is differentiated from particularised hope, which is concerned with a particularly valued outcome. Although the authors state these two forms of hope are analytically distinct, they indicate they have common dimensions and, when taken together, provide a “gestalt of hope” (p.381).
Despite the fact that this study is widely cited in other scholarly works, the report of the findings contains insufficient information to enable it to be rigorously critiqued. For instance, although the authors state that interviews and observations of elderly patients were used as the means to gather data, beyond this the research methods and methodology are not sufficiently explicated. Thus, the reader must take it on faith that the findings represent the real concerns of the participants and explicate their hope and that the definition of hope they have offered faithfully represents the concerns and ideas expressed by the participants.

J. Cutliffe (1997), in exploring literature on hope, noted that various authors reported key themes on hope. Thus, he undertook a work whose aim was to produce “…a working definition of hope upon which higher levels of theory, especially future theories of hope inspiration may be based” (p.319). Using literature, together with an inductive reasoning process, he defined hope as “…a multi-dimensional, dynamic, empowering, state of being, that is central to life, related to external help and caring, orientated towards the future and highly personalised to each individual” (p.330). However, having advanced this definition, it is interesting to note that in ensuing work on the relationship between hope and complicated bereavement (J. R. Cutcliffe, 1998) he did not employ or utilise this definition. Therefore, this calls into question its usefulness and raises questions regarding its potential to inform caring practices within clinical settings.

Stephenson (1991) undertook a thorough concept analysis of hope to develop a definition synthesised from theology, philosophy, psychology and nursing. In this work hope was defined as “…a process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfilment that is personally significant” (p.1459). Although Stephenson claimed that clarification of this concept has implications for nursing and health care delivery, it was not made clear how nurses should or ought to use this definition in their day-to-day interactions with clients, again raising questions about its potential usefulness within clinical practice situations.
Parse (1990, 1998) developed a research methodology that evolved from the theory of human becoming to extract a definition of hope. In this work hope was seen as a paradoxical rhythm of hope-no-hope, defined as “Anticipating possibilities through envisioning the not-yet in harmoniously living the comfort-discomfort of everydayness while unfolding a different perspective of an expanding view” (p.15). That is, Parse saw hope as one’s capacity to look forward and to imagine better times and what might be, whilst considering all possibilities as life is lived. Using Parse’s Human Becoming methodology, various authors in nine different countries explored the phenomenon of hope, deriving like definitions (Baumann, 1999; Bunkers, 1998; Kucera, 1992; Takahaski, 1999; Toikkanen & Muurinen, 1999; Willman, 1999; Zanotti & Bournes, 1999). Common to their explorations was the finding that humans seek out hope amidst anguishing personal circumstances. Further, a conclusion was drawn from these studies that hope does not know cultural boundaries, that is, it is a universal human experience and phenomenon that transcends culture.

The concept of hope was delineated by Morse and Doberneck (1995), who synthesised its description by exploring hope from the perspective of four distinctly different participant groups. In this work hope was defined as:

…a response to a threat that results in the setting of a desired goal; the awareness of the cost of not achieving the goal; the planning to make the goal a reality, the assessment, selection, and the use of all internal and external resources and supports that will assist in achieving the goal; and the reevaluation and revision of the plan while enduring, working, and striving to reach the desired goal.

(Morse & Doberneck, 1995, p.284)

This work used Morse’s method of concept development to firstly identify abstract components of hope within a single particular incident, that of a young couple with child who were lost in the Rocky Mountains and presumably survived and maintained hope, although this is not explicitly stated in Morse’s description. Following analysis of this situation, seven conceptual components of hope were identified as hope prototypes and these prototypes were subsequently verified in four participant groups. A conclusion is drawn that “…the universal abstract properties of hope were identified” (Morse & Doberneck, 1995, p.283). However, it is questionable whether these abstract properties are universal or whether they are
applicable only in extreme situations where hope arises out of threat. Rationale is not given within this report regarding why an extreme situation was used to identify conceptual components of hope, and the discussion is void of any acknowledgement of this potential limitation.

Looking specifically at literature that identifies hope and hopefulness within youth, Hinds used a grounded theory approach to explore the concept of hope with twenty-five adolescents, both well and hospitalised, to induce a precise construct definition of hope (Hinds, 1984). In this work, Hinds used a semi-structured interview format to identify the why, what, when, where and how aspects of hope. Using the constant comparative analysis method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) to analyse the data, hope was defined as “The degree to which an adolescent believes that a personal tomorrow exists” (Hinds, 1984, p.361). In a later work, Hinds (1988) again used a grounded theory methodology to purposively sample three populations of well and ill adolescents (N=117) to refine her definition of hope. In this work she indicated that hope is “…the degree to which the adolescents possess a comforting or life-sustaining reality-based belief that a positive future exists for themselves or others” (p.85). In developing this definition of hopefulness in youth, Hinds posited that there are degrees of hopefulness and further indicated that for adolescents hope is clearly focused.

**Hope and Wishing**

Within the literature it is acknowledged that hope varies in intensity from moment to moment and time to time and indeed in its degree of presence (Hall, 1990; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Stephenson, 1991). In other words, the magnitude to which one hopes is just as complex and multifaceted as are the situations that prompt the need or desire to hope. Hope is seen as a powerful dynamic human response (Hinds & Martin, 1988; McGee, 1984) that enables us during times of suffering (Rideout & Montemuro, 1986), loss (Stephenson, 1991) and uncertainty (Farran et al., 1990; Herth, 1990a). Marcel (1962) makes the point that hope is a grace or gift, as well as the act by which the temptation to despair is actively overcome. Menninger (1987) indicates that hope is the dim awareness of unconscious wishes which, like dreams, tend to come true, whereas Aristotle said that hope is the dream of a waking man.
(Hicks, 1967). Farran, Herth and Popovich (1995) refute the notion that hope and wishing are like constructs, indicating that there are clear and real differences between the phenomena of wishing and hoping, while Hinds (1989) makes the distinction that hoping is more reality-based than wishing. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) write that the difference between a hope and a wish is that a wish is not perceived as within the realm of possibility in the present or the future, a sentiment echoed by O’Hara (2000), who states that when we are wishing we are pining for what cannot be. Korner (1970) on the other hand indicates that a wish is something that might happen, whereas those who hope do so with the belief that what is hoped-for must occur for the sake of their well-being. This point is refuted by Tishelman and Sachs (1992), who indicate that a hope is something that is wished for or desired, but is not expressed as a necessity. Lynch (1965) argues that although hope and wishing are distinct concepts, they are linked; because when we begin to discover what our wishes are we are well on the way towards hope. Wright and Shontz (1968) however, believe that differences between hope and wishing are subjective, with no clear-cut line to separate them. Clearly the polarity of views expressed suggests further research is warranted if these two human response states are to be differentiated.

**Hope, Optimism and Resilience**

Optimism and its relationship to hopefulness have been explored by a number of authors (Miller & Powers, 1988; Puskar, Sereika, Lamb, Tusaie Mumford, & McGuinness, 1999; Scanlon, 1989; Seligman, 1992). Seligman (1992) indicated that hope and optimism are inextricably bound, with optimism being the art of hope, and Callan (1989) noted “…human beings have an amazing capacity to sustain optimism even when their expectations are regularly disappointed” (p.36). However, optimism and hopefulness are not identical constructs for, as Marcel (1962) points out, optimism always implies some distance from reality. Although various definitions of optimism have been advanced in the literature, it is believed optimists generally see “knock backs” in life as temporary setbacks; believe defeats are not their fault; and believe bad situations should be regarded as a challenge to try harder (Seligman, 1992). One important distinction between optimism and hope suggested in the
literature is that optimism is not an innate characteristic (Erikson, 1959; Flach, 1988). Rather, it is learned throughout every stage of the life cycle (Seligman, 1992).

Closely aligned to the concept of optimism is that of resilience, referred to as “…the psychological and biological strength to successfully master change” (Flach, 1988, p.xi), or “…the process or capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation, despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990, p.43). Resilience is also defined as “…the ability of some people to resist or reject the potential negative effects caused by adversity or risk factors that make people vulnerable to diminished well-being” (Bachay & Cingel, 1999, p.164).

Resilience has also been explored from the spiritual perspectives of Buddhism, Christianity and Judaism (Wolin, Muller, Taylor, & Wolin, 1999). From a Buddhist perspective, resilience is seen as the Buddha nature that is in everyone, in other words, the “…nameless quality of wholeness that can contain or bear the weight of whatever one is given” (Wolin et al., 1999, p.122). From a Christian perspective, resilience is seen as the personification of Jesus who suffered pain, isolation, betrayal and abandonment but never lost the capacity to extend Himself and love others. From a Jewish perspective, it is likened to the Exodus and the Jews’ liberation from slavery, with the injunction to live with justice and compassion (Wolin et al., 1999). Interestingly, within Wolin’s article it is suggested that resilience is “…an inextinguishable fragment of the divine fire which burns in us, regardless of circumstance” (p.124). This description is akin to many descriptions of hope previously described, suggesting definitions of resilience and hope are blurred or poorly differentiated.

There is a significant body of literature on resilience within youth (Berliner & Benard, 1995; Glanz & Johnson, 1999; Rolf, 1999). The effects of adverse life events on adolescent resilience were identified by Tiet, Bird, Davies, Hoven, Cohen, Jensen and Goodman (1998), with Luthar and Cushing (1999) noting that positive life adaptations are strongly correlated with resilience. Rolf and Johnson (1999) have highlighted a need for studies that identify resilience factors in youth, as has Hunter and Chandler (1999), with Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) identifying that the development of resilience may be one outcome for youth who overcome
adversity. Smith and Carlson (1997) highlight a need for highly stressed youth to develop resilience, while Gilligan (1999) indicates that one way to do this is to mentor their talents and interests. Hauser, Vieyra, Jacobson and Wertleib (1985) cite a number of factors from the family’s perspective that heighten vulnerability of youth and point to a need for the development of resilience, while Dumont and Provost (1999) affirm that social support and the development of social activities can minimise youth’s reactions to stress states. Common to this literature is a belief that youth have the potential to achieve a good outcome following situations of adversity if they are well adjusted, free from psychiatric disorders, live in high functioning families, receive parental or other adult supervision and have connections within their community. Hunter and Chandler (1999), however, argue resilience “…may not be an adaptable, flexible, competent process of overcoming adversity but a process of defense, using such tactics as insulation, isolation, disconnecting, denial, and aggression or as a process of survival using such responses as violence” (p.246).

These divergent views raise a number of questions. One is whether resilience should be seen as a positive or healthy state of adaptation, or whether it is a defence process that requires skilful intervention to enable positive outcomes. Another is whether hope is an outcome or consequence of resilience or whether resilience is a by-product of hope. Another is poignantly described by Butterfield (1990) who metaphorically questions whether caregivers should wait downstream and fish out victims who have fallen into the river, or whether they should walk up the river to prevent victims from ending up in the river in the first place. Clearly, until further research is done, these questions will not be answered.

**Hope and Spirituality**
The relationship of hope or hopefulness to spirituality has been identified by a number of authors suggesting, among other things that hope is a spiritual, transcendent process that enables one to rise above the immediacy of the absolutism of the present (Farran et al., 1995). Whilst various authors have attempted to clarify differences between hope and other phenomena such as spirituality, acceptance and transcendence, Haase, Britt, Coward, Leidy & Penn (1992) claim that “Despite their prevalence and intuitive significance, these four concepts have remained elusive to
nursing” (p.141). Carson, Soeken, Shanty and Terry (1990) reveal a link between hope and spirituality in those who are diagnosed with HIV AIDS; Wilkinson (1996) attests that hope is an important component to spiritual well-being; and Brant (1998) identifies that providing spiritual care is an important hope promoting strategy. Mickley, Soeken and Belcher (1992) maintain that hope and spiritual well being are closely correlated for those who are intrinsically religious; and Benzein and Savemen (1998) note that hope has a family resemblance to faith, trust, expectations and desire. From a Christian perspective, in Romans 5:3-5 we are told to rejoice in our suffering because suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. Within this scriptural passage we are also told that hope does not disappoint us. Further, Christian theology claims that hope and spiritual well-being go hand in hand, as revealed by Paul 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 who cites faith, hope and love as the most enduring of all gifts (Carson, Soeken, & Grimm, 1988). Additionally, within Christian literature it is also suggested that “Jesus is the only hope of the world” (Raiter, 1999, p.62). It is asserted by Junker-Kenny (1995) that a large-scale erosion of collective hope has marked society; thus her work provided a timely exploration of Christian sources of hope.

Both Vaillot (1970) and A. Anderson (1994) claim that nurses are instruments of hope whose central role is to instil hope in the hearts of their patients, and this sentiment is echoed by Shelly (1982), who writes that nurses must regard spiritual care and hope promotion as integral to all health care. Nowotny (1989) claims that nurses have a mandate to foster a patient’s connectedness with God as an antecedent to hope and Clark, Cross, Deanne and Lowry (1991) state that nurses have a prime purpose to assist patients to grow, actualise and transform. Despite the advancement of these views, it is also claimed that nurses deal poorly with spirituality and either ignore it or decide it is too controversial and declare it off limits for nursing practice (Harrison, 1997). It is also claimed that whereas “…sexuality is recognized as an important area of concern for nursing, spirituality is approached by many nurses with embarrassment and hesitation” (Dyson, Cobb, & Forman, 1997, p.1183). Thus, it can be seen through this brief review that, although hopefulness and spirituality are connected, the extent to which nurses acknowledge this relationship and are capable of providing comfort and support to their patients through using these concepts may be limited.
Hope and Illness

It is noted within the literature that hopefulness is strongly linked to recovery from myocardial infarction (Daly, Jackson, & Davidson, 1999) and critical illness (J. Cutcliffe, 1996). It has been found that hope is necessary in situations that involve life-threatening illnesses (Nowotny, 1989; Raleigh, 1980; Wilkinson, 1996; Wonghongkul, Moore, Musil, Schneider, & Deimling, 2000), with Briton (2000) noting that literature appears to understate hope in light of advances in medical treatments. Hopefulness is also linked to coping with end-stage HIV AIDS (Hall, 1990, 1994; Rabkin, Neugebaur, Remien, Remien, & Goetz, 1990; Wong-Wylie & Jevne, 1997); coping with breast cancer (El-Gamel, 1993); and family care-giving responsibilities (Herth, 1993b). Within the literature the importance of hopefulness in medical staff members, including nurses and doctors who give care to terminally ill patients, is also noted (Perakyla, 1991), with D. Owen (1989) and Hall (1990) stressing the importance of hopefulness to the terminally ill person as well. The interrelatedness of hope and grief resolution is identified by Herth (1990b) and Hinds (1988a) demonstrated the importance of hopefulness to adolescents diagnosed with cancer. Each of these works, while exploring different aspects of life, suggests that in the presence of hope there is a will to recover, revive and survive. Hope is also linked to a need for social support during times of crisis (Foote, Piazza, Holcombe, Paul, & Daffin, 1990; Obayuwana & Carter, 1982; Yarcheski, Scoloveno, & Mahon, 1994), attesting to the importance of health care professionals and family members engaging in hope work with their patients or loved ones.

Within much of the discussion on hope that is raised above, it can be seen that hope, as a phenomenon, possesses an elusive quality, despite demonstrated philosophical interest in hope from ancient to modern times (Day, 1991). Within the literature hope is, in the main, presented as a process, an experience or a need (Kylma & Vehvilainen-Julkunen, 1997), a way of feeling, thinking, behaving or relating (Farran et al., 1995). Hall (1990) argues that our “…understanding [of hope] is limited because it is so integral to humanness that it is difficult to describe in words. It is like a fish trying to understand water” (p.179). She further argues that hope is so vital to life that its loss is equated with a loss of life itself. This sentiment is echoed by the writings of Kast (1994) as well as the writings of Frankl (1959) and Seligman (1975), who related countless stories of how prisoners of war that lost hope gave up
the will to live. Notwithstanding, lack of precision in advancing unique and unambiguous definitions of hope is problematic on several levels. First, this lack of precision or clarity in defining hope has led to conceptual illusion. That is, I argue that the phenomenon of hope has not been clearly explicated and differentiated from other like concepts such as dreams, optimism and wishing. Some support for this argument can be found in the work of Morse and Doberneck (1995) who argue: “…to date, hope-related philosophical insights, psychological scales, and the findings from nursing and other health-related research continue to inadequately describe the complex nature of hope” (p.2). Therefore, this raises questions about the extent to which the phenomenon is understood, clearly articulated and unambiguously identified.

Second, it also raises questions about the extent to which hope can be understood as a distinct phenomenon. Because it is difficult to identify clear and distinct differences between hope and like concepts, the efficacy of reported research findings and descriptions of hope offered through the literature must be questioned. Many such reports have not identified the conceptual basis used in exploring the phenomenon of hope. For example, McGee (1984) argues that persons who experience unrealistic expectations of hope may be immobilized in the face of crisis. However, in making this claim evidence is not offered to substantiate it.

Third, within much of the literature it is not at all apparent how and why hope alters and whether or how it may be conceptually different at various stages of the life cycle. Further, in much of the literature on hope, it is assumed that hope is an ever-present state of being – a supposition that has not been empirically verified. Although there have been several studies exploring hope from cultural, ethnic and religious perspectives (Francis, 1986; Kylma & Vehvilainen-Julkunen, 1997; Nardini, 1952; Tishelman & Sachs, 1992) it is interesting to note that these studies do not offer unique perspectives on hope that differentiate it from other like phenomena. Therefore further explorations may be needed.
Hope, Hopelessness and Despair
It is interesting to note that often discussion of hope goes hand in hand with discussion of hopelessness, defined as “An emotional state displaying the sense of impossibility, the feeling that life is too much to handle, and apathy” (Bruss, 1988, p.28). Menninger (1987) argues that “…hopelessness breeds hopelessness” (p.459). However, within the literature it can be seen that the relationship between these two phenomena is somewhat uncertain. For instance, Lynch (1965) asserts a dialectical relationship between the two, while Dufault and Martocchio (1985) claim these states are not at opposite ends of a continuum. Hopelessness has been studied rather extensively by Farran, Herth and Popovich (1995), who report that hopelessness is an experiential process, a spiritual or transcendent process, an irrational thought process and a relational process. This work concludes that hopelessness can be understood as well as treated, thus pointing to an imperative for health practitioners to recognise this state in others. From an entirely different perspective, the cerebral neurobiology of hope and hopelessness was explored by Gottschalk, Fonczek and Buchsbaum, (1993) who indicated that within the brain of young males there are distinctly different cerebral representations for hope and hopelessness. Further, Schmala and Iker (1996) studied women who were predisposed to the development of cancer, concluding that a diagnosis of cancer could be predicted in women who exhibited hopelessness or potential for hopelessness at interview. Brandt (1987) also studied the phenomenon of hopelessness in women with cancer. However this study found that low levels of hopelessness were reported among the study participants.

Schneider (1980) explored the dialectic of hopelessness and helplessness, identifying similarities of these states. Within an intensive care setting Engberg (1991)explored registered nurses’ reactions to ventilated patients, concluding they often feel powerless and hopeless in these circumstances. The phenomenon of suicide and its relationship to hopelessness have been studied rather extensively by A. Beck, Kovacs and Weissman (1975); A. Beck, Streer, Kovacs and Garrison (1985); A. Beck, Brown, Berchick, Stewart and Steer (1990) and Isani (1963) identified the dynamic of hopelessness as one in which a person over time succumbed to feelings of despair. Further, Fish (1991) explored the relationship between illness and despair, concluding those with Alzheimer’s disease often need safety valves to express pent-up frustrations and anger related to their disease. From a personal perspective,
Hollar (1997) claimed hopelessness was induced through a state of losing closeness and essential connectedness. This sentiment was echoed by Shubin and Kephart (1990) who poignantly wrote of the protracted death of a young woman following a motor vehicle accident and the feelings of hopelessness experienced by members of the family.

Fry (1984) developed a geriatric scale of hopelessness in which it was shown that multiple losses were characteristic of hopelessness. These were loss of physical and cognitive abilities, loss of personal and interpersonal worth, loss of spiritual faith and grace and loss of nurturance, respect and remembrance. A quantification of hopelessness through the development of scales and inventories was also undertaken by A. Beck, Weissman, Lester and Trexler (1974) who concluded that the state of hopelessness could be “…objectified by defining it as a system of cognitive schemas whose common denomination is negative expectations about the future” (p.864).

The majority of the above literature depicts hopelessness as a subjective response in which an individual sees no alternatives or personal choices available (Seligman, 1992). However, Engberg (1991) regards hopelessness as an expression of a person’s personality, commenting that nurses find it frustrating and burdensome to care for hopeless patients, particularly if they are unable to change their state of mind. It is also suggested in the literature that there are connections between hopelessness and other phenomena such as:

- loss of dreams (Bowman, 1994, 1998; Brody, 1990)
- helplessness (Schneider, 1980; Seligman, 1992)
- struggle to recover from life threatening or terminal illness (B. Brandt, 1987; Hall, 1990; Schmale & Iker, 1966)
- organic disease (Richter, 1957)
- grief resolution (Herth, 1990b)
- giving up (Engberg, 1991) and
- despair (Fish, 1991; Kubler-Ross, 1969).

While each of these reports highlights differing aspects of hopelessness, they illustrate the dialectical interconnectedness of this concept to other human concerns,
perhaps most importantly pointing out a need for hope to be sustained and maintained as a prerequisite to human survival (C Snyder, Mc Dermott, Cook, & Rapoff, 1997).

**Hope, The Evil in Pandora’s Box**

Overall, within the body of literature on hope a common theme emerges – that is, a claim that hope is an integral part of life and an aspect of our being. Interestingly, though, hope has not always been depicted in a positive light. Hope as an escape or way of evading life, is very prominent in French existentialism, particularly in the writings of Camus (Kast, 1994). Further, Nietzsche (1974) claimed that hope was “…the worst of all evils because it prolonged the torment of man” (p.64). Shelley (1819) spoke of hope as being worse than despair and worse than the bitterness of death, and Crowley stated that hope was Fortune’s cheating lottery because for one prize there were a hundred blanks (Menninger, 1987). Day claims that hope should be regarded with ambivalence and as a dangerous activity, because the risk of hope is disappointment (Day, 1991). Greenhut (1995) depicted hope as the evil that remained in Pandora’s box, viewing hope as a delusion that pulls us away from the present. This sentiment is echoed by Graves (1955), who questioned why hope was included in the box among “…all the Spites that plague mankind: such as Old Age, Labour, Sickness, Insanity, Vice and Passion” (p.145) unless hope was an evil itself. Jacoby (1993) points out that because destiny is unchangeable “…hope is nothing more than an illusion, ‘the food of exiles’…” (p.66). Hope is also depicted negatively by Lines (2001) who comments that hope “…is an affliction, a retreat from reality, a retreat from the way the world is” (p.180). These authors suggest that one should hope cautiously, because hoping carries inherent risks and disappointments and may be associated with states of despair, frustration and loss of will, as well as an illusion that life is other than it really is. This sentiment is echoed by Begley and Blackwood, who indicate that in certain circumstances, it may be morally acceptable and indeed even more humane for health carers to lie to their patients if they feel that telling the truth will take away hope (Begley & Blackwood, 2000).
Writers such as Frankl (1959), Hillman (1964), T. Anderson (1993), and Duff (1993) offer an alternative to living with hope and looking towards the future. They suggest, either directly or indirectly, that those who are imprisoned within a world not of their making should live for and focus on the present, pointing out that clinging to hope in extreme, adverse circumstances has the potential to induce despair, disappointment and despondency. These thoughts echo those of Camus (1955), who believed that life must be lived in the here and now, not with an eye to a home in heaven in the next world, as well as those of Warrawee’a (2002), who speaks of the importance of living one’s life in the present or Linj. Shubin and Kephart (1990), who write of despair faced by families when their loved ones are trapped in a persistent vegetative state, echo this sentiment. Indeed, within this literature a paradox is presented. For example, Frankl (1959) suggests that hope is futuristic; however, he also suggests that it is present oriented. The question raised is: which one is it? Perhaps hope, as a response to life’s circumstances, should be regarded as a fluctuating and dynamic state, that not only varies in intensity but also in its capacity to enable us to focus on living in the here and now or in the future.

**Hope and Caring**

Given previous statements that it is important for health care professionals, including nurses, to engage in hope work with their patients and/or loved ones, the focus of this literature review now shifts to an exploration of caring within nursing. Clearly, within the nursing literature the juxtaposition of nursing and caring is well recognized, with Watson making the point that although “We cannot ‘prove’ CARING, rather, CARING, proves us, it enriches our humanity, deepens our very existence (Watson, 2000, p.5). Gaut (1993) has identified human caring as a global agenda, stating that it is imperative for nurses to advance knowledge of care and caring from transcultural perspectives. Leininger’s (1984) life-time work supports the importance of viewing caring from transcultural perspectives, identifying care as an essence of nursing. Kitson (1999) concurs with Leininger’s view that caring is an essence of nursing and states that nursing is a person-centred activity whereby nurses demonstrate their unconditional positive regard for the other. Benner and Wrubel (1989) assert caring as an “…enabling condition of connection and concern” (p.ix). As such, they view caring as primary in every interaction in which a nurse is engaged.
in a professional context. Although Edwards (2000) further delimits Benner and Wrubel’s construct of caring by distinguishing between intentional care, that is, care given as a voluntary and deliberate response to a person’s circumstances, and ontological care, which is care rooted in our humanness and part of our being, Horrocks (2002) argues that Benner and Wrubel’s conceptualisation of caring is misleading, because their concept of care “…has never been ontological” (p.36).

B. J. Taylor (1994) reflects that caring is part of the ordinariness of nursing, in which nurses reveal their humanity in the course of their interactions with patients, and this sentiment is echoed by Milligan (2001) who writes that caring is “…the meeting of needs, effective communication and information giving…” (p.7). Caring has also been described as a form of moderated love that creates opportunities for the formation of a therapeutic relationship between nurses and their clients (Campbell, 1984; B. J. Taylor, 1994) and Smerke (1990) notes that caring is the ethical foundation for nursing. Further, Noddings (1984) defines caring as based in receptivity, where the one who cares feels with the other, with the intention of being in relationship with the other. Castledine (1998) explores the relationship of caring to nursing, commenting that caring should not be confused with such things as comforting or having an interest in what happens to another. Rather, he states caring is “…something special, it is a process, a way of relating to someone…” (p.866). Forrest (1989) defines caring as “…first and foremost a mental and emotional presence that evolves from deep feelings for the patient’s experience” (p.818) whereby the nurse puts the patient first, both in mind and action. This sentiment is echoed by Fredriksson (1999), who indicates that caring involves becoming a partner with a patient, being willing to listen as they engage in the struggle to find the meaning of their illness. Further, Euswas and Chick (1999) identify that caring moments occur when “…nurse and patient realise their intersubjective connectedness in transforming healing – growing as human beings in a specific-dynamic changing situation” (p.48). Common to each of these authors is a belief in the centrality of caring to the domain of nursing practice, an argument that is solidly supported by Watson (2000).

Despite the attention that has been given within the literature to defining caring, Eriksson (1994) argues that a “Caring science has not succeeded in separating itself
from the medical – technical paradigm and forming a really distinct paradigm of its own (p.1) and M. Owen (1995) argues that the rhetoric of caring has been uncritically adopted by nursing. On the other hand, authors such as Reeder (1992), Schroeder (1992) and Gardner (1992) argue that caring is not only well defined as a critical aspect of nursing, but is deeply ensconced in the historical roots of the profession. Notwithstanding this claim, Paley (2001) argues “We seem to be no closer, now, to a clarification of caring than we have ever been”(p.188), and further says that in spite of our efforts to distil the essence of caring “…what is most evident to anyone taking stock in 2001 is that ‘caring’ appears to be as ‘elusive’ as ever” (p.189). C. T. Beck (1999) foreshadowed Paley’s claim that caring is an elusive concept; reporting that it is a difficult concept to measure. Relative to this claim, Beck reviewed eleven quantitative instruments designed to measure caring, concluding that “…further testing of the psychometric properties of the caring instruments is needed …and caring is still, however, a problematic concept and will continue to be a challenge to measure for nurse researchers” (p30). The work of McCance, McKenna, and Boore (2001) also echoes the sentiment that caring is a nebulous concept influenced by contextual elements, thus making it difficult to illuminate. Although these later writings suggest that it is not at all clear whether nursing can claim caring as central to the discipline, in the main the majority of nursing literature casts caring as central to the domain of nursing practice.

Whilst a number of authors place caring at the centre of nursing, as well as claim that the capacity and willingness of nurses to care is what differentiates nursing from other health-related disciplines (J. Cutcliffe, 1995; J. R. Cutcliffe, 1998; Hinds, 1989; Leininger, 1984; Watson, 1979), other authors argue that caring is integral to the mission of a number of health-related discipline groups (Callahan, 2001; Cluff & Binstock, 2001) and, as such, is not the exclusive province of nursing (Sourial, 1997). In the midst of assertions about who might “own” caring, it is worth noting that a number of authors agree that many health professions are at risk of losing the art of caring (C. T. Beck, 2001), because, among other reasons, they aspire to a worldview of science, which reveres the sanctity of positivism and scientific materialism, as well as subscribe to giving depersonalised care, where the centrality of the patient’s personhood is not acknowledged (Cassell, 2000; Cluff & Binstock, 2001). Further, Ludmerer and Fox (2000) express concern there has been a
significant erosion of caring in medical education due to forces of economic rationalism, which mandate that faculty be “…clinically productive, that is to see as many paying patients as possible so that they can help keep the academic and medical center financially afloat” (p.130). They argue that faculty who are engaged to teach and model skills such as empathy and communication are consumed by an imperative to generate fees, at the expense of spending time teaching their students. Thus an economic imperative takes precedence, leaving little opportunity for caring to remain central.

From the above discussion it can be seen that, although literature on caring abounds, this literature highlights many tensions regarding the concept, not the least of which is the claim that the concept has yet to be identified in meaningful ways (Paley, 2001). Despite this claim, within the nursing literature on the whole, there appears to be a belief that caring is a process by which a nurse meets the patient’s needs through individualised services (Gardner, 1992). There also appears to be tacit agreement that nurses, as primary care givers working within a multiplicity of health care settings, have a responsibility to be with, and to be there, that is to care, for those who are the recipients of their services.

Within the various attempts to describe the essence of caring one important concept to emerge is that of presence. However, it should be noted that the concept of presence is not unique to nursing. Presence was originally used as a liturgical concept that referred to the presence of a Supreme Being (R. Harper, 1991; Osterman & Schwartz-Barcott, 1996) or, as G. Saunders (1995) identified, presence is a demonstration of God’s power. Presence also has political connotations (Doona, Haggerty, & Chase, 1997). For example, following conflict in the year 2000 in East Timor, the Australian armed forces remained within the region, demonstrating their presence as a peacekeeping force. Within the business world, presence indicates the power of a corporation, for example, IBM’s presence within the field of communication technologies; presence is also used in a personal sense to indicate a person who has charisma or standing within a community (Doona et al., 1997). An example of this type of presence, within an Australian context, would be that of Fred Hollows, an eminent physician and eye surgeon who contributed greatly to the health and welfare of the indigenous people of the northern part of Australia.
Within nursing literature, presence is variously described. It is claimed that Vaillot pioneered the application of existential philosophy to nursing practice when she “…encouraged nurses to view the nurse – patient relationship through the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel who invited persons to be ‘presences’ instead of objects to each other” (Zerwekh, 1997, p.260). According to Doona, Haggerty and Chase (1997):

Nursing presence is an intersubjective encounter between a nurse and a patient in which the nurse encounters the patient as a unique human being in a unique situation and chooses to spend herself [sic] on the patient’s behalf, while at the same time the patient invites the nurse into his [sic] experience (p.12).

Within this definition the key antecedents to presence are the commitment of the nurse to immerse the self in another’s situation; the person’s willingness for this immersion to occur; with the consequence of both parties being changed. As will be seen, this concept is somewhat analogous to Gadamer’s (1989) fusion of horizons, which is described in Chapter 3, the Methodology chapter of this thesis. Presence is also defined as both an intersubjective and reciprocal experience, in which there is an investment of the self (Chang, 2001; Parker, 1992). Presence is further conceptualised as being; being here and not elsewhere; being there and being with; existence or influence; feeling or believing; and caring (Fredriksson, 1999; Gilje, 1992). Some authors claim that presence can exist on multiple levels, for example, on physical, psychological and therapeutic levels; or as partial, full or transcendent presence and can be cultivated through any or all of these modalities (McKivergin & Daubenmire, 1994; Osterman & Schwartz-Barcott, 1996; Watson, 1999). However, although presence can be cultivated, it is claimed by Marcel (1950) that presence cannot be taught – it is a reality that is known from within, thus it is not demonstrated, it is discovered. Buber (1965) alludes to presence in the I – Thou relationship when he says “There is genuine dialogue…no matter whether spoken or silent – where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation…” (p.56). M. Ray (1991) however, contends that presence is revealed in Buber’s I – You relationship, because, although individuals may share in the other’s being, they do not lose themselves in the relationship.
In considering the emerging literature presence is sometimes indicated in a utilitarian sense and at other times it is based in philosophy (Doona et al., 1997). Writings that embrace a utilitarian sense of presence highlight antecedents such as an ability to care, commitment to helping, knowledge and expertise, skills of listening and touching (Dunniece & Slevin, 2000; Osterman & Schwartz-Barcott, 1996; Owen-Mills, 1998; Zerwekh, 1997). This is exemplified in the work of Benner (1984), where she indicates that nurses used presence as an instrument of care. This utilitarian sense of presence is also noted in the work of Dunniece and Slevin (2000), where their participants described presence as “giving information, explaining, answering question, listening and simply being present without speaking” (p.614). Missing from these descriptions is the notion that the patient and the nurse are together in the first person, as a “we”, which is inherent in descriptions of presence advanced through the writings of Paterson and Zederad (1988). In sharp contrast to presence viewed from a utilitarian perspective is the concept of “super presence” described by Hemsley and Glass (1999), whereby a nurse experiences the self as a channel for healing through entering “…deeply into the life being of the patient, in a powerfully loving way…” (p28). In this type of presence the nurse uses the self energetically, transcending space and time, to guide the patient through a journey of healing.

There appear to be divergent opinions in the literature regarding the practice of presence in nursing. Whilst Owen-Mills (1998) argues presencing is the core of the caring process and is taught in most nursing undergraduate programs, this claim is not substantiated. Thus its legitimacy must be questioned. Further, although not often written about, within nursing literature there is some evidence that nurses may not presence with their patients. That is, they may not engage in authentic and caring relationships based on a commitment to spend the self on the patient’s behalf (Schroeder, 1998). It is postulated that this may be because the nurse does not have sensitivity to the many dimensions of self, making it possible to provide support to others (McKivergin & Daubenmire, 1994). Or, as expressed by G. Saunders (1995), individuals do not presence because “…they have had a breakdown in the sense of self, eventuating in passivity and ineffectual engagements with the world outside” (p.324). It is also suggested that nurses may not make a free will offer to presence with patients because of feelings of inadequacy, fear, distress or anger (Dunniece &
Slevin, 2000). Further, it is also claimed that nursing presence is threatened by the economic constraints of managed care and that “The value of nursing presence and the danger of nursing absence have not yet been entered on the financial balance sheet” (Doona et al., 1997, p.5). Thus, the extent to which presence exemplifies caring within nursing must be questioned.

**Hope-Facilitating Strategies**

Attention is now turned to strategies claimed within the literature to be hope-facilitating. As could reasonably be expected, most articles identifying hope-facilitating strategies do so within the context of illness, hopelessness, or some other significant life challenge such as homelessness (Tollett & Thomas, 1995, Herth, 1996); with Herth claiming that “…hope has been studied more in individuals with cancer than any other diagnosis with the exception of individuals with a mental illness” (Herth, 2000, p.1432). There is some uniformity within the literature on hope-facilitating strategies, in that it identifies untested strategies and tactics that can be used to promote hope. Among them are:

- general strategies aimed at raising hope (Tishelman, 1994), such as getting busy, being involved in prayer or religion (Ellerhorst-Ryan, 1987; Zorn, 1997) and talking to others (Raleigh, 1992; Perakyla, 1991; Miller, 1991)
- helping people find a reason to live (Nowotny, 1989) or developing a mental attitude of determinism (Hickey, 1986; Holden, 1992; Miller, 1985, 1989)
- involving patients in their care and establishing therapeutic relationships (J. Brandt, 1998; Wake & Miller, 1992)
- creating developmental environments (Hollar, 1997; Scanlon, 1989); providing information and setting goals (Farfan, 1997; Johnson & Roberts, 1996)
- helping people to cope (Herth, 1989; Kim, 1989), and dealing with it and keeping it in its place (Ersek, 1992).

Within the above literature, the strategies that are suggested are not research-based and this is particularly evident in the work of Hollar (1997), a registered nurse who cared for young people described as being on the edge for ten years. Most of the suggestions offered as hope-facilitating have arisen, I suspect, out of the wealth of
the authors’ practice backgrounds, combined with knowledge of general strategies used with any patient encountering a significant dilemma of any sort; albeit packaged and relabelled as hope-facilitating strategies. This raises questions regarding the extent to which these strategies can rightly be called hope-promoting or facilitating. Indeed, within the literature a scant three studies could be found that empirically identified the extent to which the use of hope interventions influenced levels of hope (Herth, 2000; Mercer & Kane, 1979; Tollett & Thomas, 1995); yet a number of authors have identified a need for the development of intervention studies to test the efficacy of hope-promoting nursing interventions (Farran et al., 1995; Gelling & Provost, 1999; Herth, 2000; Penrod & Morse, 1997).

A number of authors postulate that nurses, who assume a primary role in the care of people, are in a strategic position to foster or hinder hope (Tracy, Fowler, & Magarelli, 1999). However, within this same literature it is not always clearly elucidated how registered nurses should engage in hope work. That is, what skills, practices and attitudes are required to enable them to engender hope in those who do not have hope or are at risk of losing it (Turner, 2000)? J. Cutcliffe (1995) developed a framework that identified four key variables of nurses’ hope facilitation. They were:

- reflection in action, whereby the nurse developed self-awareness and reflection before entering into a helping relationship
- affirmation of worth, where the nurse communicated to the patient their worth and value to foster the development of an unconditional relationship
- creation of partnership, whereby care is negotiated and decision making is democratic and
- acknowledgment of the totality of the person, to enable the deliverance of holistic care.

It is believed these four elements, when taken together, illustrate a process by which hope is inspired. Cutcliffe’s suggestion for nurses to reflect in action prior to entering into a helping relationship is somewhat problematic, in that reflection in action is defined as a process whereby a practitioner interacts and adjusts their reactions and approaches through thinking in a focused way while working, not prior to working, as Cutcliffe suggests (Schön, 1987; B. J. Taylor, 2000). Further, there is
disagreement in the literature regarding the extent to which reflection in action is theoretically relevant, because it is difficult to achieve on a practical level (Johns, 2002; B. J. Taylor, 2000). Cutcliffe acknowledges that the findings of his research are limited, as the framework was theoretical in nature and not empirically validated. However, in addition to this acknowledgement, it can be argued that the proposed strategies are not different from strategies nurses generally use to care holistically. Therefore, the extent to which they can be claimed as processes by which hope is inspired must be questioned.

Herth (1990a), who has written prolifically in the area of hope, identified with patients seven hope-fostering categories and three hope-hindering categories. The hope-fostering categories were: interpersonal connectedness, attainable aims, spiritual base, personal attributes, light-heartedness, uplifting memories and affirmation of worth. Hope-hindering categories were identified as: abandonment and isolation, uncontrollable pain and discomfort, and devaluation of personhood. In this study Herth indicated that nurses could “…serve as catalysts to create internal and external conditions that foster caring relationships between terminally-ill people and their families…” (p.1258). She recommended developing caring relationships through:

…provision of physical and emotional support…sharing information…closeness…creating a vision of hope…providing encouragement and delight in hopes expressed…giving support and guidance…fostering light heartedness…facilitating an environment and resources to express spiritual beliefs and practices…using value clarification…using reminiscence therapy and life awareness activities. (p.1258).

Whilst each of these recommendations is inherently appealing, empirical evidence is not given to support their adoption by nurses within clinical settings. Indeed, there is no discussion regarding the extent to which a nurse has the clinical competence necessary to engage in these strategies. Therefore, although these strategies seem useful and are appealing, it is imperative further research be conducted to determine their applicability and appropriateness within clinical settings.

In a later work Herth (1993b) explored with caregivers and care-recipients categories of hope-fostering strategies and hope-hindering categories. Hope-fostering strategies were: sustaining relationships, cognitive reframing, time refocusing,
attainable expectations, spiritual beliefs and uplifting. Hope-hindering categories were: isolation, concurrent losses and poorly controlled symptom management. Based on a synthesis of the participants’ descriptions, hope was defined as “…a dynamic inner power that enables transcendence of the present situation and fosters a positive new awareness of being” (p.544). Within this work Herth again described a variety of hope-facilitating strategies that nurses can use. For instance, she recommended nurses’ presence with their patients, where presence was depicted as “…being with, listening to and attending to …their needs” (p.546). However, there was no discussion about the extent to which using the identified strategies could (potentially) be problematic for the nurse. Instead, it was assumed that nurses would have the requisite skills and practice experience to incorporate them. However, given the previous discussion on problems nurses face in being able to presence with patients, this assumption is problematic.

