ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

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NAME OF AUTHOR:

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TITLE OF THESIS:

PSOMA YOGA: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

DEGREE:

MASTER OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND SPIRITUALITY

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED:

2014

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Signature

ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

PSOMA YOGA: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

by

Shelley Leanne Winton

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of St. Stephen's College

in partial fulfillment of the degree

MASTER OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND SPIRITIUALITY

Edmonton, Alberta

Convocation: 2014

Dedication

To my teachers who have generously shared

their wisdom and ignited my passion for this work,

and to the curious among us who question,

and to the questions themselves.

Abstract

Research related to body-centred psychotherapy remains under-represented in the literature. There are very few studies about the client experience with these therapies. In this research, the results of a hermeneutic-phenomenological inquiry into the experience of Psoma Yoga, a body-centred therapy, are presented. Interactive interviews were conducted with six adults, four women and two men, who had participated in Psoma Yoga. Interpretive thematic analysis based on a reflexive phenomenological epistemology was used. Themes identified in the data were the call, embodiment, and transformation. Psoma Yoga participants report being called to this type of experience. They noticed embodiment which resulted in increased awareness, changes in perception and transformed relationships with self, others and the world. Findings are discussed in relation to current neuroscience knowledge, integration into nursing practice, education and counselling and psychotherapy practice. The uniqueness of this work lies in its rich description of embodiment as a potential guide for creating greater health, well-being and wholeness, for individuals and communities. As a result of this research, individuals and caring professionals such as nurses, counsellors, and educators are encouraged to consider including a more body-centred approach to life and practice. Considerations for further research are recommended.

Acknowledgements

First, thank you to my six research participants who shared their words and experiences so generously. I hope you are able to share a 'phenomenological nod' as you read.

I deeply appreciate the individuals who supported me in the completion of this research:

- To Jeanne Van der Zalm, for her interest in my work, her flexibility and availability with my short timelines, her mentorship with this research and in my nursing career and life. I am always reaching for an expanded understanding through your gentle tugs, commitment to excellence, and friendship.
- To Donna Martin, for introducing me to Hakomi, for guiding me into understanding my patterns and habits, for sharing your expertise in the continued unfolding of Psoma Yoga and for your friendship and encouragement.
- To the late Ron Kurtz, for his work in developing Hakomi and for guiding me through self-discovery on many occasions. Your use of gentle humour awakened profound self-understanding which deeply impacted this thesis journey. I continue to be inspired by your work and I felt your presence strongly as I wrote.
- To St. Stephen's College faculty and student colleagues, for your encouragement to write about this topic which is near and dear to my heart.
- To my many friends and teachers, in the worlds of yoga, Hakomi, Psoma Yoga, nursing and counselling, who patiently listened to my ideas as I was sorting through and processing information.

I could not have completed my studies without the patience, understanding and support of my husband, Grant, and my children, Kayleigh and Kieran. I thank you for giving me the space and time to focus on this thesis project. I promise not to say "I can't (insert activity here) because I need to write" for a long time.

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Preamble

In the time before time, the human quest to understand began. We, humans, have used our relationship to nature and to each other to adapt to an ever-changing environment. We are consistently learning, adapting, predicting, and developing our way of being in the world. We continually receive and process information in a number of different realms: mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. We use our past experiences to predict what will happen and we are regularly integrating new input, attempting to make sense of our existence. This is the human condition. Sometimes, in our attempt to make sense of our existence we find a subject so compelling that it takes us on an unexpected journey. This thesis describes the unfolding of just such a journey for me, my journey to understand the lived experience of Psoma Yoga™.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a study about the experiences of six individuals who invited more choice into their every day experiences. By participating in Psoma Yoga, they challenged their preconceived perspectives and they uncovered new possibilities for connecting both with aspects of the self and with the greater world. The experiences and changes they describe greatly contributed to my evolving understanding of Psoma Yoga Therapy. Each journey, unique and yet familiar, had a beginning and continued to unfold. In this thesis, I attempted to mirror the process of this unfolding. This chapter begins with a definition of Psoma Yoga, a description of my interest in studying this phenomenon and the search for a compatible research tradition.

Defining Psoma Yoga™

Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy are terms coined and trademarked by Donna Martin to describe the integrative body-centered psychotherapy yoga style she uses in her work with individuals, couples and groups. Donna Martin has a Master of Arts degree and many years of experience as an addictions counsellor, stress management specialist, yoga teacher and Hakomi therapist. She has used this variety of experience to create Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy which she describes:

> …is based on the yoga sutras of Patanjali, pranayama, and mindfulness practice including mindfulness-based asana and applied mindfulness: the Hakomi way (body-centered psychotherapy). Psoma Yoga helps the participant to learn more about body patterns and habits and Psoma Yoga Therapy is a way of working with these body patterns to offer the participant more choice or possibilities. This

> [Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy] is an approach to body/mind/spirit healing which understands healing as the unfolding of wholeness, or wholeness happening (Martin, 2011, n.p.).

Both Hakomi and yoga will be explored in brief to provide a greater understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of Psoma Yoga.

The refined Hakomi method. This method is the life work of Ron Kurtz. He led his first Hakomi training in 1977, co-founded the Hakomi Institute with Pat Ogden, Ph.D. and Dyrian Benz-Chartrand, Ph.D. in 1981, and later left the Hakomi Institute and continued to develop and adjust the method. He created Ron Kurtz Trainings and co-founded the Hakomi Education Network, with Hakomi trainers Donna Martin, Flint Sparks, Bob Milone, Jeff Chernove, Georgia Marvin and others, to teach the Refined Hakomi Method (Toth, 2011). Kurtz described the *Refined Hakomi Method* as mindfulness-based, assisted self-study. Kurtz (2008) explains,

> The method is based on the idea that the deepest beliefs—we call them core beliefs—are not usually conscious. They are implicit. They are implied by habitual behaviors. For the most part those behaviors were procedurally learned and have become generalized ways of being. A person's habits tell us in this pantomimic way, what kind of world the person is imagining they're living in. The goal of working with someone is to enhance their well being and reduce their unnecessary suffering. Much suffering is the result of over-generalized core beliefs. The world is not the way the client is imagining it (n.p.).

Hakomi assists the client to bring deep beliefs to consciousness in a safe environment. Kurtz (2008) continues to explain,

> The way to make a person's predictions fail is to say something or do something that totally runs counter to their implicit beliefs. That's what experiments do…. If the therapist and the assistants do the right things when that happens, the client may begin re-experiencing the painful events that were the original source of the client's habitual behavior… That kind of support allows the emotions and insights to intensify. If intense enough, the client is re-experiencing the memories and that's when healing becomes possible…. The memory has become present again. It is here, now. When that happens, it has become part of this time, not just the past. While it is part of this time, it can be influenced by what else is also present at this time. The caring people who are present, the kindness, attention and comforting they give, that too is present. Those things alter the memory. They create new beliefs and the possibility of new behavior and new habits to come. The process is called reconsolidation, the alterations of a memory on the basis of what's being experienced at the time of its remembering. The whole system of habits and beliefs becomes conscious and available for change (n.p.).

Donna Martin was co-leader of Hakomi workshops and trainings with Hakomi's creator, Ron Kurtz, from 1991 until his death in 2011. The experimental style and attention to present moment experience are strongly featured in the Hakomi method and are essential elements of Psoma Yoga.

> **Yoga.** Yoga is one of the six fundamental systems of Indian thought collectively know as darsana... [which] means "sight", "view", "point of view" or even "a certain way of seeing"... Many different interpretations of the word yoga have been handed down over the centuries. One of these is "to come together", "to

> unite". Another meaning of the word yoga is "to tie the strands of the mind together"... A further meaning of the word yoga is "to attain what was previously unattainable". (Desikachar, 1999, p. 5)

This discipline includes the physical, mental and spiritual realms. The system of yoga predominately practiced in the west focuses on one part of the path, the asana, or physical postures. However, the path toward realization of the "true self" is described as an eight-fold path (Iyengar, 1988). The core of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* is an eight-limbed path that forms the structural framework for yoga practice. Each limb contributes to a greater understanding of the self and the connection to everything. In brief, the eight limbs, or steps to yoga, are as follows: Yama- universal morality; Niyama - personal observances; Asanas - body postures; Pranayama - breathing exercises, and control of prana; Pratyahara - control of the senses; Dharana - concentration and cultivating inner perceptual awareness; Dhyana - devotion, meditation on the Divine; and, Samadhi - union with the Divine (Desickachar, 1999; Iyengar, 1988). The eight limbs of yoga are key components of Psoma Yoga. However, the eight limbs in their entirety may not be visible in each individual Psoma Yoga class or Psoma Yoga therapy session.

The terms Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy will be used interchangeably in this thesis. It is acknowledged that Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy are trademarked terms but for ease of reading, the **™** symbol will not be used in the remainder of this thesis document. Donna Martin graciously included me in the trademark documentation for Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy because I was the one who encouraged her to trademark the name of this unique body-centered therapy technique.

Why study Psoma Yoga?

My exposure to yoga began in the early 1990s and I discovered Hakomi in 2001. I have continued to study both. Over time I saw subtle changes in the Hakomi method, introduced by Kurtz, to create a more simplified and accessible Refined Hakomi Method and I watched Donna Martin incorporate more yoga as she used Hakomi. I saw Psoma Yoga Therapy emerge. I saw people, during and after Psoma Yoga experiences, reacting as if something significant had occurred. I had my own experiences with Hakomi and Psoma Yoga Therapy and they felt important to me. I began to wonder if anyone had been able to articulate what was happening. I wondered if individuals who participated in this type of therapy had similar experiences.

In addition to these personal experiences, my professional interests started to broaden. I became deeply interested in how the mind influences health. I read books about brain science and discovered that long-held ideas such as 'at a certain age, brain development plateaus' are being dispelled. These brain science books, which include titles like: *The Brain that Changes Itself* (Doidge, 2007), *The Body Has a Mind of Its Own* (Blakeslee & Blakeslee, 2007), *How We Decide* (Lehrer, 2009), *The Mind and the Brain* (Schwartz & Begley, 2002), reinforce the idea that each experience shapes us, and the meaning we make of each experience creates a certain lens through which to view the world. The neuroscience literature that I have reviewed indicates that neural change is ongoing and human potential is vast.

In the book, *The Heart and Soul of Change: What Works in Therapy*, Bohart and Tallman (2010) explain that "the quality of the client's participation is 'most determinant of outcome' " (p.88). They also state that the client's view of therapy may be very

different than the therapist's view. As a Registered Nurse and student counsellor, I have wondered about the way people experience life and how these life experiences inform their understandings and ways of being in the world and their willingness to change.

Although the collection of research related to body-centered psychotherapy is growing, it is still under-represented in the study of psychotherapy (EABP, n.d.; Rohricht, 2009; Young, 1997). I would like to promote health through exploration and improved understanding of the connection between body, mind, and spirit. I would like to contribute to scientific research by understanding the phenomena of Psoma Yoga from the client's perspective. I believe a deepened understanding of the Psoma Yoga experience may be beneficial for clients, therapists, health professionals and researchers.

Choosing the Research Tradition

The information revealed by quantitative research is expressed using facts, figures and statistical analysis. It is best used to measure variables or to verify or question existing theories and hypotheses. In contrast, qualitative inquiry uses non-numerical data to describe and clarify human experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005) to better understand meanings and beliefs (Morse & Field, 1995; Finlay, 2006; Struebert & Carpenter, 2011, Willig, 2008). Clark (1998) states, "It remains vital that method selection is based not on a limited view of science, but on an accurate understanding of all forms on inquiry, with justifications being based on contemporary understandings about how best to answer research questions" (p. 1247).