Conclusion
This literature review reveals the many faces of hope as well as those of like constructs. While not drawing definitive conclusions, it can clearly be seen that the phenomenon of hope has been explored extensively from many different perspectives. One inference that can be drawn is that most authors concur that hope is necessary, even vital, to life. Those who disagree with this sentiment argue that hoping is a dangerous activity. However, within this school of thought, it is not claimed that people do not hope, but rather they should not hope and, if they do, it is done at their own peril. The dialectical tensions that have been unveiled within this literature review, that is, that hope is a conceptual illusion and that hope is poorly differentiated from other like phenomena, will not necessarily be addressed within this thesis. This is because, in the first instance, this research is only about the phenomenon of hope from the perspective of a small number of individuals who have been asked to limit their discussion to the phenomenon of hope. That is, the participants have not been asked to engage in a definitive exposition of hope to enable it to be differentiated from like constructs. Therefore, a question that might be raised from this admission is “What usefulness will this work have, from philosophical as well as utilitarian perspectives?” In this literature review I have argued that Australian youth today face many crises that are unparalleled in modern
history. I have also argued that the challenges they face as they try to enter into adulthood, such as homelessness, joblessness, loss of connection within families, schools and the community, and marginalisation have a potential to seriously challenge any understanding about hope that has been advanced within the literature thus far. Indeed, these contexts demand that the phenomenon of hope be re-explored, in order that we might sharpen our understanding of hope from contemporary perspectives that take into consideration the contextual features of modern, day-to-day living that are faced by the participants of this study. It is with these thoughts in mind that attention is now turned to the methodology chapter of this study.
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction
In this chapter I introduce the methodological approach selected for the development and conduct of this study. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to various schools of phenomenological thought, commencing with Husserlian phenomenology and progressing to an explanation of hermeneutics as a philosophical exploration of the character and conditions for understanding. Following this, the phenomenological philosophy of Heidegger is briefly examined, leading to a more thorough discussion of Gadamerian phenomenology, which was the philosophical tradition selected to conceptualise as well as carry out this study. The chapter concludes with the argument that Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology was selected because it was ideally suited to explore the lived experience of hope from the perspective of participants of this study.

The Methodological Approach to the Study
This hermeneutic phenomenological study employed the philosophical underpinnings of Hans Georg Gadamer (1989) to explore the phenomenon of hope seen through the eyes of ten Australian youth. Concepts from Gadamer that were used throughout this study include Bildung or openness to meaning; fore-projection; understanding and objectivity; prejudice; fusion of horizons; historicity; and linguisticality. From the outset I would like to make it clear that within this study there was no attempt to predict or control. Rather, an interpretive approach that was contextually based was used that placed priority on searching for, interpreting and illuminating the meanings of what was happening, being done to, being understood or being interpreted by the participants. The focus or aim of this research was to explicate the meaning, and to distil the essence, of hope seen through the eyes of the participants.

In this study I went to the participants themselves and utilized an openly dialogical approach to explore their everyday lived world and to discover the intersubjective meanings they attached to their experiences of hope. Whilst I acknowledge there is
no single best method to uncover the nature of this phenomenon, this study was deliberately designed to overcome the subject-object split of Cartesianism, through exploration of things as they are lived (Benner, 1985). One of the major challenges I had as the researcher was to discover meanings that were hidden or obscured in everyday practical activities, because everyday lived experiences are usually taken for granted and thus can be difficult to illuminate (Jasper, 1994). However, through a breakdown of activity and the systematic and deliberate search for meaning, which is characteristic of hermeneutic inquiry, there is a potential to discover similarities in meaning and develop what can be thought of as flashes of insight into the lived world (Leonard, 1989).

I decided to undertake a hermeneutic phenomenological study for several reasons. The first reason is because phenomenology “speaks” to me in ways that enable me to make sense of the world around me and what I want to learn about and explore within it. As a researcher I respect this research tradition and have developed a deep appreciation for the way it embraces notions concerned with the way we view ourselves, our world and the world of others (Crotty, 1996). On a personal level, I am in harmony with phenomenology and the way hermeneutics has the potential to convey meanings others attach to their experiences giving deep, rich and meaningful accounts of these experiences. I appreciate the potential which phenomenology offers for exploring the lived experiences of individuals or groups, and acknowledge that it always has at its roots a desire to ascertain what it is like to be (Turner & Emden, 1999). Further, I consider that studying experiences of people as objects is irrational and I reject the myth of objectivity. That is, I subscribe to the belief that objectivity should be abandoned whenever persons are the central focus of an inquiry (Dunbar, 1998).

The second reason I decided to undertake a hermeneutic phenomenological study was because this research methodology was suitable for the research question I was asking, that is, what is the essential nature and lived experience of hope, seen through the eyes of ten Australian youth. This study focused on existential-ontological questions of how the participants understood, lived with and dwelt in the experience hope, from their own unique perspective, giving a deep, rich and meaningful account of their hope and how it resonated within them.
Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl

Phenomenology, in its various forms is concerned with the way we view the world, ourselves and the world of others. (Crotty, 1996). Fundamental to the conduct of a phenomenological study is a belief that people are unique, self-interpreting beings and that phenomena cannot be separated from experiences of them (Jasper, 1994). Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher and mathematician set out to explore phenomena as they appeared through consciousness and to elevate philosophy to the status of a rigorous science. To this end, he is credited with being the founder of phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1975).

Initially Husserl’s explorations began as a philosophical search for the foundations of logic; however, they evolved into a study of the logical structures of consciousness and the ways in which phenomena appear through consciousness. (Thompson, 1990). In his work, Husserl introduced the concept of life world or lived experience, also known as Erlebnis. Although the meaning of the word Erlebnis is somewhat cloudy or obscure, Erlebnis is referred to in the works of such philosophers as Dilthey, Schleiermacher and Hegel as corresponding both to what is experienced or directly given, as well as to what is imagined and treated as experience (Gadamer, 1989). The concept of Erlebnis also implies a connection with totality.

In his study of life world, Husserl claimed that experiences cannot be accessed because they are made up of things that are common sense or taken for granted (Jasper, 1994). In his critique of cognition, Husserl acknowledged that we “see” the world through our consciousness or natural attitude, which is influenced by our intuition, imagination, perceptions and everyday interactions with the world. He further claimed that we can also “see” the world through other means, which he termed our philosophic or theoretical attitude, by removing all subjectivity and becoming detached from the things we are observing (Walters, 1994). Husserl (1980 trans) saw the task of phenomenology as one in which we return to taken-for-granted experiences to re-examine them, in his words, a “return to the things themselves” (p.31) in order that we might understand them or make them known.
An important distinction to remember about Husserl’s phenomenology is that, although he advocated returning to the things themselves, he stressed that this must be done from a position of a detached observer, questioning one’s presuppositions about the world to achieve clear, unclouded vision. This concept, known as phenomenological reduction or bracketing (Einklammerungen), is an essential attitude to the phenomenological epoché, or suspension of commonly held beliefs about the phenomenon in question (Husserl, 1973).

Husserl undoubtedly made many valuable contributions to the phenomenological movement. However, his insistence that the lived world be studied from the position of detached observer was refuted by philosophers such as Heidegger and Gadamer, who advocated understanding as not just one of the various possible behaviours of a subject but as a mode of being, of Dasein itself. Our attention will now be turned to a brief definition of hermeneutics, which will in turn lead to an exploration of Heideggerian phenomenology.

**Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics is an ancient discipline, which traces back to the early Greeks (R. E. Palmer, 1969). The early Greek root words of hermeneutics suggested the idea of understanding through language. Derived from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which means to interpret, and the noun *hermeneia* or interpretation, the word first came into usage in the 17th century to mean biblical exegesis (R. E. Palmer, 1969). Over time, the realm of hermeneutics changed from a theory of biblical exegesis to include a general philosophical methodology; a science of linguistic understanding; a methodological foundation for the human sciences; a phenomenology of existential understanding; and a system of interpretation (R.E. Palmer, 1969). In Palmer’s words, “Whenever rules and systems of explaining, understanding, or deciphering texts arise – there is hermeneutics” (p.458).

According to Phillips (1996), in the nineteenth century the scope of hermeneutics became broadened through the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher and William Dilthey “…who moved the focus of hermeneutical understanding from texts to all human productions – verbal and nonverbal, historical and current” (p.61). Dilthey
(1989) identified the natural sciences as focused on the study of objects in the world, whereas the cultural sciences studied persons and the ways they understand each other. As expressed by Dilthey “The sciences explain nature, the human studies understand expressions of life” (p.144).

In more modern times, hermeneutics has developed two different foci, the first being the rules, methods or theories that govern the exegesis of linguistic texts; and the other being the philosophical exploration of the character and conditions for understanding (Packer, 1985). It is the second of these two foci that will be used in the conceptualisation of this study. Hermeneutics, which embraces the art and science of interpreting, uses as its mode of inquiry an inductive approach to explore the richness of experience. It makes several assumptions derived from Heideggerian and other phenomenological views of the person, such as the premise that humans are social, dialogical beings; understanding is always in front of us; and we are always within a hermeneutic circle of understanding (Plager, 1994). As an interpretive strategy, hermeneutics offers a means of arriving at a deeper understanding of human existence through interpretation of being, made by those persons being studied, an important aspect of this research.

**Heideggerian Phenomenology**

Heidegger, a former student of Husserl, reacted against Cartesianism and the emphasis placed on consciousness by Husserl (Koch, 1996; Leonard, 1994). He did not accept it was possible to bracket or suspend one’s being in the word and, further, he believed that the objectification of human reality through the process of bracketing was artificial and unattainable (Draucker, 1999). Hence, he advanced the study of phenomena from an existential, ontological perspective, acknowledging that observers cannot separate themselves from the world as they are part of it, and inextricably tied to it (Leonard, 1994). This notion of being tied to the world, or “being there” is referred to as *Dasein*.

Heidegger’s main departure from the teachings of Husserl lay in his conception of the relationship of the person to the world. In his treatise *Being and Time*, Heidegger laid the foundation for his philosophy through an historical analysis of existence.
(Heidegger, 1962). In this work, he shifted the philosophical debate from epistemology to ontology, laying the foundation for the study of phenomena in all its otherness (Koch, 1995, 1996). For Heidegger, understanding was not conceived as a way of knowing, but as a mode of being-in-the-world. This represented a significant departure from Husserl’s philosophy, because Heidegger’s phenomenological method advocated a hermeneutic interpretation of being, in which it is acknowledged that the interpreter has some prior understanding of the nature of being which is brought to that analysis. According to Walters (1994), Heidegger argued “…the only way to bring phenomenology and hermeneutics together is to appreciate that it is not possible to separate facts from their meaning” (p.138). Further, Heidegger maintained that “…our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conceptions, to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves” (Heidegger, 1962, p.153).

An essential facet of the person, from a Heideggerian perspective, is that people are beings for whom things have significance and value. Human beings exist only in self-interpretation; therefore, they cannot be completely or absolutely understood. To understand therefore requires a commitment to go to the place where being or Dasein resides, acknowledging the situatedness of human reality in the world.

**Gadamerian Phenomenology and its Application to this Study**

Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, extended the existential, ontological exploration of understanding by placing emphasis on the study of language (Koch, 1995). He also presented a phenomenological view that denounced the notion of the scientific method as the exclusive avenue to truth. In a similar vein to Heidegger, Gadamer refuted the notion that experience, or Erfahrung, could be studied from the position of a neutral observer, detached or removed from the immediacy of experience. As stated by Palmer, “Gadamer’s argument rests strongly in his detailed critical analyses of previous thinking about language, historical consciousness and the aesthetic” (R.E. Palmer, 1969, p.166).
A fundamental tenet of Gadamer’s phenomenology is the rejection of the notion of subject – object (Pascoe, 1996). According to Gadamer:

The purpose of my investigation is to discover what is common to all modes of understanding and to show that understanding is never a subjective relation to a given ‘object’ but to the history of its effect; in other words, understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood.

(p.xxxi)

Further, Gadamer believed that pre-understanding was a condition and necessary part of understanding or Verstehen. He believed that we must be firmly situated in the world before understanding can take place. That is “We understand the world before we begin to think about it; such pre-understanding gives rise to thought and always conditions it” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p.11).

Gadamer advocated a return to a humanistic tradition because, in his view, modern concepts of science were insufficient to generate understanding about human beings and their activities (Gadamer, 1989). He believed that understanding was not an epistemological problem but rather an ontological one. He also believed that the task of hermeneutics was to “…clarify this miracle of understanding, which is not a mysterious communion of souls, but sharing in a common meaning.” (p.292).

Within his writings Gadamer embraced the notion of the hermeneutic circle where we must “…understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole” (p.291).

Consistent with the views expressed above, the hermeneutic, phenomenological method used in this study acknowledged that being is immersed in people’s experiences of being in the world. The focus of this study was to understand the lived experience of hope in a small number of Australian youth. All understanding is self-understanding, which is Gadamer’s version of the hermeneutic circle. In this sense then, “Understanding is projection and what it projects is expectations that precede the text” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p.166).

Within this study, one of Gadamer’s key concepts that underpinned my approach to my participants, was Bildung or openness to meaning (Gadamer, 1989). Bildung, which originated in medieval mysticism, first suggested cultivating the image of God
in man. In the post-Renaissance period, the usage of the term suggested the realization of human potential (Weinsheimer, 1985). The structure of Bildung is crucial to understanding, as elucidated by Gadamer. In Bildung, one “…leaves the all-too-familiar and learns to allow for what is different from oneself, and that means not only to tolerate it but to live in it” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p.70). Bildung is keeping one’s self open to what is other, and embracing more universal points of view; or detaching oneself from one’s immediate desires and purposes (Gadamer, 1989). Openness to meaning is essential to understanding the phenomenon being explored, because, in the words of Gadamer, “Working our appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature, to be confirmed ‘by the things’ themselves, is the constant task of understanding” (p.267).

Bildung was manifest in this study in several ways. First, as part of my methodology, and prior to my first meeting with my participants, I thought about hope, journaling my own initial ideas, attitudes and understandings. This enabled me to develop a clear (yet evolving) understanding of what I knew and thought I knew about hope! This movement towards identifying my own initial understanding of hope was crucial, as I could not know if I was moving towards an understanding of my participants’ experiences of hope until I understood my own my prior assumptions, beliefs and attitudes about hope. Explication regarding my beliefs or preunderstandings about hope is located in Chapter 5, the findings of this thesis, which I have called Horizons Revealed.

The second way Bildung was manifest in this study was in my decision to undertake hermeneutic interviews, that is, to use an open-ended non-hierarchical approach that was conversational in nature when interacting with the participants of the study (Geanellos, 1999). However, this is not to suggest that the interviews were without intent or object, for the intent, understanding the phenomenon of hope, was clear from the outset. In other words, “The object of the conversation is what both want to understand, and it is by reference to this object that they reach a mutual understanding. This joint object, not the partners, conducts the conversation” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p.209). On a practical level, although I certainly thought about questions on hope prior to conducting my interviews, based on my own understandings and my review of the literature, these questions did not serve as an
interview guide. Instead, they served as a ferment of ideas that enabled me to probe with my participants as they engaged in a deep and rich exploration of the phenomenon of hope. As the interviews unfolded I expected my own concept of hope might differ from that of my participants and in this regard I was guided in my interactions by what my participants had to say. Throughout the interviews I attended to the subtleties of intensity of the speaking voice, the contradictory moments, emotional content and tone and the extent to which whole sentences rather than recursive speech patterns were used (Opie, 1989). I also offered interpretations of the participants’ comments, sought clarification by questioning and probed for deeper explanations on occasions (Geanellos, 1999). Each of these actions demonstrated an attitude of being open, which facilitated moving towards understanding and interpretation. In the words of Gadamer, “Working our appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature, to be confirmed ‘by the things’ themselves, is the constant task of understanding” (p.267).

According to Gadamer, a movement towards understanding consists not only of Bildung, or remaining open to meaning, but also of fore-projection or developing an early understanding of what has been said (Gadamer, 1989). In attempting to understand the story of another, the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole again (Gadamer, 1989). Thus the circle of understanding is not a methodological circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding or being (Gadamer, 1989). The hermeneutic task becomes of itself a questioning of things, whereby early understandings or fore-projections become replaced by more suitable projections as it becomes clear what the meaning is. In other words, fore-projections are constantly revised as new meanings emerge from the text, constituting the movement of understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 1989). Throughout this study, particularly whilst undertaking data analysis, I engaged in constant and incessant dialogue with the texts in an attempt to understand what was there and to use the understandings gained to further explore meaning. When I sifted through the texts, as early understanding arose I challenged myself to dwell extensively on what I found, making a conscious decision to not close out on early impressions, but to wait and see what new ideas would emerge. I remained with each text until I was confident I had a thorough recall of the expressions of hope, and only then moved on to the next text. As I
dwelt in the next text, having remembered the unique expressions of previous texts, I carefully made margin notes of points of similarity, to be returned to at a later point in time.

An important distinction to be made regarding the nature of understanding being is that within Gadamer’s phenomenology objectivity consists not in avoiding preconception, but in its confirmation. As we have seen, interpretation of lived experience begins with an assumption of familiarity and proceeds to listening with openness to the unexpected and a readiness to revise our preconceptions (Gadamer, 1989). This idea is similarly expressed by Parse (1995), in her discussion of valuing, where she indicated that valuing is determining that which is cherished, by either confirming or disconfirming it. Gadamer believes “A person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something” (Gadamer, 1989, p.269). Within the notion of understanding it is important to be aware of one’s own bias, so the text can present itself in all its otherness, thus asserting its own truth against one’s fore-projections (Gadamer, 1989). With these thoughts in mind it can be seen that presenting information to the reader regarding my own understanding about the essential nature of hope was crucial to the integrity of the study. It was also imperative that I unveil my own prejudice, so the reader could determine for themselves whether there was any truth-value to my findings.

I come now to discussion about the nature of prejudice, which is crucial when one considers the hermeneutic rule where we must understand the whole in terms of the parts, and the parts in terms of the whole. In this research I maintain I am a part of the whole, as the story about hope that is being relayed to me will be filtered through my ears and my own understandings. Further, the participants of this research did not tell their story in a vacuum, nor did I receive it in a vacuum. As Dunbar (1998) states “…all scholarship involves implicit or explicit value positions…scholarship does not exist in a vacuum.” (p.460). If we consider Gadamer’s notions of understanding, he says “All understanding inevitably involves some prejudice” (Gadamer, 1989, p.270). Rather than proceeding from a belief prejudices are subjective accidents which are remediable, it is imperative to think of prejudice not as a false judgement, but as a condition of truth. Because, as Gadamer explains,
prejudices are “…historical reality itself and the condition of understanding it.” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p.170).

Thus, within this research, I embraced the notion that prejudices are expectations or projections about the whole that are continually revised as more parts of the whole come into view. Gadamer asserts that understanding involves discriminating among prejudices, not eliminating them; questioning our beliefs about our understanding and becoming prepared for it to say something new; and responding with an openness to the unexpected (Weinsheimer, 1985). Therefore, within this study, making use of prejudices and sorting them out was the process of interpretation itself.

Understanding is a productive activity rather than a reproductive one and, as such, involves mediation, integration and assimilation (Weinsheimer, 1985). The things that are within our immediate world, that are a part of our own understanding, are our horizon, that is, our particular viewpoints, which are constantly in the process of formation and being shaped by our past and our awareness of the present. Additionally, things beyond our immediate standpoint are also part of our horizon. Thus, acquiring a horizon means we embrace far sightedness, to the extent of our own capacities and limitations (Weinsheimer, 1985). This concept is markedly different from that of polarity of thought, which “…limits one from seeing the cosmic view and the multiple possibilities and options.” (Reeder, 1992, p.22).

Gadamer explains that our horizon is something that moves with us, rather than something into which we move, adding that when we find ourselves within situations we wish to understand, our task is to throw light into them (Gadamer, 1989). This task is never entirely finished. Thus it can be seen that we have an infinite capacity to refine and extend our understanding of things. Gadamer determined that fusion of horizons occurs when our own horizon is understood in order to understand another’s. He further said that an act of understanding occurs when there is a conscious act of fusing two horizons, creating historical consciousness (B. J. Taylor, 1991). For this study, fusion of horizons occurred on multiple occasions, as a cyclic activity, as the phenomenon of hope was identified, not only within each participant’s story but also across their stories. Further, fusion of horizons will occur
again and again, each time another reads this work, forming their own understanding of the phenomenon being explored.

Finally, we come to the concepts of linguisticality and historicity. As advanced by Gadamer (1989), human understanding occurs in and through language and tradition and, therefore, they are of the same process. Of interest is Gadamer’s explanation of language as the medium of human experience. According to Gadamer, we do not conduct a conversation but rather “…fall into a conversation” (p.383) in that we do not know in advance “…what will ‘come out’ of a conversation” (p.383). Rather, a conversation is a process of coming to an understanding that has a spirit and life of its own, whereby the person involved opens the self to the other, in a commitment to understand.

As explained by Taylor, understanding is ontological and its basis is in language, which is the “house of being” (B. Taylor, 1993, p.2). Thus, language is fundamental to our being-in-the-world. In his writings, Gadamer made the point that language opens the infinity of discourse for us, allowing freedom not only to express oneself but also to be understood. Thus, an imperative exists in using language to be understood and to understand, to enable us to engage in the fullness of our humanity (Gadamer, 1989).

Given previous discussion regarding the nature of pre-understanding, prejudice and horizon I now come to the point that understanding is a facet of the historical reality of our being, in that “…history does not belong to us; we belong to it” (Gadamer, 1989, p.276). In other words, before we understand others and ourselves through the process of critical self-reflection we understand ourselves as a part of our family, community and constituted group. Thus, understanding arises, in part, out of our connections with our past, present and future imagined reality. The context of each participant’s story is as important as the story itself, for it shapes and frames the ideas, thoughts and meanings that are expressed. For this reason, in Chapter 4, The Study Method, descriptive information about each participant is included.
Conclusion
Reflecting on the above descriptions of Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology, this methodology was selected for the conduct of the present study for several reasons. It offered me, as the researcher, an opportunity to richly and deeply probe the phenomenon and experiences of hope with my participants, without having to assume there was an Archimedean point of view from which this phenomenon ought to be seen. It enabled me to hold particular positions and understandings about what I know and think about hope, without having to posit that this prior knowledge is of any great importance or was of any greater importance than that which was held by my participants or within the literature. It enabled me to explore my prior assumptions about the nature and understanding of hope, whilst also insisting I remain open to all other possibilities and to the otherness to which I was exposed throughout the duration of this study. Additionally, it offered an opportunity for my participants to be genuinely and authentically heard as they expressed their thoughts and ideas about hope, what it is and what it meant to them. Thus, for the participants and myself, our engagement in creating meaning had the potential to be liberating, whilst it also held a possibility of being both humbling and frightening. Going to the place where being resided did, in many instances, open Pandora’s box, and I remained conscious and aware of the need to be both respectful and non-judgmental of my participants, not only during our time together but also during the process of data analysis.
CHAPTER 4 THE STUDY METHOD

Introduction
Having explained the philosophical underpinnings of my study, attention is now turned to the methods I employed to undertake this study. Although hope as a phenomenon, experience and concept has been studied rather extensively from philosophical, theological, psychological and sociological perspectives, the overwhelming majority of reported studies have been carried out within the context of illness (Hall, 1990; Herth, 1990a; Perakyla, 1991; Tishelman & Sachs, 1992). These studies focus on meanings, experience and measurements of hope, identifying characteristics and attributes of hope, suggesting ways to maintain hope in the face of severe obstacles. Whilst there are a few studies reported within the literature that address the concept and experience of hope in youth (Artinian, 1984; Herth, 1998; Hinds, 1988; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Hinds, Martin, & Vogel, 1987) no studies have been found that explore this phenomenon from the unique perspective of Australian youth. Given the burgeoning problems facing youth in Australia today, it is timely to capture in rich detail what hope is – what it means and if and how it resonates within youth of Australia today.

Additionally, within the literature there is a clear indication that nurses have been identified as sources of hope and have been encouraged to inspire hope (J Cutcliffe, 1996; Daly et al., 1999; Farran et al., 1995; Herth, 1998; C Snyder et al., 1997). This study, which explored the essential nature of hope from the perspective of a small number of Australian youth, has the capacity to contribute to registered nurses’ and other caregivers’ understanding of hope. The study findings can potentially provide all health professionals with an opportunity to consider the importance of fostering hope within their clients, suggesting ways in which they can engage in hope work and develop hope-facilitating strategies. Thus this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge that is available to direct or guide care practices within a variety of health care settings.
Description of the Project
The Deakin University School of Nursing Research and Graduate Studies Committee and the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee gave approval for the conduct of this study and a description of the project is as follows. The participants of this study were a mixture of ten Australian youth who were self-identified Spirit-filled Christians and youth who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. All were between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four at the time they were invited to participate, which falls within the age-range described by Bowes, Suris and Buhlmann (1995) as the period of adolescence. All of the participants lived with their parents or with their partner, in a home that was either rented or owned, or in temporary accommodation until something better could be found. Three of the participants were either enrolled in or had completed a tertiary course of study at the time of their interview; two of the participants had completed year 12; four of the participants had either completed up to year 10 or 11 in school; and the educational attainment level of one of the participants did not come up in our conversation and hence is unknown. Seven of the participants did not have gainful employment at the time of their interview; two were employed on a part-time basis; and one was employed full-time. All participants described themselves as ambitious and possessing a strong desire to get ahead in life. Also, all expressed a strong desire to change their life circumstances. A summary of this information is found in Appendix B.

Accessing the Participants of this Study
In the early stages of conceptualising this research I attended the 7th National Suicide Prevention Conference in Melbourne, Australia, and at this conference I participated in a workshop that had a profound influence on me. The workshop presenter described an on-going “creative expressions program” that was developed for youth who attended for care at a city mission centre. This program used art and artistic endeavours, such as painting, photography, story writing, and music, to enable young people to creatively express their points of view, individuality and creativity, as well as to reframe their identity. It was highly innovative and placed strong emphasis on the capacity of the individual to succeed. Although not specifically modelled on the work of Mc Laughlin, Irby and Langman (1994), it shared a similarity with this work
in that its central philosophy acknowledged the untapped capacity of youth to
succeed.

When I thought about this program two important aspects that had direct relevance to
my study struck me. The first was that the centre provided a program that used a
medium of expression (photography) which I planned to incorporate into my study to
enable my participants to individually express their inner-most thoughts and points of
view about the phenomenon of hope. This excited me because I felt that if I
extended an invitation to be involved in my project, potential participants might see
it as a relatively simple or ordinary activity that would not be too difficult to be
involved in, an important aspect for recruitment purposes. The second thing that was
important to me was that the youth attending this centre were undergoing regular
counselling as a part of their participation in the activities of the centre. Thus if their
involvement in my research caused them distress in any way, they had an immediate
and on-going opportunity to resolve the issue with their counsellor. Providing
support services such as counselling, at no cost to the participants should their
participation prove to be stressful, was an ethical imperative of my research.
Therefore, on the basis of these two factors I believed it would be ideal to approach
this organisation, seeking their permission to invite their clients to be involved in my
study.

My initial contact with the centre occurred through the workshop presenter,
immediately following the presentation. I discussed my research and, although there
was an interest in my work, I was invited to submit a written request to the
organisation to enable them to discuss the merits of my proposal. I was told that if
following discussion staff were in agreement I could invite their clients (whom they
actually called their students) to take part in my research. Ultimately this
organisation gave written approval to allow me to access their students for the
purpose of recruiting them into my study. Additionally, they also indicated that
evidence of ethics approval of this project by the Deakin University Human Research
Ethics Committee was sufficient to access participants within their organization
(Appendix C & D).
The contact I made at the Suicide Prevention conference was a person who held a senior management position within the organization and who agreed to disseminate my plain language statement to youth attending the centre. By initiating my first contact with potential participants through this person, who did not have a vested interest in or allegiance to the study and could advise them of the opportunity in a dispassionate way, possible difficulties related to coercion were avoided. My plain language statement fully explained the particulars of the study and requirements of participation and invited them to consider being involved (Appendix E). Those who were interested in being involved were asked to inform my contact person, who then identified a suitable date and time for me to travel interstate to meet with potential participants at the centre, and to answer any questions they had related to the study. At this initial meeting, my first with potential participants, I met with eight people individually but, following opportunities to clarify aspects related to their participation, only five people confirmed a definite interest in being involved. These five people were then asked to fill in a written consent form and plans were made for my next meeting with them.

Having made the decision to recruit participants as described above, I also had an abiding interest in providing self-identified Spirit-filled Christian youth with a vehicle or forum to express their views on hope. This interest stemmed not only from being a Christian myself, but also from a desire to talk to youth from many walks and circumstances in life, not for the purposes of comparing their conceptions, but for the purpose of broadening my understanding of hope as seen through their eyes. I knew, from limited discussions with the youth of my church, that many (but certainly not all) came to know Christ as a consequence of life’s pain and confusion. I also knew from what some of my young friends told me, that being a Christian was sometimes an isolating experience. I was interested in what these youth would tell me about hope – I wanted to know about their ideas and experiences. Also, my initial research proposal specified that there would be up to ten participants in my study. Therefore, I made a decision to approach my church, providing an explanation of my work and asking whether it would be possible to link potential participants to their counselling services, should they have stress reactions as a consequence of participation. My church was willing to provide this service, at no cost, for members of my church who became involved in my research, as well as
people who were not members of my church. They also indicated in writing that they were willing to allow me access to their organization for the purpose of recruiting participants. Additionally, they indicated that evidence of ethics approval of this project by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee was sufficient to access participants within their organization (Appendix F).

To secure the participation of Christian youth, as I am well placed within the Christian community in Melbourne and had many contacts that could have been interested in this research, I used a snowball sampling technique. That is, I invited a youth from the church I attended to consider being a participant. The first two people I approached said no, for personal reasons. However, one of these gave me a name of someone outside the congregation who might be interested and simultaneously with inviting this person to consider being involved, I invited another youth from my church whom I had not met previously but whose parents I knew. Both of these individuals said they would like to participate, and at the time of this contact I asked them to take a plain language statement that detailed requirements of participation, together with information on how to contact me (Appendix G). When contact happened I established a date, time and location for us to meet that was mutually convenient. At this meeting I answered all questions related to the study. When they indicated that they were definitely interested in being involved, I requested they fill in a consent form and established the next date we would meet. I also asked for help in contacting the next person for possible inclusion in this study, explaining that I would like the participant to let another Christian youth know about this study and ask their friend to telephone me if they were interested in being involved. However, in asking this friend I stressed they were not to use coercion; that I was only interested in working with people who would like to participate of their own free will. Using this technique to recruit Christian youth into my study enabled me to cross congregational boundaries and none of my participants worshipped within the same congregation. In total I was able to recruit five additional participants using this recruitment strategy.
Data Collection Methods

Reflecting on Hope
After having obtained written and informed consent from all of the participants of this study, I employed three methods to encourage them to reflect on their experiences of hope – what it is and what it means to them. First, as a participant of this research, I used the technique of reflective journaling described by Holly (1997) to capture my pre-understandings about hope prior to interacting with my participants. These written recollections were physically put aside, but certainly not forgotten, as I interacted with my participants, and they were returned to during the data analysis phase of this study as well as incorporated into the discussion. For the other participants of this study, reflecting on hope occurred in the main through taking photographs and participating in an in-depth interview, described below.

Capturing the Essence of Hope Through Photographs
The second method of data collection I used was to supply the participants with a disposable camera containing colour film to take photographs that depicted hope to them. A number of authors recommend using photography as a means to enhance data collection. Thus this strategy is not new (Gaskins & Forte, 1995; Rowe, 2000; Running, 1997). Jacobs (1996) asserted that photographs can be a useful adjunct to enable people to appreciate the reality of death, and Percy (1995) maintained that homeless children, when given an opportunity to take photographs, were better able to distil the meaning of their experience. Regarding the usefulness of photography as a research tool, Adelman (1998) notes that photographs should be used as a method for discovery rather than as a technique for documenting life and object relationships. Further, as a research tool Collier (1967) notes that a camera does not have selective processes attached to what it records; on its own, it has no means of evading that which is ugly, unpleasant or somewhat disturbing. Whatever is present within the visual field of the camera’s lens is captured, unlike what is seen by the human eye, which selectively processes images according to the sensitivity of the beholder. Thus, Collier argues that, as a device for capturing phenomena, a camera may help us to see more accurately that which is around us, stating “The camera is not presented as a cure-all for our visual limitations, but as an extension of our perception” (p.7). It is also noted by Collier that, as a research instrument, a camera has the capacity to
enhance what occurs in an interview setting because, as he claims, once a picture is taken, a photographer enters into a period of excitement, in which there is an anticipation of feedback, as well as the excitement of seeing the images that were taken and sharing them with others. Further, taking photographs provides a natural opportunity for a researcher and photographer to come together once more, with photographs making:

…directional conversation pieces that allow you to draw out the interests and enthusiasms of your informant. The theme of the interview is nonverbally established, and because this photographic feedback creates a state of awareness and evokes emotional feelings, the photographs make wordless probes that lead the interview into the heart of your research.

(Collier, 1967, p.47)

On the other hand, Barthes (1977) identifies photographs as mechanical analogues, capable of transmitting “…the scene itself, the literal reality. From the object to its image there is of course a reduction – in proportion, perspective, colour – but at no time is this reduction a transformation” (p.17). Thus photographs have a capacity to convey innocence or brutality that has not been transmuted by an overlay of interpretation. However, Barthes also points out that photographs can be composed, to connote messages that are constructed according to the aesthetic or ideological stance of the individual taking the photograph. Thus the paradox of photograph is revealed – photographs as analogues and photographs as constructions (Barthes, 1977). This paradox casts the use of photographs within research in an interesting light, by highlighting a need for awareness of possible tensions, particularly if the intent within research is to use photographs as evidence.

Contributing to discourse regarding use of photographs as evidence is the work of Winston (1998), who reminds us that capabilities for digital manipulation have drawn to a close the illusion that photographs can be used as evidence. This is a moot point as far as this work is concerned, however, as there was never an intention to use photographs as evidence, as defined from an empiric-analytical perspective. Rather, from the outset I intended to use photographs as visual triggers to facilitate probing the phenomenon of hope.
Harper (1998) argues eloquently for incorporating photography within qualitative methodology, identifying that story is enhanced through use of photographs because they enable us to make statements that cannot be made by words, and thus enlarge our consciousness. Prosser (1998), whilst arguing for use of photographs within research, makes a claim that image-based research is undervalued and under-utilised, particularly by anthropology and sociology, because it is not on the agenda of word-oriented researchers. However, in the midst of this acknowledgement, Prosser also stated that rapid changes have been made to image-based research theory development, suggesting that this form of research will enjoy a popular resurgence in years to come. Further, Prosser and Schwartz (1998) rightfully point out that decisions to use photography within research should begin with the researcher having considered their epistemological and methodological assumptions, because they orient the way we conduct our studies.

Turning to descriptions of hope, Fromm (1968) wrote:

As with every other human experience, words are insufficient to describe the experience. In fact, most of the time words do the opposite: they obscure it, dissect it, and kill it. Too often, in the process of talking about love, hate or hope one loses contact with what one was supposed to be talking about. Poetry, music and other forms of art are by far the best-suited media for describing human experience …

(p.11)

Thus, taking this statement into consideration and acknowledging that using photography had the potential to expand the capacity of my participants to tell their hope stories, I felt that the decision to incorporate photography into my data collection method was well supported.

Originally, I intended for each participant to select either a camera containing black and white or colour film, because I felt that the participants may have distinct preferences and wanted to give them some choice. However, I discovered when purchasing the cameras that disposable ones only contained coloured film! Therefore, all photographs were taken with a disposable colour film camera, with a built-in flash mechanism and a twenty-six exposure capacity. When I gave the participants their camera, they were asked to imagine they were being paid to mount
a photographic exhibit of hope, and bearing this instruction in mind, they were asked to use the camera to take pictures that in their view showed hope. The participants were asked to take their photographs within 2 weeks of receiving the camera. At the time the camera was distributed, I arranged a mutually convenient time and location to pick it up to have the film developed. At this second meeting with my participants I was pleased to note that each participant extended me some form of recognition, facilitating establishment of an early relationship. I felt that building in multiple opportunities to meet with my participants was an important feature of my research design, because I was aware that we would potentially be discussing a sensitive topic and I wanted our discussions to be enhanced by some familiarity.

**In-Depth Interviews**

When I picked up the camera, which was the third time I met with each participant, I arranged another time to meet them, reiterating that I would like them to participate in an in-depth audio-taped interview of approximately 1 to 1½ hour duration, which was the third method of data collection. It was reiterated during the interview that I would bring the photographs that were taken, asking each participant to reflect on their pictures and identify their concepts and ideas about hope. At this meeting I found that rapport had definitely been established, with each participant eagerly relaying their experiences of taking their photographs, as well as exchanging social information such as what they had been doing over the ensuing weeks. There were numerous questions about how my weeks had gone, how the research was progressing, and several of the participants who were interstate expressed appreciation and amazement I had travelled interstate just to pick up their camera. For the Spirit-filled Christian participants, the interview, which was our fourth meeting, was held at a date, time and place that was mutually satisfactory, such as in the participant’s home or in mine. For the participants from the City Mission, the interview, and fourth meeting, was held within a private room in the centre used for interview purposes, on a date and at a time that was mutually satisfactory.

At each interview, which, as I have already mentioned, was the fourth time I met my participants, it was clear to me that the participants and I were comfortable with each other and ready for disclosure. Appropriate forms of greeting were exchanged and it
was obvious we were glad to see one another. During the interview I used the participant’s photographs to trigger their reflections on hope. I cannot specify the precise questions I asked of each participant, nor the order in which they were asked, as they varied from one participant to another. However, some sample questions or exploratory probes used were:

- So, having taken your pictures what can you tell me about hope?
- What is hope to you?
- Tell me about this picture and why it represents hope to you.
- If you could add anything to this picture that would make it even more hopeful what would it be?
- If you could take anything out of this picture, so that it would be a better portrayal of hope, what would it be?
- Thinking back on your life, tell me about a situation or event in which you were really full of hope.
- What made that situation full of hope for you?
- Tell me about a situation or event in your life in which you did not have any hope.
- What made that situation hopeless for you?

Some of these questions had been used and found to be highly effective in a study of homeless youth by Herth (1998). Others stemmed from my readings on hope, my own experiences and understanding of hope and from my careful listening and reflection during the interviews. Although each interview was unique, from these questions it can be seen that the focus of the interview was on the participant’s lived experience and understanding of hope, seen through their eyes.

Upon conclusion of the interview, I initially retained the photographs as specified within my ethics submission to the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee. Knowing that this was a specification of my ethics submission, I explained in my plain language statement and the participant’s consent form that I would retain the photographs for possible use within my thesis, any subsequent publications arising out of this work and professional presentations. From the outset it was clear that acceptance of the invitation to participate included giving consent for me to retain and use the photographs. However, subsequent to the interviews, I
was contacted by one of my participants, who asked if a copy of their photographs could be returned for personal reasons. When I received this request, I had made sufficient progress to know that none this participant’s photographs would be used pictorially within my work. I believed it was a reasoned request, and therefore gave an undertaking to approach the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee asking them to consider this matter. Further to my correspondence, the Ethics Committee allowed a variation of their ethics approval. They gave permission for all photographs that I definitely excluded from ever being published in any work arising to be returned to the participants on their request (Appendix H) and this was done for the one participant who asked. For all other participants the photographs were retained. Finally, although I had planned to journal my experiences and feelings and undergo confidential professional debriefing following each interview as needed, it was not necessary for me to arrange professional debriefing.

Data analysis

The Philosophical Underpinning of Analysis
One of the greatest challenges I faced in this study was to select a method for data analysis that was congruent with the philosophical underpinnings of Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology. This was a challenge for a number of reasons, not the least of which was my observation that within reports of the findings of phenomenological research, historical precedent has been established. That is, a vast number of respected phenomenological researchers have reported using thematic analysis as an appropriate and/or suitable method to reveal the findings of their studies, regardless of the philosophical underpinning of the study. Thematic analysis means different things to different people. Thus it can be “open to a wide range of interpretations” (Savage, 2000, p.1496). However, for the purposes of this discussion, I am using this term to indicate the systematic processes whereby a researcher codes and clusters data, constantly moving them to higher levels of abstraction, to ultimately develop themes that help to explain the phenomenon being explored.

Within the literature it appears various that authors have been uncritical about reporting the findings of phenomenological studies thematically and this practice has
remained, by and large, unchallenged. I am not advocating against the use of thematic analysis per se; however, for the analysis of this study, which was a Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenological study, I was not entirely comfortable with adopting this approach. It has been my observation that what is often missing from reports that utilize thematic analysis is a thick and rich description of the context of the phenomenon being explored, as well as description of the procedures used to identify themes of meaning. Also, the position of the researcher within the phenomenon being explored is often not explicated, leaving the reader with a sense of unfinished business.

If we consider the philosophical ideas espoused by Gadamer (1989), a movement towards understanding takes place not from the position of a neutral observer, who is detached or removed from the immediacy of the experience, but through the intimacy of understanding that occurs as a part of the hermeneutic circle. Within this context, understanding occurs because we circle from the whole to the parts and back to the whole again, constantly forming and continually revising our understandings or projections about the whole as more parts of it come into view. During this process, prejudices are formed and reformed, and it is important at this point to remember that prejudices are not false judgements. Rather, they are conditions of understanding. Thus, instead of eliminating our prejudices we discriminate among them, constantly questioning our beliefs and our understanding as we become prepared for the phenomenon we are exploring to say something new to us.