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experience of Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy. The main question I wish to explore in this study is: What is the lived experience of individuals who engage in Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy?

Since this research question is about understanding lived experience a qualitative research method, specifically phenomenology, is the best approach.

According to Creswell (2007), the phenomenological method requires the researcher to integrate a multitude of wisdom from different disciplines. This variety of perspectives provides texture and structure to assist the researcher to describe the meaning and essence of the phenomenon. This seemed to be the best fit to understand the experience of Psoma Yoga in life.

I consulted the work of qualitative and phenomenological researchers from a variety of fields: nursing (Morse & Field, 1995; Emden & Sandelowski, 1998; Struebert & Carpenter, 2011), allied health (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006), psychology (Cresswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005; Willig, 2008) and education (van Manen, 1990; van Manen 2007). The more I read about phenomenology and richly described experiences, the more excited I became. A phenomenological way sounded so much like a Hakomi and Psoma Yoga way. Both phenomenology and Psoma Yoga create space for previously unseen things to be seen and acknowledged, pay attention with intention to understand what is happening and how meaning is made, explore how we stand in relation to many realms (existentials), and look for gaps in perception when something new and unexpected could arise. I knew from the moment that I was exposed to Hakomi and Psoma Yoga that I needed to know more about these methods because I needed to understand more fully the experiences people were having. As a researcher, I was tasked with discovering deep and full understandings. I knew from the moment I found phenomenology that it would help me dive deeply into these understandings because phenomenology requires reflection, intuition, and the assigning of intersubjective meaning (Hein & Austin, 2001).

Now that I knew which research method would best fit the research question, it was time to consult the literature to gain clarity about phenomenology and the phenomenon in question, Psoma Yoga. In chapter 2, I highlight the ontological and epistemological elements of phenomenological inquiry and I explore and describe foundational components from which to begin the in depth inquiry into Psoma Yoga. The research process for this inquiry is outlined in chapter 3. In chapter 4, as my understanding of the topic deepened, I was able to present my interpretation and analysis of the Psoma Yoga experience. After this analysis, I returned to the literature to see how my findings connect with past literature. The results of this search and a discussion about potential implications for practice are shared in chapter 5. Finally, in chapter 6, there is a summary of this research journey and the transformation in understanding that has unfolded for me as a result of this work.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Construction is the process of bringing something into form. Whether the project is a building, a work of art, a scientific theory, or a literary work, it begins with an idea and ideas become a plan. Once the plan is in place, the next step in building something is the construction of a solid foundation. In this chapter, I create a foundation for the investigation into the experience of Psoma Yoga using two separate sections: the first discusses the research tradition; and, the second highlights the psychological and spiritual context of Psoma Yoga.

Understanding the Research Tradition

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and method of research. The philosophical roots are first attributed to the German philosopher Edmund Husserl and later expanded upon by Martin Heidegger and other philosophers, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. Essentially, phenomenology is the study of experience and its meaning. There are two main schools of thought surrounding how this research should occur: *Descriptive or transcendental phenomenology*, which attempts to *know* the phenomena from the position of separate observer, and *interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology*, which attempts to *understand* the phenomena through interaction with it (Cresswell, 2007; Earle, 2010; Koch, 1995; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011; Van der Zalm & Bergum, 2000; van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2002; van Manen, 2007). A brief discussion of the history of the philosophy is essential to understanding phenomenology as a research method.

Descriptive or transcendental phenomenology. Husserl is described as formalizing the philosophy of phenomenology (Cresswell, 2007; Dowling, 2007; Earle, 2010; Koch, 1995; van Manen, 1990). Ontologically speaking, Husserl viewed the world through a Cartesian model or duality where the mind is separate from the body. "Husserl... defined phenomenology as 'the science of pure consciousness' " (Earle, 2010, p. 287). Epistemologically, Koch (1995) indicates that Husserlian phenomenology "asks about the meaning of human experience" (p. 828) through the concept of the 'lifeworld' or 'lived experience'. Three important notions underscore this type of phenomenology: intentionality, essence, and phenomenological reduction or bracketing. *Intentionality* refers to directing the mind toward an object, being aware of an object and the context in which the object exists, being conscious of something (Earle, 2010). *Essence* is the inner essential nature or true being of a thing. van Manen (1990) explains that in Husserlian writings "essence" refers to the *whatness* of things rather than the *thatness* (p. 177). *Whatness* is what is happening from the perspective of an observer. *Thatness* is what is happening from the perspective of being in the experience. The ultimate structure of consciousness and these essences should be fully described in order to 'return things to themselves' (Koch, 1995). *Phenomenological reduction or bracketing* ensures that the researcher is naming the influence of natural attitudes and subjective opinions about the essences in order to view the object without bias or prejudice (Dowling, 2007; Earle, 2010; van Manen, 1990).

> In fact, the bracketing of belief in the reality of the natural world was the lever for Husserl's phenomenological methodology... Husserlian phenomenology, through

> the process of bracketing, defends the validity or objectivity of interpretation against the self-interest of the researcher (Koch, 1995, p. 829).

Therefore, researchers who subscribe to the ideas of Husserlian descriptive or transcendental phenomenology see the 'observer' as separate from the 'outer world'. They use structured methods to ensure validity and rigour are maintained and the search 'to know' an experience is unobstructed by preconceptions or theoretical notions (Dowling, 2007; Earle, 2010; Koch, 1995; van Manen, 1990).