According to Gadamer (1989) throughout the process of achieving understanding we begin with, and remain committed to, a determination to reject the notion of subject–object, instead actively acknowledging that “…understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood” (p.xxxi). In other words, we seek to discover what is common to all modes of understanding by responding with openness to the unexpected and a willingness to embrace more universal points of view. Throughout, we fully acknowledge that pre-understandings and fore-projections, which are a part of our being in the world, will constantly be revised. We begin with an assumption of familiarity and proceed to listening with openness to the unexpected and a readiness to revise our preconceptions (Gadamer, 1989). Thus, in identifying the findings of this study, it was important to not limit myself to
describing the end results of the analytic process vis-à-vis displaying the findings of
the study. Instead, in this study, in which I sought to understand hope as seen
through the eyes of the participants, I demonstrated transparency through several
means. The first was by disclosing the thoughts and opinions I had about hope (my
pre-understandings) prior to interacting with my participants; the second was by
identifying early ideas that emerged (fore-projections) as I contemplated the
wholeness of what my participants had to say about hope; the third was by revealing
the prejudices that emerged throughout the analytical process; and the fourth was by
explicating hope as a fusion of horizons between myself and my participants.
Having considered these essential points, the manner in which I interrogated my data
to achieve a fusion of horizons is now identified.

**Audiotape Transcription and Analysis**

Following each interview, I personally undertook verbatim transcription of each
audiotape to create the text for analysis, which was undertaken using an iterative
process closely aligned to the tenets of Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology.
That is, I listened to and read the audiotapes and text over and over again, whilst
adopting an initial attitude of *Bildung*, or openness to meaning. It is difficult to
precisely describe when I moved from attentive listening and reading to listening and
reading for the purpose of gaining early impressions or fore-projections of each
participant’s personal meanings of hope. Perhaps this is best described by saying
that I reached a point where each participant’s expressions or story became
evocatively intimate; that is, as I read each transcript I could also hear what each
participant was saying, even when the tape was not on. When this happened I knew
that I was ready to begin interacting with each participant’s story on a new level, and
from this point data analysis proceeded, in the main, through interaction with the
texts. As I reread each participant’s text, I began to note keywords or ideas in the
margins, so I could return to them at later points in time. I returned to the text and
these margin notes again and again, and as I did so I circled from the whole to the
parts and back to the whole again, which is Gadamer’s version of the hermeneutic
circle (T. Anderson, 1993; Gadamer, 1989). I began deliberately to search for
patterns in ideas and recursive thoughts that were expressed, as well as singular or
unique ideas. I dwelt extensively on ideas as they began to emerge and formed
projections about the whole of each participant’s story of hope, embracing some prejudices and discriminating among others. I constantly questioned my beliefs about what each participant said, eagerly looking for points of similarity as well as differences between each participant’s expressions of hope. I also began actively to dwell on elements of my participant’s expressions that were similar to my own as well as those that were distinctly different. Ultimately, these actions enabled me to work towards a fusion of horizons, whereby the phenomenon of hope for the participants of this study was identified. Further description of the analytic process is detailed in Chapter 5 of this thesis titled Horizons Revealed

**Ethical considerations**

**Adherence to Principles of Beneficence and Non-Maleficence**

There are four key ethical issues that either arose, or had the potential to arise, in the conduct of this research. The first to be discussed is adherence to the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence. Participation in this research had the potential to “do good” as it may have been cathartic for the participants to talk about their ideas, understanding and experiences of hope and how it affected them; however, it also had the potential to be stressful. I gave careful consideration to stressful outcomes, particularly as youth often feel marginalized or disenfranchised from mainstream society, and talking about their life and experiences could have been stressful. Five participants of this study were youth receiving services within an outreach organization that provided counselling as a part of their on-going relationship with these youth. Within the study design, if any stress reactions were experienced during the time I was working with these participants, they would have been strongly encouraged to seek an immediate appointment with their counsellor, to provide on-going support to resolve the issue prompting the stress reaction. Additionally, if any participant showed signs of stress, which, as an experienced registered nurse, I was competent to recognize, our interaction would have been suspended until such time as the participant indicated they were ready to resume. In the event the participant did not wish to resume, for any reason whatsoever, I planned for them to be immediately withdrawn from the study without penalty, with all copies of their photographs being returned to them. Data collected up to that point would have been destroyed. However, I did not have to action any of these plans for reasons of stress.
In fact, one participant told me at the conclusion of their interview that although they knew that our time together was not intended to be therapy, they found talking to me very therapeutic, as they had relayed aspects of the self that had never been shared before. For the five participants who were Spirit-filled Christians, had stress reactions occurred, I would have actioned the resolution strategies outlined above, with the exception that, prior to commencement of their interviews, I obtained permission for participants to be referred to the counselling services of my Church, at no cost to the participants, for on-going support. Despite these considered moves to protect the rights of my participants, I did not find that any participants experienced stress reactions during their interview, nor did they report any adverse outcomes in our subsequent meeting. In fact, to the contrary, a number of my participants indicated during their interview that they developed new insights into issues we spoke of and this gave them an opportunity to think about a number of matters more carefully.

Ownership of Intellectual Property
The second ethical issue that arose out of this study was that of ownership of intellectual property. As discussed previously in the description of the project, I sought permission from the participants to retain and use their photograph(s), thus in effect becoming the owner, but not the author, of their work. When submitting my ethics proposal I gave careful consideration to whether it was possible to return a copy of the photograph(s) taken by the participants to them, to enable them to use or show them. However, the risk to the participants in adopting this approach was that their photograph(s) could subsequently be recognized in publications arising from my work; thus revealing their identity. Therefore, my initial ethics proposal indicated that I would retain all photographs taken in the course of this study. However, as was previously discussed, one of my participants expressed (retrospectively) a strong desire to have their photographs returned, explaining, *I feel as if I have left part of my soul behind.* Out of respect for this concern, and in acknowledgement of the principles guiding interaction with my participants as specified in Chapter 1, Introduction, we talked this issue through. On conclusion of this discussion I agreed I would contact the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee to see if a compromise could be reached, enabling me to return all
unused photographs, that is, all photographs I had definitely decided not to use in any publication arising. This was satisfactory to the Ethics Committee, who gave permission for any unused photographs of any participant to be returned to them if they requested (Appendix G). As there were no other participants to make this request, photographs were only returned to one participant.

**Concealment of the Identify of the Participants**
Closely linked to this discussion is the third ethical issue that arose out of this study and that was concealment of the identity of the participants. To conceal the identity of the participants, both in the present and in the future, they were instructed, as required by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee, not to take, or arrange to have taken, pictures of identifiable individuals. However, although I adhered to this requirement by stressing it in preliminary conversations with all participants, as well as including a statement to this effect within the plain language statement, none of the participants adhered to it, in that photographs of themselves, their family members and loved ones were taken. I brought this matter to the attention of the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee; however, they indicated it was not an issue, provided such pictures were not used in publications arising and I will adhere to this stipulation. Finally, within all publications arising from this work, photographs I use will be identified by the pseudonym selected for each participant, with acknowledgement given that the photograph(s) is their work.

**Disclosure of Information**
The fourth ethical issue to be identified was that of disclosure of what might normally be regarded as private information to me, a relative stranger to the participant. To facilitate comfort in the disclosure process, as previously discussed in this chapter, I built in several occasions to meet the participants prior to their in-depth interview, to enable us to develop some rapport and familiarity with each other. Further, all participants were assured that their disclosures were regarded as confidential, and they were reminded that the purpose of this research was not to judge what they had to say, but to develop a full and rich understanding of the phenomenon of hope from their own unique perspective. Upon conclusion of this
project most of the participants thanked me for inviting them to be involved, which I believe is a good indication that we established comfort and rapport.

**The Participants**

There were eleven participants in this study. Ten of the participants were Australian youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four at the time they were invited to participate, and I was the eleventh participant. As I begin the description of each of the participants, you will notice that I started with myself. This is not because I have a position of supremacy within this study, but purely is a matter of convenience. A description of all other participants is then given in the order in which their interview was undertaken.

**de Sales**

At the time I commenced this study I was forty-eight years old and working on a full-time basis as a senior academic member of staff of the School of Nursing, Deakin University, which is located in Melbourne, Australia. I initially enrolled into my PhD as a part-time student. However, the last two years of my candidature were undertaken full-time, having been awarded a scholarship by Deakin University to complete my degree. I migrated to Australia in 1980 when I was thirty and was a permanent resident for eighteen years. However, I became an Australian citizen in 1998, when I learned that the laws of America had relaxed and that I could hold dual citizenship.

I am the eldest daughter in my family, but not the eldest of the seven children, which includes a sister who is really my biological cousin. I am married and live in what is referred to as a blended family – my husband and I have four children in total, one whom is my own (from a former marriage) and the others who are the children of my husband. Having said this, whenever I am asked, I usually tell people I have four children and I do not qualify that some of them are stepchildren. This is because I am very close to all of the children and we have a loving and warm relationship. I consider them all as my own, whether this is “true” or not. In fact, I have lived with three of the children and, for the daughter I never had the privilege of living with, I was present at the birth of all of her four children – my grandchildren – at her
invitation. I am a Christian and regularly contribute in the life of our church, as an occasional lay preacher and head of a ministerial area that is called Discovering Life Programs. As you can see, I have a busy and full life.

**Cosmos**

Cosmos was an eighteen-year old student, completing his final year in high school, in Australia called the Victorian Certificate of Education or VCE year, at the time of our interview. He lived with his family of origin, which consists of a mother, father and brother. He described his family as close and hard-working, having been through lean times. Cosmos has aspirations to be a professional athlete in his chosen sport and believes he will achieve this goal. He lived overseas with his family for a large portion of his life and, as a consequence, is fluent in more than one language. When he was fifteen years old he returned from overseas without his family and lived with relatives and then friends in Australia until his family rejoined him two years later. His return was related to the fact that his parents wanted him to complete his education in Australia. Although he said he was lonely when he first came back, he maintained regular communication with the family via email. Cosmos has a stepbrother and sister with whom he has a close relationship that he hopes will get even closer. He loves travel, meeting people and having a good time with his “mates” and described himself as a very social person who loves to compete in sport. Cosmos is a self-identified born-again Christian and he attends church semi-regularly.

**Erica**

At the time of her interview Erica, who had been married for almost one year, had just turned twenty-four. She is the youngest daughter of three and her parents divorced when she was fifteen. She had recently re-established a relationship with her father, who moved interstate when her parents divorced, and told me she was very sad that she and her dad were like strangers to each other in many ways. Erica said she has a loving and close relationship with her mother and, although she does not see her sisters often, when they get together they enjoy one another’s company. Erica and her husband have bought a house they are renovating and of which she is very proud. She has a dog she jokingly referred to as her “first child”. Erica, who undertook a nursing qualification in a university, has been a registered nurse for four
years, which she loves. Erica is looking forward to having children one day and describes her life as very simple. Erica identified herself as a Spirit-filled Christian and she does not attend church.

Lisa
Although Lisa was born in Australia, she and her family (mother, and two sisters) moved overseas when she was ten, where they lived until she was eighteen. The family (mother, two sisters plus stepfather) returned to Australia and Lisa described her re-entry as somewhat difficult because she was aware she did not “fit in”. Lisa said she did not respect her mother and, as a consequence, she left the family home soon after returning to Australia to live with friends. Lisa married at a young age (unspecified) but said things just didn’t work out and the relationship ended. At the time of her interview Lisa was twenty-three and unemployed, living with her boyfriend of about one year. She described herself as a person who wants to achieve things. She was considering applying to undertake an arts degree in a college of technical and further education, which is known as TAFE in Australia, although she was not sure if she would be accepted, because she did not complete what was formerly called her High School Certificate (equivalent to the current VCE). I thought Lisa was very beautiful. She had olive skin, long dreadlocks, wore unusual clothes and jewellery and she was very tall. To me she was arresting – striking – and during her interview I told her I thought that she looked like a goddess or a warrior princess. When she replied, she said that people often stared at her and avoided her when she was on the streets because of the way she looked. She said she had become used to this, but felt sad that people often judge you by the way you look and not by whom you are as a person.

James
James was twenty-three when he was interviewed. He has three younger sisters. He moved out of his parental home when he was fifteen because things were difficult there. His parents are not together, although he did not specify how old he was when they parted. Although employed on a part-time basis, James expressed dissatisfaction with the kind of work he was doing, which he described as a boring and dead-end job. He wants to go to university to undertake an arts degree. However, James left school when he was fifteen and had just finished Year 10.
Because he did not complete his high school certificate, he enrolled in the creative arts photography course of the centre that I affiliated with for the purposes of this study, so he could develop a portfolio to present with his application for admission. James travelled overseas with his live-in girlfriend a couple of months prior to his interview. He said he wants to get ahead in life – have a house, good health and just generally be happy. He said this desire surprised him in some ways because he had generally not been a happy person throughout his lifetime.

Vanesha
Vanesha was twenty-two years old at the time of her interview and unemployed. When Vanesha was a young girl her mother doused herself with petrol (in front of Vanesha) and set herself alight. When she relayed this story, she said it wasn’t too good and that she thought it screwed her up a lot. From that time Vanesha became her mother’s caretaker, feeding her, cleaning her and cleaning her wounds. At the age of fifteen she moved out “under a dark cloud” from her family home, which consisted of her parents and sister. However, she returned to the family home for a brief time when she was eighteen and then left again to live in a group house. Vanesha now lives with her boyfriend of a couple of months, which she described as exciting but scary. Vanesha has a passion for painting and hopes one day to exhibit her paintings overseas and in different parts of the world. She has an ambition to travel, make lots of money and do what she wants to do, although she said that this scares her because, in the past when she had become good at something, she usually quit. In her closing remarks she told me that one of her life’s ambitions was to have the strength to be still, have children and be satisfied.

Christian
When Christian and I spoke he was twenty-two years old, unemployed for the last year and a half and sharing a house with a budding musician. He was an only child from a very artistic and creative family, whom he described as very loving and close. When Christian was sixteen he moved out of his family home because his life style did not complement that of his parents. He described it as an amicable parting and said he goes to see his folks whenever he can, although they live some distance from him in rural surrounds. When Christian left home he had completed Year 10, but
once he moved out he started working full-time and then he travelled. Christian described himself as a natural-born city dweller who drew his strength and vitality from the city. He also said he loves art because it gives meaning to life, and he was consumed by the desire for his artwork to be placed within a gallery or museum where it could be shared with, and appreciated by, others. Christian spoke frequently during our time together of the importance of loving and being loved, and he also spoke at length and with great passion about the inhumanity of oppression.

**Keisha**

Keisha, who was not born in Australia, had just turned twenty-five at the time of our interview. When I asked her how old she was she giggled and said I’m twenty-five, but I was twenty-four at the time you asked me if I wanted to be involved, so I hope you don’t kick me out! She and her family (mother, father, three sisters and two brothers) migrated to Australia when Keisha was twelve years old. At the age of fourteen when she became pregnant, she left home to live with her boyfriend’s family, because her father treated her and her siblings in a harsh, strict way, without any freedom. Three months after she left her son was born, just as she turned fifteen. She said that even if she had not been pregnant she would have left anyway, because she was tired of being treated like a prisoner. After her son was born Keisha continued to go to high school, taking him to childcare at her school. She completed Year 11, but did not think she was ready to progress to year 12, so she re-enrolled in Year 11. However, she did not complete this year because her son was killed in a house fire. He was three years old at the time and, about a week after he died, Keisha found out that she was pregnant again. She said she had to make a decision on whether to go ahead and keep the child she was carrying because she wanted to make the best decision, not based on wanting to replace her son. She had counselling, and in the end she decided to go through with the pregnancy and she gave birth to her daughter.

When her daughter was one Keisha met and moved in with two women who subsequently adopted her daughter after they had all lived together for around four years. Adopting out her daughter was an extremely hard decision for her to make. It caused her to explore numerous avenues and options before she made it, because she
wanted to do what was best for her child. She also realized that, following the death of her son, she had not really grieved for him and this in some ways had stunted her growth.

Following the adoption of her daughter, Keisha moved interstate and has since met a woman with whom she has formed a deep and loving relationship. They are now living together. Her daughter comes to see her and although she said the decision to give her daughter up for adoption was hard, she felt it was necessary to enable a lot of healing to take place – both for herself and for her daughter.

**Sarah**
Sarah, who was twenty-one at the time of her interview, was getting ready to be married in four months’ time as well as graduate from university, having obtained a double degree in interrelated areas of health. She was a triplet who was born overseas, and her family migrated to Australia when the girls were five years old. She said that she has been a churchgoer all of her life and that it’s been a strong influence. Sarah described herself as a pretty happy person although she tended to become stressed quite often. She said she has been blessed because she comes from a loving family, and she was looking forward to sharing love and having a wonderful life with her fiancé. For their future plans Sarah and her fiancé would like to work in a place where they could be useful, perhaps in a disadvantaged country, showing God’s love in a very practical sense. Sarah is a self-professed Spirit-filled Christian.

**Titania**
Titania was twenty-two years old when she and I met to discuss her ideas on hope. She shared that basically, from the time she was young, her family (mother, father and two siblings) travelled around Australia, and she thinks that has had much to do with who she is. Titania is the eldest of the three children. She said she finds it easy to make friends and integrate herself into different circles and social groups, and believes this is because her family travelled so extensively. Titania was home-schooled and completed her Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). When she turned twenty her family stopped travelling and settled down in a large Australian city. She went to university to commence a professional qualification, which she
discovered she hated, so she quit. At the time of our interview she was working on a part-time basis, just to get some money. Titania is a self-professed Spirit-filled Christian. While we talked Titania described a time in her life when she fell away from the church and God, thinking of Him only in the context of He'll condemn me for decisions she had made about her life-style. However, she said that in the last two years she had recommitted her life to God and, for her, this was a quality decision.

**Kathleen**

Kathleen, who had been married for two years at the time of our interview, was a twenty-four year old full-time student studying for a professional qualification. She grew up in a small town and described her early years as happy and content, knowing she was loved, and never felt locked in. Kathleen was the youngest of three children and described many happy memories of being with her siblings and parents, as well as some painful ones. When Kathleen was eighteen she left her home to attend an interstate university. After having completed the first three years of her course she took a year off to work and gain experience in her chosen field. During this time she met her boyfriend, and as she was returning to her university to complete her qualification, they decided to marry so he could return with her. Kathleen has a burning ambition to undertake strategic planning and work in an organization that has been called in after a natural disaster or war to rebuild the community. She said that she is an idealist who loves people and who wants to do something that is bigger than she. She has an ambition to one day own her own home, which she can enjoy with her husband.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I explicated the methods used to conduct this research and provided explanations regarding my decision to embrace Gadamer’s hermeneutic phenomenology for the conduct of this research. I identified the means by which the participants were recruited and laid the foundations for the conditions under which my participants and I formed a relationship and interacted with each other to explore their hope. I argued for, and demonstrated the importance of, congruence between the study methodology and the methods used to elucidate the phenomenon being
explored. I also gave a brief description of the process of data analysis I used and provided a rationale for my decision to depart from undertaking thematic analysis. I identified ethical considerations of the study, indicating how issues related to the ownership of intellectual property, support for the participants and maintenance of confidentiality were handled. Finally, I provided some descriptive information about each of the participants to enable the reader to have an appreciation for the context of their exploration of the phenomenon of hope.
CHAPTER 5 HORIZONS REVEALED

Four great experiences:
the giving of love,
the breath of courage rising within,
the communication between yourself and everything else;
the satisfaction of taking part in your own journey.
Richard Hill

Introduction
This chapter reveals the phenomenon of hope as seen through the eyes of the participants of this study. Rather than presenting the findings using more traditional conventions and titling this chapter the study findings, I present my findings in a manner that is consistent with the methodological approach to this study, as previously described in Chapter 3, Methodology, and Chapter 4, The Study Method of this thesis. This decision is in keeping with my absolute commitment to be guided throughout the entirety of this work by the philosophical underpinnings of my study. Further, it also provides me with a unique challenge and opportunity to portray the phenomenon of hope in a fresh way. Thus, this chapter begins with a description of my own horizons or pre-understandings about hope. As previously described, my pre-understandings about hope were carried into my interactions with my participants, so this information is shared to enable the reader to develop an appreciation for the background thoughts and attitudes I had when I began interacting with my participants. They are also shared so the reader can gain some insight into ways my own understanding of the phenomenon of hope enlarged and changed over time. Following the explication of my own hope, the fore-projections or early understandings of hope that emerged as I interrogated the data are revealed. Subsequently, the prejudices, or projections, that emerged about the whole of the phenomenon of hope are shared, and finally a fusion of horizons is identified in Chapter 6, Fusion of Horizons, whereby the phenomenon of hope for the participants of this study is explicated.

Pre-understanding: My Initial Conceptions of Hope
I freely admit I was very naïve, when I commenced this study, to presume that I could easily and readily articulate my own understanding and sources of hope,
because, as I discovered, it was painstakingly difficult for me to do this. The following is an extract from my journal:

*I realize now that I have commenced this study, that my own understanding of hope is severely limited. I have not dwelt on the concept or experience of hope over time – instead, I have taken its existence for granted. Also, I have not really had a passion to identify the essence of this phenomenon – I am getting one, but I don’t feel like I know much about hope at all. Whilst I do know that at times I have been very hopeful, there also have been times in my life when I have been flat; but I can’t precisely say why, how, or if my feelings are related to the phenomenon of hope. I am not clear whether there were any real differences between hope and other similar life experiences such as optimism, joy, wishing and determination. I wonder whether the people who will be a part of my study will have hope or whether they will be hopeless – I suspect that a lot of them may have lost hope along the way, but I guess that I’ll just have to wait and see. It sort of bugs me that I don’t think I am getting any closer to understanding what hope is from what I am reading, except that I am beginning to believe hope as a distinct concept has not been well defined at all.

My journal goes on:

*Having said this though, because I have been dwelling on the meaning of hope I actually realize that I spend little time or energy thinking about hope and feeling desperate for things to go well in my life. I don’t think this is a consequence of general maturing (ha ha, getting older you mean) or being hopeful – I think it’s an outgrowth of developing a rich and deeply meaningful relationship with God. Actually, when I think about it, it surprises me to realize that I have stopped hoping for things in my life to turn out for the good – I just believe, from a Christian perspective, that they will. This is not to deny the day-to-day 'niggles' and struggles of living and life – rather it attests to the fact that I am assured on a personal level my life will go well and I will spend eternity with God. I acknowledge this statement as a personal reflection of who I am and what I believed in. But, I think this belief is a faith statement, not an expression of hope.

Bearing in mind that Gadamer (1989) describes things that we know and believe as our horizons, and asserts that in order to understand another we must first understand ourselves, I will continue to share my reflections from my journal on my initial thoughts about hope:

*For me, hope is about expectations for the future and a life that has meaning, purpose and is richly fulfilling. It is also about the belief that people have the right to experience all the good that life has to offer and a hope that there will not be too many crushing
disappointments or blows along the way. What I mean is that hope is about future expectations and a wish that life will be kind. Hum, I just realized that for me hope and wishing were deeply enmeshed – I hadn’t really thought about that before. Also, my hope is about determination, will and a zest for life – the capacity to face life square on, without regrets and fears that cripple or stand in the way. If I had to sum up all of these sentiments in one succinct statement, it would be that hope for me is the belief that we can and should look forward to a life that is good.

A further journal entry revealed the following sentiments:

Well, I’ve still been thinking about hope and I’ve come to the conclusion that I hope humanity will work towards preserving the integrity of our world – preserving it to ensure that its resource is abundantly available for future generations. It seems to me that this is what hope is about – caring, having compassion and participating fully in achieving the desires of our hearts. For me hope is also about the possibilities of living in a world that is safe, predictable, reliable and dependable. Having said this though, I am deeply aware that the world in which we live is under threat from many different sources. When I think about threats to the biophysical integrity of our world it turns me to hoping that we will wake up in time to realize that our world is precious, its resources finite and our responsibilities to protect it great. So for me, hope in this instance emerges from fears and threats – interesting, that’s what the literature says.

As I summed up these statements on hope I wrote the following:

For me hope is the capacity to look beyond one’s self and embrace a way of living that includes respecting and treating with reverence all that the world has to offer. So, if I put together my first hope statement with this one, I believe that hope is an enduring capacity to look forward and to embrace life, believing that it has purpose and is rich and meaningful.

From these descriptions of my hope it can be seen that my expressions of hope were not unique, nor were they original. I carried the knowledge and experience of my hope with me when I interacted with my participants and I used it as the filter through which I heard their stories. I was also aware that other thoughts and questions about hope were emerging as I explored the literature and then interacted with the texts of my participants. However, I did not hold my thoughts in a place of supremacy, as I was prepared to learn something new about hope. I was also prepared for the texts of my participants to tell me something new about the nature and experience of hope as seen through their eyes. Again, as Gadamer (1989)
asserts, it is important to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness, thus asserting its own truth against one’s own fore-projections.

Fore-projections and Early Understanding: Accommodating the Views of Others
The period I spent undertaking data analysis and developing an early understanding of the phenomenon of hope was a very exciting time for me. I found that once I developed intimacy with the dialogue of my participants, I began to accommodate their views and develop an early understanding of hope from their perspective. Ideas began to tumble out of my memory of my participants’ stories and from the pages of their texts into my consciousness. At first these were a jumble of thoughts, impressions, feelings, emotions and expressions. I realized that it was imperative to bring some order into the thoughts that were amassing, as well as into the way I was thinking about my participants’ expressions of hope. To facilitate this process I made a conscious decision to interact with the texts one at a time. On each of the texts I made extensive and thorough margin notations, which I returned to time and time again as I dwelt on what the participants said. Eventually all margin notations and salient items were transferred on to separate computer spread-sheets, so I could see the data of each participant in its totality whilst I contemplated them. This technique was helpful because, as I looked at this list, whilst comparing it to the original text and in the context in which it was said, I realized I needed to make some adjustments to each list to enable it to more faithfully reflect the words of the speaker, to the best of my ability. I have not presented a full listing of what each participant had to say, because this is not the end point of the analysis. However, many of their expressions are quoted verbatim in the next section of the analysis, which is called prejudice – moving closer to understanding the phenomenon of hope.

Prejudice: Moving Closer to Understanding the Phenomenon of Hope
Having identified some early understandings or fore-projections of what my participants were telling me about hope, the next step of the analytic process was to allow prejudices or expectations or projections about the whole to surface and to
discriminate among them. This involved carefully contemplating each data set in its totality, whilst asking myself “What is this person saying and how can these ideas be understood in meaningful ways or be encapsulated under prejudices that reflected their major concerns?” As I worked with the data sets, I found it necessary to circle back and forth from the original texts to the data sets many times over. In doing this I found that as I moved things around, both on paper and in my head, I became increasingly confident that prejudices were beginning to surface. At times I changed my mind about my reflections, feeling the words I selected to exemplify a prejudice did not portray the essence of what a participant was telling me. So I again returned to the text to explore the context in which the discussion took place. Finally, I was able to identify a number of prejudices from the data of each participant and, as this step is nearing the portrayal of the essence of hope, I will now present these findings under the name of each participant.

**Cosmos**

Cosmos, the youngest of all the participants, had a wealth of ideas to share about hope. As I considered the totality of what he shared with me, four dominant prejudices emerged. They were:

- having purpose fulfilled through working hard
- helping myself and others
- enjoying life by relating to others and
- being assured of a good future.

Each of these will now be discussed.

**Having purpose fulfilled through working hard**

Cosmos expressed, on numerous occasions, a strong will and desire to be a professional athlete and this filled him with a sense of purpose and hope. As he expressed it:

> One of my greatest dreams is that I will become a fantastic athlete, and when I get there I’m just really looking forward to just, you know, encouraging people, motivating them, saying, you know, look, you can work hard and you can have a good life. And I suppose that’s always been a desire of mine, because I like having a good time and I like to bring that to other people too.
Further on in the conversation he expressed:

*And I suppose that my dream of becoming a professional athlete represents a hope for me, because I can see that there’s a reason to be here and I can find fulfilment.*

When I asked him what he would do if he didn’t succeed in his chosen sport, he said:

*I cannot really think of any time when I seriously doubted – it’s just not a reality, it’s just not a possibility. I have had fear sometimes – but no, there’s just never been anything else for me – I don’t know how to answer that… I know that if I work hard I will do it and I will achieve all that…I know that time is a couple of years off yet, but at the moment I am really relishing the opportunity to work and to work hard. And when some people say that’s a really dangerous position to be in [wanting to be at the top] – well fair enough, whatever they want to think.*

Viewing having purpose fulfilled through working hard from a different perspective,

Cosmos shared two of his pictures with me as he reflected:

*I didn’t really know how to take a picture of God, so I took a photo of a Bible and this other book called You the Leader. God gives me hope because he’s given me so much opportunity and that makes me want to work hard. Like I feel a responsibility, and it’s hope, because you think, yeah, it would be great to be a leader and to help people and it just motivates me to work harder to succeed…there’s no way at the age of 18 that I am ready [to be a leader] but I know that stuff will come later, when I am ready.*

**Helping myself and others**

Cosmos had a great sense of and belief in the importance of helping others as a facet of hope. He said:

*I like to think that I can help people to enjoy life and to be motivated to live and have a good time. You know, that’s one good reason for me to continue to strive to be better and all that sort of stuff.*

Further in the conversation he reflected:

*After I became a Christian I felt a lot stronger the reality of hope and that I would be able to help people…I have a willingness to help and serve.*

When I asked Cosmos what was the most important thing he wanted to tell me about hope he replied:

*The most important thing is to know that you are liked and loved, or that you will be liked and loved and that you can help people.*
Enjoying life by relating to others

Throughout his time with me Cosmos stressed the importance of enjoying life and how this was made real through relationship with others. He mused:

*I just love being around with people and having a good time...I mean I go out with my friends, and it’s just little things, but I think, mate, it’s just great to be alive...I don’t know, I just wake up on a beautiful day, walk down the street and I’m off to play sport and just seeing – you know, I love my country and it’s just fantastic. I think it’s just the fact that I can cohabitate [sic] with other people, and I can really enjoy life because they are there – hopefully, I bring a bit of fun stuff into their lives too.*

He further said:

*Friends make life worth living – I just really look forward to being friends and to enjoying friendship – I don’t care what I do with my friends, just hanging around and doing nothing, veging on the couch – it’s all about that I think.*

When Cosmos spoke of his relationships with his friends and family he related:

*I love having a good time together – I love that. Like my brother, he’s always laughing and having a good time – he works hard, too, you know, but I love having him around, he makes me happy – every time I hang around with him I’m just happy and content, and he brings a lot of hope into my life...and all of my friends, close friends and family are just extremely lucky and have great lives – not having hope would be just the opposite of that, you just wouldn’t enjoy life.*

And when Cosmos spoke further of some people in one of his photos he said:

*People give me hope and make me wanna do well. There’s my mom, my aunt and uncle, and there’s my best mate, and it’s just a privilege to know them as my family and friends and, yeah, every time I hang around them I’m just really happy and content and they bring a lot of hope into my life.*

And a bit later:

*I’m just all in for having lots of laughs and, yeah, just talking to people about what stuff they’re into, encouraging them about that, and I reckon it’s a good way to be.*

Cosmos admitted he had an idol in his chosen sport, and here is what he had to say about him:

*I want to get up there in the ranks of international sport and I want to be like he is – a good bloke that everyone can relate to and that*
anyone can talk to. You know, he had kind of humble beginnings but the guy still wants to come home and be with his family.

Cosmos also expressed his thoughts in relation to God and enjoying life when he said:

*I have had some interesting experiences with Christianity, but just the knowledge that, you know, that God loves me all the time and that He wants the best for me and wants me to succeed with, you know, stuff that I really love doing. Yeah, that's incredible... what has really brought me through all sorts of stuff is the fact that I know that there’s a God who loves me for who I am. And there’s this idea that you’re loved and that there’s God – someone that wants the best for you and wants you to do things that you just really love yourself and are dear to you. Yeah, that’s what brings me through a lot of time...and there are times that it scares me to think if I, if I turn away from God I mean, there goes my hope of ever, ever doing anything worthwhile.*

**Being assured of a good future**

Cosmos often expressed looking forward to a good future. He said:

*Hope for me is just knowing that I’ve got a better and brighter future to look forward to and I suppose, yeah – looking toward my future or destiny whatever you want to call that, I have lots of hope there.*

Later on he said:

*When I was younger these thoughts weren’t so refined, but there was never any question about my future and being successful. Yeah, there was no reason not to hope.*

His ideas also included the expression that:

*If you have hope then I think you will have – even if it may not be sort of strong at some times – you will have some kind of positive attitude towards your future.*

Cosmos also talked of having a good future in relation to the knowledge that he has changed. He said:

*I’ve learnt to have some sort of retrospect on my life, and I’ve looked back, and actually the past is something that gives me hope. Because I have learned stuff and think far out, that’s pretty cool to have come all that way considering I started off so bad. And that kind of gives me hope for the future, yeah.*
Sport was never far off in my conversations with Cosmos and, in relation to having a good future consider the statement:

I think it’s no coincidence that I have learnt French and that I do get along with people from other countries, because I feel that I am going to travel heaps with my sport. Yeah, so every time I am made aware of that, it just makes me happy. And it fills me full of hope for the future when I will be travelling.

He also reflected:

I’ve got so many things in my life that give me hope – when I think about my life it is pretty much what I would consider to be a perfect life. And when people say, what about your sport – well, I’m playing, I’m getting better, and that’s a perfect situation for me. So I’m really lucky, yeah.

Erica

The expressions of hope that emerged throughout the time that Erica and I spent together were many and varied. As I considered the totality of what she shared with me, five dominant prejudices emerged. They were:

- developing or having a sense of achievement
- looking forward in anticipation
- having close bonds
- giving into the lives of others and
- the experience of hopelessness.

Each of these will now be individually discussed.

**Developing or having a sense of achievement**

Erica talked at length and with some pride about the home she and her husband had just purchased. In her words she said:

I have always been a saver...I liked seeing my bank account grow and when we bought the house I just thought of it as changing one asset for another. Somehow, I just had an idea in my mind about what I wanted the house to be... and I was actually impressed with my husband because, prior to us buying a house, he didn’t even know what end of the hammer to hold...and he has been just terrific and I’ve been really proud of him. And I think that’s what it is – it’s a sort of sense of achievement...I could stand back with him and say look at what we’ve done at our age and with no actual building experience.
Erica also spoke of having a sense of achievement when she talked about herself and her family members when she shared:

If you work hard enough, if you’re disciplined or motivated you’ll get there. There are opportunities and everything’s not just black and white – this is where you started off now, but this is not where you are going to be forever.

She further reflected:

I think my sisters and I have general things in common, like we all strive for perfection in our jobs...and we don’t do anything by half measure – if we’re gonna do something we’re gonna do it correctly...like my sister, she just always accomplishes...and it just shows through in her teaching.

The notion of sense of achievement was also portrayed through Erica’s discussion when she shared the story of a requirement to repeat a subject at university because of a prior failure. She said:

I was in the most horrible state thinking, what if I fail again? But I guess I felt hopeful, because I knew this time that I put the study in, that I pulled my finger out and I knew that there was only one person that was going to make Erica pass and that was Erica, but she’s done her studying this time and she was prepared to take the exam.

Finally, Erica spoke of a sense of achievement as she relayed strategies she used when she was trying to do something that was particularly difficult for her:

When I was studying, if I had a lot of difficulty grasping the concepts and if I went over and over something and couldn’t get it, I’d stop and go for a walk. And it would give me an opportunity to clear my mind...and I could feel the sun on me and I could just feel, not necessarily God, but something inside of me was saying – I could just feel my heart contract and I could, I just had this sense of knowing that I’d been injected with something – that I could go back and try again and that I would get it.

Looking forward in anticipation
While Erica reflected on the joy of owning her home, she not only talked about having a sense of achievement but she also talked about looking forward to the future. She said:

It gives me a sense of optimism, that maybe this will be the house that we start to raise a family in...and maybe a sense of hope, because we’ve still got a lot more that we can do, so I’m sort of looking forward to more things that we can do...if we’ve been able
to achieve this, maybe we can aspire to living in something maybe, with more land and a little more grand maybe later on.

She also said:

*Hope to me is looking to the future...looking into the future sort of gives you something to strive towards.*

When Erica was talking about her work she commented:

*You know how I was saying before? That hope is even if you’re having a really rotten today, that there’s always tomorrow? Tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it...so hope is, if you don’t feel that you can do it yourself independently, that you can maybe call on other people to help you and that maybe there’s somebody there that you could learn from or have them help you...and you can think, yeah, maybe I can do this.*

Finally, Erica shared a sense of optimism that things will work out, and that she could look forward with anticipation, when she said:

*I tend to use hope and optimism interchangeably, because to me to be optimistic is to have a sense that things will work out tomorrow – and to me hope is similar. As I was saying before, even if you’re having a really bad day today, there’s always tomorrow... It’s a new day and this is an opportunity to erase those thoughts and start thinking positively...the sunset at the end of the day sort of draws the line between okay well this has been a horrible day, the sun has set and that day’s over. Reflect on it, and think about the things that you don’t want to do again. But tomorrow is a new opportunity for you to make sure that you don’t do those things again.*

**Having close bonds**

Erica reflected on numerous occasions and in various ways that having close bonds was an aspect of hope for her. In relation to her family her words were:

*My family is really important to me...and hope is about knowing them, being able to rely on them, knowing they can rely on you, that you can be there for them...my family just gives me a sense of belonging, that I am here for a purpose that I’m somebody’s daughter, sister and if there’s a problem they can rely on me and I will do anything in my power to help them.*

She also said about her dad:

*When I close my eyes and think of hope in terms of my dad, I see grandchildren and I really do hope that he can be a part of their life. I can see us just being comfortable and knowing each other in terms of just everyday.*
About her mum she revealed:

*I’ve never thought of my life as being without mum, it’s just a given that she’s always gonna be there.*

She also shared:

*My idea of a great night in is, well, being at home, in front of a fire, having my family over for dinner.*

Erica also spoke of having close bonds in relation to her friends stating:

*We’ve built relationships and friendships where we spend a lot of time together out of work. And I guess it gives me a sense of hope that I am important to other people, they choose to spend time with me and that I represent pleasure to them…maybe hope and relationship tie in, because it means that I can give of myself to other people, so that then I feel I have a purpose in life. Whereas if I didn’t have any relationships with anybody why would I need to be here?*

**Giving into the lives of others**

Separate from, but closely related to, the notion of having close bonds with others, Erica relayed that a source of hope for her was in giving into the lives of others. She said about her relationship with her patients:

*One of the pictures that I took was me, here, in my nursing uniform…and I suppose it’s not just me, Erica, the nurse, but the idea of a nurse, that I can provide hope to my patients. That I am there to help them, give hope to them by sort of being the middle person helping them to get back to what they were prior to coming in.*

She also said:

*I try to be a spark in their day, I try to be happy and let them know that I value and respect them as a person, I guess. And in some ways I try to be their hands, their feet and their legs. And I try to give them a sense back that, well, even if you’ve had a stroke don’t feel that your life is over now, that you’re hopeless, ’cause you’re not.*

Erica also spoke of ways in which even strangers can give into the lives of others when she relayed this story as she showed me a photograph:

*There were a couple of people that were on a boardwalk sort of thing, and these two ladies were helping this little girl up the stairs because she couldn’t reach each step…they’ve come to this place which is blue sky, water and they’re doing something that is causing, or that is creating – and giving – them pleasure out of the simple things in life.*
When Erica spoke of her desire to have children one day she mused:

It gives me a sense of hope that one day my husband and I will have children...that one day I will be a mum and I will be able to give to my children the same opportunities that I was given.

And when she shared a bit of herself and, who she is as a person her words were:

I like to give to people. I’d like to think that I’d be the same person if I had a million dollars or if I had nothing, but I have this idea of showing people that you appreciate them by spending time with them. So I suppose I put value on my own time, and to me that reflects that you’ve spent more time and effort than just going out and buying expensive gifts.

The experience of hopelessness

It was not possible for Erica to speak about hope without speaking about hopelessness. To convey this aspect I will return to a previously mentioned episode in Erica’s life, when she failed one of her university subjects. Although in the end she turned this situation around from hopelessness to hope, this is what she had to say initially:

I just felt completely stupid. Like I wasn’t even, shouldn’t even, be in the course. That I didn’t even have the knowledge to be a nurse. That I’d let myself down. I was angry with myself…and I didn’t know how I was going to face the friends that I left behind…I didn’t have any hope at all…so I sort of closed myself off and didn’t want to associate with anyone who would find out what I’d done because I’d be mortified…I certainly didn’t have a sense of hope then.

Lisa

Like the other participants, Lisa was forthright in sharing her ideas of hope with me. Through analysis of her hope stories four dominant prejudices emerged. They were:

- having the courage to achieve and change
- having the capacity to see things differently
- knowing that you and others care and
- being at peace with your inner self.

These prejudices will now be discussed.
**Having the courage to achieve and change**

For Lisa, having courage to achieve and change was really important for herself, her family members and for others. When she reflected on this, in relation to her sisters:

> I haven’t finished Year 12, I still have a few subjects. I really should have pushed from the beginning but I never did – but I always push my sisters to do it, to finish. It’s important for them to finish, hell yeah. It kind of means a lot when you’re kind of looking for a job, or you know, you want to get a better paid job, or things like that...and I want them to have dreams, I want them to achieve their dreams basically.

Lisa relayed that she was very disappointed in many ways with her mother – that:

> She had done some nasty things... and she lies a lot... and that she can never say no to things, and then she has to make up things so she can get away with it.

And in relation to this she said:

> She just left [Australia] a while ago, she just totally abandoned my sisters, and I won’t forgive her for that. But I hope, I hope that there is hope for her to change – to realize and to have the courage to change.

When Lisa spoke about herself she revealed:

> I am trying to study next year, to get into a course. I think maybe graphic design, or something like that. I kind of want to do something creative, where eventually I can work to make things better within myself...I think that one of the reasons that I want to go back and study is because I want to achieve things.