***Merleau-Ponty*.** Another philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002 trans.)**,** is closely aligned with the work of Husserl because he "places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude" (vii), that is, he suspends pre-existing ideas or brackets the natural or common way of thinking about a phenomena. However, Merleau-Ponty's work is also existential in nature (Dowling, 2007; Earle, 2010). In his book, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945/2002), Merleau-Ponty explores perception in three parts: the body; the world as perceived; and, being-for-itself and being-in-the-world (v-vi). Dowling (2007, citing van Manen, 1990) states that,

> the usefulness of Merleau–Ponty's writings for nurse researchers is evident in the utilisation of the four existentials considered to belong to the fundamental structure of the lifeworld; lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality), and are productive for the process of phenomenological questioning, reflecting and writing. (p. 134)

These existentials greatly contribute to multi-dimensional descriptions that lead to deep understandings of a phenomena.

Interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger and Gadamer are the philosophers most associated with this version of phenomenology. Heidegger was a student of Husserl but he viewed the world very differently. He did not believe in objective separateness from the phenomena (Dowling, 2007; Earle, 2010; Koch, 1995). His view of phenomenology often is referred to as existential phenomenology. Gadamer expanded on the method for the type of inquiry required to uncover meaning (Walsh, 1996) and his work is often referred to as philosophical hermeneutics. The work of these two philosophers is explored in greater detail below.

Heidegger. Martin Heidegger has been referred to as an ontological phenomenologist because the focal point of his work was explaining the nature of being. However, he was also an existentialist because he aimed to describe what it means *to be* through discussion of ordinary human activities and *being* human (Mulhall, 2005; Van der Zalm, 1995; van Manen 2007) .

Earle (2010) states Heidegger "dismisses the notion of intentionality... in favour of an existential phenomenological account of *Dasein*, or the situated 'meaning of *being* in the world' " (p. 288). This essential ontological difference is captured by Koch (1995),

> Even in *Being and Time*...[Heidegger 1927/2010] the real question is not what way 'being' can be understood but in what way understanding is 'being'. For Heidegger, understanding is no longer conceived of as a way of knowing but as a mode of being, as a fundamental characteristic of our 'being' in the world (p. 831).

Whereas Husserl spoke about *being* from the perspective of looking at it, Heidegger uses language to speak from being. For example, if *being* were a mud puddle,

Husserl would describe everything he could see about the puddle by standing on the edge of it and perhaps wading into the mud; Heidegger would be in the puddle, describing its muddiness from the very centre of it. In order to view the world in this way, Heidegger makes several assumptions:

The nature of reality. Everything is interconnected. First, the world is populated by others, and experiences happen intersubjectively as people relate to each other; second, the world existed prior to this point in time, so present, past and future are 'taken for granted'; third, phenomenology studies the lived experience and each person's reality is 'true' for them; finally, human experience and human 'being' are valued. (Heidegger 1927/2010; Van der Zalm, 1995)

The nature of being. Expressing '*being'* may be challenging because *'being'* just is. Heidegger takes on this challenge through the use of language. For example, if water were a metaphor for being, it may be challenging to describe the water itself. If instead there is discussion about the form water takes (such as, ice, liquid water or steam), the nature of the water is revealed (as long as everyone understands these different states). Heideggerian phenomenology is like the water metaphor because it illustrates the meaning of being through an analysis of existence. The person is positioned within the world (the phenomena), experiences the world (embodied), and the world is framed using time which aids with understanding. Past, present and future are incorporated into experiences (Heidegger, 1927/2010; Heidegger, 2001; Van der Zalm, 1995).

Koch (1995) describes Heideggarian concepts by defining several terms. B*ackground* which is "what culture gives a person from birth... and presents a way of understanding the world"; *pre-understanding* which describes "the meaning and

organization of a culture (including language and practices) which are already in the world before we understand"; *co-constitution* assumes unity of the 'person-world' so humans are "being constructed by the 'world' in which we live and at the same time constructing this world from our own experience and background"; and, *interpretation* which is "the fore-conception in which we grasp something in advance" (p. 831). Koch (1995) cites Taylor "when we try to understand the cultural world, we are dealing with interpretations and interpretations of interpretations." Alternatively, Van der Zalm (1995) clarifies the underlying assumptions regarding *being* this way: *multiplicity* – "there is more than one way in the world for an individual to be", *history* – "a human being is essential to and part of" the past, present and future and will incorporate the past into the present; *context* – "one must assume that meaning is present and can be discovered in individual contexts"; *embodiment* – "the mind and the body are one", "the body is imbued with consciousness" (p. 9).

Nature of knowledge, meaning and truth. Heidegger realized that the way one understands a phenomena is constantly changing. Each time an experience occurs, individuals imbue that experience with personal meaning which leads to understanding and the broadening of understanding for that individual. It does not necessarily represent a single "truth" that is quantifiable. Instead, there are many possible "truths". Truths exist, meaning is made, and as the lived experience is interpreted, individual understanding blossoms and knowing emerges. There is an impact on human experience and understanding, so if a similar experience were to happen to the same person, the truth of any particular situation may change. Yet, Heidegger believed that if he could define *being* adequately he may be able to define *truth* (Heidegger 1927/2010; Heidegger

1938/39/2006; Van der Zalm, 1995). "Heidegger grappled with the relationship between being and truth until the time of his death" (Van der Zalm, 1995, p. 10).

Another key concept of phenomenology as envisioned by Heidegger is the *hermeneutic circle* which deepens understanding through cycling between the whole, the parts, and moving back to the whole (Heidegger, 1927/2010; Mulhall, 2005; van Manen, 1990). Mulhall's (2005) book, *Heidegger and Being and Time*, states, "We must enter the circle by initiating our enquiry on the basis of some preconception (provisional, but worked out with maximal care) and, then, when we reach a provisional conclusion, return to our starting point with the benefit of a deeper understanding" (Mulhall, 2005, p. 31). van Manen (1990, 2007) describes that the method for this practice occurs through phenomenological reflection and writing. Jardine (1990, cited in Van der Zalm & Bergum , 2000) states that the primary objective of phenomenology "is to give voice to human experience just as it is" (p. 212). This "giving voice" occurs through "the provision of an animated, evocative description of the person's lived experience..." (Van der Zalm & Bergum, 2000, p. 212). Other philosophers also made significant contributions to hermeneutic phenomenology.

Gadamer. Hans-Georg Gadamer was a student of Heidegger. Earle (2010) explains, "Like Heidegger, Gadamer rejects the notion of phenomenological reduction and bracketing and he claims that all understanding arises only in and through our prejudices… Gadamer agrees with Heidegger's notion of 'being in the world', which is mainly concerned with making sense of, or interpreting, lived experience" (p. 288). Tan, Wilson and Olver (2009) state that Gadamer sees "interpretation as a collaborative process… [that leads to] understanding [that] is continually expanding" (p. 4).

Gadamer's (1960/2004) book, *Truth and Method*, outlines two important concepts: pre-judgment or prejudice and universality (Earle, 2010; Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003; Walsh, 1996). *Pre-judgement or prejudice* refers to one's preconceptions and seems similar to Heidegger's notion of pre-understanding. *Universality* "relates to a connection that is created by common human consciousness between persons" (Earle, 2010).

Gadamer (1960/ 2004) also puts forth the concept of *fusion of horizons.* He describes that the horizon expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better (p 301). Understanding happens when our present understanding or horizon is moved to a new understanding or horizon by an encounter (Gadamer 1960/ 2004). The old and the new horizon fuse and combine into something of living value and the circle of understanding (*hermeneutic circle*) continues. Walsh (1996) states, "Horizon' then is a metaphor which… represents 'the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (p. 235). Broadening the horizon requires an extension to this range of vision. By challenging the current horizon with other perspectives and linking this new information with the older understandings (fusion) our range of vision broadens and expands.

Gadamer placed emphasis on language as a means of broadening understanding of the world. According to Earle (2010), Gadamer viewed that "language not only reflects human 'being', but it is language that actually makes humans 'be'" (p. 288). Fleming et al. (2003) discuss the philosophical hermeneutics ascribed to Gadamer. They

indicate that researchers need to identify preunderstandings (prejudices), gain understanding through dialogue with participants, gain understanding through dialogue with text, and finally establish trustworthiness (Fleming et al., 2003). The concept of trustworthiness will be explored more fully in the discussion of rigour and method in chapter 3.

I seek to understand the lived experience of Psoma Yoga, therefore, I believe the advantage of using the philosophical works of Heidegger and Gadamer as a base for research is that the phenomena is described with an emphasis on, and understanding of, the continual interplay between the researcher and the data. Using this interplay is important because I have been deeply immersed in the development of Psoma Yoga; therefore, successfully bracketing or suspending my ideas about the phenomena would be challenging. Using this philosophical approach, I can continue to live my life and become aware of how I am impacted by a dynamically changing world view. The data, from many sources, included: the interview, the subsequent text from the interview, relevant reading that assisted with understanding of the phenomena, and reflective writing and interpretations (van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2002; van Manen, 2007). As I reviewed the data, themes and meanings continued to transform. Incorporating the work of Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) allowed me to build understanding from the perspective of different existential realms. This was not a search for a single *truth* but instead an exploration of different perspectives and experiences in an attempt to deeply understand and richly describe the phenomena (van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2007). There is room to discover 'what is' for this particular moment of time and being and research could continue at a later time and discover additional depth and meaning.

Understanding the Context of the Phenomena

An initial search of the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Medline, PubMed, PsychInfo, SocIndex and Alternative Health Watch databases did not return any results for the term "Psoma Yoga". Therefore, I performed a systematic search of the literature incorporating computer searches for articles for the time period from 2000 to June 2013 and for related books from 1988 to 2013. Search terms included single-terms and combination of the terms: yoga, mindfulness, therapy, psychotherapy, psychology, counselling, and body-centered psychotherapy. I searched in the fields of neuroscience, psychology, social work, nursing, medicine and rehabilitation therapies and alternative health journals. I sought to ensure a thorough search and to broaden my understanding from the perspective of many disciplines and domains. The following synthesis covers main ideas and theories related to yoga, mindfulness, and psychotherapy and counselling. These segments are followed by a brief look at research related to the client perspectives of lived experiences of therapy.

Yoga. This section expands on the information covered in chapter one and includes the aims, philosophy and journey of yoga through the view of two influential teachers, Iyengar (1988, 2001) and Desikachar (1999), both of whom were taught by Kirshnamacharya (one of the greatest yogis of the modern era). Yoga therapy and yoga research also are discussed.

B. K. S. Iyengar was one of the first yoga teachers to bring yoga to the west and focused primarily on asana (physical postures) and pranayama (breath control). Iyengar (2001) states that "the primary aim of yoga is to restore the mind to simplicity and peace, and free it from confusion and distress" (p. 9). He continues,

> When there is perfect harmony between body and mind, we achieve self-realization. Yoga teaches us that the obstacles in the path of our self-realization show themselves in a physical or mental indisposition. When our physical state is not perfect it causes an imbalance in our mental state...the practice of yoga helps us to overcome that imbalance. (Iyengar, 2001, p. 10)

Interestingly, yogic science does not distinguish between the body and the mind but approaches it as a single entity. Patanjali's yoga sutras discuss that physical ailments create emotional turmoil and the task of yoga is to tackle both. Iyengar (2001) outlines four stages of yoga practice: 1. the physical body; 2. the mind learns to move in unison with the body; 3. intelligence and the body become one; 4. perfection. The outcome of these stages is spiritual awareness and freedom. "Yoga illuminates your life... Regular practice will bring you to look at yourself and your goals in a new light" (p. 13).

Iyengar taught the western world to begin with the body and the breath and this would lead to the spiritual. In contrast, T.K.V. Desikachar (Krishnamacharya's son), based his method on his father's teaching. Desikachar's (1999) book, *The Heart of Yoga*, approaches yoga from the physical, mental and spiritual levels simultaneously and puts the yoga wisdom literature, including Patanjali's Yoga Sutra and the Bhagavad Gita, at the forefront of his teachings.