Further on, when Lisa was talking about a really tough time in her life she relayed:

> You can always change, you know...like I was trying to get through it, and like not be defeated, and you know, that I could do it – and I think that’s what got me through, that I knew you’re the only one person that can help you.

Then she said:

> I don’t let things kind of pin me down – if I’m not doing something well I approach certain people and say it’s not working well, I can’t do it. But I do this to hear no, you can do it, you can do it, what are you talking about? I won’t give up easily.
Lisa also spoke of her boyfriend in relation to having the courage to achieve and change:

> He encourages me to do things and makes me feel like I can. He is very encouraging and says, yeah, you can do that, definitely you can do anything, Lisa, that you want to. He just gives me the hope that I can, can achieve anything.

Lisa relayed a story about a girl that she met in the toilets of the public transportation system:

> She was crying her eyes out and I went up to her...she started to talk to me, that she was very young and she’d left home and was living with an older man...but now he didn’t want to have anything to do with her. And I just kind of sat there for a while and encouraged her, saying she could do things on her own, that she didn’t need anyone giving her things, that, you know, she had the courage to achieve things and get on with her life and not rely on other people to make her happy.

When I asked Lisa when she heard the word hope what kind of things she thought about she replied:

> That things won’t always be dull, bad, that there’s always hope for change. And that you can change you know.

She also said:

> Hope can make you happy, you know. It helps you get on and achieve things.

Further on she said:

> I think growing and changing for the better is a very hopeful thing, you know? It’s not so hard to do when you recognise where you go wrong, but it is harder to change things in your life like your personality, so it’s a very hopeful thing to be able to achieve things like changing your personality.

**Having the capacity to see things differently**

When I asked Lisa what hope was to her she said:

> It’s something that will, I don’t know, help you in ways and times in life to see things differently and feel different...when I am not really well, I just wake up and look at the things that will make me smile, I don’t know, the funny things that are around you and you go, oh, look, and that brings a smile to my face.
Later on she related a story about an elderly lady whom she met on the street:

*It was funny. A couple of months ago this old lady, I never got to know her, but she was quite cute and she says, oh, your hair is so lovely, can I feel it? And I was like, thank you, it just made my day ’cause then I get other looks from people, and I just think, if you just bothered to say hello to me you’d see that, you know, I’m just a normal person that dresses kind of different…it would be nice to be judged for who you are rather than what you look like.*

Lisa also relayed a story of when she worked in a community-care setting:

*There was this one person that had a lot of issues. She just had the ability to hurt people with her words…and she was violent at times, and I used to think why am I putting up with this? But then I realized that this lady was, well, I knew she had a mental illness, but she was just used to the hospital way and she loved the nurses and she really didn’t want to leave that place where she was institutionalised. Yeah, she was just used to the order of things.*

Lisa talked about life in general and said:

*It gives you hope that life sometimes, when life’s in turmoil and things are really bad and horrible, you can look forward to it becoming calm. Because I just think that everything’s gonna be, you know, you have ups and downs and that’s what life is all about, and you have to deal with the downs. But I just don’t think life is always down – it has to be up, like, you know, I always think there’s a reason to find it…you have to be hopeful in the present and for the future…like most people think day to day, but I always have a little plan of what I want to do, and you need hope and encouragement so that you can achieve.*

When I asked Lisa to complete the sentence “I hope that…” she replied:

*I hope that people could see beyond their own noses and realize that they have to live with other people; therefore being nicer and respectful of each other. It just comes down to respect and things can change…you know, we need to respect one another and trust each other to help each other out.*

**Knowing that you and others care**

Lisa spoke about the importance of being with people who care and of caring in general. This was particularly evident when she spoke about the girl in the toilet who was mentioned previously. She ended this story by saying:

*I gave her some hope, I gave her a big cuddle, you know, affection can be really soothing when someone’s not feeling well. And, you know, hopefully she thought, wow, this stranger came up to me and*
made me feel better. At least at that moment I think she knew that someone cared.

When Lisa spoke of her younger sister she reflected:

I find it comforting that she can trust me, that she comes to me and that she has trust and can talk to me about things. I’m quite different to her, but she respects me and trusts me and knows that I care.

And when she relayed a story about an incident where her former husband had been in a major accident and it was thought that he was dying, she said:

I wasn’t involved with him, it was quite clear that it was over. But I went there [to the hospital] just because I cared about him as a person, not as a lover or as a husband, but because I care about him as a person. And I just hung in there, and I talked to him and said, you know, you can make it, if you don’t want to die, you know, what are you doing? I was just there for him, you know, for the whole time he was there, twenty-four hours a day, even sleeping there, and I don’t know what gave me the strength to do that. He was dying, you know, and I suppose there was hope for me that he didn’t die.

About this incident she further relayed:

I knew that he just wasn’t ready. I don’t know what gave him strength while I was there 24 hours a day. That sounds really funny, but I don’t know what it was…and the other guy next door was the same age, and both of them were in a car accident at the same time, and both of them, like, their pupils were dilated, and they both had serious brain swelling. But the other guy died.

Conversely, she also stressed the importance of care when she spoke about people who don’t care:

I don’t like mean people, I don’t like greedy people who think constantly about money, and they’d do anything to achieve, and they hurt other people and things like that. And I don’t like people that mistreat other people or that would hurt the land. And I’m always trying to be conscious of what I do that affects other people, not to hurt other people or things. It’s always on my mind never to be nasty – I mean I can be nasty, but if someone is going to talk to me rude or something like that, it’s not like I’m just gonna go, it’s not like I’d use spite or anything like that.

When Lisa spoke about being in community with others she said:

We’re social beings, people are social beings and we can’t live on our own. Really, we need to be in a community with people and I think that you’ve got to have the right people around you, watching each other. I have always managed to have a nice group of friends around
me. Yeah, we’re social beings, and there’s a lot of people that might not have close friends, which is really difficult, because I think people need to talk about things and let things off their chests, whether they are going through happy or sad times. If I am happy, I need to, you know, talk to people and make them aware, and if I’m not, I just need them to know as well.

Lisa showed me a picture of her boyfriend and mused:

This person is a very special person in my life. He makes me happy, he does, he makes me feel special and he makes me feel pretty. And I tell him that the reason that I feel pretty is because he makes me feel pretty.

Later on she said:

I was walking along the beach with my boyfriend and I looked at this old couple and I went, I hope we’ll be old and walk together along the beach as well.

When Lisa spoke about caring within the centre in which she was undertaking a creative arts program she said:

The people in here are really, really nice, you know. You’re always welcome – like, I was away for five weeks or more, and then I was on holidays for a few months. But when I came back they were like, well, I’m glad you’re back. We were really looking forward to you coming back. I think they give hope to a lot of people that might not have it. And they’re always willing to listen to people that are having problems and stuff like that. It always comes back to people for some reason for me – I’m a people person and people have to have people.

**Being a peace with your inner self**

When Lisa described herself she reflected:

I give myself hope. I think I encourage myself a lot, and I feel good about myself. Like, I feel happy with how I am. Yeah, like, I don’t care if people stare at me ’cause I realize that a lot of people stare at me, but you get used to it. I just walk and I know that I am not a bad person. I know that there’s nothing wrong with me and that, you know, that I am strong, and I am just content with myself and that makes my mind feel good, that I am not just kidding myself, that my mind is telling me as well, that, like, you’re a good person, and that’s just the way that I encourage myself and I give myself hope as well.
Lisa embraced a view of the world where tolerance and understanding was a priority:

*I want a better world and I am trying to do my best for a better world. In a better world people being more understanding of each other, and there’s not too much greed and power and politics, and you know, that people are decent.*

When Lisa was looking at her photographs she said of one in particular:

*Okay. This one, this one is just a beautiful day, there are only a few clouds here and there. And I think it just gives me hope when you wake up and you see a nice sunny day. It just makes me hopeful that it’s safe and everything is going to be shiny looking for the rest of the day…sunny days are just, you know, they make me feel so lovely, and I don’t know, it just makes me feel happy… and if you’re happy your mind is clear, and therefore you can achieve a lot by being happy.*

**James**

I would describe James as quiet, softly spoken, and intense as he talked about hope with me. Through analysis of his dialogue four dominant prejudices emerged and they were:

- getting somewhere and achieving goals
- being content
- connecting with self or others and
- hopelessness.

Each of these prejudices will now be discussed.

**Getting somewhere and achieving goals**

From the outset of his time with me and throughout his discussion James identified that getting somewhere and achieving goals was linked to his experiences and ideas about hope. This was revealed as he said:

*I came to this centre because I am hoping to study next year and, yeah, I’ve been coming here to try and get different skills. This is one place where I can come and learn things. It’s hard to put it in one sentence, but there’s an opportunity to come here and improve things if you want to – and since I’ve been doing the course here, the community photography thing, I’ve been kind of hopeful that I can do something with it…I wanna be able to find a job that I’m happy with – I just get bored stuck in a dead end job…I don’t find it hard to get work if you don’t mind what you do, but I just want to get somewhere in my life…I don’t want to work full-time and just go back to earning money – I just can’t see what that’s going to do for*
me – I mean, in the short term, it’s going to pay the rent, but I kind of want to work to live and not live to work.

When I asked James what hope was to him he offered:

*It’s really hard to explain without using the word hope, but I just hope for better things, for things to be better. Yeah, it’s looking forward all the time towards a goal...I just want to be a better person in myself, just constantly improving.*

When he spoke about his girlfriend in relation to improving himself he acknowledged:

*I guess she kind of pushes me to do thing that I wanna do. Like giving me a kick up the bum, get out of bed and go! She gives me confidence as well. She always pushed me to do things, the little things that I want to do, and she makes me realize that I can. She makes me hope that I can.*

James described a time in his life when he travelled overseas and he talked about the commitment this trip took:

*Well, I just got back from overseas a couple of months ago. I worked hard for the first part of the year – from the start of the year I had to save for about seven months. That was hard. It just came down to the wire, working six days a week.*

He also referred to getting somewhere when he was looking at one of his photographs, which had some steps that were:

*All nice and peaceful. And there are these steps, I can’t see where they go, but they just go up and up and then they stop. Yeah, just kind of leading somewhere – and I like it because even if you don’t know where you’re going, you’re going.*

**Being content**

When I asked James what kind of things he hoped for he said:

*To find work that I enjoy and not having to worry about money – I’d like to be financially stable...and just to be happy...and I’d like to have a home of my own with room everywhere – I’d love to live near the ocean...yeah, and I would like to have good health. Just generally be happy – I think when people are happier it makes them work better together. I don’t know, it’s just not good to feel otherwise. And yeah, I kinda wish that in the world things weren’t the way they are.*
On this last aspect he further elaborated:

I think everyone should be equal, kind of then we would respect one another. Yeah, I know that people are different, but I’d like to think that everyone’s equal, not like, you know, he’s a police officer and he’s...

While James was exploring his photographs he talked about the ocean and the effect it has on him saying:

I don’t know, it’s just always appealed to me. I know that no matter how I feel, how bad I feel, when I go to the sea I end up feeling good. There’s just a lot of energy there. It’s probably one of the things I enjoy most – it’s free, the surfing – yeah, and it doesn’t cost anything.

Connecting with self or others
James related how he met his current girlfriend when he was drunk and had been thrown out of a pub for having an altercation with the girl he was seeing:

She saw the whole thing so she kind of came and helped me. We just became really good friends and we started hanging out after a couple of months…and, I guess, there was, I guess I need friends and she became a friend…after that I didn’t see her for a couple of weeks but the next time I met up with her we went to the beach for the day and I remember people just smiling at me, and we’d hop on a bus and people would just smile at us. It was weird just being around her because people weren’t normally like that to me. Just kind of everything turned around and I just became kind of content.

James also revealed his feelings about being involved in the creative arts program in which he was enrolled. As he gazed at a number of photographs he’d taken of the centre he reflected:

This place, the people here and the things they offer – I mean they’ve got all these people here that are using the facilities, and everyone is here to learn. And everyone here has got a lot of time for me…all the staff want to help and they’re quite a good group.

As he looked at a photograph of the front entrance of the centre he remarked:

I just thought, like, I’m welcome here, and it seems right to call it the door of hope.

James also explored the notion of connecting when he looked at two different pictures; one of some windsocks and the other of some stuffed toy animals that were all facing in the same direction on a pathway. He said:
Yeah, I don’t know what it was – it was really quiet and these windsocks were blowing in the wind and going in all different directions. And they kind of all looked the same and they kind of all looked different – but they were able to be responsive to what was happening with the wind and all. And these were different things – they were like stuffed toys. They had little eyes on them and they were on the pathway here. And they came down one side and stopped where the path was, and then they started off on the other side. Like they were kind of going in one direction, like crossing the footpath and they were all kind of together.

Hopelessness
James described the previous year of his life as being a really hard time for him:

I just crashed a lot, I couldn’t get any full-time work, so I just worked part-time and it was just enough to get by. I was on my own, with not much to do – drinking too much. I had a lot of money problems and I just worried about it... I would just get up in the morning and bum around – my frame of mind wasn’t really good. I had a relationship, but it was pretty bad – I was seeing this girl and we would always drink a lot and just argue and she’d get real violent... and one night we started arguing and she ended up hitting me in the face with a glass and just being drunk and I kind of pushed her and hit her... I was taken out, thrown out by the bouncer.

Later he added:

I think now I can look back and realize that at the time, I don’t know, I just didn’t care.

Vanesha
While we were talking, the thing that struck me the most about Vanesha was her vibrancy and passion for life. Her ideas were many and varied, and for Vanesha the essence of hope was revealed through five dominant prejudices. They were:

- having the capacity to be still
- achieving things that are out of your reach
- having and fulfilling dreams
- the fuel for life and
- finding good out of bad.

These prejudices will now be discussed.
**Having the capacity to be still**

Vanesha described in many ways a deep desire to be still, particularly in her relationship. However, there were times when she displayed clear ambivalence in regards to fulfilling this desire. First, she had this to say:

*I used to roam around, but when I met him [her boyfriend] it was like I was feeling relaxed and I even put on weight. Because I don’t really put on weight you know. I run around too much and my brain never stops.*

Later reflections included the thoughts:

*I sometimes wish that I could just be a bit more complacent. It would make life easier. I wish I could just be satisfied with some man who says he loves me, have children and live in the ’burbs, you know.*

However she quickly added:

*I’d hate it!*

Further on she said:

*I hope that one day I could be patient – I hope that I can be patient enough to be calm and comfortable with my boyfriend and just feel comfortable with him. Oh, that’s a beautiful thing, to settle down...yeah, just not having to look so much all of the time. I want to quit looking and looking. I’m never satisfied with what’s around me, but I just want to be calm and still. I’d love to be still...I wish I was more complacent, I just wish that I had the strength to stay still, have children, be satisfied. Be satisfied and stay still – yeah, that’s the hardest thing for me to do.*

Vanesha also spoke about being still when she talked about losing hope. She said:

*When I am losing hope, which, when I don’t feel right, sad and stuff: I go to the cliffs and look out at the horizon and the sky. It reaches far out and makes me feel happier.*

**Achieving things that are out of your reach**

Throughout the entirety of her conversation Vanesha spoke about the importance of growing and of achieving things that were initially out of her reach, particularly in relation to her art. She said:

*I’d like to be able to learn more...I was full of hope yesterday because I’ve been trying to do Web designing and it wasn’t working, but then I figured it out, I figured it out! I did it, and that filled me with hope. I need to achieve things every day; it’s like a drug. Even learning a new word is fine.*
And when she spoke of one of her paintings she said:

I’d given up on this painting, and then it just came together. I finally, like, I put it aside for ages, and I worked it out and now it’s beautiful.

She also spoke of a time when her painting was coming too easily for her and mused:

It’s like I got a bit down about this painting thing recently, because I was producing them way too easily, way too quickly. And I felt it can’t be art if I’m producing them so quickly. And it’s like it’s right there, in front of you, it’s something that’s really simple. For me, things have to be out of my reach. Hope is getting things that have been out of my reach...yeah, it’s doing things that I’d never thought I’d be able to do, but also doing the things that I’d be too scared to do.

Vanesha also spoke metaphorically of achieving things that are out of your reach as she examined one of her photographs, taken of an archway, but reflected upon from different perspectives:

It’s kind of like an archway, an entry. And from this perspective if I was to look at this, this is my entry into something that you’re sure that you know of, because you can see what you’re going to step into. But this, when I look at it this way, I had a sense of falling off the precipice, not diving off the cliff, but moving myself forward without seeing where I would land. And that’s kind of what’s happening in my life now – being able to step through the arches not knowing what’s beneath your feet...it’s very hopeful to be abandoned, to free yourself enough to let yourself step through those arches. You can always try and do things on this side of the arches, the known side. But the unknown side is the thing where passions lead, where things really come together, you know, where there is no gravity...sometimes you just jump out into nowhere, having hope and faith that the elements around you will provide for you.

In an abstract way Vanesha spoke of hope as she examined a picture of a spider web that had been woven in a cliff face between some rocks. She took the picture while she was on a walk with some people from the creative arts program and they were examining a recent exhibition of sculptures that had been placed in an open environment. She told me:

I just think it’s lovely, this spider web, it’s funny isn’t it...all these people on this walk, and there were these sculptures all around and they were going, ah! Look at that one, look at that! And no one is
noticing this beautiful spider web. But I thought that it was more beautiful than the sculptures.

But because I didn’t get the link between this discussion and hope, I responded by asking Vanesha to tell me about the hope in the spider web. She replied:

Um, it’s kind of like, well it’s not just the hope in that spider web, but it’s where the spider web was at the time I saw it. There on its own … I’m not sure why it was hope, but I guess it’s quite a wide bit of area for that spider to make its home there. It’s quite brazen of that spider, to choose such an area in a windy place.

Vanesha also relayed a story about her favourite painter and a parallel between his struggle to become an artist and hers. She said:

He didn’t think he was worth enough to get a studio and paint. It was a struggle for him. And he inspired me. If he thought, if he thought he could do it, and he had no money at all and spent the last of his money on his paints and hiring the studio, well, I just said I’m just gonna paint, I don’t care. I’m just gonna do it – he’s my inspiration…and I just decided, okay, it’s just what I have to do to be happy. If I’m not going to do this then I may as well be dead. Yeah, I can’t go not doing what I have to do. I’m not sure if it’s inspiration, but it is about taking chances.

Having and fulfilling dreams
Vanesha frequently intertwined discussion about dreams and hope in her time with me. She told me:

I remember my dreams to restore my hope. I remember the things that I really wanna do, and I push myself to do it. Hope is dreaming and remembering my dreams. I made up all these stickers a year ago and it was about my dreams – one of them was, don’t forget to remember your dreams.

When she spoke of her dreams it was frequently in relation to her passion to be a great artist:

I have to paint; it just rises within me. I see images everywhere – I see images in tiles, everywhere… I wanna exhibit paintings overseas and in other countries…my future involves me being able to fly around whenever I want, being able to travel where I want – to however many different places in the world. Have art exhibits in different parts of the world, to have money…for me hope is dreaming, it’s remembering my dreams. I’m full of dreams and hope and passion.
Vanesha also talked with passion about her desire to learn a different art form as a part of her dreams:

\[
\text{I would like to weld and make natural sculptures. I get very excited when I see metal...one day I want to weld. I just can’t do too many things at once. It’s not good to do too many things at once. Oh, it’s just like a dream – it’s a future fantasy, and a fantasy can be real, yeah, a future hope.}
\]

**The fuel for life**

When Vanesha talked about hope she said:

\[
\text{You have to go with your passions. You’ve got to remember your hopes and dreams to keep you moving...if simple things don’t satisfy me, then hopes really are important to keep you together, and alive.}
\]

Vanesha spoke about a time of depression in her life and she revealed:

\[
\text{I had a 9 to 5 job and I felt trapped. And it wasn’t like I was trying to kill myself because I was depressed. I mean, I’m sure I was depressed, but it’s just like I just wanted to free myself from this body. I felt trapped in this body. But hope enabled me not to feel trapped in my body.}
\]

She also spoke later about hope as a fuel from a negative case perspective when she said:

\[
\text{I have passions, but without my hopes my passions have no drive or they have no, not drive, like, without hope I don’t have the self-motivation to go, to go with my passions. I need hope or else I’ll just be miserable or quit, you know? I need to have hope. Like, I’m not content to just live, just be, just exist...it’s important for me to have hope, and I’d like it to be important for other people to have hope. People that don’t seem to have hope, those people who are on the dole and sitting in Housing Commission flats and watching TV every day, they seem not to have hope.}
\]

Vanesha also relayed:

\[
\text{Life frightens me you know. Yeah, I get stressed, people get stressed, but then hope lightens me.}
\]

Again, in a metaphorical sense Vanesha spoke of hope when she explored one of her photographs with me. This one was of a split rock in which a plant was growing. She said:

\[
\text{It is beautiful that a rock can split for this plant.}
\]
I asked her what’s the hope in that and she said:

*Oh, there’s so much hope in that. That something can grow out of a rock and a rock is seen as dead. It’s hopeful that rock split and later something green grows out of it.*

**Finding good out of bad**

There was an acknowledgement from Vanesha that hope often arises from bad when she said:

*So many times disasters happen. And there are disasters right there and then. But good things can come later and it shows that disasters need to happen for good things to come. There’s so much hope in that for me...there’s times when I am jolted into, I am trying to get myself together when a crisis happens and I really have to get myself together. I have to be able to say this disaster’s happening, so something good in the future will happen.*

Further on in her conversation she said:

*I believe that you gotta destroy to get good stuff, to create. You have to fail to succeed. You have to destroy to create and have to fail to succeed. I mean, otherwise, if you do let yourself fail you only let yourself succeed.*

When I asked her to elaborate further and she revealed:

*Look, if you’re doing a painting and you’re really not satisfied with it, it is really helpful to go forget it, I’m painting over this one. Like, that’s what I did with this [picked up a photograph of a painting that she had done that she really didn’t like], I thought, hey, this has to go, I’m getting rid of this. That’s very hopeful – to be able to believe, okay, I’ve tried my hardest, yes, I’ve gone as far as I can with this, but now is the time to move on, destroy this.*

**Christian**

I would describe Christian as very passionate as he shared his ideas about hope with me. Christian revealed six dominant prejudices about hope as we spoke and they were:

- the triumph over evil or ugliness
- a driving force
- adding to society
- loving and being loved
- a creative force and
- having choices.
These prejudices are now discussed.

**The triumph over evil or ugliness**

Throughout his discussion with me Christian spoke eloquently and passionately about the importance of social justice, both within his world and the world of those whom he considered oppressed. This was evident when he said:

*There’s always hope that things can be better, you know, that things can move on. I hope that things will change and things will be a lot better in regards to poverty, war, social injustices and things like that...you know, people are starving and dying all the time. But it doesn’t have to be that way, you don’t have to accept it that people are being killed and shot all the time. A lot of people turn away from that kind of thing, but I’ve always watched and learned and assimilated it into my work. My work is very much a condemnation of violence, evil, but my work fills me with hope in a certain sense.*

So I asked him, if I were to look at his most recent work, whether it would fill me with hope or despair and he replied:

*That’s a good question. It’s a kind of desparing sort of picture, more of a reflection of the condemnation of evil – there’s not a whole lot of hope in it. But the fact that it’s making a stand, kind of trying to tackle some issues, maybe that’s hope-inspiring in a way.*

I asked Christian if hope could live in the same space as ugliness, like depraved scenes of murder or war or injustice, and he said:

*Yeah, I think so, on many different levels. I mean, there’s always the hope that it won’t be that way, that it will stop, that it will change...the hope that the good in the world will crush the bad.*

I wanted to follow up these thoughts by being provocative and asked Christian if there was any negative in hope. He replied:

*I guess it can lead to expectation which may not be fulfilled, or you may always be hoping for better than you have, or to be able to change yourself or expand on your life and it may not be possible. You may not be able to do it...it’s a bit scary really.*

Christian relayed a story about a game machine he’d seen in an arcade and an opportunity for a photo shoot that he’d lost. He described it this way:

*While I was in this arcade, there was a shot that I wanted to get. But I didn’t, because there were people in the way and I didn’t get the film wound on in time. But I saw this woman with full Muslim dress over her face and wearing the black robe and looking like the*
symbol of the oppressed woman of the Muslim culture. And she was dancing on a video game machine. And it was such a contrast, I found that very hope-inspiring...in her culture there’s a lot of abuse and maltreatment of women and what they disgustingly call honour killings. Slaughtering women because they’ve been raped, or for some other stupid reason, like someone’s infidelity or adultery. And the rights of women are really removed from women in that culture – the right to do what they want, be what they want. And in her country it would not be acceptable to dance on a machine like that. But with or without her attire, I found it very hope-inspiring to see somebody who is of that persuasion or religion being able to enjoy themselves and engage in something which is free and easygoing...triumph of will I guess you’d say. And I have a hope that all Muslim women will be able to do that one day, and in their own country as well.

Christian also spoke of triumph over evil or ugliness in a metaphorical sense when he described a photograph of a building he’d taken. As he picked up his photograph he revealed:

> It’s ugly, horrible, functional – a monstrosity. It’s such an ugly building – but at the right angle and at the right time and place, with the right light reflecting off the building, it can be somewhat attractive. You know, art can be made of it. Yeah, I guess it’s just a symbol of beauty over ugliness, the triumph of beauty over ugliness.

He repeated this sentiment when he spoke of a barren and ugly park that was located across from a brothel and was full of needles. As he examined one of his photographs of this park he mused:

> It just looks somewhat peaceful even though I don’t think it really is. It’s kind of neat the way the sun’s kind of dappled and gives a stippled effect. I love the way the trees mix with it and I love the lines, the angles. Again, it’s just a triumph of beauty on absolute ugliness.

**A driving force**

Christian spoke about hope as a driving force, but revealed that he had conflicting views on whether having hope was positive or not:

> You know, hope can lead to expectations, which may not be fulfilled, or you may always be hoping for better than you have, or being able to change yourself or expand your life and you may not be able to do it. You may not be able to do it yourself, but it’s very much an ideal in the back of your mind that you aspire to. We all have our own personal ideals on what we want and what we want to do...I feel that hope transmits, and you hope that reality can become the ideal that you’ve imagined.
Christian spoke of his roommate:

My flat mate is a musician and he’s doing a Bachelor of Arts at university, working till very late in the night, with very little food and sleep – constantly stressed out. But just watching him doing that, putting one hundred percent into his work, that’s really hope-inspiring – to see him following his music that he loves, creating it and getting it up and running – it fills me with hope to see him following his dream, I guess.

Later on in his conversation he mused:

I am filled with hope when I see really beautiful images, just things with great talent in them. Things that really inspire the mind or incite the imagination. And it’s great to see somebody really harness a great amount of talent or a great amount of knowledge or ability and really lock it down and do something with it. It can be quite awe-inspiring and hope inspiring.

And a bit later he reflected:

I think that collectively hope is always there – everyone that exists has been robbed of their hope in certain circumstances for one reason or another, but they’ll find it again. It is never lost to the collective, particularly in Western cultures, because we have a lot to live for and there’s a lot less reason to lose hope...I think hope is one of the things that drives people and it’s really difficult to go on without hope in you, because you become more of an automaton, just working or carrying on without any real joy. I guess it’s something that’s really a driving force behind humanity and behind people.

He further said:

And I think that it’s innate, inherent, very much so, because you can see hope in children – yeah, it’s definitely a driving force in the human psyche.

Adding to society

Christian spoke often about the ways hope contributes to, or adds to society. When he talked about himself in his former employment he said:

I try to help people when they’re in a bad situation, and try to reassure them of their worth or help them get over the obstacles they are facing. I’ve tried to do that, by holding people’s hands and stroking their hair if they were crying or in pain. Yeah, helping people when they’ve fallen down or just reassuring people of their worth, I guess – just trying to help them feel confident and comfortable.
He also said:

I hope to be able to do some good in the world, to find someone I love and to have a family.

Later when Christian spoke about the creative arts program he was attending he identified:

This is really a place where people can pick themselves up and move on and do something really worthwhile. Just seeing people working and happy and adding something to society – like seeing an unemployed person who’s never had a job getting a cheque for one thousand dollars for work he did in here.

And in relation to his own artwork he said:

I’d like my work to be famous rather than hope I can be. I want my work to be seen, I don’t want it to sit on a mantelpiece in someone’s living room, or wind up in the garage. It has to be a part of the world, have an existence.

Further on he said:

It is really relevant for a person, if they want to have a happy and productive life, to have hope in themselves and for the world around them, to make something of themselves and to get close towards their goal of improving situations.

Our conversation took an interesting turn when Christian was talking about some modern art in his city and its relationship to hope. He picked up one of his photographs saying:

This is a brand-new architectural sculpture, where the renovation of the bus shelter is taking place. It’s fantastic, I love it. And it doesn’t need to be here, it’s not necessary. It’s not something that we need to have there.

I wasn’t sure how this discussion was related to hope, so I looked at the photograph and said with a question mark in my voice this fills you with hope? Christian replied:

Yeah, very much. It’s a new project, it’s very modern, it’s attractive and surreal. It’s not mundane and not functional. It represents artistic creation and it beautifies the city from my point of view.

Loving and being loved

I asked Christian if he had to make up a definition of hope and what it is, what he would say. Here is what he told me:
Well, I see it as love; I think that’s probably one of the most important things. Love seems like the most worthwhile pursuit, the most pure and happy thing, which can fill you with hope for yourself. Yeah, it really makes everything seem bright and shiny. No matter what you feel, if you have a partner or somebody to love. You know, that’s what you would hope for.

So I pressed him and asked him if he was in a love relationship at present and he said:

No, not right now, but it’s always out there and you can find it again, and it usually happens one way or another when you don’t expect it or aren’t really looking for it, even though you’re always kind of looking for it. In my mind, when I’ve been with somebody I really care about, every day is filled with hope and every moment with possibility.

Much later while he was talking he said:

When I fell in love, you know, that filled me with the most hope. It’s something that matters greatly to me, even more than other people. I love the sensation of touch and romance, and that’s the most hope-inspiring thing. To see children born, living happy, peaceful, with things going well.

A creative force
Just as sport was not far from the conversation of Cosmos, Christian’s dialogue was peppered with references to the importance of art in his life. He said:

I am very much the fanatic artist at the moment – trying to prepare for my exhibition...I grew up around art and imagination and culture and was very impressed by it. Art gives meaning to life and it’s what I love...I close my eyes and visualize things and work off the dream that’s inside my head. I have a lot of hope for art and creating, and my work fills me with hope – that it will have a life of its own, that people will see it and enjoy it. It will exist independent of me; whether I live or die it will live on.

He then revealed:

Hope on a personal level induces my artwork and creativity, the way I can draw and paint and sculpt. I feel pleased when I’m working on my art full-time and things are happening, creating new things and finishing new things. Really creating – yeah, that fills me with joy and hope.
**Having choices**
Christian told me an interesting story about where he lived and how that was related to choice and hope. He described his backyard as overgrown with vines, creepers and trees:

> You know, I can still see the sky through the trees and I find that kind of hope-inspiring, you know – just inspiring to sit back, and even if it’s not your property, you can just relax and look at the sky and the greenery.

I didn’t see the immediate relevance of this to our conversation on hope so I asked him why being able to look up at the sky from his backyard was about hope and he said:

> Because I could cut down that tree if I wanted to, you know. I could cut all those creepers back, and I guess the hope is the possibility of just being able to do that. The choice.

**Keisha**
Although all the stories of my participants were poignant and filled me with a sense of awe that at times bordered on reverence, it would be remiss of me not to mention I was particularly affected by the stories Keisha shared with me. As I contemplated all that she shared with me six dominant prejudices emerged. They were:

- growing and changing
- having and establishing connections
- loving and being loved
- experiencing inner peace
- a driving force and
- hopelessness.

These are now discussed.

**Growing and changing**
Throughout her discussion with me Keisha spoke about the importance of growing and changing and its relationship to hope. At times, opportunities to grow and change arose out of adversity and pain, and at other times they arose out of joy. She said:

> I tend to be pretty open now with how I feel about things. If I’m feeling something, I say it. And I’m just slowly coming to realize that’s actually a good thing – especially the whole thing of being
able to have arguments with people. You can have different points of view and argue. Like, my partner has been teaching me about having a debate. Debating doesn’t mean that you get, you know, really upset about something – you can just debate about it, and if you don’t agree that’s okay too. And that’s been really great, and I’m still learning about that one.

Later on she told me:

In my high school it was open to adult people. And this woman came into my class one day and she had a Mohawk and dreadlocks, and she was wearing all weird clothes and everything. And I went up to her and said, wow, I really like your dreadlocks. I wish I could have dreadlocks too. And she just looked at me and said, well, you can. And I just went, oh, wow, yeah, I can. And that was the turning point, and I slowly started to relax a lot more with myself and explore a lot more and, you know, I started changing a lot.

Further in our conversation when I asked Keisha to tell me the most hopeful thing that’s happened in her life, this is how she responded:

Well, at the moment, it’s my relationship. Because it’s the first time that I’ve ever been with somebody and been able to process through the really hard stuff and learn so much – learn so much about myself, and I can actually see changes in myself which I have been working towards for a long time. And that’s given me a lot of hope.

**Having and establishing connections**

Keisha talked about the importance of having and establishing close connections, especially with friends. She relayed a story about how much a friend helped her when she was trying to sort things out in relation to parenting her daughter. She said:

We were pretty much like sisters, and we were deeply connected, and she helped me through a lot. Like, she actually helped me through immense amounts.

Later on as she picked up one of her photographs she reflected:

This is my housemate. And I really love our connections. I really love spending time with her, and friends are really important to me and they give me hope, especially when we go through hard times together. And when we can tell each other, look, just piss off and leave me alone for a moment, and still be okay with each other. I haven’t got many close connections, but just recently we’ve started to become really close and that gives me hope in my life, to have somebody close in my life that I can feel, you know, really safe with, I guess.
Further on in our conversation Keisha recalled an event she’s attended with a friend where they were both working:

It was really nice working with her that night. I just felt so connected. We just had lots of fun together, just working together, and yeah, it just gave me hope in having a fulfilling relationship with people.

Keisha revealed another dimension on the importance of having and establishing connections when she talked about herself:

Most of my son’s life I was not very connected with myself. I was too concerned about, too occupied about what everybody else thought and what everybody else wanted me to do. And finally towards the end of his life I actually had some sessions with a counsellor and got to know me and him and who I am.

Later in our conversation she showed me a photograph of a doll a friend had made for her for her twenty-first birthday. As she looked at this photograph she revealed:

My friend made that for me. She is really talented and she [the doll] – I guess she gives me hope to be able to get in touch with my inner child. I still have her with me, but I still can’t quite get in touch with my inner child. But she gives me hope sometimes when I look at her and touch her that I can get in touch with my inner child.

And then she showed me a picture of her drum and said:

I hope that I can play that drum really well one day. I will, but I’ll have to keep practising. But it does give me hope when I get it right. It takes me a while to get into it because I feel quite self-conscious. But when I get right into it, it doesn’t matter, I just feel confident and find the rhythm and it just really gets to me.

Our conversation took an interesting turn when Keisha spoke about connections in relation to the earth:

Like, one day I had to go out and buy clay – I have to be able to play with clay so I can connect with the earth as much as I can. I love the smell of it, it’s so earthy. And I love going to the ocean as well, and I have a strong connection with the sun. And I need to be around trees, but that’s only been clear to me in the last couple of years.

She picked up a picture she’d taken of an avocado tree and identified:

I guess it’s about hope for the nation almost. It’s like I have this, almost this burden on my shoulders for the nation, just being kind to the earth. And I hope that, I hope that we won’t all get blown off the earth because of how we’ve treated it. And I do hope that people
finally get it – that they finally understand that we can’t just keep mistreating the earth as we have been...I don’t want to do anything that contributes to harming the earth... and I’m just thinking a lot of the people on earth, they just don’t actually connect the earth with themselves and what they do. But I hope that they can actually get in touch with themselves and with others and actually help each other.

**Loving and being loved**

Keisha spoke often about the importance of love, especially in relation to her daughter and her partner. She said in relation to her daughter:

_I feel like there is definitely hope for our relationship. There’s definitely a lot of progress and I’ve lost sight of that at times. But there’s moments when I just feel that love between us, and that does give me hope. It’s that we’re gonna pull through and it will be okay...I saw her about four weeks ago now. We spent the week-end together and that was just wonderful. And that really gave me a lot of hope – how easy it was for us to spend time together and how much fun we had and how much love was there._

When I asked Keisha about her partner and hope in their relationship she said:

_It’s just the love. It’s the mutual love that we have for each other. Even in moments when I don’t feel like I love her anymore I can move through that, I can go through that...it’s about giving into the love and opening myself up to the love and allowing myself to be vulnerable...yeah, that’s something I’ve only just started to learn about. Even if we are having an argument she still loves me. I’ve just started to learn that even if you’re having an argument it’s okay to still love that person._

A bit later she revealed:

_Yeah, I think it’s about loving yourself, and allowing yourself to have that process of trying again, and reaching out again and again in a relationship._

And later still she said:

_She allows me to be loved and to love and also be able to go through the painful parts and feel the calm of it afterwards and not to think that everything is bad because it’s hard._

However, in the midst of this conversation Keisha also acknowledged that sometimes having hope for her relationship scared her because:

_I can’t guarantee that it’s always gonna be that good._
Experiencing inner peace
Keisha spoke about experiencing inner peace when she relayed the story of the death of her son. She said:

*About a week after he died I realized that I was pregnant and I had to make a decision about whether to go ahead and carry the child I was carrying. And I wanted to make the best decision – not based on, not based on wanting to replace him. And so I had a youth counsellor at the time and she helped me to, like, she talked it through with me, what were my options and whether I should have the child. And so, I made my decision.*

And when she talked about her decision to give her daughter up for adoption she shared:

*I was just in this space for a really long time, this really heavy space and I couldn’t get out of it. Like, I couldn’t get out of it and the only thing that I could do to help myself was – I was going to counselling, I was doing, I was having Chinese medicine, and all that sort of stuff, and massage and everything, but it just wouldn’t shift – I just couldn’t shift it. And the only thing that helped was to actually leave and go travelling for a while. I went to Tasmania by myself and just travelled around. I spent time up at top end of Tassie and camped and just spent four days all by myself completely, and didn’t really see anybody for that time...and it was like I’d been walking up a big hill, struggle, struggle, struggle. And then suddenly, there’s no struggle any more, and it’s like I’m out of the clouds, I can actually breathe again. I was just able to see a lot clearer what we needed to do. When I think about it now, even though I didn’t feel really hopeful at the time, I was. It just really brought me inner peace.*

A driving force
Keisha told me it’s important for people to have hope, so I asked her why. She reflected:

*If you don’t have hope you don’t have a place to strive towards. You don’t have something that will drive you. Yeah, because hope is like a driving force. It’s a driving force, you know, and in a good and wholesome way, like get out the whip and crack it over you...when I have hope I’m kind of going like this, it’s like I’m propelling myself forward and I have a lot of tension in my body and I have to remind myself to relax and think, okay, I’ll get there in a minute. It’s like I get this excitement...and also hope gives me inner peace and it helps me to find inner strength as well.*

Hopelessness
I asked Keisha, when she heard the word hope what she thought about, and this is how she responded:
I think of sadness I guess. Sadness and injury and it almost feels defeatist, because of the sadness that I feel with it...sometimes you feel as if it’s no use to just to keep reaching out and trying things. You just feel so uninspired.

She also told me:

I’ve had periods in my life where I’ve gone for months and months with what I express as having no life in me. Everything just collapses, and a lot of the time I just don’t want to see anybody, and I just exist day to day...I don’t know what it is actually, but there’s been points in my life when I’ve just felt like I don’t want to be here. And it’s been so strong. I mean it hasn’t been like I’ve gone I’ve gotta kill myself. But it’s been so strong that I don’t want to be here and I’ve been through one of those periods again. Yeah, sometimes it’s just a real vague sort of almost listlessness with everything being really flat.

Later she said:

It’s a strange sort of riddle. I mean the other day I did think briefly about killing myself, but only because I was going I don’t want to be here, why don’t you just kill yourself? But then I thought about it and thought, no, I would just be hurting everybody around me...and there are things that I want to do. You know, I want to live through this difficult space and have fun times, you know?

Finally she relayed a story about her childhood:

I couldn’t handle the way my father in particular treated us and how he expected us to live – in a harsh, strict way without any freedom... and my mother, she used to seek my father’s approval by telling him all the bad things that we did. So there really wasn’t much trust or hope there. My dad used to punish us and he would rip down doors and stuff like that. They were both alcoholics, and even though she wasn’t the one that harmed us, she wasn’t the one that stopped it from happening either.

Sarah

Sarah was getting ready to graduate from university when we spoke, as well as get married, so it was not surprising to me that much of her discussion was peppered with reference to her boyfriend and love. However, through careful analysis of her dialogue I identified five dominant prejudices. They were:

- loving and being loved
- being useful to others
- looking forward with anticipation and achieving something good
finding good in bad and
\begin{itemize}
  \item hopelessness and the loss of looking forward.
\end{itemize}

These prejudices are now discussed.

**Loving and being loved**
When Sara spoke to me about the importance of loving and being loved it was not only in the context of her relationship with her boyfriend, but also in relationship to her family and to God. One of the first things that Sarah told me about herself was:

\begin{quote}
I’ve been a pretty happy person and I’d say that I’ve had a very good life. I’ve been very blessed with my family and been loved all my life. And now finding somebody who will love me and that I can love them just as much, it’s pretty exciting.
\end{quote}

She revealed further:

\begin{quote}
I think my fiancé and I want to be like his grandparents. When you looked at the two of them they were so in love and we thought, we can be like that. But apart from that, just seeing an older couple still in love, remembering what it’s like to love one another – that’s important to us. If offers us hope for our life together to start.
\end{quote}

When she spoke about love in the context of God she mused:

\begin{quote}
I know that God loves me and I know that I’ll have that love always. And that gives me hope as well, because I know that I am loved.
\end{quote}

Later she said:

\begin{quote}
I don’t think that I’ll ever be alone because I believe that I have God with me all of the time. And that offers me hope because eventually one day I will see God, I will be able to be with God eternally...One of the things I know is that I won’t ever be alone. I’ll always have God. So that gives strength to guide me, His love, regardless of what happens. And that gives me a lot of hope to go on. Yeah, that eventually I will live in heaven, which to me represents everything that is loving and good. So that’s probably where God fits in with hope.
\end{quote}

Later on, when I asked her in a direct way what hope is for her, she again tied hope to love. She reflected:

\begin{quote}
Well, hope is a lot of things to me. It’s tied up in love, particularly at the moment...I’m looking forward to having that love in fifty to sixty years’ time. We’re serious about marriage; it’s not just a here and now thing...and hope for me is the sense of living a life of love and
that we can sort of look forward to being in love for a long, long time.

When Sarah picked up one of her photographs of an older couple with their teenage children she remarked:

*This was something I thought about when I thought of hope – strong family connections and the hope that there’s more even when your children have grown up.*

**Being useful to others**

Being useful to others was a recurrent expression in Sarah’s conversation with me.

In relation to her future ambitions she said:

*I always wanted to be a nurse or a teacher or probably both…and after I graduate and my fiancé and I get married, we plan to move to Papua New Guinea, probably in three or four years’ time. I don’t know exactly what we are going to do, but I’d like to just sort of be there for the people, working with them, teaching the people in the community to care for themselves, more in a practical way than a top down approach if you like…we want to work alongside of whoever is there, to develop systems or develop ways of improving health within a community. And in that, offering, maybe, a hope for a better health system.*

Later on she revealed:

*We both made the decision that we want God to be a central part of our lives and basically to be a guide in our lives, to sort of show us how we can be of use in this world and what we can do to help other people, to show God’s love in a very practical sense…yeah, we hope we can be useful to other people, just helping people out – helping the poor and the people who are estranged or sort of left out of things, that sort of stuff.*

Sarah also relayed:

*We like to help our friends in any way we can. Sort of in a really simple sense, like, if we are going out with our friends and they want to drink, we’ll be the designated drivers. We’ll pick them up wherever they are – we can go anywhere to sort of help out our friends. Just yesterday my fiancé was saying the sort of couple that we want to be is that people can look at us and go, heh, well, if I’ve broken down at three in the morning on the freeway, I can give a call to either of these guys and they’ll come and help me.*
Sarah also echoed expressions of usefulness in relationship to working with a group of young people in her church. She said:

*In my church I see that I can be useful. Like, with the young people I was working with, I tried to help them to see what God is about, sort of the basic things of what Christianity means and Jesus means and who he was and what it means to your future. But also building up really good friendships and offering them hope for things that are better.*

Sarah also described a connection between hope and usefulness:

*Part of the hope that I have for other people is that they will achieve something better and by me being useful I can help them to achieve it. I guess the connection is a bit skewed, but my usefulness helps to give, well, not give other people hope, because you can’t really give people hope, but it can sort of offer them something to help them reach their goals. Yeah.*

Looking forward with anticipation to achieving something good

When I asked Sarah what hope was to her she was quick with her response and said:

*I guess hope means to look forward to something, something beyond now and something good. To look forward to something good and that can be many things. One of those things is to look forward to a life of love and sharing that love with other people. To me that’s hope. Yeah, it’s looking forward to something better or good in the future, that’s what I’d say hope is...to me hope has to be attainable and it’s hard to describe, but it’s more than looking forward to something, it’s sort of working towards it, being able to achieve something good. And I guess once that’s achieved it’s something to be joyful about.*

She further said:

*I am filled with a sense of hope for my future and I am looking forward to a really good future. I guess I decided for myself that things were worth living for.*

A bit later Sarah picked up one of her photographs, which was of some candles, and she spoke of hope in a metaphorical sense:

*When I saw these I thought of how light from you can offer hope. When people see hope in you, it inspires them to look forward to things, to see that there are things worth enjoying, now and in the future. Hope has that effect. And in a biblical sense they talk about Jesus being the light of the world. And in a sort of symbolic way you think of, well, I think of darkness as sort of negative. When light comes into the darkness it means that it’s no longer dark and you get a sense of something good. And obviously that relates to hope, in*
that darkness isn’t something you have to dwell on – there’s no more darkness, there’s a light that you can follow. You can see again if you like.

Later she picked up another photograph of a candle, this one for Amnesty International, and said:

This candle sort of symbolically represents a light in the darkness...sort of the hope for people who are imprisoned wrongly – it’s about proper justice. That there are still people who think there’s hope for them and are working towards freeing them from imprisonment.

Sarah talked about her desire to have children when she picked up a photograph of a young family:

That’s a young couple with a baby in a pusher thing. To me that was hope in sort of regeneration if you like. Seeing a young family, to me that’s a personal hope, that I too will be able to enjoy things like that with my fiancé and our children.

So I asked her how come that wasn’t a wish and she said:

Because I think it’s attainable.

But then she mused:

It might not be, we might not ever be able to have kids. Uh, it’s more of a wish, I guess. Hope is more about the good that you can look forward to; whereas a wish is something you get if you get it and that’s good, but if you don’t, you don’t...hope is, well, it’s something to look forward to, is something good where you’d expect that if you reached it you’d have joy.

And finally Sarah picked up a photograph of an empty unit and said:

It’s my empty unit and I guess that sort of symbolizes hope in that my fiancé and I are hoping to have our own life together in this particular place. At the moment it is pretty empty, but it will soon be full. And we are looking forward to our future together, starting our own lives together...and it was amazing, there was a calendar we found in our unit, and it said hope is a plant in friendship’s garden where dreams blossom into priceless treasures.
Finding good in bad
Again, in a metaphorical sense Sarah spoke of hope as she looked at one of the photographs she’d taken:

This is a persimmon tree. And I was thinking, this is sort of where you would say there is no hope. The land is totally dead, dry, sort of barren, if you like. And this, sort of having a small tree starting to grow somewhere you would never expect something to grow. Yeah, that represented hope in that you can be sort of rock bottom and not expect anything good to happen and then it does. Something can still grow. To me that is about hope. There can still be hope even when there’s nothing...hope sort of spurs you on to do things, to be someone, to reach something, so I guess there’s a sense that you’re still moving.

A bit later she relayed that she was once seriously involved in a relationship that didn’t work out and she was really devastated. She revealed:

I cried a lot, but I guess I realized that there was more to life than just this person. I put a lot of energy and a lot of thought into my future ideas and whatever about our relationship. And when that fell through I thought, well, there’s nothing more, there’s nothing more I can do. And then I thought, well, that’s not true. There are still other things that I hope for; there are other things that I want for my life. And so I guess I sort of brought them into my understanding of life at that particular time. And that offered me hope, because there were other things to focus on, other places, you know?

And then as Sarah picked up another one of her photographs she reflected:

This one is out of the gates and a thunderstorm is coming. There were a lot of lights in the clouds, and sort of that’s saying there’s always a silver lining. And that sort of represents hope, that there’s always something good even in the bad. Thunderstorms aren’t necessarily bad, but it represents – generally there’s a symbolic significance in thunderstorms and death, those kinds of things. And the silver lining? That the storm will be over soon can be related to really bad times – that there’s always something to look forward to. It’s symbolic, just like the cross, which is another symbol of hope, that Jesus will rise again and that as Christians we will also have a new life.

Hopelessness and the loss of looking forward
Sarah recalled a painful time in her life when she thought a situation was pretty hopeless:

With a particular bunch of people that I was fairly good friends with, most of them decided that they didn’t want to go to church anymore. And they didn’t want to be involved in other people’s lives and didn’t want to be friends anymore. That was pretty hopeless, because you
could see no future in the friendship anymore. Not the fact that they left the church, but things like inviting them to birthday or parties or get togethers or really simple things – some of them didn’t even respond and it was really hurtful. Yeah, it was kind of hopeless because you couldn’t see a future in it.

She further elaborated:

*When you don’t have hope it’s very hard to look forward to the next day. You get out of bed and think I don’t really have anything today. I don’t have any hope for my life, or I’m not going anywhere, or I don’t want to go anywhere. I don’t see anything good or worthwhile. I don’t see how you could enjoy life without hope – nothing to look forward to.*

**Titania**

One of the things that really struck me about Titania as we were speaking was her love for people and her passion for connecting with others. As I considered the totality of what she shared with me, five dominant prejudices emerged. They were:

- loving, caring and connecting
- expecting good and experiencing turning points
- reaching full potential
- having choices and
- hopelessness.

These prejudices are now discussed.

**Loving, caring and connecting**

Titania, who had travelled extensively with her family throughout her lifetime shared:

*Basically, from the moment I was young my family and I have been travelling all around Australia and New Zealand and I think that has had so much to do with who I am…I’ve been associated with so many different people and cultures…and I find it fairly easy to integrate myself into different circles and social groups, to make friends in one town and then move on to make friends in another…I am a really social person.*

Her hope was manifest in the way she spoke of her family and friends. She picked up a photograph of her family and revealed:

*This is a really horrible picture because they are all pulling faces, but these people, they constantly bring me hope.*
When she described her parents she said:

Mum and dad are just amazing people and I have so much respect and love for them and the way they’ve brought us up.

But despite feeling she had a loving relationship with her parents, Titania shared that:

It wasn’t always that way. Probably about nine months or a year ago I felt like dad was always scrutinising everything I did. I suppose I didn’t feel really convicted (sic) that he loved me, he loved me unconditionally. He’d always tell me that he loved me, but then I’d do something and he’d react really badly. He places far too high expectations on me. So dealing with that caused a lot of tensions. But all that’s come to a head and since then it’s been a lot better between me and dad. The relationship’s been a lot more real.

Titania also spoke about hope as loving and caring for others:

I love people – everything about people. I want to bring hope to people and uplift people. Because I really have a thing about people...everywhere I go I seem to attract needy people or something.

She said:

I can give people hope and find out what hope is for them.

I wanted to know how she could do this and asked her. She said:

I suppose I would first, primarily be there for them, as someone they could talk to, because even that will bring hope, I think. If they were in a bad situation for them to be able to talk to me it would be a good thing...but primarily, even if I just sit there and listen and nod my head and don’t say anything. So yeah, being there for them. Um, how can I give hope? There can be heaps of things, like even if I would give them a bunch of flowers when they’re going through a bad time. Yeah, I think that if they knew that someone loved them and they were cared for, I think that’s probably the best hope we can have – that they’re not alone and they’re loved. The greatest thing I can give is love and love brings hope.

Later on we returned to the subject of giving people hope and Titania again reflected:

I reassure them that I am there. And show them as much love as I can, without getting too far drawn in their life. I let them know that Jesus loves them and if they wanna ask me more I’ll tell them, but if they don’t I just leave it.
Our conversation took a turn when Titania told me about the importance of connecting with her dogs:

_There have been so many times in my life when I’ve been sad or in tears and all I want to do is see my dogs. I just feel totally connected to these dogs, they just pick me up when I am down._

Our conversation also revealed the importance of connecting with friends and how that made Titania feel hope:

_In my room I have a collage of photographs of significant people, and before I go out each day I look at them and I say, Titania, look how many you have around you that adore you and want to be your friends. And that brings me hope, because I know that someone loves me…for me hope is knowing that you are loved and that you can love as well._

Later on she said:

_I have two really good friends and they constantly bring me hope. If ever I am down I just know that their love is available to me._

I asked Titania if she could sum up what hope is to her and she remarked:

_I hate those sum-up questions, but I guess it would be the knowledge that you’re loved, because everyone wants, everybody needs to be loved._

Finally, Titania spoke about the importance for her of connecting with God and nature:

_When I read my Bible it gives me true hope because I know that it is God’s word. When I read the Gospels where Jesus is speaking I know that God is speaking to me, speaking to me personally. And it reassures me that I have a God who loves me and one day I’ll be going to heaven to be with Him._

And then she said, when she picked up one of her photographs:

_The whole of nature gives me hope. Big open paddocks, the ocean as well. Because it makes me feel more connected to God, because I know that I am totally in the midst of what He’s made by Himself. So I feel really connected to God when I am in His beautiful places._

**Expecting good and experiencing turning points**

Titania talked about experiencing turning points when she revealed how she recommitted her life to God:
I had just turned nineteen when I gave my life back to God. My parents had started going to church and they were trying to convince me to come along. But I said, oh no, and I didn’t for a couple of weeks. But then I went along and found it was really good. So, one day I was coming home from work, and I was smoking cigarettes at the time, but God really convicted me of not smoking, to stop smoking. And that was a real breaking point for me, to give up cigarettes. That day I gave up cigarettes and I had a real breakthrough and I knew this is it, this is for me, and I am going to follow God…Also, that and the moment that I confessed to mum and dad about my past. You know, I just felt forgiven even though I’d already apologised and repented for that time in my life to God. I suppose when I told them it was a real consolidating thing for me.

When I asked Titania what she though hope was, here is what she had to say:

*I think that hope is the knowing or the feeling that something good will happen.*

I wanted to press this point a bit so I said something good like getting a chocolate bar? And she said:

*Yeah, if getting a chocolate bar makes you feel better about yourself, or anything, anything that makes a person happier than they are.*

She further elaborated:

*I know that I’ve got hope when I am, when I feel good in a bad situation. Like right now I am going through a really rough, hard situation. But I still know that things are going to be all right. I just, like, I never lose sight of the fact that something good will come out of this. And I think that comes from God – I just know He’s always brought something great out of something not so good. So, I’ve just come to know that even though this time is just crap, that something good will eventuate from it – not necessarily directly, but, you know, things will get better…even when it’s totally unrealistic to expect that things will get better I can still see that, it’s not even a conscious thing. It’s just something that I always just know…like I said, I’ve got that knowing that this time will be over. That something good will come out if it.*

Because I was curious and wondered if her thoughts were similar to mine about hope and faith I asked her if what she was talking about was faith, or were hope and faith different? To this she responded:

*I think they are different. They’re meant to be different. Faith you just know, and I suppose what I feel is faith, because I just do know and I don’t have to keep reminding myself. But I think that hope is a conscious thing – it can be instilled in someone. Like I can produce*
hope by reminding myself of something or consciously thinking of something. Whereas faith is given to me. Ahhhh, it’s hard.

Further on in our conversation she said:

I think that I am most full of hope when I am in really bad situations and I get convicted (sic) somehow that something good will happen. That’s when I feel hope most deeply. You know, I can see hope more when I am in a desperate situation...when you’re in a good time and you’re having a good time you don’t really need hope because you’re living it, you know.

Titania spoke in a metaphorical sense of the link between music and hope:

Music is hope because I am pretty fanatical about music and it’s important to me because it builds up my spirit. It can take me away from a drastic situation and that gives me hope, you know.

Reaching full potential

I asked Titania what sort of things she hoped for in her lifetime and she told me:

I hope to be able to bring hope to other people. I hope to serve God in the best way I can. And to reach my full potential is something that really brings me hope, if I know I am stepping in the right directions as far as reaching my potential goes. I just hope to be the best that I can be and to be happy.

I wanted to know what reaching her full potential meant to Titania, so I asked her. She responded:

I’d be doing what God designed me to do. I think that he wants me to bring hope to people and I know that’s always been a passion. I think I’ll be reaching my full potential when I am helping other people and when I feel like my relationship with God is really good.

Having choices

Having choices was important to Titania and connected with her views on hope.

This was expressed as having personal options, as shown by the following dialogue:

We’ve always had a choice in what we’d want to do. When I was about the age of twelve I remember we had lived in Magnetic Island for about a year and we were talking of moving. And I just didn’t want to go. And I recall mum and dad saying to me, look, if you really don’t want to leave then you have the opportunity of staying. They said we’d love you to come with us obviously, but, you know, I was always given that choice. And I think that’s been really hopeful.

Having choices was also exemplified in a discussion about God when Titania said:
I know that one night mum and dad came into my bedroom and said this is what we believe. Do you want to believe it as well sort of thing.

It was also manifest in a conversation we had about her decision to study at university:

I finished school and then I wasn’t too keen on going to university straight away, so I went into full-time work in retail. I stopped that after about eight months and then I went into children’s theatre, and then I took the following year off. Then I did this university course but I withdrew from that completely. I didn’t even think about deferring. I just hated it so much...it just didn’t suit me. I was looking for something that would teach me how to rehabilitate or bring hope, so now I am looking at doing a counselling course by correspondence.

Hopelessness
Titania focused some of her discussion on a time in her life when she felt hopeless and this is what she had to say:

I’ve had periods in my life where, I think, I mean there was a period for about three years when I really fell away from God and just got into all sorts of teenage stuff...and I could say that if ever I was a sad person it would be during that time. But it wasn’t so much sad – it was unhappy, discontent. I think the main thing I got into was feeling that men could fill my life, make me feel good. I got into sex and my attitude was I could only be made to feel worthwhile if a guy had interest in me. So basically I lived my life in the false hope of impressing some guy to make me feel good. I got into drinking, there was a little bit of drugs – not a lot and only marijuana and magic mushrooms, but I suppose it was my attitude. I was only thinking of God in the context of He’ll condemn me. Like, yeah, I was very guilty...one day I was telling my friend that the only attention that I got from my boyfriend was in bed and never any other time, and my dad heard my conversation. And that was the first time they found out that I was probably not who they thought I was. I was living just a total double life...it was pretty hopeless because I was so distant from God but I had a sense of false hope, like, I got a boyfriend...when I was doing my time away from God I had a false hope because it’s a hope that leads you nowhere. It makes you feel good and it gives you confidence, but it’s not long-lasting. True hope only comes from knowing God, and if you don’t have hope you have nothing. You have nothing, nothing to look forward to and you’re just living a life of despair. You can tell if people have no hope – it’s in what they talk about. The fact that they can never smile about something, laugh, or relax.
I was interested in this concept of true versus false hope, so I asked Titania what was the difference. She told me:

True hope is the knowledge that you’re going to go to heaven really, and that you are on track with God, because God is the ultimate provider of hope. But trivial hope is never long-lasting, it’s not an eternal thing. It’s just a thing of the moment kind of deal.

Kathleen
I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Kathleen describe her views on hope. So many wonderful ideas had been expressed and I was eager to hear what Kathleen would tell me. I had a wealth of insights and ideas to consider and was looking forward to analysing what all my participants revealed about their hope. Through careful analysis of Kathleen’s story six dominant prejudices emerged. They were:

- looking beyond the self
- believing in endless possibilities
- a life force
- being worthy
- the ability to record memories and
- hopelessness.

These are now discussed.

Looking beyond the self
Kathleen talked about hope as having an awareness of, and commitment to giving into things that are beyond the self. This was evident when she said:

I would really like to get involved in strategic planning and community work, particularly in areas where there’s been a natural disaster or a war and the community has been completely wiped out…not working on the emotional side, but more on the practical side, like where and how do you put your shelter up, where do people stay, how are they looked after and all that sort of thing. I think I’ll go where I know I’ll have an impact on people in general…I know that I want to do something that’s a lot bigger than myself, even though I never imagined that I would start going down the path of a country during raids or anything like that. But just in the last four or five years I became aware that there are things happening out there, and all of the sudden it was important for me to help others. And to feel as though you’ve done something, that you’ve tried, you’ve gone as far as you could. A lot of the decisions that you make when you are young are made because it’s not what you know or want to do, but it’s that you know an uncle with some
As Kathleen picked up one of her photographs, which was of a park that she walks through, she said:

"I just think this represents a value. The fact that you set aside land, you put money into it and don't get money back. Because it's a resource for the community, so it's important. The trees, the flowers, just the fact that they exist – it's not built up, it's not about fashion or the trend of what's the latest or is the best or what makes the most money. It's just nature and it's there for you to enjoy it."

Believing in endless possibilities
There were a number of occasions where Kathleen described hope as being a state of endless possibilities. For instance, she said when I asked her, what is hope to you:

"Well, this is interesting, because when I took my photographs I realized that I've taken photos of different hopes, different interpretations of hope. It's just, to me hope is the anticipation of good – it's just, to me it's all right, like it's all right, it's just gonna go on – I was going to say that there's always possibilities. By having hope, it shows that the doors will open. Like finding a place where, even though I can't see it, I'm believing that as long as I can go forward with these ideas and just try, then something will allow me to go forward. So I think hope is very much about discovering, like finding the place where it's just you, and it's about the good things that will happen, that it's never as bad as it is now."

Kathleen then said:

"You can have hopes in the sense that you hope, but you're hoping because you don't really believe it...but then something can happen that, to our eyes, that doesn't seem yet possible. It's like hope, right at the moment, I just can't see it – but if you really have hope then you go, I know I will, I will do it...you know, as if you've got a sense of, well, why should things go bad for me, they shouldn't – things should go well for me."

Later on she mused:

"Hope is not sitting on the fence going, oh, I hope so. If you do you're already defeated before you go in. If I say I hope with
certainty that a door will open for me in an area that I want to pursue, then for me I’ve just settled the matter. You know, I hope with certainty – there’s no room for doubt.

Later she identified:

There have been times in my life when the door has not been open, but I can see it happening. I can just see it, and I’ve got a real tangible something that I carry inside.

Kathleen also referred to endless possibilities as she spoke about her chosen profession and the myriad of career opportunities that might be available from which she could choose. She said:

I’m not sure that I want to get into the whole office scene – you know, the nine to five routine. So, I’m trying to look at my degree, what are the other ways of using it that are not so obvious. I know that from the thinking that you learn in my course, and the problem solving, and being able to organize and arrange complex ideas and briefs and things. I know I’ve learned a lot about being able to think bigger.

When Kathleen was looking at her photographs she looked at one of a house and garden that she’d taken and told me:

This was taken around the corner where I go for a walk sometimes. And it’s hope in the sense that these people, I mean, I would love to have a home, a family home. And it gives me hope that, well, if they’ve got it, then I’ll hope that I can have it too.

Kathleen revealed an interesting contradiction about the way that we use the word hope:

I have naturally picked up as I was growing up, that when we use the word hope it’s really a middle, sitting-on-the-fence kind of word. That you use it, but you don’t really, really believe it...and it’s almost like, when people say a hope statement, it’s not the words, but the way they say it, you don’t believe them. It’s not a positive believing statement. And in some of my photos I was almost going, oh, I hope that will happen, and it was out of a very weak, unbelieving part of me inside. Yet other things I took photos of were about hope that I believed in thoroughly. I mean I knew inside that it was right; it was about a bigger idea, about what’s right in people.

A life force
Kathleen also expressed hope as a life force:

Hope is a life force because to me hope is not a head thing. Actually, hope is the life in you, the feeling that doesn’t make you
feel tired and worn out and just give up. And yeah, it just makes you feel able. It’s all of those things for me, and yeah, it’s enabling and it enables you to believe in all those things that you said you would do. And I think that’s important.

Later on she said:

Hope is a life force that enables you to look after yourself, you know, to exercise, swim, live out of our passions.

Kathleen related an interesting story about hope as a life force when she was a little girl:

*When I was little I was full of hope and I don’t think I ever used hope as a word. I don’t think I’d go around and say, oh, I hope I’m a pop singer. I would just go around and be a pop singer. I would have a brush in my hand and the music full on. And I think that’s what having hope was, that you just lived it out. You lived out that desire and that dream. You could do anything.*

Later she again spoke about when she was younger:

*Going though high school you would have moments when friends would tease you or, you know, where you’d think, I’m not pretty enough. But for me I don’t think they went deep enough to curb that belief in myself, which, I’m sure, was very great for me.*

A bit later she said as she looked at a photograph of some flowers on her balcony:

*My husband nicked off this little flower from some bushes and put it in this vase and let it grow roots. And now it’s this beautiful plant. And just seeing that plant, seeing it grow from a little cutting – it’s just the most beautiful thing. I come out here every morning, just to see this thing that we’ve managed to grow. It’s really nice to come out and see it and it gives me hope. It speaks of the whole process of growing up and becoming something…and it speaks about life, the mystery of life.*

Kathleen also spoke about hope as a life force from the perspective of situations where you did not have hope:

*When I was going through a hard time with my lecturer and feeling not in control and struggling and feeling down and stuff, I kept remembering a verse from Blake. It goes:*

*Joy and woe are woven fine, a clothing for the soul divine. Under every grief and pine, runs a joy of silken twine.*

*And I thought, oh, that’s about hope, and I started to come to an awareness that life was never necessarily intended to be happy all*
the time. And I started to realize that this struggle wasn’t necessarily a failure, but the beginning of my victory...I mean, it’s not until you hit the more difficult problems that you’re able to grow and take whatever life throws at you...it’s really just about becoming more able to do what you need to do.

Later in our conversation Kathleen told me that:

Hope exists in all human people, regardless. It’s just something that is within them – it’s something that’s bigger than myself.

And in her closing remarks Kathleen told me:

Having had hope for something, and having had it realized, grows the hope for the next thing.

She reiterated this thought in a metaphorical sense when she said:

It’s like the morning sun, it just feels so good and I think the sun is about the new day, the mystery of life and it’s like life goes on. You know, the fact that you get up each day says a lot about that you have hope.

**Being worthy**

Kathleen tied hope and being worthy together in the following dialogue:

Your understanding of who you are, I think your understanding of who you are and how you feel about yourself in the inside will determine whether your hope is realized or not. So I think that hope is believing that you are worthy of what you want or of what you desire.

Later on she said:

In general, when you are interacting with other people, you need to present yourself as worthy. I think that then you will see a lot of your dreams and aspirations happen.

She continued, at a later point in our conversation.

I think that hope and faith have to be completely entwined. Hope is realised because of your faith. Maybe faith builds you enough to believe in who you are, to hope for things. I think that faith has belief for the impossible, like when you are really locked in and there is no hope. Faith sustains the hope that you have when you present yourself as who you are. I think that faith is very much about believing, regardless of the way you feel and regardless of your circumstances. But for me, hope is actually something that I feel. I mean you have faith and you go right, that’s what you believe. But hope to me is something that you carry. Hope is something that you feel. Maybe hope is the sign that confirms you.
The ability to record memories
When Kathleen was examining one of her photographs, of a painting that had been
given to her by her uncle, she revealed:

“I’ve been thinking about it and a lot of my hopes are about memories that are precious to me. And it’s not so much the memory, but the fact that you record things. I think the ability to record memory can give a lot of hope. Your experiences, whichever way they go for you. And so this painting was like a way of recording a memory that we have. And I think it is important for you to keep a memory of something that has happened or has had a positive outcome...it gives hope to people who are going through something to remember the things that you’ve done well and the things that you’ve been able to do.

Hopelessness
Kathleen relayed a story about her father in which she believed he was being
slandered by the people in their community for some work that he was doing. She
found that experience and time in her life very hurtful:

“I think that situation hit me so hard, you know, that people would actually attack you and pull my father down. It was my first experience where I found people being quite vicious. It affected my world so much and it was not something I could control. For me, it started me questioning ideas of hopelessness. Up until that point I had never felt hopeless, because I had everything in my world intact. But then when people attacked my father I thought, well, if this happens to him, then it will happen to me.

Kathleen also relayed another story about an experience she had in the university
course she was undertaking. She showed her lecturer some work that she’d done:

“Although I tried, I just couldn’t get it right. And I couldn’t get it in my head to explain it. But my lecturer turned around and said, why are you here? What are you doing here? And was quite vicious I thought. And I read it as being, why are you here, if you can’t do it? I think it hit deeper inside me than I realized, and I became stressed before class. I would just become incredibly panicked that I just wasn’t good enough...and I was wondering, do I keep going? Do I finish? I wanted to stop right there. I kept thinking I can’t do it, I’m dropping out. It was just hopeless. I thought I was very hopeless.

She then said in a later part of her conversation:

“His comment really swung things for me, because it had become personal. He made it personal. It hurt me, but I didn’t give up. And later I realized that it was not an ability issue but it was about my self-esteem or my belief in my ability.”
Conclusion

In this chapter I unveiled my pre-understandings or initial conceptions about hope, to enable the reader to apprehend attitudes and assumptions I carried into interactions with my participants. This imperative is consistent with Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology, because, as identified in Chapter 3, Methodology, understanding gives rise to thought and conditions it. Therefore, through sharing my pre-understandings, a window of opportunity has been provided for my reader to see whether I have developed an expanding view of hope as a consequence of my involvement in this research. Additionally, I explicated processes I used to identify fore-projections or early understandings about hope that arose as I interrogated my data. Whilst these fore-projections were not specified, I maintained this was appropriate because it was not the end-point of data analysis. Finally, the prejudices of hope that were distilled from each participant were identified, giving the reader some insights into ideas that were expressed by them. In the next chapter the horizons of hope that were identified for this study will be explicated and fused, to create a more succinct understanding of the phenomenon of hope seen through the eyes of the participants.
CHAPTER 6 FUSION OF HORIZONS

The gift of being human is to understand another person’s point of view. The grace of being human is to know this and still think the best of them.

Richard Hill

Introduction

Gadamer (1989) says that our horizon is something that moves with us, rather than something into which we move. He further says that when we find ourselves within situations that we wish to understand, our task is to throw light into them. A fusion of horizons occurs when our own horizon is understood in order to understand another’s, and understanding occurs when there is a conscious act of fusing two or more horizons, creating historical consciousness. Bearing these thoughts in mind, the next imperative of data analysis was to achieve understanding, through fusion of the multiple horizons of hope that were expressed by my participants. This was accomplished by carefully considering the prejudices that were revealed in the texts, whilst constantly thinking about how to make meaning of what had been said.

Throughout this phase of data analysis, the questions I kept asking myself over and over were:

- What do the prejudices that I have identified mean?
- How can their expressions be understood in light of each other? and
- How can their expressions be grouped in meaningful ways that give rise to a rich and deep understanding of the phenomenon of hope?

As I grappled with these questions I realized initially I was filled with tension, anxious to “get it right” and to produce a work that was meaningful and worthy of consideration. However, I began to relax when the full realization dawned that mine is just one of many interpretations possible from exploring the data of this study. This is because my horizons or particular viewpoints, which express who I am, are unique and constantly forming. They are shaped not only by my past and my awareness of the present, which are my horizons, but also by the fact that my
understanding changes over time. Throughout the time of this study my understanding of hope has continually enlarged, not only by what my participants told me, but also by what the literature told me. The full realisation of Gadamer’s philosophy of understanding was realised when I finally embraced the belief that the task of understanding is never entirely finished, because we have an infinite capacity to refine and extend our understanding of things. It is highly likely that if I interact with the data in years to come I will see them differently, because (presumably) I will have grown and changed over time! Also, each person who reads this thesis, and subsequent publications arising, will also see these data in different ways, bringing their own horizons into play. These comments are not given as an excuse for conceptual sloppiness, nor are they meant to imply there was a lack of rigour in exploring the data! They are, however, consistent with the methodology of this study, which acknowledges multiple realities and multiple, almost endless, possibilities.

To make explicit what occurred in the final stage of data analysis, during this stage I interacted with the data in a number of different ways. I grouped and regrouped the prejudices that were revealed, trying to make sense of the totality of what was shared by the participants. I pondered the prejudices I had identified for each of the participants, trying to tease out unifying ideas that could be expressed as their horizons. I asked myself questions about what each participant was saying, and once again returned to the original text to consider the context of their revelations. Over time a number of ideas or horizons emerged, many of which were subsequently discarded, because they did not resonate according to the revelations of the participants, in the context in which it was said. After I identified the horizons of hope which I believed arose out of the multiple ideas expressed by my participants, I returned to them to ask whether what I had identified resonated within them. Their responses were affirmative and they indicated that the four horizons of hope I identified felt comfortable and right to them. The four horizons that explicated the essence of hope, as seen through the eyes of the participants of this study, were: the experience of at-one-with; a driving force; having choices and options; and connecting and being connected. These horizons will now be presented and discussed. However, at all times it must be remembered that what I am presenting as the fusion of horizons, represents my understanding of the phenomenon of hope at
this point in time, which was derived through a thoughtful, careful and extensive interrogation of the data. What is presented is not a definitive work; rather it is a fair representation of the unique ideas and concerns my participants expressed as they relayed their ideas about hope to me.

**Hope: An Experience of At-One-With**
The participants of this study experienced at-one-with in a variety of ways. For some it was expressed as knowing that things were right in their world; for others it was expressed as a sure and confident belief that life would go well. To illustrate how this horizon was identified I will now relay brief summaries from the many stories told by each of my participants.

Cosmos did not relay specific instances or incidents in his life that revealed the horizon of at-one-with. Rather, he expressed it as a feeling – one of having a great deal of confidence about himself in relation to his life. He said he knew he had a great life to look forward to, and there was never any question about his being successful. He said he believed that when you had hope you would have a positive attitude about your life, with no reason to question your ability to succeed. He also expressed that in hope you could find fulfilment in life. Cosmos relayed he’d always had people around him who loved him, and hope was something that was always present in his life. When he woke up each day he was glad to be alive; he enjoyed life and he believed life was good, even during the times of his life when he felt down.

Erica on the other hand expressed the horizon of at-one-with as the deep sense of satisfaction and achievement she felt as she surveyed the work she and her husband had done on their house. As admitted novices to the world of home renovations, when she showed me her photographs she eagerly pointed out every feature they had changed through their labour of love. She expressed wonderment that her husband, who initially did not know one end of a hammer from the other, would be able to accomplish so much. Although initially filled with doubt – she never thought they would be able to do it – as they got closer to their goal her sense of pride grew. It gave her the confidence to believe everything would turn out all right, not only in
respect of renovating the house, but also in her life. She expressed this by saying that somehow, even if you had a horrible day, or something really bad had happened, things would be all right. This idea was particularly emphasized when she said that even if you’re having a really rotten today there’s always tomorrow. Tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it.

For Lisa the horizon of at-one-with came through as an attitude of liking her self and being at peace with her inner self. She told me with some pride in her voice that she was a good person, she liked herself and felt good about herself. She knew there was nothing wrong with her and she was strong. It puzzled her that at times people focused on the exterior of a person, on things like how they looked and dressed, and said she believed that if people would take the time to get to know her, not judge her, they would find out she was a normal person who happened to like dressing in a different sort of way. Lisa conveyed that her peace came from knowing who she was as a person and what she had to offer others. She said she was content with herself and that made her feel good. She was not kidding herself, because her mind was also telling her she was a good person. Lisa did not equate being a good person with being a perfect person, as she did relay at times that she could be nasty if she needed to – not that she liked to be nasty, but she knew how to be nasty if the occasion called for it. Lisa was content with herself as a person.

James revealed a strong connection with the horizon of at-one-with through communing with nature. This was expressed as he told me that when he felt bad he went to the sea, where there was energy and life. Going to the sea allowed him to turn bad times into good ones, it enabled him to feel good. He also said that when he felt sad he went to the cliffs to look out at the horizon and the sky to restore his peace. It reached far out and made him feel happier. He relayed that nature generally – the sun, green things, the wind – all invoked good feelings for him. So for James at-one-with was expressed as the capacity to feel good, through embracing the energy nature provided.

Generally Vanesha did not reveal the horizon of at-one-with in the way that the other participants did. Her horizon was expressed in her absolute need to be free, to do what she wanted and needed to do. She could not be moulded or conform to the
expectations of others. She freely admitted she was self-centred and hope was about her, just doing what she wanted to do, following her dreams and passions. She was a free spirit, possessed of passion and drive. The horizon of at-one-with for Vanesha was revealed in the capacity to be free, without obligations or expectations imposed by others. This was expressed metaphorically when she discussed stepping through an archway into the unknown, where it was scary, but where passions were and things came together. Vanesha experienced at-one-with through fulfilling her self-obligations and expectations.

For Christian, the horizon of at-one-with was revealed through being an artist and being in touch with his artistic side, allowing it to refresh, revive and express his spirit. He was filled with hope when he saw beautiful things that inspired him and incited his imagination. He worked off dreams that were inside his head and used his art not only to express beauty in the world, but also to express his passions about things that were not right in the world. He described himself as a fanatic artist; firmly stating that art gave meaning and purpose to life. It was what he loved and he said artwork itself filled him with joy and hope because it enabled his creative energy to be harnessed and expressed. He said existence became worthwhile on a personal level by working and creating. Christian revealed through this dialogue that he loved not only his work, but also the work of others – it added to society, it was a triumph of beauty over ugliness. Christian hoped that reality could become the ideal that he’d imagined. This was his horizon of at-one-with.

There isn’t a single story that revealed the horizon of at-one-with for Keisha. Rather at-one-with was found in a series of interconnected episodes in Keisha’s life, which demonstrated her persistent desire to fully know and trust herself and experience inner peace. Keisha began this description through relaying the painful circumstances that caused her to leave her family home at the age of fifteen. She ended it with the story of establishing a loving and close relationship with her current partner. The in-between of these stories revealed the many struggles and successes of Keisha’s life. One story was about acknowledging that she needed to grieve for the loss of her son, many years after the event, so she could put it aside and absolve her guilt; another was about experiencing joy in rediscovering a relationship with her daughter, made possible when she took a risk and stopped parenting her. Through
her descriptions of her life one thing was clear. She would do whatever was necessary, whatever it took, to become whole and to experience inner peace and inner strength. To her his was the horizon of at-one-with.

Like Cosmos, Sarah expressed at-one-with as a belief that she would have a good life. Her life plans included having love, children, family, friends, travel; working in a foreign country; helping others; and living with God in eternity. She told me she was looking forward to a really good life because she decided for herself that things were worth living for. She believed that when people saw hope in you it inspired them to look forward to things and to realise there were things worth enjoying. Metaphorically Sarah expressed at-one-with when she spoke of a candle as a light coming into the dark, enabling one to see again; and when she talked about a thunderstorm bringing knowledge that soon the storm would be over. At-one-with for Sarah was the knowledge that there was a silver lining in every cloud.

Titania expressed the horizon of at-one-with by saying she knew good things would happen in her life. She said that even in situations that were rough on her, in the end she knew they would be all right. She said this belief came from God, because in her life He always brought something good out of the not so good. She relayed a story in which she found her sense of self restored through being authentic with her parents. She believed true hope came from knowing God, and knowing you were going to go to heaven. She expressed the view that even when her belief was unrealistic, she just knew that in the end all things would turn out for the good. Although she was not able to differentiate how this belief was different from faith, she was undeterred in her professed belief that hope was manifest in the capacity to feel good in a bad situation. For Titania the horizon of at-one-with was the sure knowledge that all things would, in the end, turn out for good.

For Kathleen at-one-with was expressed in the sentiment that there was no room for doubt. She illustrated this point when she discussed how as a young girl she would be a pop singer. Full of enthusiasm and zest for life, she would take her hairbrush in hand and mimic the actions of pop singers as she lived out her fantasy. However, at that time it was not a fantasy but real to her, because there was no room for doubt – in her mind she had settled the matter. She was a pop singer and it was just a matter
of time until the rest of the world knew it. Kathleen further expressed that it was not until you hit the more difficult problems in life that you were able to grow and take whatever life threw at you. It was just about becoming more able to do what you needed to do. She firmly believed that how you felt about yourself in the inside determined whether your hopes were realized or not. For Kathleen the horizon of at-one-with was expressed as knowing you are worthy of what you want or desire.

When I asked myself what each of these unique and individual expressions had in common, it was the belief or knowledge that we could transcend our circumstances to be or have whatever was important to us and to experience at-one-with. For Cosmos it was the belief that his future was assured; for Erica it was the sure knowledge that each day held new possibilities for a brighter tomorrow; for Lisa it was a contentment of knowing who she was, no matter what anyone else thought or believed; for James it was the capacity to turn away from feeling bad to feeling good; for Vanesha it was her capacity to be free to do whatever she wanted; for Christian it was being refreshed by his artistic talent; for Keisha it was a belief that knowing herself was worth it; for Sarah it was knowing that she had a good life; for Titania it was knowing that all things would turn out for the good; and for Kathleen it was knowing that you were worthy of what you wanted or desired. For these participants hope was the feeling and experience of at-one-with.

**Hope: A Driving Force**

Each of the participants of this study saw hope as a driving force, and this was revealed in a myriad of ways. To illustrate how this horizon was identified, I will relay some of the many stories of each participant, which exemplify this horizon.

For Cosmos hope as a driving force was expressed in his strong desire to succeed in his chosen sport. He had great hopes of one day joining the ranks of those who had made it to the top internationally, and he expressed the joy it would bring him, not only for himself, but also others whom he would motivate to succeed by working hard. He was strongly confident he would succeed and he saw himself travelling with his sport in the future. He clearly conveyed he could not conceive of not making it. In his words it was just not a possibility. He was willing to work and
work hard, and he described how having a drive to succeed in his sport gave him a clear understanding there was a reason to be here. His passion fulfilled him and gave him motivation, energy and drive.

Erica on the other hand described hope as a driving force from an entirely different perspective. She found herself in a situation where she had failed one of her prerequisite subjects for her chosen career, and there was a strong likelihood that if she failed again, she would be precluded from her studies. She was filled with despair and described how she felt like she was a failure; she didn’t have the knowledge to be a nurse and she let herself down. However, over time, because the goal (being a nurse) was vital to Erica, in her words she pulled her finger out and did the work required to pass her examination. She said she realized the only person who could help her was herself, and so she studied with great determination. This determination paid off; she avoided further failure and later told me about the many joys being a nurse brought her.