> When we begin studying yoga-whether by way of asana, pranayama, meditation or studying the Yoga Sutra - the way in which we learn is the same. The more we progress, the more we become aware of the holistic nature of our being, realizing that we are made of body, breath, mind and more... if we are to be complete

> human beings we must incorporate all aspects of ourselves, and do so step by step. (Desikachar, 1999, p. 7)

Desikachar (1999) suggests that the foundations of yoga include perception and action. It is by identifying "incorrect comprehension" and moving toward clear understanding that we feel more quiet and calm. Everything we see and experience and feel is true and real and "yoga subscribes to the notion that deep within us there is something that is also very real but, unlike everything else, is not subject to change" (p. 12). The essential path to discovery of this deeper self is through: 1. the physical and breathing exercises; 2. self-study or investigation; and 3. quality of action. Yoga brings us to the point where something changes and the change brings us to the point we have never been before. The "impossible become possible" (p. 79).

Both Desikachar (1999) and Iyengar (2001) advise that there are many different forms of yoga. Some of these yoga forms include: Jnana yoga - the search for real knowledge; Bhakti yoga - to serve a power greater than ourselves; Mantra yoga - use of a single syllable, number of syllables or a verse to protect and focus the person who receives it; Raja yoga - the "king" part of us that is always in a state of enlightenment; Karma yoga - to act and not be attached to the results of our actions; Kriya yoga - encompasses the three actions (physical and breathing exercises, self-study, and quality of action); Kundalini yoga, Hatha yoga and Tantra yoga - all work with the three main channels in the body (*susumna* - which runs straight up the spinal column, *ida* and *pingala* - which cross over the spinal column and back and forth a number of times. Kundalini yoga removes obstacles to the channels, Hatha yoga balances the channels, and Tantra yoga focuses on the connections and relationships between the body and aspect of

the world and cosmos. No matter which path, the yoga journey is one of freedom from body, mind, power and pride to reach union.

This ancient yoga knowledge has been interpreted and adapted by many teachers in western society. The International Association for Yoga Therapists (IAYT), founded by Larry Payne and Richard Miller in 1989, "supports research and education in yoga and serves as a professional organization for yoga teacher and yoga therapists worldwide. Our mission is to establish yoga as a recognized and respected therapy" (IAYT, n.d). The IATY advisory council "provides representation for most of the major yoga methodologies and lineages in the West along with yoga researchers and healthcare professionals" (IAYT, n.d.).

Yoga research. Yoga therapy is being used as an adjunct to the treatment of many types of illness, which include (but are not limited to): trauma; mental health diagnoses like anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and schizophrenia; chronic pain management; diabetes and weight management; and stroke. In the literature, there were several systematic reviews about yoga therapy and many randomized-control trials to examine efficacy of yoga in the above listed illnesses and others. As indicated earlier, there were no studies about Psoma Yoga and in particular, no qualitative studies about the experience of the participants themselves could be found. There was only one phenomenological study by Mehling et al. (2011) which looked at body-mind therapies, including yoga, and the role of body awareness in therapeutic mind-body approaches. It used analysis of data from focus groups of practitioners and patients from several mind-body modalities. In addition, in a search of the Library and Archives Canada, there were two hermeneutic phenomenology thesis inquiries related to yoga. Fiebig (2009) who

looked at yoga and body image and Vayali (2007) who looked at the ecological awareness of four yoga teachers. The findings of these thesis documents were of interest because of the manner in which the phenomena were described rather than the outcomes.

Mindfulness. Heidegger (1938/39,2006) wrote *Mindfulness* and in this work the translators, Kalary and Emad, explain, "he returns to and elaborates in detail about the role of the individual dimensions of the historically self-showing and transforming allotments of be-ing" (p. xiii). Yet, it is not Heidegger's mindfulness that has been increasingly prevalent in popular culture. Hart, Itvzan and Hart (2013) describe that the concept of mindfulness most prevalent today comes from two separate and parallel schools of thought. First, from Langer (1989, 2005) and associates who "explore mindfulness as a mental mode and assess its outcomes in terms of cognitive functioning, psychological well-being and health " (Hart et al., 2013, p. 453). Second, Kabat-Zinn (1994, 2009) and colleagues who look at mindfulness as "therapeutic in its orientation, and involves mindfulness meditation as a primary intervention for the alleviation of a variety of mental and physical conditions" (Hart et al., 2013, p. 454). Hart et al. (2013) thoroughly explore literature from the two main schools of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, based on Eastern and Buddhist practices, and Langer, considered Western and scientific) and conclude that while there are many differences in philosophy, goals, target audiences, conceptual focus, measurement tools and interventions, the important outcome from both schools of mindfulness is improved self-regulation.

Boyce (2011) is the editor of a collection of writings about mindfulness. In the book, *The Mindfulness Revolution*, noted authors from both schools of mindfulness outline important ideas about mindfulness and the science of mindfulness. The following

quotes are intended to highlight the similarities and subtle differences expressed by the authors.

> Mindfulness means deliberately paying attention, being fully aware of what is happening both inside yourself - in your body, heart, and mind - and outside yourself in your environment. Mindfulness is awareness without judgement or criticism... We are simply witnessing the many sensations, thoughts, and emotions that come up as we engage in the ordinary activities of life. This is done in a straightforward, no -nonsense way, but it is warmed with kindness and spiced with curiosity (Bays, 2011, p. 3).

> Mindfulness is the key to the present moment. Without it, we cannot see the world clearly, and we simply stay lost in the wanderings of our minds... Mindfulness is the quality and power of mind that is deeply aware of what's happening - without commentary and without interference (Goldstein, 2011, p. 21)

> There are several reasons that we cling to the illusion of stability to the extent that we do. First, although we recognize on some level that the world around us is always changing, we are oblivious to the fact that we mindlessly hold it still. When we are mindful, we notice. When we are mindless, we are "not there" to notice that we are not there. Second, from the moment we are born we are presented with absolute facts rather than facts in context. We aren't taught that distinctions such as "young" and "old" or "healthy" and "unhealthy" are social constructs and that their meaning depends on context. (Langer, 2011, p. 124).

> The science is showing interesting and important health benefits of mind-body training and practices and is now beginning to elucidate the various pathways through which mindfulness may exert its effects on the brain (emotion regulation, working memory, cognitive control, attention, effects on some of the somatic maps of the body that the brain uses to manage sensory-motor activity of the body, cortical thickening in specific regions) and the body (symptom reduction, greater physical well-being, immune function enhancement, regulation of activity in large numbers and classes of genes). It is also showing that meditation can bring a sense of meaning and purpose to life, based on understanding the nonseparation of self and other. (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p. 58)

In addition, Paulson, Davidson, Jha and Kabat-Zinn (2013) discuss that the brain is an organ of experience that works to regulate how we function in relation to every aspect of our lives. The brain has been performing this activity for millennia; it is only now that we are beginning to understand how the brain organizes itself to function in a rapidly changing world. Cutting-edge neuroscience findings are paving the way to understanding transformation of consciousness.

Mindfulness research. The literature on mindfulness is increasing exponentially with the efficacy of mindfulness proven to have a positive effect on self-regulation. Therefore, it is easy to see why mindfulness has been incorporated into many other therapies. Further exploration of mindfulness research related to therapy will be covered in the next section, psychotherapy and counselling.

Psychotherapy and counselling. This section will define *psychotherapy and counselling* and *body-centered psychotherapy*. These definitions will be followed by an

exploration of Hakomi and Psoma Yoga in relation to theories of psychotherapy. Finally, the current research about the client's experience of therapy will be reviewed.

Definition of psychotherapy and counselling. There are many definitions of psychotherapy and counselling. The one that best fits my personal philosophy comes from the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (n.d.),

> Psychotherapy and counselling are professional activities that utilise an interpersonal relationship to enable people to develop self understanding and to make changes in their lives. Professional counsellors and psychotherapists work within a clearly contracted, principled relationship that enables individuals to obtain assistance in exploring and resolving issues of an interpersonal, intrapsychic, or personal nature. Professional Counselling and Psychotherapy... utilise counselling, psychotherapeutic, and psychological theories, and a set of advanced interpersonal skills which emphasise facilitating clients' change processes in the therapeutic context. This work with client processes is based on an ethos of respect for clients, their values, their beliefs, their uniqueness and their right to self-determination... [and] takes account of the cultural and socio-political context in which the client lives and how these factors affect the presenting problem... [and] the work may be short-term or long-term, depending on the nature of the difficulties, and may involve working with individuals, couples, families or groups. Although Counselling and Psychotherapy overlap considerably, there are also recognised differences. While the work of Counsellors and Psychotherapists with clients may be of considerable depth, the focus of Counselling is more likely to be on specific problems, changes in life

adjustments and fostering clients' wellbeing. Psychotherapy is more concerned with the restructuring of the personality or self and the development of insight.

***Defining body-centered psychotherapy*.** There are two well know organizations who promote and research body-centered psychotherapy: the European Association of Body Psychotherapy (EABP) and the United States Association of Body Psychotherapy (USABP).

> Body-Psychotherapy is a distinct branch of psychotherapy, well within the main body of psychotherapy, which has a long history and a body of literature and knowledge based upon a sound theoretical position. Body-Psychotherapy involves an explicit theory of mind-body functioning, which takes into account the complexity of the intersections and interactions between body and mind. The common underlying assumption is that the body reflects the whole person and there is a functional unity between mind and body. The body does not merely mean the 'soma' and that this is separate from the mind, the 'psyche'. There is not a hierarchical relationship between mind and body, between psyche and soma. They are both functioning and interactive aspects of the whole human being. Where other approaches in psychotherapy touch on this area, body-psychotherapy considers this as fundamental. (EABP, n.d.)
>
> Supported by a rich history in somatic psychology and the healing potential of body/mind integration, body psychotherapists help people to deal with their concerns not only through talking but also by helping them to become deeply aware of their bodily sensations, emotions, images, movements, and behaviours. Clients become more conscious of how they breathe, move, and speak, and where

> they experience feelings in their bodies. Through this awareness they create the change they seek in their lives. (USABP, n.d.)
>
> Body-Psychotherapy, perhaps more directly than other psychotherapies because this is one of the main points of focus, works to assist people to rediscover that awareness and experience of 'being' more in one's body... It also feels something of a 'right', like a 'birthright': what it is to be human. (Young, n.d.)

Hakomi, psoma yoga and psychotherapy theory. Hakomi is one of many different styles of body-centered psychotherapy. As indicated earlier, Hakomi was founded in 1977 by Ron Kurtz. The development of Hakomi was influenced by Taoism, Buddhism, the Feldenkrais Method, science and psychotherapy (Martin, 2014). As Psoma Yoga is strongly influenced by Hakomi, a comparison between Hakomi and several psychotherapy theories will be outlined.

Hakomi has some similarities to psychoanalysis, as both are interested in unconscious material, early childhood development and making the unconscious conscious (Corey, 2008). Hakomi differs from psychoanalysis in that it does not focus on psychosexual stages, positioning the therapist as anonymous, or the need for long-term analysis.

Corey (2009) discusses the 'humanist psychology' or the 'third force' therapies which, "emphasizes freedom, choice, values, growth, self-actualization, becoming, spontaneity, creativity, play, humor, peak experiences and psychological health" (p. 84-85). He says these therapies are experiential and relationship-oriented and include: Existential, person-centered and Gestalt therapies (Corey, 2009).