When Lisa talked about hope as a driving force, it was in reference to herself and her ex-husband. She relayed the story of how her ex-husband had been in an horrific accident and it was thought by the medical profession he would not survive. And so she went to his bedside, not because she was obligated to, but because she cared about him as a person. As he lay there unconscious she talked to and challenged him, telling him, you don’t have to die, what are you doing? And she said that in the end that she was not sure what gave him the drive to survive, nor was she sure what gave her the strength to stay there, day after day, twenty-four hours a day, sleeping there, but she had this feeling that he just wasn’t ready to die. And so for Lisa, even though she could not precisely put her finger on why he did not die or what drove her, she knew he was not ready to die. Against the odds he survived. In relation to herself Lisa conveyed that when she was in situations that were not optimal she refused to let things get her down. She did whatever it took to turn around situations in which she was feeling defeated, including sharing her feelings with friends, so they could give her a pep talk and motivate her to succeed. Like Erica, she realised the only person who could get her through was herself and she used her determination to forge ahead in life.
Like Erica, James had two goals and it was these goals that gave him the drive to do what he had to do to achieve them. His goals, however, did not arise from failure, but from a dream. He had a dream of going overseas with his girlfriend and so he worked relentlessly, six days a week, for seven months, to get the funds together to enable his dream to become a reality. He also had a dream that he would find a job that he could be happy with, where he would not be bored. He wanted to get somewhere in life and not be stuck in a dead-end job. As he said it, he wanted to work to live and not live to work. And so he embarked on a journey to skill and equip himself to better his opportunities in life. He admitted it would be hard, he had not completed his high school education, but he was determined, because he wanted, in his eyes, to be a better person and he wanted to be happy. His goals provided him with strong motivation to do whatever it took.

Vanesha’s story was somewhat similar to Cosmos’s, in that she was driven by her passion to be an artist of international acclaim. She talked about her vision of exhibiting all over the world and she said she had to paint and if she didn’t, then she may as well be dead. Both of these participants were driven by a dream not yet realized that was tangible, achievable and most definitely highly probable, from their perspective. Getting the thing that was out of her reach, that is, international acclaim as an artist, drove Vanesha. At times this drive almost brought her to the point of despair, like when she admitted her art was coming way, way too easily for her, causing her to question whether it was really art. She told me that without hope her passions had no drive and without hope she did not have the self-motivation to go with her passions. The driving force of hope for Vanesha was in doing things that she never thought she’d be able to do and in doing things she was too afraid to do. Although my transcripts do not reveal it, when I met with my participants to confirm whether the horizons I’d identified resonated, I attended an art exhibition in which Vanesha’s work was prominently featured. All her work had sold out, and subsequently she was invited by a gallery to enter into an exclusive contract with them. They believed she had great talent and would become a prominent artist in Australia. So it seemed that the first leg of her journey had come to fruition and that her passion, energy and commitment to her ambition would pay off.
Although it was mentioned before that Christian described himself as a fanatical artist, the horizon of a driving force does not focus on his being an artist, but rather on what his artwork represented to him. Christian created much of his work not to be sold, but to be exhibited in galleries and museums as a condemnation of violence and evil. Rather than wanting his work to be recognised for any acclaim it would bring to him, he wanted it to stand as a social statement. He wanted his work to exist independently of him and to have a life of its own. He felt passionately that his work needed to be a part of the world, rather than being held within a private collection. Christian expressed hope as a driving force behind humanity. He said it was one of the things that drove people, and without it people would carry on without joy, becoming like automatons, just working in a joyless kind of existence.

Keisha’s life story contained a tragedy that few of us can imagine. She lost her young son in a house fire for which she blamed herself and for which others blamed her. We already know that subsequently she had another child and, through a series of events, found herself in a position where she had to make a decision to stop parenting her daughter. In relaying her story about her children, Keisha revealed the horizon of hope as a driving force. She spoke of her personal pain and struggle and the journey she needed to go on to make her decision in relation to parenting her child. She was driven by her absolute commitment to do whatever she needed to do to become whole and clear about what would be the best decision for her and her daughter. The hope that she would be able to make this decision drove her, and she said that without hope you don’t have a place to strive towards or anything that will drive you. When she made her decision it was like she was out of the clouds and could breathe again. In her journey she found peace and healing and was able to move on in life. She moved on, however, not without her daughter, but within a newly defined relationship, where she was beginning to experience fun and love.

The recurring sentiment and driving force of Sarah’s story was the need to be useful to others, giving of her self in ways that were practical and able to demonstrate her concern for the welfare of others. To achieve this she was in the process of equipping herself professionally through appropriate educational qualifications. Part of her dream included plans for her and her fiancé to travel to a disadvantaged country, after they were married, to work with those less fortunate than herself. She
saw herself working alongside others, and she revealed that she wanted God to be a central part of their lives, basically showing her and her fiancé how they could be of use in this world and what they could do in a very practical sense to show God’s love. She was committed to helping the poor and people who were estranged and sort of left out of things. The desire to be useful and in service to others drove Sarah to place the needs of others above herself. She believed that by being useful to others she could help them to have hope and to achieve a better quality of life.

Titania relayed that her decision to commit her life to God was a driving force in her life. It helped her to make many life choices that were hard for her. When Titania decided to recommit her life to Jesus it was a consolidating thing for her. She relayed that she believed the way she would reach her full potential was by serving God in the best way she could and by doing what God designed her to do. Her commitment to God was strongly expressed as a driving force throughout her conversation and it was a focal point for many of her ideas.

Like Sarah, Kathleen had a burning passion to serve others and to do something a lot bigger than herself. She dreamed of getting involved with a community that had experienced a natural disaster or a war, helping them in practical ways to re-establish themselves. To do this required her to complete a professional qualification, and it was in relation to this completion that hope as a driving force was revealed. While Kathleen was studying, she hit a major stumbling block in one of her subjects. Her lecturer accidentally hit on a nerve through something he said to her. While he probably did not intend his remarks to affect her in the way they did, for Kathleen his remarks were personal and devastating and they almost caused her to quit her university course. She struggled with whether she should quit and relayed that she wanted to stop right there. However, she persevered, finally realising that it was not an ability issue, but that it was about her self-esteem and her belief in her ability. Her qualification was important to her – it was the ticket she would use to do the work she dreamed of doing. And so she persevered, and although it was hard and was still having some residual effects many semesters later when we spoke, her determination and tenacity pulled her through. She told me it was not until you hit the more difficult problems that you were able to grow and take what life throws at you. She said hope was a life force; it was a feeling that didn’t allow you to feel
tired or worn out and just give up. It was an enabler, helping you to believe in all the things that you said you would do.

I asked myself what each of these stories had in common, and the answer I got was that each of them highlighted the passion and energy that the participants were willing to expend to achieve their goals. They were driven, sometimes for themselves and sometimes for others. They had a particular end-point in mind and they were not willing to settle for second best. For Cosmos his drive was the dream of becoming a professional athlete who topped his chosen sport; for Erica her drive was to become a nurse; for Lisa the drive was to help her ex-husband fight for his life; for James it was the dream of having a good and meaningful life; for Christian it was having his art work make a statement; for Keisha it was finding new hope in her relationship with her daughter; for Sarah it was being in service to others; for Titania it was serving God; and for Kathleen it was finishing her professional qualification. For each of these participants hope was manifest in their commitment to work hard for what they wanted. They did not sit and wait passively for what they wanted. They gave forth of their energy, which was sometimes physical, sometimes mental, but almost always emotional. Hope for each of them was a driving force.

**Hope: Having Choices and Options**

There were a myriad of ways in which the participants of this study expressed hope as having choices and options and for each of the participants this horizon will now be revealed.

One way Cosmos expressed hope as having choices and options was through discussion about choosing to help and serve other people and becoming a leader in the future. Cosmos indicated that he felt he had a call on his life to be a leader, and he knew that one day he would have to choose to respond to this call. Many people had told him at various times that he had a mantle of leadership and, whilst he acknowledged this as a strong possibility, he indicated that he knew the time was not right now, but it would be sometime in the future. He said he was willing to respond to this call and was looking forward to the challenges it would bring. It actually motivated him to work hard. Cosmos also talked about his desire to serve others. In
the main he stressed that he wanted to help other people to enjoy life and to have a
good time, encouraging them and motivating them by pointing out that with hard
work they could succeed. He talked at length about a person whom he greatly
admired and who had made it to the top of his chosen sport. This person continually
helped other people, and Cosmos said it inspired him to want to help others as well.
He acknowledged that many people who made it to the top did not give of
themselves, and that was their choice. However, he had a clear understanding of
what he wanted to do and how he wanted to respond. He had a role model or idol
that paved the way by living out of a spirit of unselfish giving and he was eager to
follow this lead.

For Erica the horizon of having choices and options was expressed in an optimistic
view that in our lives there were opportunities waiting to be achieved. Life was not
just black and white, and it was important to realise that the end point of any
accomplishment was different from (read better than) the starting point. She said
hope was looking to the future, because it gave you something to strive towards. She
believed you should choose to look forward to challenges that presented in your life,
as they often led to opportunities to better your life circumstances. She felt this was
particularly important for people who had experienced a stroke, and she regularly
couraged her patients to believe that even if they’d had a stroke, their life was not
over. She encouraged them to embrace life and choose a path to recovery. Erica
also said it was important to remember that success often led to success. When
Erica spoke of her parents’ separation and divorce, she revealed that, as consequence
of her parents’ separation, Erica lost contact with her father. However, after she
married she decided she wanted to have a relationship with him. She wanted him to
know her in terms of the day-to-day aspects of her life. No longer was she content to
just know she had a father, she wanted to know her father and for him to know her as
a mature woman, who made her own decisions. She wanted to believe that there
were options and possibilities for her father to have a relationship with her future
children. And so she re-established contact with him and was making it a point to
speak with him on the telephone at least once a week. Whilst at the time of our
meeting Erica and her father were still in the early throes of relationship, she was
confident she had made the right choice. For her future children Erica did not want
life without a grandfather to be an option.
Lisa expressed the horizon of having choices and options as a belief that you can better your life and have hope for the future. Lisa wanted to make something of her life. She wanted to get ahead and achieve. She said she thought she could do this by becoming a graphic artist, which was something she had been interested in over a long period of time. To this end she developed a portfolio to present as part of her application for admission into a TAFE course. She knew it would be hard to be admitted, because she had not completed her high school education, but she was willing to try. She wanted to increase her options and choices in life through having gainful employment and a reasonable income. Lisa expressed that she just wanted life to be less of a struggle; she wanted to believe that things wouldn’t always be dull and bad, that there was always hope for change. For Lisa growing and changing for the better was a very hopeful thing. She was ready to embrace any opportunity that would increase her choices in life.

James expressed the horizon having choices and options by saying he wanted to be responsive to what was happening around him and to go forward, even if he didn’t know where he would end up. He expressed this metaphorically when he looked at a photograph he had taken with some steps that went up and up and up. Despite the fact he didn’t know where the steps would lead, he indicated it didn’t matter, because even if you didn’t know where you were going, at least you were going somewhere. He also expressed a desire to achieve and attain future possibilities through being responsive to what was happening in his life. He demonstrated this metaphorically when he spoke about a photograph he’d taken of some windsocks blowing in the breeze. He wistfully said he didn’t know what it was about those socks, but they were able to be responsive to what was happening, and he liked it. James spoke of the importance of fulfilling his life’s ambitions – to be financially stable, have good health, a home of his own and to be happy. James told me he had never really been in front in his life and yet it was clear that being in front, having choices and options in his life, was important to him.

Vanesha revealed the horizon of having choices and options when she talked about her artwork. She said that in our lives we have many options and choices, and sometimes we have to destroy to create, and fail to succeed. She said this about a
painting she had painted over because she was not satisfied with it. While she relayed her dissatisfaction with her work she echoed that if you let yourself fail, you let yourself succeed – you needed to destroy to get good stuff. She believed it was hopeful to be able to fall over and laugh or cry, but then get up and do it again. Through these words she revealed the horizon of having choices and options. For Vanesha, having choices and options was about going forward and making decisions in full view of the many and varied obstacles that might present themselves along the way. This was revealed in her metaphor about the spider web when she said it was quite brazen of that spider to choose to spin its web in such a wide and windy place.

Christian spoke at length about the importance of having choices and options. This was revealed in a simple way through his discussion about a tree in his back yard – a tree that he did not want to cut down, but could if he wanted to. It was also revealed through his discussion about a Muslim woman who was dancing on a video machine in a shopping arcade. He found it liberating and hope-inspiring that she was able to be free and to enjoy herself, particularly as women of her culture were often subject to maltreatment and abuse. He mused that he hoped that in the future all Muslim woman would be able to act as she had. Christian’s discussion revealed a deep concern for the plight of humankind. He stated quite clearly he hoped our world would change for the better, that there would be no more poverty, war or social injustice. In these expressions he revealed his clear desire for all to live within a world where there were options and choices to be free from persecution, violence and degradation.

Keisha revealed the horizon of having choices and options through discussion about the importance of being whom you want to be, and saying what you want to say. This horizon was highlighted when she told a story about a woman who came into her classroom with dreadlocks. Through this encounter she was challenged to believe that she could achieve what she wanted in her life. She had options and choices to change, if she wanted. She said this revelation changed her; it was a turning point in her life. It enabled her to view her life from a different perspective. Keisha also revealed she was beginning to appreciate that freedom, not alienation, came from being forthright and speaking out frankly in her relationships with others. She was learning that in relationships it was all right to disagree, to argue and to
debate issues. Exercising these choices did not automatically result in loss of relationship, as she had previously experienced, but could lead to the achievement of lasting relationships.

For Sarah the horizon of having choices and options was revealed through her story about a traumatic break-up with her first boyfriend. She had looked forward to many things with him and the realisation that they would never happen was devastating. Her initial response to the break-up was to believe nothing was going to go right in her life, and there was nothing more she could do. However, in time she began to frame this situation in a different light, by reflecting that there were still a number of other things she hoped for in her life. She acknowledged she had a good life, there were things that she wanted to do and dreams she wanted to achieve. So she chose to focus on them instead of her situation. Through the realisation that there were many options and choices available in her life she was able to move on.

Titania expressed the horizon having choices and options through several of her life stories. One story was about her early life, when her parents were ready to leave a location where they were living, but Titania was not. She said that, although her parents would have loved for her to come with them, she was given a choice about whether she wanted to leave or stay. She relayed that it was really helpful she was given a choice, and felt having choices was important. Another story Titania relayed was about growing up in a Christian home. Although her parents were Christians, they did not take it for granted that she too would be a Christian. She was asked whether she wanted to make this choice. Titania also relayed the importance of having choices and options when she said that if you don’t have hope you have nothing to look forward to, your choices and options are limited and you have nowhere to go and nothing to achieve.

Kathleen expressed the horizon having choices and options in a variety of ways. For her this horizon was about going forward and finding things she was really passionate about and believing in endless possibilities. She was not content to sit on the fence and wait passively for what life had to offer. She said that when you were young you often made decisions on the basis of what others advised. However, a point had to come where you found something that was really yours, that hadn’t
come from anywhere else, but from the dreams inside of you. Kathleen believed it was important to look at her degree and consider using it in not so obvious ways. She acknowledged she was adept in problem solving and arranging complex ideas, and she was excited about possibilities that would come from thinking bigger. She also said hope was the anticipation of good, it was the place were she could see the desires of her heart happening, even when a door was not open. This foresight was tangible and real to her, and she carried it inside of her. For her, hope was found in the possibilities of life, from making choices and having options.

When I considered whether there was a common thread among these diverse expressions, I realised that the horizon having choices and options was linked to the achievement of future possibilities. Each participant believed life was full of options and choices that could ultimately lead to the fulfilment of desires, hopes or expectations. For Cosmos this was about one day achieving his call to be a leader. For Erica it was about establishing a continuous relationship with her father in the future, not only for herself but also for her future children. For Lisa it was about a desire to have a better life and the realisation that she needed to take action to get ahead. For James it was the prospect of his life going forward through responding to possibilities around him. For Vanesha it was moving forward in the face of obstacles, knowing that sometimes you had to fail to succeed. For Christian it was living in a world where people could be free and for Keisha it was learning it was all right to grow and change. For Sarah it was realising you could recover from life’s disappointments. For Titania it was knowing she could make her own decisions about her future, and for Kathleen it was believing in endless possibilities that enabled her to frame her own future. For each of these participants, hope was expressed as a belief in the importance of having choices and options.

**Hope: Connecting and Being Connected**
Each of the participants of this study expressed connecting and being connected in a variety of ways as a horizon of hope. This horizon is now discussed for each participant.
Cosmos was a genial person who loved being around other people and having a good time. Discussion about connecting and being connected was prevalent in his stories. He expressed that having friends made his life worth living and he looked forward to being with his friends – to laughing and just hanging around together, no matter what they were doing. He spoke about the importance of his family; his brother, half-brother and sister, his mother, aunts and uncles were described as really great people whom he admired and respected. He said family and friends gave him hope and made him want to do well in life. In fact, he expressed that, without friends, you just wouldn’t enjoy life. He felt privileged to connect with family and friends. Cosmos also spoke about the importance of connecting with God. The knowledge that God loved him and wanted the best for him, wanting him to succeed, was important to him. Cosmos expressed appreciation for the fact he knew God loved him for who he was. He also expressed that there were times when it “scared” him to think that if he turned away from God he would lose his hope of ever doing anything worthwhile. For Cosmos the horizon of connecting and being connected was summed up in his statement that hope was knowing that you are liked and loved, or that you will be liked and loved.

Erica expressed the horizon of connecting and being connected in two different ways. Like Cosmos, Erica reflected on the importance of her family, saying knowing that they could rely on each other was important. Her family gave her a sense of belonging and she expressed that through them she had a purpose in life. She couldn’t imagine life without her mum; she wanted to draw closer to her sisters; she wanted to build a stronger relationship with her dad; she wanted children and she described her relationship with her husband as loving and close. Erica described herself as being a woman who enjoyed simple things in life. One of the things she enjoyed best was having her family over for dinner, sitting around the fireplace together. Erica also talked about the importance of having friends, saying that they too gave her a purpose in life. She mused that if she didn’t have any relationships with anybody, why would she need to be here? The other way Erica expressed the importance of connecting and being connected was in relation to her desire to sew into the lives of others. She admitted she liked to give people, not things, but herself, through sharing her time with them. She spoke of her patients, saying one of the reasons she became a nurse was to give them hope, to be a spark in their day and to
let them know she respected them as a person. She extended the notion of giving into the lives of others as she relayed the story of the woman who, although a complete stranger, stopped to give help to a little girl who needed assistance to go up some stairs. For Erica connecting and being connected was like breathing, a natural element of life.

Lisa’s horizon of connecting and being connected was expressed in an acknowledgement that we are social beings and therefore can’t live on our own. Lisa described herself as a social person who appreciated the importance of living in harmony with others, watching out for, caring for, respecting and trusting one another. One of her deepest wishes was that people would begin to realize that they had to live with other people, and therefore be nicer and more respectful of one another. Lisa illustrated the importance of caring for and connecting with others when she relayed the story of the girl in the train station whom she’d befriended. She also illustrated it as she relayed the story of the woman who lived within a psychiatric facility over a long period and was finding it difficult to adjust to living in the community. This woman had connected to the nurses who were her caregivers and was finding it difficult to adjust to life without them. She also illustrated it through many references to the importance of her relationship with her boyfriend and to the people who taught her at the creative arts program. She expressed the importance of connecting and being connected when she voiced her ideas that people need to talk about things and let things off their chest, sharing happy as well as sad times. She also strongly expressed it when she voiced her disappointment in her mother, whom she said had abandoned her sisters, an act which she would find hard to forgive.

James revealed the horizon of connecting and being connected through several means. The first was in his discussion about his girlfriend; and the second was in his discussion about the centre he attended. Having formerly been involved in an abusive relationship, he described how he and his girlfriend started their relationship by just being really good friends. He frankly admitted he needed a friend and she became one. While relaying the story of their friendship he expressed wonderment that when he and his girlfriend were together strangers responded to him differently by smiling at him. Over time this caused everything to turn around, and he became
content. James spoke freely of the myriad of ways in which his girlfriend helped him. She gave him confidence, she made him realize he could do the things in life that he wanted to do and she gave him hope. With his girlfriend, James had a connection and that connection was good. James also expressed that the centre where he was learning the skill of photography was a place of connection. He appreciated the fact that he was welcome there, the staff wanted to help him, they made him feel good and they were interested in fostering his development. This feeling of goodness and connection was firmly expressed when he shared one of his photographs and said he was welcome there and it seemed right to call it the door of hope.

For Vanesha the horizon of connecting and being connected was revealed through a montage of insightful discussion about connecting with herself, her artistic talent and her voice of reason. In relation to connecting with herself, Vanesha revealed she sometimes felt trapped in her body and wanted to free herself from it. When she experienced this, she went to the cliffs to look at the birds and planes, because they could fly. Metaphorically she expressed a wish to fly or be free and it made me wonder whether painting was a form of flying for her. In relation to connecting with her artistic talent, Vanesha was torn by a strong passion to weld and make natural sculptures. She had a natural love for metals and sculpting; however, she restrained herself from fulfilling this strong desire because she knew she shouldn’t do too many things at once. She needed to do things when it felt right and realised that for her it was not good to do too many things at once. In relation to connecting with her voice of reason, Vanesha mooted she would like to settle down, be still was how she expressed it. In the midst of this revelation, however, she acknowledged that it would be incredibly hard for her, and she would hate it – it would be cloying and stultifying and she would feel trapped. Her voice was wistful as she told me that she struggled with being in relationship, acknowledging that, although in some ways being with her partner satisfied her, she believed the relationship would not last – not because he could not be steadfast, but because she wondered if she could. Throughout our conversation tension was evident in Vanesha’s dialogue as she revealed the horizon of connecting and being connected. For Vanesha, wanting but not wanting and having desire tempered by reason were the essences of connecting and being connected.
For Christian the horizon of connecting and being connected was expressed as loving and being loved. Christian said love was one of the most important things in life; it was a worthwhile pursuit, a pure and happy thing that could fill you with hope. He saw hope as love. Although Christian was not connected with a significant person in his life at the time of our interview, he did not exclude the possibility. He talked about a loving relationship that he had experienced in the past and said it was not entirely out of the realms of possibility that the relationship could be resumed at some time. He believed love was always out there, waiting to be experienced and embraced. Being with someone special filled Christian with the sense that every day was filled with hope and every moment with possibility. In addition to expressing the horizon of connecting and being connected as romantic love, Christian also expressed it in relation to his parents and helping others. He described his relationship with his parents as warm and close, although he admitted that at times they needed their own separate space. He felt deeply bonded with them and appreciated opportunities to spend time with them, although they were few because of geographical distances and transportation difficulties. Christian also reflected on the importance of connecting and being connected in his discussion about helping people when they were in a bad situation, through holding their hand and stroking their hair if they were crying or in pain.

Like the other participants of this study, Keisha identified the importance of connecting and being connected as a horizon of hope. She expressed joy in the knowledge that she was forming friendships, and she felt connected to her friends. She delighted in being able to spend time with her friends and develop a special closeness that was unique for her. Keisha also expressed profound joy in the love she found with her partner, whom she could trust as her friend, mentor and teacher. She believed that her partner was teaching her about many aspects of life she had not previously learned, especially about how to argue and debate issues, without it dissolving the special quality of the relationship. This was pure wonder to her, because she had never experienced it before in her life. Learning to give and receive mutual love became a part of Keisha’s life, and she found real joy in being able to give into love and relationship. Keisha also spoke about the importance of connecting with herself, getting to know herself and her inner child. She revealed
that as she got to know herself she began to change and she felt this change was
good. Finally, Keisha spoke about the importance of people generally getting in
touch with themselves and with each other, actually helping one another out.

Sarah, who was preparing to marry the person she identified as her partner for life,
strongly expressed the importance of the horizon of connecting and being connected
as loving and being loved. When Sara spoke about the importance of loving and
being loved, it was not only in the context of her relationship with her boyfriend, but
also in relationship to her family (the one she came from and the one she was about
to commence) and to God. She admitted she’d had a good life, she felt blessed and
loved in her family of origin and was delighted to have found someone with whom
she could continue to share life’s experiences. Finding love, which she described as
a life-long commitment and sharing it in marriage, was a source of hope to her.
Additionally, Sarah spoke of the horizon of connecting and being connected in the
context of loving God. She said she knew God loved her and she would always have
that love. It gave her hope, particularly as she knew she would never be alone,
because God would always be with her. She expressed joy that one day she would
be with Him in eternity.

For Titania the horizon of connecting and being connected was revealed in her
discussion about her family, friends, God, nature and her pets. In relation to her
family, although she admitted they had been through some rough times together, she
said they constantly brought her hope and she respected them. When she spoke
about people in her life, she revealed she loved people and, because of this love, she
wanted to bring them hope, to uplift them in practical ways by being there for them,
talking with them, sitting with them and letting them know they were not alone and
that someone loved them. She also said she constantly reminded herself she was
loved by a lot of people who wanted to be her friends. She said hope was knowing
you were loved and could love in return. Titania talked about the importance of
connecting with God. She identified that God spoke to her through His written word
in the Bible and she felt reassured because she knew she had a God who loved her
and with whom she would spend time in heaven. Titania also revealed that
connecting with her dogs was special to her, particularly when she was sad or in
tears. For Titania the essence of hope was expressed as the knowledge that you are loved, because everyone needs to be loved.

Kathleen expressed the horizon of connecting and being connected when she discussed the importance of having memories. She identified that a lot of her hopes were about memories, which were very precious to her. Kathleen noted that the fact we are able to record memories of significant places and events in our lives was something that was important, no matter how those events turned out for you. In the course of her reflections Kathleen revealed the horizon of connecting and being connected in her strong desire to work with people in natural disaster situations, doing something that was bigger than herself and, in her discussion about the importance of her family to her, in the closeness that they shared.

Again I asked myself what these revelations had in common and it was that each participant believed it was important to share their humanity in some way. For Cosmos connecting and being connected was expressed as knowing that you are liked and loved by family and friends; for Erica it was also the importance of being in relationship with family and friends; for Lisa it was living in harmony with others; for James it was knowing on a personal level that he was accepted and liked by others; for Vanesha it was connecting at an intimate level with herself; for Christian it was loving and being loved: for Keisha it was having lasting and loving relationships; for Sarah it was loving her family and her God; for Titania it was knowing you were loved and could love others in return; for Kathleen it was storing a lifetime of wonderful memories. For each of these participants connecting and being connected was a horizon of hope.

**Conclusion**

Through the process of hermeneutic analysis four horizons of hope were identified for the participants of this study and they were: an experience of at-one-with; a driving force; having choices and options; and connecting and being connected. These horizons are not hierarchical in nature, that is, one expression does not have a place of supremacy in relation to the others, nor are they sequential. In order to develop a clear understanding of the phenomenon of hope for these participants,
these horizons must be understood in light of each other, as complex, dynamic and interwoven aspects of the whole. I have found the challenge to present the findings in a way that demonstrates the wholeness of the phenomenon of hope very vexing, particularly as the medium I am using is “flat” and as such is devoid of textual, graphic, pictorial or voice overlays. Therefore, what follows is a verbatim of a single story of one of my participants, whereby I identify in situ the horizons of hope embedded within this dialogue. For purposes of clarity, the dialogue of the participant will be in italics, the tradition I employed throughout this chapter and the horizons of hope are placed in superscript bold. Hopefully this approach will not only demonstrate how horizons of hope are evident within a single story and how the same expression can embody more than one horizon, but will also make explicit what heretofore may have been somewhat cloudy.

I’m married and have been for almost twelve months to my husband Jim. He’s a wonderful, wonderful man. We have just purchased our first house. When my husband and I realised that we wanted to be together we rented for twelve months and it was convenient for him because he could walk to work and we enjoyed living there. And then we decided we wanted to buy a house and it was a case of finding an area that we could afford but would also be a good place for my husband because his profession is always going to have him working in the city. So, anyway, we have just purchased our first house, which I’m very excited about.

It’s a great sense of achievement for me actually – to think that I could purchase a house that we’ve renovated and that I’ve done it myself, so that makes me feel good about myself. I was actually impressed with him because, prior to us buying a house, he, I mean, he didn’t even know what end of the hammer to hold. That was a sort of joke that the whole family had. But he’s just, he’s been so determined. He’s learned things and done things that I wouldn’t even know how to do. So I’ve been really proud of him. And I can stand back with him and say look at what we’ve done.
connecting and being connected you know, at our age and with no actual building experience and it’s really a sense of achievement.

This dialogue about hope is not particularly sensational or unusual. It describes an every-day event in the life of my participant and her spouse. Within this brief excerpt all the horizons of hope are found. However, as can be seen, they are not in any particular order. Although some horizons were dominant, each horizon worked together to portray the essence of hope in this brief vignette. In Chapter 7, the Discussion, these horizons of hope are synthesised to create a definition of hope from the perspective of study participants.
CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

*Hope is the Thing with Feathers,*
That perches in the soul,
*And sings the tune without the words,*
*And never stops,*
*At all.*
Emily Dickinson

**Introduction**

The horizons of hope revealed through this study are important in and of themselves, for they help to refine and extend our understanding of the essential nature of hope seen through the eyes of the participants of this study. However, they have an importance beyond this, because they provide some understanding of ways in which health care practitioners, especially registered nurses, might respond to youth, *with hope,* in their day-to-day interactions with them as they minister to their needs. This is an important facet of this study because, as was identified through the literature review, youth of Australia are not always connected in ways that enable them to draw from a well of strength that exists within the self (Heckler, 1994; Mitchell, 2000; Pritchard, 1996; Rolf & Johnson, 1999; Schetzer, 2000). The findings of this study revealed four horizons of hope. They were: at-one-with; a driving force; having choices and options; and connecting and being connected. In this discussion I will address these horizons, indicating how, or if, the literature treats these dimensions of hope, and offer perspectives on how they might be considered by people who are charged with caring for another, whether as a health care professional, concerned friend or in any other capacity.

From the outset I would like to make it clear that while it might be tempting to try and draw connections between what the participants revealed about hope and their experiences of their past, my discussion will be void of any attempt to draw such inferences. For example, it might be tempting to say that Vanesha did not talk much about connecting and being connected to other people and that this is probably related to her early traumatic experience with her mother. Or that Keisha emphasized the importance of connecting and being connecting because of the multiple experiences of loss in her early life, followed by the discovery of recent love. However, to regard the revelations of the participants in this way trivializes the
importance of what they have shared, by somehow implying that their lives can be understood though a series of causal explanations. It also makes a mockery of Gadamer’s assertions that we are the whole of our lived experiences, and therefore are best understood in terms of this wholeness and not just with selective reference to aspects of our experiences.

Each participant of this research experienced and verbalised hope in differing and unique ways, because their lives were and are unique and distinctly different. Yet, there were also similarities within their expressions of hope that enabled their thoughts to be connected with each other. What follows is a definition of hope, synthesised from its horizons, followed by discussion of these similarities and differences, seen in light of their uniqueness, as well as from the vantage point of ideas contained within the literature.

**Definition of Hope**

If we return to the definition of hope I derived when exploring my pre-understandings of hope, it can be seen that my understanding of hope was limited and clearly not reflective of all the horizons of hope identified by the participants of this study, although the horizon of at-one-with was revealed within it. In my definition I stated that hope was an enduring capacity to look forward and to embrace life, believing it has purpose and is rich and meaningful. Through my engagement in this study I can see that my definition of hope falls short, as it does not acknowledge the importance of the driving force of hope, connecting and being connected or having choices and options. Further, although my definition acknowledges our capacity to look forward and embrace life, it portrays attainment of hope in passive rather than active ways, a point that will be further elaborated upon in this chapter.

Taking into consideration the shortfalls of my prior definition of hope, and incorporating the horizons of hope revealed through this study, the definition of hope that has been developed is as follows:

_Hope is a driving force characterised by a necessity for human connectedness and the need to have options and choices in life which, when experienced, produce feelings of at-one-with._
Illuminating the Fullness of Hope

I have heard people say over and over again that being awarded a PhD is as much about the process as it is about what is discovered. It is only now that I have come to fully appreciate this remark. The process of discovering the essential nature of hope, seen through the eyes of the participants of this study, has been unperturbed and awkward simultaneously! Unperturbed because I was always willing to let this study go where it would, without worrying about what the participants would tell me. Throughout I was willing and eager to go on my participants’ journey – to hear their thoughts, reflect on their experiences, share in their joys and/or sorrows and to open myself to the otherness of hope they were willing to share. To this end I confess the journey has been rewarding, although at times it has been sad. I have learned a lot about hope from my participants, and not surprisingly some of what I have learned reinforces what is present in the literature. However, I have also learned a number of things not well represented in the literature and these will be shortly discussed.

On the other hand, as mentioned, being engaged in this study has also been awkward, and no more so than at the stage of discussion. This is because there have been times when I have clearly felt out of my depth. After completing my data analysis, I believed I would easily move on to the discussion section of the thesis. However, despite feeling I was ready to write and share what I learned, nothing happened. I discovered I had nothing to say, or rather although I knew I should have something to say, I did not know what and the words would not come! I tried dozens of tactics to get started, including rambling on to my very patient husband, only to discover that what I was saying was leading nowhere. However, rescue came when I read the words of Ronna Jevne (1991), who said, “…hope is part of our life’s journey” (p.146). I found simplicity and truth in these words. For each participant in this research, hope was a part of their life’s journey, without being the entirety of their journey.

Relative to the journey, if my participants and I were to meet at a later point in time to reflect on what they shared, they might be somewhat amused or bemused about their thoughts and the ways in which they described their journey of hope! I know this has been my experience when I have looked back on what I have written, or when others have reminded me about what I have said in the past. I have thought,
“That’s ridiculous, I never said that or Hum, I wonder why I wrote that? or Yeah, that’s right.” This is because what we say and believe at any moment in time are our horizons, and they reflect not only that moment, but countless other moments that have come and gone in our lives. Our expressions reflect a montage of ideas. Many of these thoughts are transformed as we speak them into existence, yet many others remain fairly constant throughout a lifetime, depending on a variety of factors. Regardless, life, and our experiences of it, is a journey and as such it is ever changing and unique. With these thoughts in mind, I now discuss aspects of hope prompted by the participants of our journey.

Photography as a Means of Illuminating Hope
From the outset of this study I always believed it would be difficult to articulate ideas about hope, and I discussed some of my feelings about this in Chapter 5, Horizons Revealed. Because I found it difficult to put into words what hope was to me, I believed it would be difficult for others as well. This belief was reinforced through the literature, most notably by Hall (1990) who indicated that hope is “…so integral to humanness it is difficult to describe in words (p.179) and also by Fromm (1968), who claimed that words were insufficient to describe the experience of hope and suggested using poetry, music and other forms to explicate this phenomenon. In the conceptualisation of this study I included the use of photography as a means of prompting the participants’ revelations about hope whilst they were telling their stories. Although not new to data collection methods, use of photography and other visual forms to represent ideas has become increasingly popular. This was particularly evident when I attended the Eighth Annual International Qualitative Health Research Conference held in April, 2002 in Banff Canada, where a number of qualitative papers were presented that incorporated visual media such as photographs, videos and paintings as a means of exploring phenomena (Scott-Hoy,2002; Ferguson, 2002; Caine, 2002; Turner, 2002).

When I was writing my ethics submission I imagined what kinds of photographs my participants would take. In my imagination they were always beautiful, sometimes profound and deeply thought-provocative. I expected my participants’ photographs to be inspiring, visual representations of hope, and in this regard I was singularly
disappointed! The great artistic talent I expected to be present in them was missing. I felt let down and wondered how on earth they could possibly enhance our discussions on hope. Perhaps my expectation of artistic greatness was related to the fact that a number of my participants were involved in a creative arts program, and that those who weren’t identified themselves as spiritually attuned. Therefore, from my perspective, it seemed reasonable, however incorrect, to expect they would be creative works of art. However, as I said, my initial reaction to viewing their photographs, in the privacy of my own home and in the absence of their discussion, was disappointing.

Despite this great disappointment I was determined to be true to the method I had proposed and took the photographs along to each interview. Initially I regarded the photographs only as triggers that would be used to explore expressions of hope. However, my first interview taught me otherwise. In this interview, which was with the youngest of my participants, I was exposed to the power of photographs and the capability they had to create passionate and lively discussion. I felt the phenomenon of hope become alive and felt energy and excitement about what my participant was telling me. Based on my own assumptions, I thought talking about hope would be an arduous task, but it was not. It became relatively simple. Through his photographs, my participant showed me images of hope that were close to his heart. I was taken on a journey about his hopes and passion to fulfil dreams and achieve great heights. Whereas our conversation prior to the introduction of photographs was friendly and informative, it was not passionate, swift-flowing or filled with yearning. However, the dialogue that accompanied the photographs was animated and full of life. While these descriptions may seem like exaggerations, when photographs were being discussed, the audiotapes reveal a marked difference to the tone, tempo and animation of speech. This is reflected in superscript annotations on my transcripts, which show such things as voice really loud and rapid here, or said with merriment in the voice, or whispered or whimsical and sad. This experience, which was very positive and rewarding, enabled me to go into the following interviews with growing confidence about how to introduce photographs in the course of our conversations. For instance, I learned it was a good technique to hand over the photographs at the outset of our time together, clearly communicating their authorship. In handing over the photographs I encouraged my participants to take their time reviewing them, saying we would
commence our interview when they were ready. When they leaned over to comment about a particular shot, I shared in their enthusiasm and delight and there were many moments when we laughed and shared our companionship. For some participants, after this initial review they put their photographs aside, as if they were signalling “Okay, I’m ready to get down to business now”. For others they launched into insights about hope straight away, explaining why they took a particular photograph and what it meant to them, thus commencing our interview. I quickly learned to adapt my interview style to the tempo and mood of my participants and I believe this attitude not only demonstrated my respect, but also my determination to enact relationships of equality. Further, when I found a participant was struggling to express their thoughts I encouraged them by saying “Well, why don’t you look at your photographs, there may be a picture there that shows what you are trying to say”. This prompt often led to discursive as well as lively discussion that possibly would not have occurred otherwise. In essence, I found photographs to be conversation enhancers, just as the literature suggested (Bell, 2002; Collier, 1967).

In every instance, using photographs enabled deeper and more reflective positions to be unveiled about hope than had been possible, up to that point in time. This was particularly so for photographs having no inherent hope-possibilities that I could detect. To illustrate this comment I offer the following example. One of my participants showed me a photograph, which, to all intents and purposes, looked like a bunch of rocks (Photograph 1). Try as I might, I could not figure out why the photograph was a representation of hope. I thought a direct approach to the situation would be useful and said to my participant I don’t get it, why is this a picture of hope? What happened next exemplified the spirit of comradeship that developed between us. My participant said, with a great deal of mirth in her voice, Don’t you see it? You mean you don’t get it? So I said, Well, no I don’t actually. The response was, Well look harder, it’s there. Despite looking harder I still could not see hope, or anything for that matter other than a bunch of rocks, and I admitted this. It was at this point that my participant said Aahhh, well it’s the spider web. Not wanting to sound too obtuse, but still not comprehending why a spider web was about hope, I asked Well, why is a spider web about hope? In responding, a powerful metaphor Hope is a Spider Web was revealed, identifying hope as being present in situations that had elements of uncertainty and unpredictability. Hope was elucidated as
Photograph 1: Hope is a Spider Web by Vanesha
fraught with possible difficulties, yet, knowing about these possible difficulties, you pressed on, exercising choices and options while striving to reach the prize, always hopeful in the end you could beat the odds. The spider was endowed with attributes of bravery, daring and cunning – it worked against strong forces of nature, ignoring elements that could work against success, and chose to build its web in a wide-open space subject to the wind. It is my strong belief that this conversation about hope, and its insightful illumination and powerful metaphor of hope as having choices and options, would not have occurred without the photograph to prompt such revelations. In a split second of time I became the student and my participant became the teacher, ever patient and ever willing to work with me until I finally got the point. Although I did not think about this while our interview was going on, in hindsight I believe this exchange fostered trust and intimacy that perhaps would not otherwise have been achieved. Clearly this participant had many insights about hope I had not considered before. Our dialogue expanded my horizons and gave me powerful insights into the meaning of hope from my participant’s own unique perspective. The capacity to learn from participants of our research is identified by Jevne (1991), who states, “…there are no recipes; there are no formulas; there are no pat answers. There is only hope” (p.12).

As the literature conveyed (Barthes, 1977; D. Harper, 1998), photographs were significant instruments for revealing my participants’ inner-most thoughts and insights about hope. Combined with my participants’ dialogue, their photographs revealed passion, beauty, mystique and metaphors of hope which I was not expecting and some of which I did not recognise as metaphors until I began to analyse my data. Given this aspect of the findings of my study, attention is turned to additional metaphors of hope.

**Metaphors of Hope**

As mentioned above, throughout their dialogue many participants of this study revealed metaphors of hope. These metaphors were rich, beautiful and deeply illuminating. They offered valuable insights into dimensions of hope that were difficult to express, and those I initially recognised have been cited in various places within Chapter 6, Fusion of Horizons. This aspect of the study caught me by
surprise, for I had not anticipated that the participants’ discourse would be so rich with metaphors, a thought which was naïve indeed according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who maintain, “…human thought processes are largely metaphorical” (p.6), and therefore are a part of their conceptual system. Lakoff and Johnson believe there are “…shortcomings in recent theories of meaning” (p.ix) in that they fail to illuminate metaphors as “…pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, [emphasis mine] in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (p.3). Kovecses (1986) supports this idea, making a distinction that metaphors have more than ornamental functions in our every-day language; they play a significant role in crystallising abstract concepts. Further, Lines (2001) asserts that our concepts are metaphorical, and meaning is never entirely literal. Thus, if one follows these lines of reasoning, by identifying conceptual metaphors of hope we can be drawn one step closer to understanding this phenomenon.

Given I had not read the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) or Kovecses (1986) prior to undertaking data analysis, and did not expect my data to be rich with conceptual metaphors, I did not initially look for them. When interacting with my participants and their texts I did recognize some linguistic metaphors used to convey concepts of hope and felt my data analysis gave good insights into these as they related to the phenomenon of hope. However, although I regarded linguistic metaphors as interesting, I had not considered metaphors could represent conceptual systems. However, upon reading the work of the above authors after completion of my data analysis, the notion of conceptual metaphors intrigued me. I found myself going back to re-examine the horizons of hope with “fresh eyes,” wondering what conceptual systems could be found.

Ironically, literature on hope is not replete with either linguistic or conceptual metaphors. Rather, hope is described in more concrete ways as a noun, verb, adjective and state of being (Farran et al., 1995). In a rather extensive review of the literature few articles could be found that identified conceptual metaphors of hope (Holt, 2000; Jevne, 1994). Thus I was keen to re-examine my data, looking for conceptual metaphors that could perhaps expand my understanding of the phenomenon of hope. This closer examination of the data revealed conceptual
metaphors that were deeply personal and reflective, as well as interconnected and enmeshed. The *Hope is a Spider Web* metaphor, which demonstrated hope as having choices and options, has already been cited. In addition to this metaphor of hope the participants of this study revealed another conceptual metaphor and it was *Hope is Hard Work*. This was revealed through the dialogue of Cosmos who said he would work hard for the prize of being a world-class athlete; it was revealed in the discussion of Erica who described how hard she worked to finally pass an examination; it was revealed by Keisha who told us how she struggled to understand what she needed to do to feel good about her parenting. The portrayal of hope as hard work is not revealed in the literature. Instead hope is revealed as an innate human response (Erikson, 1959; Flach, 1988), a confident, yet uncertain, expectation of achieving good (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985), a process of anticipation involving interaction of thinking, acting, feeling and relating (Stephenson, 1991), an anticipation of possibilities through envisioning the not yet (Parse, 1990) and a belief that a positive future exists for the self (Hinds & Martin, 1988). In each of these definitions, hope is portrayed as something that simply exists, rather than something that exists because we work hard to hold onto it, as revealed by the participants of this study. That is, literature reveals hope as passive rather than active. Seeing hope as hard work, particularly while we interact with those who are entrusted to our care, offers new possibilities, because it cautions us not to presume it will always be present or able to be maintained, except through tenacity and perseverance on the part of the hoping individual. Thus, in our interactions with others we need to ascertain if a person believes there is anything they could do to be hopeful or to be engaged in the hoping process and, if so, every effort must be made to support this person in the maintenance of hope.

In addition to viewing hope as a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving good (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985) it is also important to focus attention on what is referred to in the literature as the dark side of hope (Day, 1991; Graves, 1955; Greenhut, 1995; Jacoby, 1993; Kast, 1994). Failure to do so could result in the adoption of romantic views about hope that are not consistent with the experiences of the participants of this study. For instance, both Christian and Keisha acknowledged that having hope did not always guarantee good outcomes, and we know from an exploration of literature on the prevalence of youth suicide (M. J. Dudley et al.,
1998; M. Dudley et al., 1997; Mann, 1997), as well as through examination of the dialogue of the participants, that many circumstances in life militate, albeit sometimes temporarily, against the possibility of maintaining hope. If we only see hope as an ever-achievable, ever-available commodity, which is an essential component of human development (Erikson, 1959), we run the risk of only seeing hope through a limited horizon.

Further, if we operate from a premise that engaging in authentic relationships is important to caring, we must acknowledge life’s struggles and pains, because as the findings of the study clearly demonstrate, they do have the capacity to affect our ability to hold on to hope. However, the manner by which we should acknowledge others’ struggles whilst providing supportive care is not always clear. Whilst there are a number of studies that identify hope-facilitating strategies (Herth, 2000; Johnson & Roberts, 1996; Miller, 1989; Perakyla, 1991; Tollett & Thomas, 1995), most of these studies have been carried out within the context of illness, thereby providing few leads on how to facilitate hope in those who are basically well but experiencing setbacks in their lives. Additionally, hope-facilitating strategies that are offered, however sound they might appear, have not been rigorously tested, a point that will be further elaborated upon in another section of this discussion. Finally, within literature there are conflicting views on whether nurses should or can offer hope. For example, Shubin and Kephart (1990) explored tensions inherent in working with families with a brain-dead member, concluding it is not always advisable to offer hope, and Engberg (1991) suggested that nurses find it frustrating and burdensome to care for hopeless patients. The writings of these and other authors clearly suggest it is not as straightforward to offer hope as one might expect.

Another metaphor of hope was revealed through photographs and accompanied by a simple declarative statement. It was *Hope is Yellow*. This metaphor was revealed through a variety of ways in photographs and discussions about the sun and how people feel hopeful when the sun is shining, and how they wish for the sun to come out on rainy days. It was also revealed in statements about the sun’s capacity to make people feel warm, safe and lovely. When asked why the sun in particular prompted hopeful feelings, more than one participant said *well it’s yellow and I don’t know why, but somehow I associate the colour yellow with hope*. Hope was also
identified through photographs of yellow flowers which were said to brighten up any room and made you feel good just to look at them; in photographs of paintings that incorporated yellow to bring out feelings of contentment, light and peace and in all things of nature that were yellow (Photographs 2 and 3). Each participant’s discussion of their hope, in the context of it being yellow, revealed the horizon of at-one-with. When this metaphor was revealed I initially believed that the link between the colour yellow and hope would be somewhat tenuous, in that it had not occurred to me that hope would be represented by colour. However, much to my surprise, shortly after completing my data analysis, while my husband and I were travelling, we attended a drama where the colours red and yellow were presented as the royal symbols of hope. I remember thinking at the time “How did they know yellow is the colour of hope”? Shortly thereafter, I read the work of Jevne (1991) and she jarred a memory about a song that symbolised hope called *Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree*. Shortly after that, I was reminded about a link between the colour yellow and hope through a cancer awareness activity, in which daffodils were sold for an annual breast cancer fund-raising event. This linking of hope to colour intrigued me, sending me to the literature, where I found a number of works clearly linking colour to a variety of phenomena. For example, in reporting the findings of an auto-ethnographic study, Scott-Hoy (2002) found that pain is red and hope is yellow. The people of Tibet regard yellow as a symbol of growth and purity (Yamamoto, 1982); yellow has the sun as its nature symbol and is defined by qualities of optimism, clarity and intellect (Marberry & Zagon, 1995). Green is nature’s symbol for growth and green is noted for its qualities of nurturing, healing and unconditional love (Marberry & Zagon, 1995). Blue has nature symbols in the sky and ocean and this colour is reported to induce relaxation, serenity and loyalty (Marberry & Zagon, 1995). Many of these descriptions of the properties of various colours resonated with the metaphors of hope found within this study, suggesting that colours may play an important role in inducing hopeful states. Certainly Marberry and Zagon claim that colour contributes to our health and well-being and Jevne (1991) encourages all to promote hope through whatever means we can. I believe this suggestion could include the use of colour to promote hope.

Further, Ritberger (2000) indicated that our personality type can be defined through colour, with red people being practical, realistic, down-to-earth, sensible, pragmatic
Photograph 2: Hope is Yellow by Erica
Photograph 3: Hope is Yellow by Lisa
and dependable, as well as quiet, introspective, serious, matter-of-fact and reliable. Reportedly red people are patient and painstakingly systematic in their approach to problem solving (Ritberger, 2000). Ritberger also identified “Yellow is the colour of intellect, innovation and a love for things that are contemporary and challenging” (p.103). In this work it is stated that people with a yellow personality type are self-confident, self-reliant, self-made, self-starting, self-motivated and self-fulfilled. They are also described as deep thinkers. Other personality types are described by Rigberger, such as green personality types, who “…live in a world of hopes, dreams and emotions, where the intangibles of life are the most important” (p.119).

Accordingly, greens think in metaphors and analogies, painting vivid pictures in their minds and seeing things from a holistic perspective. They are reported to be calm, quiet, reserved and even shy at times and have a great depth of caring (Ritberger, 2000). I found this discussion of colours as they related to one’s personality interesting, and it caused me to reflect on how well colour descriptions would fit the personalities of the people I interviewed. I did not feel I knew my participants well enough to speculate any further on this, but decided to take the colour personality test devised by Ritberger to ascertain my own colour personality. The results of this test fit my own personality type reasonably well and caused me to reflect that the significance of having hope described by a colour rests not in knowing the reported properties of the colours themselves, but in the knowledge that colour may be able to be used therapeutically to promote hope. Whilst literature is clear that colour can be used therapeutically to promote health, there is a dearth of literature exploring the usefulness of colour in promoting hope.

The last metaphor of hope I will discuss is another powerful one that revealed hope as at-one-with. It is Hope is the Door of Possibility. In this metaphor, my participant showed me a picture of an archway which was located several meters from the edge of the face of a cliff (Photograph 4). The dialogue accompanying our examination of this photograph revealed two different points of view. In the first discussion I was asked to look at the photograph as if I was standing on the edge of the cliff, looking through the archway on to the ground on the other side. This was described as the known side, where it was safe, predictable, comfortable and secure, because, if you stepped through the arch, you could clearly see what you were going to step into. The second discussion, however, revealed another point of view altogether. In this
Photograph 4: Hope is the Door of Possibility by Vanesha
discussion I was encouraged to look at the photograph as if I was standing on the ground and looking through the archway into the abyss. This view was described as the unknown side, because, when viewing the archway from this perspective, you had a sense of falling off the precipice, not diving off, but moving yourself forward without seeing where you would land. Hope in this instance was described as being able to step through the arches without knowing what was beneath your feet. Nevertheless, you stepped out, being confident that it was where your passions were leading and that things would really come together, whilst knowing the elements would provide for you. This graphic description called into question previous thoughts I had pondered related to whether hope was a whimsical, superfluous thing, somewhat akin to wishing. It made me think about hope as having depth and layers I had not fully appreciated, and whilst I do not think I was ever complacent about hope, these comments reminded me never to become complacent or take hope for granted. They also reminded me to consider that hope can be about taking chances and risks, rather than being safe and secure.

The conceptual metaphors expressed in this study confirmed the horizons of hope as well as deepened my understanding of the significance of these horizons. In many ways using photographs enabled the participants to wax lyrical, and construct metaphors of hope which revealed their innermost thoughts on hope and aspects of their being, as well as conveyed the intimacy of their relationship with hope. I believe many expressions of hope uttered by the participants would not have been revealed without the use of photographs, although this point would possibly be rebutted by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who maintain that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. If this were the case, presumably the metaphors that were used would eventually have come to light, through persistent and diligent probing. However, my sense of this was that my participants revealed their metaphors to me because I had spent some time with them in the lead-up to the interviews. They knew me a little and, even though in reality I was still an outsider, I believe they felt non-judged, valued and safe throughout the sharing process. Therefore they opened up, speaking somewhat poetically about their views on hope as they looked at their photographs and constructed their metaphors. In a work that explored people’s experiences of fire and their recovery H. Cox noted that participants of her research were open with her, despite the fact
she had been warned that “…bushfire communities were tired of being researched” (H. Cox, 1996, p.23). She reported that because she was a nurse, it seemed “…to confer upon one a mysterious entrance to an intimacy not usually or easily granted to others” (p.23). Thus she gained insider status, much the way I felt while I was interacting with my participants – that they were willing to let me have a glimpse into their private worlds. I believe that when researching topics which by their very nature invite people to share thoughts they may never have shared before, it is important to be both thoughtful and contemplative about not only the research design but also the research setting, paying attention to such aspects as the research relationship, to which I have already referred in the Chapter 1, the Induction to this thesis, as well as in Chapter 4, the Methods section of this work.

If these conceptual metaphors and horizons of hope are considered in the fullest sense, they challenge us never to be dismissive of the potency of hope, which, as we have seen, was at the very root of being for the participants of this study. Knowing this, a question that must be asked is, what are the ways we can bring hope into the lives of others? Within a caring context it seems that our responses must go beyond mere caring or presence, which, as we have seen in the literature, are not skills that all health care professionals possess (C. T. Beck, 2001; Dunnice & Slevin, 2000; McKivergin & Daubenmire, 1994; G. Saunders, 1995; Schroeder, 1998). Through these revelations I know I feel called to deeply examine my own core of caring and ways that I can promote hope.

The Horizons of Hope in the Guise of Other Descriptors

Searching for Meaning

Jevne (1996) makes a point that hope is messy and difficult to confine to nice, neat chapters, a sentiment with which I wholeheartedly concur. I have certainly found it very difficult to weave the plethora of ideas expressed about hope in the literature with the horizons of hope identified in this study. Perhaps this is because a number of the horizons of hope identified in this study are present within the literature, but, they are not always revealed in precisely the same way that the participants of this study expressed them. For example, the horizon of at-one-with, although not specifically identified as such in the literature, is present within it, albeit under
different descriptors. Frankl (1959) described hope, or at-one-with, as man’s (sic) search for meaning. In the foreward to Frankl’s work, Allport maintained that man’s (sic) eternal search for meaning was achieved when one rose above their outward fate or transcended their predicament. Frankl himself said his personal search for meaning was achieved because he “…succeeded somehow in rising above the situation, above the sufferings of the moment …as if they were already of the past” (p.95). These sentiments, in essence, describe hope and the horizon of at-one-with, a belief or knowledge that we can transcend our circumstances, to be or have whatever is important to us. Although there are striking differences between the experiences of at-one-with from the perspective of Frankl, who was a prisoner of war and suffered unspeakable horrors, and the participants of this study, there are also striking similarities. Like Frankl, some participants of this study also suffered unspeakable horrors, but regardless, they rose above the immediacy of their own situations to find ways to go forward in their lives. What is important is to focus not on the circumstances or condition of their lives, but rather on their responses at the inner core of their being, which they identified as hope or hopefulness and I have identified as the horizon at-one-with. Although Frankl’s hope was called forth out of personal degradation, Cosmos’ was called forth out of his absolute belief in his abilities, Erica’s was called forth by the deep sense of satisfaction she felt as she surveyed the work she and her husband had done on their house, Lisa’s was called forth out of her absolute liking of herself. They, and all the participants of this study, described hope as a capacity to move beyond the immediacy and reality of the past and live fully in the present, while projecting a different future

Evidence of hope as a futuristic activity is found in the work of Hall (1990) who stated, “…I believe it is normal to hope, regardless of the circumstances. In our future-oriented culture one must hope for the future, because without a future there is no present” (p.180). Further, projection of hope as a future imagined reality, a vision yet to be unveiled, or a waking dream is identified in the literature by a number of authors (Desroche, 1979; Kast, 1994; Stotland, 1969). Or, as described by Wang (2000), “Hope is a reality that is not yet present but is real and possible for people who are hoping, and that propels people to move on even at the darkest times” (unpaged). The findings of this study support assertions of these authors, whilst
clearly highlighting the importance of maintaining a future orientation when working with individuals in any life circumstance. Having said this, further clarity is needed regarding what is meant by having a future orientation. For some it may mean focusing on the next hour, for others it might be the next day, and for others the next year or years to come. This is exemplified in a work by H. Cox, Turner and Penney (2002), who explored individuals’ responses to rehabilitation after sustaining a serious orthopaedic injury following a road accident.

**Learning to Fall**
The capacity to see beyond the here and now and transcend our circumstances, which I have called the horizon of at-one-with, was revealed through the dialogue of the participants in a number of different ways. They experienced at-one-with by communing with a Supreme Being or Creator, by making and fulfilling new plans, and by being content with the self, to name a few. Within the literature, the experience of at-one-with is described variously. Simmons (2002) wrote rather extensively about the concept of at-one-with and hope without naming it as such. In his writings, in which he described his struggle to live with loss and to learn the art of falling, he referred to at-one-with as an attitude of total self-acceptance, where one developed the capacity to live in the joy of the present, as well as the capacity to experience a sense of goodness through being fully present with another. This was undoubtedly the experience of Lisa, who accepted herself for who she was and felt secure enough to make herself fully present to a total stranger in need. It was the experience of Christian and Titania, when they comforted those who were crying and in need. It was the experience of James, who went to the sea to enable bad times to be turned into good ones. And it was also the experience of Sarah, who believed that when people saw hope in you it inspired them to see that there were things worth enjoying.

Inherent in these descriptions of at-one-with is a willingness to act for or believe in good, either for the self or others, and to derive a sense of satisfaction in being at-one-with the self or others, attributes clearly demonstrated by the participants of this study, as well as identified by Simmons (2002) as characteristics of hope. The writings of Simmons are made remarkable by the fact that this work was written
while the author suffered from an incurable disease and, through his experiences, wanted to communicate the joy of living, that is, hope, in the midst of terminal illness.

During the time I was writing this section of my thesis, heightened interest occurred in the media about euthanasia. This interest was prompted by a decision of Nancy Crick, a woman residing in Queensland, Australia, to voluntarily end her life in May 2002, through a self-administered lethal overdose of pain medication that was witnessed by twenty of her closest friends. In an interview with Ms Crick, taped just days before her death and aired posthumously on national television on a program called *A Current Affair*, Ms Crick stated that she experienced constant, unrelenting pain due to bowel cancer. She believed her condition was incurable and stated her preference to end her suffering, to literally take the matter into her own hands. Information released after her death revealed that on autopsy Ms Crick did not have bowel cancer, but suffered from twisted bowel syndrome. Following the publication of Ms Crick’s decision, the ABC radio announced that another individual, Ms Sandy Williamson who resided in Victoria, Australia was planning to end her life on July 4, 2002 as she was suffering from Motor Neurone Disease (MND) and wanted to be free from the trajectory of her disease. On the appointed day Ms Williamson self-administered what she hoped would be a lethal overdose of medications; however, she lapsed into a deep coma and did not die for a further ten days. I do not want to raise or debate the morality or ethics of either of these situations. However, I do want to posit that there are two opposing points of view from which these situations can be viewed. It can reasonably be stated that these situations exemplified states of despair, the opposite of hope, in that they prompted a decision by both individuals to end their life. However, it is also entirely possible, for both Ms Crick and Ms Williamson, that the decision to end their life reflected hope and the horizon of at-one-with. It is possible that their decisions reflected belief in an afterlife where they would spend eternity with God. Seen from this context, their decision to end their life and transcend their circumstances could have been expressions of hope.

Literature does not adequately explore the nature of hope in situations where death is chosen as the most palatable option. In fact, the reverse seems to be true, with literature suggesting that hope is reserved for the living, to enable them to make a
conscious choice to preserve life at all costs. In exploring facets of life and death, Aries (1981) argues that within Western society:

...an absolutely new type of dying has made an appearance in some of the most industrialized, urbanized and technologically advanced areas of the Western world...society has banished death... and no longer observes a pause...everything in town goes on as if nobody died...


Clearly literature that explores dimensions of hope in those who are terminally or gravely ill does so from a prevailing ethos of the inviolability of life (Hall, 1994; Herth, 1990a; Moto, 1975; Rabkin et al., 1990), as well as from a discourse that denies acceptability of giving up, suggesting “Where there is hope there is life, and the role of the health professional is to nurture both” (Moto, 1975, p.1168). Further, as Menninger (1987) writes, “It is a responsibility of the teacher to the student, just as it is of the young doctor to his (sic) patient, to inspire the right amount of hope – some but not too much” (p.449). While on a personal level I may or may not agree with these statements, a great deal of literature that explores the meaning of illness is devoted towards identifying hope-facilitating strategies which carers can employ, such as demonstrating a desire to know the patient as an individual human being (Wong-Wylie & Jevne, 1997); finding and harnessing the will to live (Daly et al., 1999; Wong-Wylie & Jevne, 1997); encouraging interpersonal connectedness (Herth, 1990a); and using cognitive reframing to transform threatening perceptions into positive ones (Herth, 1993b). These strategies are wholesome and presumably have been designed with the best interests of the patient in mind; however, it must be asked whether they can or should be universally applied as strategies to promote life, or as strategies to promote peaceful death, especially in circumstances where it is possible that being released from life may constitute hope from the perspective of the person who is ill. Clearly further research is needed to enable us more fully to appreciate and understand the complexity of hope in death.

Acknowledging Spiritual Dimensions of Hope

At-one-with is variously expressed within literature that examines faith, beliefs and spirituality. Within Judaeo-Christian literature faith, the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen but believed (Hebrews11:1) mirror the
participants’ description of at-one-with as a before-the-fact belief in themselves and their abilities. This is particularly true of Cosmos, who saw himself as a world-class sportsman before the event; Vanesha, who saw her art being exhibited in galleries around the world before the event; Erica who saw herself passing an examination before the event; Sarah, who saw her and her future husband undertaking community work before the event, and Kathleen, who saw herself being involved in community work and having an impact on people before the event. Fromm (1976) expressed faith not primarily as belief in something, but rather as a “…quality of certainty and firmness which our convictions have…” (p.121), a description quite similar to that of Kathleen, who spoke of situations where she hoped with certainty and Lisa who knew she was a good person no matter what anyone else thought. A number of theologians and philosophers maintain that hope and faith are inseparable; that is, faith without hope cannot be sustained and hope without faith has no basis (Fromm, 1968). This view is supported through revelations of both Sarah and Titania.

Viewing hope as the assurance of things desired and the conviction of things not seen but believed echoes the expressions of a number of participants of this study, who possessed vision and desire to fulfil their ambitions, giving them motivation to work towards achieving what was heretofore not visible. Thus, the findings of this study support a nexus between the phenomena of hope and faith, lending credence to their simultaneous existence. They also testify to the importance of encouraging others to embrace farsightedness in relation to the achievement of their goals and ambitions, referred to by Jevne (1991) as the process of building hope bridges.

Christians regard an eternity spent with God as the ultimate prize, the raison d’être of their faith. It is the pivot around which Christian faith is built, an absolute. An assurance of eternity spent with God is another way in which at-one-with was expressed by the participants of this study, most particularly those who identified themselves as Spirit-filled Christians. According to Gumbel (1994), to be Spirit-filled is to experience God as Trinity, that is, to know the fatherhood of God, the love of Christ and the power of the Spirit. While acknowledging that the Trinitarian nature of God does not automatically equate to a life filled with peace and contentment, for the Spirit-filled participants of this study their expressions of at-one-with were a reflection of inner peace and an absolute conviction that they would
spend eternity with God, sentiments echoed in particular by Cosmos, Sarah, Titania and Kathleen.

From the perspective of the Jewish faith, Shalom is another concept that shares characteristics with at-one-with. Shalom has numerous interpretations, but one is that it is a gift or peace from God, that is complete or whole, and cannot be earned (Crotty, Crotty, Habel, Moore, & O'Donoghue, 1995). This concept embodies the essence of at-one-with revealed by the participants of this study, again most particularly those who were Spirit-filled Christians. At-one-with is also intimated within writings about the Buddhist faith. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to provide a comprehensive overview of the many forms of Buddhism, but generally Buddhism embraces four holy truths whilst also enumerating a noble eightfold path to enlightenment (Yamamoto, 1982). Within Buddhist philosophy, the achievement of these truths and paths leads to an escape from samsara, or the cycle of rebirths (E. Saunders, 1971). Zen Buddhism, which is a form of Buddhism originating in Japan in the twelfth century, claims:

> Every man (sic) has the Buddha-nature, and this nature is perceptible through a realization of self. Hence Zen more than any other sect stresses the qualities of self understanding and self reliance as prerequisites for apprehending one’s own nature.  
>(E Saunders, 1971, p.186)

This quality of apprehending one’s own nature and deriving deep satisfaction therein reveals the horizon of at-one-with as expressed by the participants of this study, many of whom had a deep desire to know themselves more fully at every level of their being.

Walsch (1999) obliquely refers to at-one-with in his description of “beingness”, which is defined as who you really are at the core, when all of the “doing” of life is stripped away. According to Walsch, in the course of our day-to-day living we pursue the wrong question, which is, what shall I do, at the expense of discovering what shall I be. His writings indicate that once we discover what we are meant to be, then what we will do will follow naturally, resulting in peaceful existence with and in the self. Walsch connects conscious participation in our beingness to release from uncertainty and concomitant development of a greater understanding of who we are. There are striking similarities in this description to the revelations of the participants,
who identified themselves very much in their beingness – Lisa and James who were each striving to be a good person; Christian and Vanesha who wanted to be artists; Keisha who wanted to be a better mum; and Sarah and Titania who wanted to be helpful to others. The participants of this research revealed that they found hope through a capacity to be at-one-with themselves, a finding that suggests it is incumbent upon all carers to help others connect with the inner core of their being.

Taken together, what do each of these expressions of at-one-with mean in relation to the phenomenon of hope? The revelations of the participants of this study highlight the importance of embracing other-sightedness in our day-to-day interactions with people, in order that we might clearly identify sources and aspects of hope not common to our own experiences of it. This may be hard, for the very aspects of hope we are called upon to reinforce may be at variance with our own values and beliefs about hope. This study also highlights the importance of fostering the hoping self, through accentuating ways in which individuals can experience a sense of at-one-with.

**A Driving Force**

Hope as a driving force is revealed in the face of great challenges to achieve life’s goals. This is evident in such works as *I Can Jump Puddles*, which chronicled the life and victory of Alan Marshall over polio (Marshall, 1971); *Oyster Grit*, a study of the experiences of numerous women who overcame physical, social and emotional disabilities (Victorian Women With Disabilities Network, 1999); the victories of Joni, paralysed from the neck down after a diving accident (Eareckson Tada, 1996); the story of Sister Elizabeth Kenny, who led an international campaign to alter the treatment of polio (Wilson & Pearn, 1988); and the memoirs of Agate Nesaule, who, as a Polish Jew, survived the horrors of internment in a concentration camp during World War II (Nesaule, 1995), to name a few.

However, in addition to having the face of hope revealed through overcoming great obstacles or horrors of life, hope is also exposed in every day accounts of those striving to achieve their life ambitions, such as the participants of this study, witnessed by the revelations of Cosmos, who was driven by the hope of reaching the
top echelons of his sport; James who was driven by the hope of earning enough money to travel overseas; Christian who was driven by the hope of having his art work stand as an indictment against evil; Vanesha who was driven by the hope of becoming an exhibiting artist; and Titania who was driven by the hope of serving God. Common to the stories of each of these people was a determination, through sheer grit, to achieve some goal, whether it was survival, return to wellness, or rising to a position of fame. Interestingly, although hope is presented in the literature as a dynamic life force that results in the achievement of good (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985), it is not specified how achievement of good will come about. That is, most literature remains silent with respect to hope as hard work, a point previously discussed in the Metaphors of Hope section in Chapter 7 of this thesis. Clearly further research is required, particularly to either confirm or disconfirm hope as a driving force that involves an element of hard work.

**Surviving the Storms**

As we have seen above, a number of authors speak of hope arising out of disaster, threats, trials of life and tragedy. Aronson offers a compelling argument of hope as a driving force in his detailed critique of forces shaping responses to the holocaust or “final solution” (Aronson, 1983). In his words “…the human race will sustain each struggle against oppression until it is finally won” (p.215). Indeed, some seminal literature on hope suggests that hope emerges from or arises out of suffering and hopelessness (Fromm, 1968; Marcel, 1962; Moltmann, 1975; Nardini, 1952). This is clearly illustrated in the aftermath of the disaster that occurred in New York City on September 11, 2001, in which thousands of people lost their lives in the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington DC, USA. Countless news stories at the time of the incident, both on television and in the print media, pointed to a need for all to hope that survivors would be found, despite overwhelming odds against this happening as time wore on. Fundamental to this hope was a belief that there resides within each of us a capacity to rise above the here and now, sentiments echoed by the participants of this study, particularly Keisha, Erica and Kathleen in relation to their hopes, and further illuminated by survivors such as Stewart Diver, trapped for ten days under a landslide in the Australian ski slopes (Diver, 2002) and also by Pat Cash, a famous
Australian tennis player who struggled to overcome various addictions and said “Only shooting stars break the mould” (Cash, 2002, p.333).

What is implicit, but not absolutely stated, within most literature is a preference for people to rise above the here and now, to hope for and choose life, or to anticipate a good outlook on life (McCann, 2002). However, how does this resonate with the suicide literature in general and the literature on youth suicide in particular? This is a reasonable question to ask, given suicide has been cited among the top three causes of death for persons under the age of twenty-four. Past trends indicate that suicide rates will continue to rise markedly (Peck, Farberow, & Litman, 1985) and, further, it has been stated that each year in the United Kingdom “…roughly 195,000 people SURVIVE a suicide attempt” (Heckler, 1994, p.xiii). Various reasons for youth suicide are raised within the literature. Unemployment combined with a paucity of jobs suited for the young; punitive or inadequate child-rearing practices; breakdown in the nuclear family; depression; having a previous psychiatric history and substance abuse have all been cited as risk factors (Patton & Burns, 1998; Peck et al., 1985; Preston, 1998). It is worth noting that many of these risk factors were reported by some participants as aspects of their lives and, additionally, two participants admitted that they had thought about suicide at various times in their life. The relationship of suicide attempts to feelings of hopelessness has been acknowledged, as has the relationship of suicide to feelings of powerlessness (Heckler, 1994; Peck et al., 1985). These stark realities provide strong imperatives to explore the phenomenon of hope further for all youth, whether they have been placed within a risk category or not, for, as literature demonstrates, those who lose hope are vulnerable.

**Is it Hope or Hopelessness**

One question that might be raised in respect of the horizons of hope is, why wasn’t hopelessness identified as a horizon, given it was discussed by most participants and identified in their prejudices? In response to this (theoretical) question, I actually considered over a long period of time whether hopelessness was a horizon of hope, finally coming to the conclusion that, although many participants discussed their experiences of hopelessness, their revelations portrayed hopelessness as a driving force of hope, not an emotional state displaying a sense of impossibility and feeling
that life was too much to handle (Bruss, 1988). That is, when the participants found themselves in situations where they felt hopeless or out of control, although they experienced a number of human emotions, these feelings spurred them to action. Aronson refers to the call to action in his discussion of the hope of hopelessness, where he states that the very act of survival is often drawn upon later for courage and strength (Aronson, 1983). This is in sharp contrast to descriptions of hopelessness provided by Lynch (1965), who wrote, “…we all have areas of hopelessness, areas where we know that we are helpless or incompetent. We all know that there are situations we cannot handle, things we cannot do, tasks which for us would be hopeless” (p.62). This description of hopelessness conveys a sense of the impossibility, as well as a subtle yet pervasive message to give up. However, the participants of this study, when faced with situations that prompted feelings of hopelessness, did not give up. They verbalised that, although thwarting of their desires prompted feelings of hopelessness, it also provided the very drive or motivation needed to change the situation, no matter the severity of their life circumstances. Hopelessness became the very fuel by which hope could be found, and rather than dwelling on the negative they seemed eager to move the story along, focusing on ways their lives were enriched and full of meaning.

Although this finding appears to be in sharp contrast with some literature on hopelessness, particularly literature on suicide (Heckler, 1994), it is congruent with the writings of Frankl (1959), who identified hope as a force that went beyond emotion to energise a person when the odds seemed to be against them. It is also consistent with descriptions of hope provided by Farran et al. (1995), who described hope as a way of thinking that enabled people to look beyond the particularities of their circumstances and it is consistent with the writings of Moore (1994), who suggested that even in the face of deep loss hopelessness is not a prevailing norm for people in society today. Further, it is also consistent with literature that describes heroic efforts of people who have risen above the immediacy of their circumstances in the face of extreme obstacles. Thus it can be seen that some literature confirms hopelessness as a fuel of hope. However, the majority of research studies, as distinct from personal narratives on hopelessness, have taken place within the context of ageing or illness states, not within the context of young people who are facing day-to-day aspects of life. For a finding of hopelessness as a driving force of hope in
youth to be confirmed, further studies will need to be conducted, in both healthy and ill individuals across the life span. Suffice to say, though, even without further confirmation of this finding every attempt should be made to help individuals move through experiences of hopelessness to hope.

**Hoping or Wishing**
I have discovered through my immersion in this study something perhaps I knew all along but had convinced myself otherwise. I never stop hoping for things in my life, whether hoping for a good life, a chocolate bar as Titania expressed it, or anything else for that matter. My expressions of hope reveal the face of my longings or expectations, that is, things I would like to have or achieve. In my journal, when I said I no longer hoped for an afterlife with God, this was true. I don’t hope for that, because I am certain I have the promise and assurance of an eternity spent with God. However, when I said I no longer hoped for things to go well in my life, this was not true. I hope for things to go well in my life all of the time! As a consequence of my involvement in this study my horizons have expanded, helping me to understand that hope and hoping are features of my life, whether it is trivial hope as expressed by Titania, or hope with certainty that leaves no room for doubt, as expressed by Kathleen. However, what remains unclear and therefore deserves further consideration is whether my hopes are hopes or whether they are wishes. Within the literature there are no clear distinctions between the phenomena of hoping and wishing, and close examination of descriptions of hoping and wishing displayed considerable disagreement regarding the extent to which hope and wishing are similar or different constructs. Indeed, discourse posits things desired as hope when they are realistic, and wishing when they are unrealistic, suggesting an underlying dialectic tension and raising fundamental questions regarding the nature of what is realistic or not and from whose perspective these determinations are made. To illustrate this point, I relay the story of a close and dear friend named John, who was diagnosed with terminal cancer of the pancreas over two and a half years ago. At the time of his diagnosis John was told that his life expectancy was severely compromised and he could expect, at best, anywhere from six months to another two years to live. However, John hoped for a miraculous cure and remained convinced that he would not die in the short term, nor would he die from cancer. When we
talked about this he was emphatic that he hoped and genuinely believed that he would be cured; that is, he was convinced he would be healed, despite affirmations to the contrary from his physician. He further emphatically stated that what he wanted was a hope not a wish.

Apart from my conversations with John I pondered, from my own unique perspective, the question of whether it was realistic or not for John to hope for a cure, and whether what John wanted was a wish or a hope. I came to realize that, by and large, the answer to these questions depended on the belief system I adopted at the time I raised them. When I enshrined medical technology and used a medical gaze to carefully consider the aggregate data and apply it to John’s situation (knowing the extent to which cancer riddled his body), the conclusion I drew (independently of what John thought) was that John was not likely to be cured. According to medical reasoning, it was not likely that he would “beat the odds”. From the literature, I gleaned in this instance that John’s desire was a wish – in that it was purportedly not within the realm of possibility (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; O’Hara, 2000). That is, it was the product of wishful thinking (Menninger, 1987) or it was a means of making sense of his diagnosis (Tishelman, 1997). Hall (1990) provides some insight into this way of thinking through describing the struggle health care practitioners face as they work with those who are terminally ill and try to maintain hope, making the comment, “The belief that hope of recovery, in the face of a grim prognosis, is a form of wishful thinking is hard to pin down in the literature, even though it is pervasive in the minds of many nurses…” (p.179). She likens this to medical technology’s ubiquitous influence in our culture, where dying is a failure of the medical curative system of care

Conversely, when I viewed John’s situation from a Christian perspective entrenched in a belief that with God all things are possible (Romans 8:28), the conclusion I drew (independently of what John thought) is that John’s desire to be cured would be fulfilled and he would be cured. Again, as I considered the literature I drew the conclusion in this instance that John’s desire was a hope – it must occur for the sake of his wellbeing (Korner, 1970). As I thought about this situation very carefully I drew several conclusions. The first was that my belief systems or horizons strongly influenced the way I thought and responded in any given situation and moment.
When I first learned of John’s diagnosis my initial reaction was to wish he didn’t have cancer – that he would somehow get better – even though in my heart I did not believe it would be likely. However, during my visits with John, when he shared his hope that he would be miraculously cured, I too began to hope with a fervent belief that this would be the case. In this example the situation, that is, John’s diagnosis of cancer, had not changed. However, the perspective from which I viewed his situation had. Wishing or hoping? In John’s case, the possibility and probability of cure, when viewed from the detached, clinical reasoning of medical science seemed remote. However, when viewed from the perspective of belief in a benevolent and loving God, John’s cure seemed inevitable. The belief states or horizons which I adopted as I thought about his situation influenced the differences, in each instance. The differences were also related to the extent to which I wanted to understand (as distinct from just know about) John’s response to his illness, from his own unique perspective. If I apply Gadamer’s (1989) philosophy, which describes conditions of understanding, when I want to understand something I must simultaneously not only acknowledge my own prior beliefs, prejudices and horizons, but I must also consider those of the other. Thus, as I listened to and interacted with John, for the purpose of achieving understanding, my horizon shifted and became more closely aligned with his – simply put, I became convinced his desire to be cured was a hope, not a wish.

Although it would seem that the writings of some authors clearly articulate differences between wishing and hoping (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Hinds, 1984), clear differences between these states have not been empirically identified. That is, the literature offers no clear-cut or irrefutable evidence to either prove or disprove that wishing and hoping are distinctly different phenomena, as they are subjective experiences filled with variance and individual interpretations. Perhaps, at best, we may have to accept that both wishing and hoping are a part of life and may be interchangeable and able to exist simultaneously, a point raised by Titania when wrestling with whether what she was talking about was a wish or a hope.

**Anticipation of Future Possibilities**

Putting aside whether my participants’ disclosures ought to be defined as wishing or hoping, it is clear they regarded hope as an anticipation of future possibilities, and
indeed there is ample literature that confirms hope as futuristic (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran, Wilken, & Popovich, 1992; Holt, 2000; Lynch, 1965; Mickley et al., 1992; Moltmann, 1965; Nowotny, 1989). As the discourse of the participants of this study revealed, their anticipation of future possibilities was enhanced through having choices and options, a finding supported by Wall (2000), who explored changes in hope and power in lung cancer patients, concluding that there is “…a relation between one’s ability to envision a better future and one’s potential to actualise options through choice” (p.234). When the participants had choices and options open to them and felt they could achieve future goals or aspirations, their expressions were buoyant and full of confidence, a finding congruent with the work of Erickson, Post and Paige (1975). However, when it was clear that they would not or may not achieve future possibilities, they expressed doubts in themselves and believed they had limited options and choices. Discussions of both Erica and Kathleen revealed initial reactions to failure that were bleak. They could not see choices and options that could enable them to achieve their future aspirations, so they hid their shame from others and thought of quitting. However, as we know, both participants resolved the situations that led to a loss of hope, regaining over time both confidence and belief that they could achieve their hopes, a response that is consistent with the writings of Jacoby (1993) who maintains that hope “…grows out of struggle and emotional work which draws strength from within the person, while being oriented towards the future” (p.67) and also by McCann (2002) who claims, “Implicit in the concept of hope is a goal, a plan, or a vision for the future, a dream, or even a delusional idea – tangible or intangible” (p.88). Their reactions are also consistent with the findings of Seligman (1992), who highlights the importance of having choices and options in his insightful discussion about learned optimism and its relationship to hope. However, these representations of hope are not consistent with findings from Johnson and Roberts (1996), who maintain that lack of hope for the future, that is, hopelessness, is a major barrier to successful adaptation.

The relationship between loss of choices and options and hopelessness has been demonstrated experimentally by Seligman (1992), and Frankl (1959) anecdotally provided insights into the importance of having choices and options through vivid descriptions of fellow prisoners who everyone knew had lost hope because they gave
up their cigarettes. These works, together with revelations of the participants of this study, contribute to our understanding of the importance of having choices and options to the phenomenon of hope. They attest to the importance of enabling those who are entrusted to our care to exercise choices and options and not limit choices to those conventionally gazetted through policies or practices that govern organisations or mandate behaviour. For the participants of this study hope, having choices and options and anticipation of future possibilities were inextricably bound. Hope in youth, expressed as the achievement of future possibilities, is supported by the research of Hinds (1984, 1988) and is poignantly illustrated through the writing of Rowe (2000). However, given that few studies on hope as a future-oriented state have been carried out within wellness contexts generally, and with youth in particular, further research is needed to confirm this horizon of hope, particularly from the perspective of youth and those who are not experiencing major illness.

Finally, although literature identifies hope as the achievement of realistic future possibilities (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Herth, 1993b; Hinds & Martin, 1988; Nowotny, 1989) inclusion of the word realistic in various definitions of hope must be contested. It cannot be said with certainty whether one’s hopes are realistic or not, for hopes are expression of things yet to be achieved or realised. Therefore, on what basis can a claim for realism be made and from whose perspective ought this judgement be made? Clearly some hopes raised by the participants of this study revealed what might be regarded as lofty ideals, such as hopes for world peace and abolition of persecution. If one accepts a definition of hope as the achievement of realistic future possibilities it could be said that hopes for world peace, in today’s context, will not realistically be achieved. Therefore, it could be argued that they are not expressions of hope, but ones of ideals, wishes, dreams or other like constructs. However, if we take this stance, we overlay judgements that trivialise the expressions of the participants of this study, forcing their hopes to be seen from horizons that do not match their own expressions. These observations therefore call into question the appropriateness of including the achievement of realistic future possibilities as part of the definition of hope.
Relationship and its Connection to Hope

The horizon of connecting and being connected, which in many instances was portrayed through the importance of being in relationship, was strongly revealed through the dialogue of the participants of this study. This is clearly evident in Cosmos’ discussion about the importance of family and God; it was revealed in Erica’s discussion about the importance of her family and patients; it was evident in Lisa’s acknowledgement that we are social beings. It was transparent in Christian’s discussion about the importance of loving and being loved and in Titania’s revelations about her connections with God and her animals. The findings of this study make it clear that connecting and being connected go beyond mere connections with people and embrace such aspects as connecting with God, nature, pets, self, one’s talents, memories, places and love. Fromm (1976) believes that connecting is an element of love, “…the overcoming of human separateness” (p.32) and “…the only same and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence” (p133). Campbell (1984) also attests to the importance of connecting and being connected through evocative writings on the place of moderated love in caring for others.

The horizon of connecting and being connected is also revealed through writings about Aboriginal philosophy or ways of life (Warrawee’a, 2002). According to Warrawee’a, all things are one or Aildt, accordingly “…your growth is my growth: your pain is my pain” (p.95). Thus Warrawee’a sees all things as intimately and necessarily connected, one to another, a point of view supported by Moore (1994), who portrays connecting and being connected as roots of hope. The importance of the interconnectedness of things is echoed by the participants of this study, particularly Keisha, James and Lisa, who spoke passionately about the need for people to connect with one another. It is also revealed through Lisa’s poignant discussion about loss of connectedness with her mother, which resulted in feelings of hopelessness, a finding that is not surprising given Hollar’s (1997) claim that hopelessness is induced through losing closeness and essential connectedness.

The Lessons of a Teacher

In another poignant work revealing the life, times and philosophy of an ageing and dying teacher (Albom, 1997), we are taught that the horizon connecting and being connected is about living our lives to the fullest, without regret or need to look back.
in sorrow, sentiments clearly echoed by the participants of this study, in particular Keisha, as she relayed the victory of disconnecting from the past and guilt related to her son’s death, and Titania, as she told of the release she experienced in becoming her authentic self with her parents. In *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Mitch Albom (1997) provided a deeply moving account of the time he spent with his former teacher, learning to say good-bye, learning how to express his love and learning how to connect with Morrie in the final months of his life. This work portrayed a belief that dying is a state not to be feared, but accepted as a necessary component of life, and the lessons contained within it encouraged the reader to connect with the self and the life that has been lived, through shifting goals and reshaping boundaries of our existence, all of which take time. The importance of having time to develop intimate and open relationships, with health professionals, was also espoused by Tishelman and Sachs (1992) while exploring Swedish patients’ reactions to a diagnosis of cancer.

In literature addressing concerns and hopes of the terminally or gravely ill, the importance of readjusting and shifting goals is highlighted, making it clear that those who connect with others in the midst of their illness can find hope (Albom, 1997; Jevne, 1991; Wong-Wylie & Jevne, 1997). Foote et al. (1990) highlight the importance of social support to those with Multiple Sclerosis, and this assertion is supported by the work of Tishelman (1997), who provided aetiological explanations of the phenomena of getting sick and getting well, highlighting the importance of hope to the capacity of the individual to return to health, as well as by Daly, Jackson and Davidson (1999), who, in exploring the experience of hope for survivors of myocardial infarction, found that holding on to human connectedness brought hope in hopeless situations. However, within the literature, it is also apparent that there are times when hope is not found in the midst of terminal illness (Fish, 1991; Shubin & Kephart, 1990). Writings of these authors suggest that finding or having hope can be a tenuous or nebulous possibility not universally experienced, particularly by those who are terminally or gravely ill. Recognition of these dichotomous responses to illness – that is, having and not having hope – raises awareness of the dangers of presuming, one way or another. Clearly this research shows us that hope and the horizon of connecting and being connected were experienced by the participants of this study, who were well and young, but not without tragedy, and had the capacity
to connect with others. However, literature also shows us that life’s circumstances do not always allow us to connect with others. There are numerous variables and reasons that militate against this possibility, including having a terminal illness (Huberly, 2002). As the work of Fish (1991) clearly points out, those who live with the despair of terminal illness often question whether it is possible to look beyond the absoluteness of one’s illness. What is critical to realise is that despite claims raised by a number of studies that hope is promoted by having faith in the future and a belief that life is worth living (Rabkin et al., 1990), this notion cannot be universally applied and therefore must be contested.

The centrality of connecting and being connected, as it relates to the phenomenon of hope, was specifically noted by Paul (1994), who described processes which cancer sufferers used as a means of dealing with recurrence of cancer. Also, Herth (2000) explored reactions of those experiencing the first recurrence of cancer, describing a hope process framework in which connecting with others, as a relational process, was paramount. Like the participants of this study, connecting was described as an essential aspect of hope. In another study it was claimed that the most powerful influence on sustaining a patient’s hope was to focus on sustaining relationships and fostering attachment ideation (Miller, 1985) and, although Goldberg (1998) notes that nurses cannot give others hope, she maintains that they can offer a caring relationship to foster the development of hope. Further, J. Miller highlighted the importance of having family bonds to the process of hoping (J. Miller, 1989), a sentiment clearly echoed by the participants of this study. These and other studies, such as that conducted by Johnson and Roberts (1996), lend credence to the finding of this study, affirming the importance of connecting and being connected to the phenomenon of hope.

Connecting and being connected is clearly demonstrated in nursing and other literature as important to the overall morale and wellbeing of people – a type of antidote to bolster the spirit of those who are flagging, through illness, loss of a will to live and other such maladies (J. Cutcliffe, 1995; Ersek, 1992; Scanlon, 1989). This is particularly evident in literature concerned with illness states and the role of the physician, where relationship was found to be central to the patient’s ability to sustain hope (Wong-Wylie & Jevne, 1997), and it is also found in literature exploring
nurse–patient caring relationships (A. Anderson, 1994; Euswas & Chick, 1999; Vaillot, 1970). Having meaningful relationships, as both prerequisite to and an outcome of hope, has been identified in the literature (Benzein 2000), and the centrality of connecting to our very humanness is asserted by Jevne (1996). Hickey (1986) identified a number of approaches that nurses should take to enable hope, including, but not limited to, helping patients identify reasons for living, and Holden (1992) noted encouraging a person to look forward to celebrating future events, such as Christmas, often facilitated hope. It is noted by Scanlon (1989) that to foster hope nurses must facilitate involvement in decision-making and contribute to the development of an environment conducive to growth. From a negative case perspective, Wake and Miller (1992) explored the phenomenon of hopelessness, concluding that nurses must use positive future scripts to enable patients to successfully recover from critical illnesses.

Within much of the literature, connecting and being connected are suggested as hope-facilitating strategies or ways to mobilise hope (Herth, 1990a), and as elements of the nurse–patient relationship (M. Owen, 1995) rather than as essential or core elements of hope itself. While literature makes it clear that having family and loved ones present during illness, who are involved in and fully informed about every aspect of care, will facilitate hope, the findings of this study reveal connecting and being connected at a much deeper level, as core elements of hope itself. Seeing hope from this perspective has implications for both nurses and those who are entrusted to their care. For one thing it suggests that if connecting and being connected are core elements of the phenomenon of hope, then connecting people in significant ways must become paramount in every nurse–patient situation, and practices that separate patients from their significant others must be questioned. This point is clearly supported by the work of Jevne (1991), who identified the importance of making real connections that happen at the heart level.

Whilst a number of authors have described strategies that nurses and other health care professionals can use as hope-promoting or hope-facilitating, (Artinian, 1984; J. Brandt, 1998; Hall, 1994), few authors have acknowledged that hope-facilitating strategies may need to differ depending on such factors as the age and health status of the individual concerned (Farran et al., 1990). Regardless, at the root of hope-
facilitating actions is the will of the individual to commit the self to another, in an act of selfless giving. Selfless giving was an attribute that was evident in the works of Mother Teresa (Vardey, 1995) as well as in the words of Frankl (1959) when he described extraordinary acts of clemency bestowed on fellow inmates as they stopped to comfort or care for those in need, despite the danger to themselves this act may have engendered. While it is not likely that nurses will be in danger (at least not from external sources) through liberally dispensing their good will, care or presence, a question that is raised is: what is the risk of deeply caring for another? What price is paid when one connects with another who had previously been a stranger? While I am not trying to imply that every interaction a nurse has with a patient will call forth a need to deeply care, many interactions nurses have with patients call for deep caring, and nurses must always be alert to possibilities of engaging with patients in this way.

Literature on caring, presence and hope facilitation describes the essences of these attributes; however, little research has been conducted that demonstrates the extent to which nurses and other health care personnel actually presence with another (Welsch, 2001). Rather it is presumed that an altruistic and intrinsic desire to care is at the root of caring practices and therefore should not be problematic. However, we know innately that there is a cost of drawing close. People die, they move on and we may grieve at this loss of connection. Interestingly, Illich (1977) writes that physicians have great problems connecting with patients, especially those who are chronically disabled, because of the pervasive wish for cure that dominates medicine. Lawler (1997) supports this assertion by saying “In the case of medical practice, allegiance to the rational-scientific model, with its emphasis on practising on the physical, object(ive) world, has led to dehumanising trends when applied to the object(ive) body of the patient…” (p.37). Further, Lawler cautions that “If nursing evolves in terms which typify the natural and biomedical sciences, the body will be anonymous, de-personalised, passive, and inevitably, reduced to the sum of its malfunctioning parts and related remedies” (35).

If nursing subscribes to models of practice that reify the rational-scientific model, what implications does this have for caring in general and hope facilitation in particular? I suggest that the importance of facilitating hope in our patients would be
lost or diminished, and while this may seem a Draconian view, at least one author has already speculated, in relation to casemix and quality in nursing care, that “It would not be too difficult to eliminate the vital, personal elements of the art of nursing care” (Reeve cited in Lawler, 1997, p.42). Thus I would posit that a commitment on the part of registered nurses to maintain caring at the core of nursing practice and to instil hope in their patients could become one of the greatest challenges to face nursing in the twenty-first century. It can be seen from this discussion that the whole notion of caring and connecting with others and facilitating hope is an aspect of our professional contribution that must be questioned through further rigorous and systematic research, or we will be in danger of perpetuating rhetoric of nursing practice (that is, that all nurses promote hope in their patients) without fully determining the extent to which this action or activity is realised.

**Cultural Creatives**

Although contexts of this study were touched upon in the Literature Review in Chapter 2, I return to this notion, pushing the envelope beyond that of Australia and its youth, to reflect on contextual features of this study from more global perspectives. This study took place in the wake of the stark reality that “Over 100 million human beings have been killed in our century”… (Aronson, 1983, p.9), as well as amidst the buoyancy of hope inspired by the arrival of the new millennium. It also took place in the midst of the shock and horror of the terrorist activities that occurred in New York City and Washington DC and retribution activities in Afghanistan, was bounded by continuing conflict between the Arabs and Israelis, conflict within East Timor, continuing problems of starvation for peoples of the African nations, the hosting of the Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, and incessant talk about possibilities that a millennium bug would wipe out computer data bases on a global scale. These are only a few of the many world events that shaped humanity at the time the participants of this study shared their views on hope.

I do not pretend to understand how these events shaped the ideas and attitudes of the participants of this study; however, their discourse often reflected beliefs that they were living in a world that had gone wrong and was in need of change. This was particularly evident in the horizons connecting and being connected and a driving
force, where participants freely revealed a strong desire for people to get along with each other, embracing attitudes of compassion and respect for others. It was also reflected in a cry for people to treat the world and its resources with care, as well as in passionate pleas for freedom for the oppressed. Yet, in the midst of revealing concerns for the plight of the world and humanity, each participant was still able to express hope, suggesting hopelessness was not a prevailing norm for these participants, whom the literature has referred to as a “wasted generation” (Irving et al., 1995).

 Whilst the predilection to define young people as “Generation X” has received favour in many quarters of society today (Irving et al., 1995), this label cannot be appended to the participants of this study, who were contemplative, ambitious, desirous of serving humanity and other-focused in respect of their views on hope. I will expand on this idea in the following paragraph of this discussion. But first a brief word about the participants of this study. I have, on a number of occasions, been asked to elaborate on the differences of the participants of this study, given that some identified themselves as Spirit-filled Christians and others were not, and some were receiving care and supportive services within an outreach organization, and others were not. Implied in this question is an assumption that the participants were polarised, that is, their differences were great enough for them to be considered as two distinct groups of people who, by virtue of their differences, would have very different ideas on hope that could be compared. However, this was not the case. The participants of this study, who were unique individuals, came from differing backgrounds and experiences; however, their expressions of hope were remarkably similar, although their manifest reasons to hope were different. Thus, I have made no attempt to fractionate descriptions of hope into those expressed by Spirit-filled Christians and those involved in the creative expressions program. I believe that the findings from this study ought to be viewed in their entirely, that is, as expressions of ten youth who resided in Australia and experienced normal and not so normal day-to-day struggles in getting on with life.

In recent literature there has been some discussion about shifts in world views and the emergence of cultural creatives. Cultural creatives are people who invest a great deal of their selves in personal authenticity, and by their practices and ideologies,
contribute to reshaping prevailing cultural norms and everyday practices, whether they are conscious of this reshaping or not (P. Ray & Anderson, 2000). Put in another way, cultural creatives believe that social change leading to a better world is still possible (Aronson, 1983). Hence, in this sense cultural creatives are other-focused. Numerous beliefs and values are embraced by cultural creatives, among them being a passionate concern for and care of the environment, establishment of relationships as primary, emphasis on a need for social justice, and recognition of the importance of spirituality and self-expression (P. Ray & Anderson, 2000).

Cultural creatives extend the ideology of social capital propounded by E. Cox (1995), by placing greater emphasis on the power of an individual to effect change. Their ideologies are in harmony with those of Birch (1993), Skolimowski (1981), and Suzuki and Vanderlinden (2000), who write passionately about the need for humanity to work towards preserving the integrity of our world – preserving it to ensure that its resource is abundantly available for future generations. Skolimowski (1993) in particular speaks of learning to live with reverence upon the earth, illuminating an eco-philosophy in which the world is viewed as a sanctuary where we must turn from a mind-set filled with greed and parasitic materialism to one of caring, compassion and participatory consciousness. These thoughts are echoed by cultural creatives, who are credited with putting into practice innovations to preserve the world’s resources for future generations (P. Ray & Anderson, 2000). The ideologies of cultural creatives are also in harmony with those of Sardello (1995), a depth psychologist who writes about the importance of soul to our future environment.

Within this study, there are clear parallels between the philosophy and lived attitudes embraced by cultural creatives and the concerns voiced by the participants, suggesting that it is reasonable to view the participants as cultural creatives, whether they were aware of this possibility or not. In fact, Ray and Anderson (2000) make the point that many people who are cultural creatives are not directly aware that they are. In their discussions, the participants of this study strongly expressed desires to deeply care for the environment, to establish relationships as primary, to embrace principles of social justice and to express their spirituality, all of which are hallmarks that identify or set cultural creatives apart from others in society. Although the
participants of this study have not yet made their mark on society in terms of an enduring contribution to the welfare of the planet that can be quantified or measured in some direct way, they have revealed their heartfelt attitudes about the importance of treating others and the planet with dignity and respect, which Ray and Anderson claim is a step toward outwardly activating for change as a cultural creative. It is reasonable to speculate that the participants will continue to embrace personal authenticity as a way of life as they strive to achieve their goals and ambitions, many of which were about caring for others. Interestingly, Ray and Anderson assert that there are few cultural creatives between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four because their values are not sufficiently matured. However, regardless of this assertion, it can be seen through the dialogue of these participants that they displayed great maturity and wisdom as well as concern for others. The participants of this study expressed views on hope from emic as well as etic perspectives, looking beyond concerns for the self and the immediacy of their life circumstances. Their discussion revealed an other-centredness about hope that is both striking and refreshing, and these expressions extend the literature by providing greater depth of understanding of hope as a phenomenon that extends beyond concerns for the self.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I frankly admitted that I found it difficult to draw together the findings of this study with elements of the literature in order to shed new light on to the phenomenon of hope. However, despite this admission I shared some insights that hopefully will enable the reader to reflect on hope in new or different ways: for example, hope is hard work. I have enthusiastically endorsed using photography as a means of explicating hope and have shared a number of metaphors of hope revealed by the study participants. Although overall the findings of this study are congruent with descriptions of hope found in the literature, identifying the participants of this study as cultural creatives has added a new dimension to discussion on hope in youth that is not present within current literature. Whilst the findings of this study make it clear that hope was central to the experiences of these participants, it also identified that some participants did not always view hope positively, especially those who struggled to maintain hope in the face of life’s obstacles.
In this chapter I have raised questions regarding the extent to which hope-facilitating strategies suggested in the literature can be claimed as hope-facilitating, given they have not been empirically validated and are not always able to be differentiated from caring strategies. I have also raised questions regarding the extent to which we have thoroughly explored the concept of hope with those who are dying, acknowledging that literature frequently intimates that hope is reserved for the living.
When you no longer worry about the future, 
and no longer have regrets about the past, 
you exist purely in the moment. 
If you concentrate on that moment you 
instinctively know that as long as you 
have life you have hope. 
Paul Wilson

Naturally I have thought about, or intellectualised about, hope a great deal since the commencement of this study. As a consequence I have learned more about hope than I ever dreamed possible. I learned some answers to many of the questions I had at the commencement of this study, particularly whether my participants would have hope, how they would know if they had it and whether they believed it was important to have it. In particular I have a far greater appreciation for how important hope is for young people today, especially in light of our rising suicide rates. While I do not claim that the findings of this study can be generalised to all youth, I suspect that further studies will yield similar sorts of results. This is because I have come to appreciate the universality, nature and necessity of hope in people, whilst still appreciating that manifestation of hope will differ from person to person and time to time. Clearly Moore (1994) makes this point in an insightful discussion about the nature of healing deep human pain. I suspect that there is a sameness of the concerns and realities of the youth of this study to those of many other youth in Australia. Their expressed needs and ambitions mirrored my own at that age and were hauntingly familiar as I recounted discussions of my students, my children and young people enrolled in recovery courses I lead for my church. However, as I recalled these conversations, whereas before I had not allowed myself to wonder on a deep level what their musings were about, I now know that I was being made privy to their hopes and ways they connected with the world around them.

As I am drawing near to the conclusion of this work I would like to share my thoughts on how being engaged in this study has affected me. In addition to having a greater understanding about hope on an intellectual level, I have tapped into what I
feel is the emotional side of hope. This is an aspect of hope that caught me by surprise because, as I admitted in my journal entry, hope was something I took for granted, rather than thinking deeply about it. As a consequence of my involvement in this study, I more clearly recognise times in my life when a small voice inside has whispered, “Don’t give up, try again, you can do it, cling to what you believe in, share yourself with others.” I like to think of this as the voice of hope as Jevne (1994) calls it. Additionally, I am aware I have also heard a small voice inside whispering, “You can’t do it, just give up, it’s no use”, during situations I’d hoped to achieve but were beyond my reach. I think of this as the voice of hope in defeat or, as Aronson (1983) calls it, the hope of hopelessness. I do not, however, regard this as wishing as suggested in some literature. On reflection in my own life I am grateful I have heard the voice of hope more often than the voice of hope in defeat.

As a nurse I am certainly more attuned now to listening for the voice of hope in defeat, so I can position myself to help people move beyond being defeated. In a concrete sense, actions I can take as a nurse to attune myself to the voice of patients’ hope include directly asking patients to identify sources of their hope during admission interviews and attentively listening throughout my interactions with them, for cues that might indicate that they are feeling less than hopeful.

Although I previously claimed I seldom thought about hope, in fact my conversations and thoughts are often peppered with hope statements. I would like to frankly admit I hope that you, the reader, connected more deeply with your own hope by reading the stories that were shared by the participants of this study. I know I did. I can say in all honesty that I was dismayed (as well as embarrassed) to discover that I began this study with a superficial understanding of hope, which I trivialised in my journal entries. Not to defend myself, but initially I did not realise that my thoughts about hope were superficial and lacked critical thinking. Nor was I aware I had portrayed my life and ideals through rose-coloured glasses. While I do not think I was dishonest in what I wrote, I now believe I was just not ready to risk sharing my feelings, even with myself. For instance, I said I spent little time and energy thinking about hope and whether my life would go well, because I believed that for me all things would turn out for the good. In some ways, when it comes to the big picture this is a true statement – regarding my salvation, I know I will spend eternity with God, so I don’t hope for that anymore. However, when it comes to the everydayness
of life, as mentioned previously, I hope for all sorts of things and, just like my participants, the intensity of my hope is directly related to how strongly I believe I will get what I am hoping for. I now know that the complacency revealed in my journal was an artefact, because my horizons about hope had not been challenged. However, they have been now and they will continue to be, enabling me to develop more respectful and continually evolving understanding of the dynamism of hope.

A number of authors believe fostering hope is intrinsic to the role of health care professionals, and in this thesis I argued that developing a contemporary understanding of hope, seen through the eyes of today’s youth, is crucial to expanding the capacity of nurses and other health care practitioners to care holistically. As health care providers, and particularly for registered nurses, it is imperative that when we are working with those whose hope is fading, to identify horizons of hope that have been extinguished and those that have not. Once it is known what remains, we must do everything we can to feed and nourish these horizons while the individual struggles to take control over the issue(s) robbing them of their hope. For example, if the person is still connecting, all stops must be pulled out to foster their connections by any means. This might translate into simple acts, such as varying visiting hours to enable loved ones to more easily visit those in hospital, or it might mean we facilitate a temporary leave of absence from a health care facility, for those who need to reconnect with the self or others. The findings of this research and the literature suggest that hopelessness is found in times when a person has lost all their horizons of hope. Although not explored in this study, it seems reasonable to suggest that this is a dangerous period for any person, and all efforts must be made to connect the person to their core of hope. I know this will be one of my direct intentions in working with people who are dependent on me for care or caring.

**The Storehouse of Hope**

Each of us has our own Pandora’s box, a treasure-chest or storehouse of memories about things we have done and experienced, as well as the things we hope for and would like to do. It is a box that fills and empties depending on our circumstances, opportunities, ambitions, goals, successes and failures. At times our box is full of
hope and at other times it is almost empty – perhaps because we are low on the
driving force needed to overcome the challenges of life, perhaps because we have
lost our sense of being at-one-with whatever is most important to us, perhaps because we
feel we no longer have any choices or options about life or perhaps because we
have lost a valuable connection in our lives. Rather than throwing the box away or
placing it in that attic as Huberly (2002) did, or caving in to the temptation to end our
lives as Williamson and Crick, (see ch 7 p.183) we may close the lid, like the
participants of this study, biding our time until a fresh wind comes and presents an
opportunity to change or refocus our thoughts or lives.

Many participants of this research talked about low points in their lives, and two
people in particular talked of suicide. Some spent time dwelling in hopelessness
while they struggled to work out what had happened in their lives. These periods
were described as low points in life, where the spark and enthusiasm for life was
extinguished. However, they did not remain in this heavy space indefinitely. Once
they knew what to do and how to get out of the place where their spirit was defeated,
they became driven to achieve. Sometimes the increments in achievement were
small, but they were steady. At least this is what it was like for the participants of
this study – hope was mostly a part of their everyday experiences, but sometimes it
was not. I suspect this is what life is like for many other people as well.

Of course there are times when hopelessness is prolonged and rather invasive. It
may be because all of the horizons of hope described in this study have become
depleted or extinguished at the same time, resulting in a feeling that life is just not
worth living. If hopelessness is prolonged, as we have seen, it is possible that
despair may ensue, with unresolved despair leading to thoughts of suicide and
possibly even commission of the act itself. According to Hollar, every person, at one
time or another, has thoughts of suicide, yet not every person takes this pathway
(Hollar, 1997). Arguably this is because hope for this person is still present in some
form, albeit diminished. While this study did not focus on hopelessness, in a work
about hope it is natural to acknowledge hopelessness and to muse about such
concepts as despair and suicide, for hope and hopelessness are inseparable. They are
flip sides of same phenomenon (Simmons, 2002). It is also appropriate to suggest
that as health care providers we must be alert for signs of loss of hope in all individuals whose lives we touch.

Whilst I have taken care in this study not to imply that the findings of this work can be generalised to all youth, or even Australian youth, I believe the findings of this study have the potential to shape and inform nursing practice. They reinforce the centrality of hope to our very humanness, and assert the importance of this phenomenon in the lives of those whom we serve. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that we emphasise hope and hope-facilitating strategies within nursing curricula, at both undergraduate and post graduate levels. Further, it is also sensible to suggest that all nurses examine the core of their caring practices, asking themselves honestly whether they ascribe to a belief that having hope matters. Whilst this may seem a simple suggestion, in my practice area, where it is reasonably common to care for youth who have unsuccessfully attempted suicide, I have overheard my colleagues say, on occasion, “If they’re going to do it (commit suicide) then they should do it properly”. Although this statement can be interpreted in a number of different ways, it calls into question the extent to which a person making such a statement can, or would, offer hope to the person concerned. Thus I recommend that each nurse take inventory, on a regular basis, of the attitudes and beliefs that inform their practice, particularly exploring whether they believe having and conveying hope is requisite to human survival. Within the discussion chapter of this thesis, a number of strategies that nurses could employ to facilitate hope have been suggested. However, in addition to actions that individuals can take, it would behove care facilities to examine all policies and procedures that could potentially interfere with an individual’s capacity to maintain hope, such as policies that segregate, from significant others, those for whom we care. We would also do well to examine more fully our caring practices and policies, to ensure we maximise opportunities for our patients to have choices and options.

Unsung Heroes
There are notable heroes among us and they are heroes for different reasons (Halliday, 2002). Ian Thorpe, a world champion Australian swimmer is a hero for his agility and speed in the pool and ability to win gold medals and break records at
world-class swimming events. Stuart Diver is an Australian champion for his courage and tenacity when he survived a landslide that buried him alive for many days on Thredbo Mountain in New South Wales, Australia. As the literature revealed, Banjo (Andrew Barton) Paterson was a hero for his poetry when he created the folk lure of the Australian Bush (Tacey, 1997). Don Bradman, a famous cricket legend, is a hero to those who were in awe of his batting prowess. Undoubtedly the people whom I have mentioned are not heroes to everyone living in Australia. However, I dare say their names will be recognised by a great number of Australians, both young and old. But are they Australia’s only heroes?

It is my contention that there are ordinary heroes who walk on our streets every day and they are men and women just like the participants of this study, struggling to make ends meet in what is often a hostile environment where there are few jobs, inadequate opportunities and escalating personal debt. However, despite obstacles that face them, they are willing to look beyond their circumstances to see a bigger picture, which is filled with hope and a belief that life is good. Yaeger and Ball (1992) believe that ordinary heroes are those who have ordinary power, yet overcome life’s obstacles through sheer determination. Veninga (1985) describes ordinary heroes as the people who “…live in oncology wards and in hospice units…who cling to life with a tenacity that contradicts all that we know about failure and finitude. Even as life ebbs away, these ordinary heroes act kindly towards others. They express optimism” (p.123). Whilst these descriptions about ordinary heroes are fitting, it is my contention that participants of this story are also ordinary, yet unsung, heroes. They are heroes in my mind for a number of reasons, among them being their zest for life and willingness to persevere, despite life’s obstacles. They have chosen hope in much the same way the people in Hill’s work did (Hill, 2000), by refusing to give in and by participating fully in this thing we call life.

It has been my privilege to be involved in this study and, as I said in the introduction to this thesis, in addition to being heroes I think of the participants of this study as legends. A legend is someone who is a great genius, a hero, a giant – yeah, that just about sums it up. I, like the participants of my study, have felt the touch of hope on our lives and for each of us hope is an unassailable feature of our lives. For my
closing remark it may be useful to consider Proverbs 17:22 which says, “Without hope the bones rot”.
REFERENCES


Burchill, S. (2002, October 22). We do need to identify the sources of grievance and anger that drive people to commit such heinous crimes. The Age, p. 8.


Warrawee’a, K. I. D. (2002). There once was a tree called deru. Sydney: Thorsons.


APPENDIX A: Glossary of Terms

Bildung
Keeping one’s self open to what is other and embracing more universal points of view; or detaching one’s self from one’s immediate desires and purposes.

Pre-understanding
A condition and necessary part of understanding that gives rise to thought and always conditions it.

Fore-projections
Early understandings or projections about what has been said that are constantly revised as new meanings emerge.

Prejudice
Expectations or projections about the whole that are continually revised as more parts of the whole come into view.

Horizons
The things that are within our immediate world, that are a part of our own understanding, that is, our particular viewpoints, which are constantly in the process of formation and being shaped by our past and our awareness of the present. Additionally, the things that are beyond our immediate standpoint are also part of our horizon.

Fusion of Horizons
A process that occurs when we blend our own horizon with that of another, in order to achieve understanding.

Understanding
A movement whereby we discriminate among prejudices rather than eliminating them; question our beliefs; and respond with an openness to the unexpected, becoming prepared for our beliefs to say something new; as we engage in a conscious act of fusing two horizons, creating historical consciousness.
## APPENDIX B: Summary Profile of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Educational attainment</th>
<th>Housing arrangements</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>de Sales</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>University qualification</td>
<td>Own house with husband</td>
<td>Full-time student</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmos</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Completing year 12</td>
<td>Rented house with parents and sibling</td>
<td>Full-time student</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>University qualification</td>
<td>Own house with husband</td>
<td>Full-time professional work</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Rented flat with boyfriend</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Rented flat with girlfriend</td>
<td>Part-time casual work</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanesha</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Rented flat with boyfriend</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>House sharing with a friend</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>Temporary accommodation with girlfriend</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Completing university qualification</td>
<td>Parents house</td>
<td>Full-time student</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titania</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Parents house</td>
<td>Part-time casual work</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Completing university qualification</td>
<td>Rented flat with husband</td>
<td>Full-time student</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee – Approval to conduct project

Research Services
Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Burwood Campus)
MEMORANDUM

TO: Ms de Sales Turner
Nursing Burwood cc: Prof Helen Cox
FROM: Secretary, Deakin University Ethics Committee (DUEC)
DATE: 18 November 1999
SUBJECT: PROJECT: EC 194-99 (Please quote this project number in future communication.)

HOPE AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH
The above human research project was considered at DUEC Meeting 6/99 held on 15 November 1999. The Ethics Committee decision is as follows.

THAT APPROVAL BE GIVEN FOR MS DE SALES TURNER, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PROF HELEN COX, TO UNDERTAKE THIS PROJECT FROM 16 NOVEMBER 1999 TO 31 JANUARY 2001.

Standard on-going ethics clearance has been given for the above project as submitted, the conditions listed on the accompanying page.

In arriving at its decision, the Ethics Committee noted that you had received letters of co-operation from two ecclesiastical organisations.

Although not anticipated in your ethics clearance application, your participants should not take photographs of identifiable individuals for the purposes of your research without due regard to prior consent or other privacy and cultural expectations. Perhaps the plain language statement should be adjusted accordingly. A copy of the statement if revised should be forwarded to my office for the record.

Please contact me if you have any concerns or queries about the above decision. I can be contacted on (03) 9251 7123 (nr ext 171231. The project reference number should be quoted in any communication.

Keith Wilkins
Secretary, DUEC
Email: keithwil@deakin.edu.au
CREATIVE YOUTH INITIATIVES
10-12 Little Albion Street Phone: 02 9211 8956 / 57
Surry Hills NSW 2010 Fax: 02 9211 8862

September 21, 1999

de Sales Turner
Principal Lecturer, School of Nursing
Deakin University, Burwood, VIC 3125

Dear de Sales,

I've read the ethics proposal for your project and feel that this is a worthy and exciting project that is complementary to the activities that are conducted with marginalised young people at the Creative Youth Initiatives Centre, Sydney City Mission. Mission Australia are willing to accept confirmation of the ethics approval from Deakin University and do not require a separate ethics approval. I understand the nature of the project and confirm that if any of the participants have any concerns, they will be able to seek an immediate appointment with me or a member of staff at the centre who will help them work through the problem.

I will be able to initially advise clients at the centre of the opportunity to be involved in this project and will distribute the plain language statement on your behalf. Following this, I will arrange a time for you to meet those who are interested.

We will be able to provide a private meeting room within the centre to conduct the audio taped interviews and after the interviews, I will be willing to be your contact person for professional confidential debriefing if needed. Please feel free to contact me if you require further information,

Yours Sincerely

Phil Nunn,
Manager, Creative Youth Initiatives centre
APPENDIX E: Plain Language Statement 1

Hello. My name is de Sales Turner and I am a principal lecturer in the School of Nursing, Deakin University. I am currently undertaking a doctor of philosophy degree under the supervision of Professor Helen Cox of the School of Nursing, in which I am looking at hope as seen through the eyes of Australian youth. I am undertaking this research because I believe that providing an in-depth description of hope as seen through your eyes may enable care givers, such as registered nurses, to improve their caring practices. I would like to invite you to participate in my study and this letter gives you the information that you will need to help you decide if you want to be involved.

Before deciding if you want to participate in this study carefully read this letter. It gives full details of your participation. If you decide you want to be involved, let the person who gave you this letter know. He will contact me to with details of the date, time and place for me to meet individually with you in the centre. At this time I will answer any questions you have about the study, and if you are definitely interested in being involved, I will ask you to sign a consent form.

Here are the details of your participation in the study. I'll ask you to use either a black and white or colour camera supplied by me to take photographs that to you show hope. I will ask you to imagine you are being paid to mount a photographic exhibit of hope, one that shows hope from your own unique perspective. Because it is important for me to ensure you remain anonymous throughout this study please do not have any pictures taken that have you in them. You'll need to take all the pictures within two weeks from the date that I give you the camera. After this I will return to the centre at a preselected date and time to collect it, so the photos can be developed at my expense.

After the photographs are developed we will meet on a date and time that is mutually convenient and in a location within the centre that is free from distractions where we can talk privately. I will return your photos and ask you questions about them. I anticipate this conversation will take anywhere from 1 to 1½ hours. The questions will be like these "Now that you have taken your photographs what can you tell me about hope? What is hope to you? Tell me about this picture and why it represents hope to you. If you could add anything to this picture that would make it even more hopeful what would it be? If you could take anything out of this picture so that it would be a better portrayal of hope what would it be? Thinking back on your life, tell me about a situation or event in which you were really full of hope. What made that situation full of hope for you? Tell me about a situation or event in your life in which you did not have hope. What made that situation hopeless for you?" As you can see from these questions there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in hope as you see and experience it from your own perspective.
There is a possibility that when you are talking about your experiences of hope or otherwise you may become stressed. If this happens, our conversation will be suspended until you are ready to resume. If you don't want to resume you can withdraw from the study. However, if you withdraw from the study and I will recommend that you seek the support of a counsellor normally available within the centre so any issue that arose can be resolved. In the event you withdraw, your photographs will be returned to you and any information that I have learned from you about hope will be destroyed.

During the time we are talking our conversation will be tape-recorded, to help me accurately recall what you said. Afterwards I will transcribe our conversation word for word so I can analyse what you said and try to really understand what hope is from your own unique perspective. When our interview is finished I will keep your photographs for possible use within my thesis, any subsequent publications arising out of this work and for professional presentations. Thus if you agree to take part in this research I am asking you for permission to retain and use your photographs.

Here are some additional points you need to know before you decide whether to participate or not. The first is that when I write up the findings of this research, which may include use of your photograph(s), you will be assigned a false name so that your privacy and confidentiality can be maintained. The second is that you are under no obligation or pressure to participate and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time and without penalty if you choose. The third is that if you would like to know what I found, you need to tell me so I can mail you a summary.

Throughout this research I will take precautions to maintain and preserve the confidentiality of my records. For instance, your photographs will be listed by your false name; the audio tapes of our conversations will be stored under lock and key at all times when I am not directly working with them and only I will have access to the storage facility. Your consent forms and any other information that links your false name to your real name will be at all times stored under lock and key in a separate location to your audio tapes. When I have finished the research all data from this study will be transferred to Deakin University where it will be secured for a period of six years in accordance with Deakin University guidelines.

If you would like to have further information about this research please do not hesitate to telephone me or my supervisor at the telephone numbers listed below. Thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

de Sales Turner (03) 9244 6110         Professor Helen Cox (03) 9426 6566

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, BURWOOD VIC 3125. Tel (03) 92517123 (International +613 92517123).

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APPENDIX F: Letter – Christian City Church Whitehorse (CCCW)

13 September 1999

de Sales Turner
Principal Lecturer
School of Nursing
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood Vic 3125

Dear de Sales,

In regards to your request to access members of my congregation who are between the ages of 18-24 for your PhD studies, I write to give my full support for this activity.

You are not required to obtain ethics approval for the conduct of this study from Christian City Church Whitehorse, as we are willing to accept confirmation of ethics approval from Deakin University. Further, should the participants to this study experience stress as a consequence of their participation, the counselling services of the church will be made available to them at no charge for the resolution of any issues that arise.

I wish you all the best with your work. Having discussed your proposal at some length I believe it is a worthy and exciting project that has the potential of enabling health care practitioners to develop hope facilitating strategies as a part of their caring practices.

Yours sincerely,

Peter McHugh Senior Minister

A part of Christian City Church (Vic) Inc. Office: 27 Bank Street Box Hill 3128 Ph: (03) 9898 5d77 Fax: (03) 9898 3766 Email: cccvic@i.net.au
Hello. My name is de Sales Turner and I am a principal lecturer in the School of Nursing, Deakin University. I am currently undertaking a doctor of philosophy degree under the supervision of Professor Helen Cox of the School of Nursing, in which I am looking at hope as seen through the eyes of Australian youth. I am undertaking this research because I believe that providing an in depth description of hope as seen through your eyes may enable care givers, such as registered nurses, to improve their caring practices. I would like to invite you to participate in my study and this letter gives you the information that you will need to help you decide if you want to be involved.

Before deciding if you want to participate in this study carefully read this letter. It gives full details of your participation. If you decide you want to be involved, please call me on 9244 6119. During this contact I will arrange a date, time and place to meet that is mutually convenient, where I will answer any questions you have about the study. If you are definitely interested in being involved I will ask you to sign a consent form. I will also ask you at this time to help me contact another person for possible inclusion in this study, by telling another Christian youth about this study and asking them to telephone me if they are interested in being involved. By the way, the person whom you contact must be between the ages of 18 to 24. In contacting this person on my behalf, I request that you do not use coercion, as I am only interested in working with people who genuinely want to be involved.

Here are the details of your participation in the study. I'll ask you to use either a black and white or colour camera supplied by me to take photographs that show hope. I will ask you to imagine that you are being paid to mount a photographic exhibit of hope, one that shows hope from your own unique perspective. Because it is important for me to ensure you remain anonymous throughout this study please do not have any pictures taken that have you in them. You'll need to take all the pictures within two weeks from the date I give you the camera. After this I will meet with you to collect it on a date and at a location that we predetermine so the photos can be developed at my expense.

After the photographs are developed we will meet on a date and time that is mutually convenient and in a location that is free from distractions, where we can talk privately. I will return your photos and ask you questions about them and I anticipate this conversation will take anywhere from 1 to 1 ½ hours. The questions will be like these "Now that you have taken your photographs what can you tell me about hope? What is hope to you? Tell me about this picture and why it represents hope to you. If you could add anything to this picture that would make it even more hopeful what would it be? If you could take anything out of this picture so that it would be a better portrayal of hope what would it be? Thinking back on your life, tell me about a situation or event in which you were really full of hope. What made that situation full of hope for you? Tell me about a situation or event in your life in which you did not have hope. What made that situation hopeless for you?" As you can see from these questions there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in hope as you see and experience it from your own perspective.
There is a possibility that when you are talking about your experiences of hope or otherwise you may become stressed. If this happens, our conversation will be suspended until you are ready to resume. If you don't want to resume you can withdraw from the study. However, if you withdraw from the study and I will recommend that you seek the support of a counsellor from Christian City Church, so any issues that may have arisen can be resolved and this service will be provided at no cost to you. In the event you withdraw, your photographs will be returned to you and any information that I have learned from you about hope will be destroyed.

During the time that we are talking our conversation will be tape-recorded, to help me accurately recall what you said. Afterwards I will transcribe our conversation word for word so I can analyse what you said and try to really understand what hope is from your own unique perspective. When our interview is finished I will retain your photographs for possible use within my thesis, any subsequent publications arising out of this work and for professional presentations. Thus if you agree to take part in this research I am asking you for permission to retain and use your photographs.

Here are some additional points you need to know before deciding whether to participate or not. The first is that when I write up the findings of this research, which may include use of your photograph(s), you will be assigned a false name so that your privacy and confidentiality can be maintained. The second is that you are under no obligation or pressure to participate and are free to withdraw your participation at any time and without penalty if you choose. The third is that if you would like to know what I found you need to tell me so I can mail you a summary.

Throughout this research I will take precautions to maintain and preserve the confidentiality of my records. For instance, your photographs will be listed by your false name; the audio tapes of our conversations will be stored under lock and key at all times when I am not directly working with them and only I will have access to the storage facility. Your consent forms and any other information that links your false name to your real name will be at all times stored under lock and key in a separate location to your audio tapes. When I have finished the research all data from this study will be transferred to Deakin University where it will be secured for a period of six years in accordance with Deakin University guidelines.

If you would like to have further information about this research please do not hesitate to telephone me or my supervisor at the telephone numbers listed below. Thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

dee Sales Turner  (03) 9244 6119           Professor Helen Cox  (03) 9426 6566

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, BURWOOD VIC 3125. Tel (03) 92517123 (International +613 92517123).
APPENDIX H: Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee – Variation of Approval

Research Services
Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Melbourne Campus)

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ms De Sales Turner cc: Prof Helen Cox
    Nursing  Burwood

FROM: Secretary, Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DU-HREC)

DATE: 12 July 2002

SUBJECT: PROJECT: EC 194-99 (Please quote this project number in future communication.)
HOPE AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GIVEN FOR MS DE SALES TURNER, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PROF HELEN COX, TO UNDERTAKE THIS PROJECT AS MODIFIED.

The Executive has approved the modification authorising return of photographs to participants on their request.

The approval given by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the application and approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Secretary immediately should any of the following occur:
  - Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
  - Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
  - Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
  - The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

Victoria Emery
Secretary, DU-HREC
(03) 92517123
vemery@deakin.edu.au