Existential therapy is developed from the concepts of existential philosophy and "emphasizes choice, freedom, responsibility and self-determination" (Corey, 2009, p. 71). Key figures in the development of existential psychotherapy are "Viktor Frankl, Rollo May, Irvin Yalom and James Bugental - all of whom have... strong backgrounds in both existential and humanist psychology" (Corey, 2009, p. 70). This therapy focuses on the human condition, the here-and- now, and the search for meaning. Similarly, key components of Hakomi include bringing the client's attention to the present moment and the search for meaning.

Carl Roger's person-centered therapy "emphasizes fully experiencing the present moment, learning to accept oneself, and deciding on ways to change. It views mental health as congruence between what one wants to become and what one actually is" (Corey, 2009, p. 82). This therapy, like Hakomi, focuses on activating and supporting the client's own resources. The therapist must be genuine, empathetic, respectful and non-judgemental. The therapeutic relationship is the training-ground for relating. Roger's concept, *unconditional positive regard*, is "the nonjudgemental expression of fundamental respect for the person as a human; acceptance of a person's right to his or her feelings" (Corey, 2009, p. 85). In Hakomi, the quality of respectful, non-judgmental, compassionate, and aware state of mind is called "loving presence" (Kurtz, 2008).

Fritz and Laura Perls, Gestalt therapy, emphasizes "the 'what' and 'how' of behaviour and the role of unfinished business from the past in preventing effective functioning in the present" (Corey, 2009, p. 95). Both Gestalt and Hakomi focus on gaining awareness and expanding choices and the importance of the therapist's personhood. The "therapeutic relationship is the context for designing experiments that

grow out of the moment-to-moment experience" (Corey, 2009, p. 95). Both Gestalt and Hakomi use experiments but an important difference in Hakomi is that these experiments, which are designed to evoke reactions that will help bring unconscious material such as foundational memories, underlying emotions and implicit beliefs into consciousness, are done with the client in a mindful state (Kurtz, 2008).

In addition, Hakomi shares some philosophies with post-modern approaches to therapy. Corey (2008) explains that the basic philosophies of postmodern approaches are:

> Based on the premise that there are multiple realities and multiple truths, postmodern therapies reject the idea that reality is external and can be grasped. People create meaning in their lives through conversations with others. The postmodern approaches avoid pathologizing clients, take a dim view of diagnosis, avoid searching for underlying causes of problems, and place a high value on discovering clients' strengths and resources. Rather than talking about problems, the focus of therapy is on creating solutions in the present and the future (p. 456).

Hakomi is present-focused and interested in discovering how an individual is managing or coping with situations. In Hakomi, it is understood that past experience is explored in relation to how it is impacting present experience and for the purpose of assisting an individual to discover more choices and emphasize inner resources (Kurtz, 2008; Martin, 2014).

Postmodern therapies are based on social constructionism which works from the idea that "reality is based on the use of language and is largely a function of the situations in which people live. Realities are socially constructed" (Corey, 2008, 375). Therapy from a postmodern frame is usually brief, emphasizes externalizing the problem, and

therapists work with clients to co-create solutions and the goal of therapy is "to help clients create a self-identity grounded on competence and resourcefulness" (Corey, 2008, p. 461). Narrative therapy and solution-focused therapy are postmodern approaches.

Corey (2009) explains "The general theme of narrative therapy is to invite clients to describe their experience in fresh language, which tends to open up new vistas of what is possible" (p. 180). Hakomi therapists are interested in the way individuals *name* experiences and in separating ideas that may become fused. On further exploration, I discovered that Hakomi uses a practice similar to what in narrative therapy is called "mapping the influence" or exploring how the problem impacts the person. The therapist works collaboratively with the client to systematically discover how the problem is influencing the client's life. Once the influence is uncovered, narrative therapy seeks to reauthor the story (Corey, 2008). The idea of reauthoring from narrative therapy is similar to what is described in Hakomi as "non-egocentric nourishment" (Kurtz, 2008; Kurtz, 2009). The difference is that Hakomi is not only interested in the story that the client can share but also in the story that can be discovered from the client's non-verbal communication and body experience. The non-egocentric nourishment may be verbal or non-verbal.

Solution-focused therapy specialists, De Jong and Kim Berg (2008), describe switching from a problem-solving paradigm to a solution-building paradigm. The intention of solution-focused therapy is to help the client develop a vision of a more satisfying future and to bring attention to the strengths and resources that the client possesses to turn this vision into reality. The client is the expert. Solution-focused

therapy and Hakomi are both interested in the importance of noticing non-verbal behaviour and exploring possibilities.

Hakomi did not arise specifically from any of these psychotherapeutic methods but it has parallels with components outlined in the theories of psychoanalysis, experiential and relationship-oriented therapies, and post-modern approaches. Carr (2012) states:

> From a systemic perspective, we refer to the way specific behaviour change can result in larger and long term change as *second order change*. Also, some specific kinds of behaviour change can change brain biochemistry (exercise, food choices, taking wholistic healthcare products and/or medication, engaging in art-making, etc.) - leading to greater clarity and greater capacity to choose health.

Kurtz continued to refine the Hakomi method until his death in 2011. He subscribed to the idea that "neurons that fire together, wire together" (Hebb, 2012, np) and developed Hakomi to assist the client to uncover experiences that can rewire our brain and encourage more choice. As the client opens to more possibilities, second order changes become more possible.

The elements that make Hakomi a new kind of psychotherapy are twofold: using evoked experiences in mindfulness and non-violently taking over the management of these experiences. There also is an important difference in underlying philosophy. In the psychotherapy theories discussed, the goal may be problem-solving, solution-focusing, counselling or curing disease. This is not the case with Hakomi. In Hakomi, the underlying perspective is self-discovery. This work is the same internal search as the work of spiritual disciplines. It tackles the question - Who am I? (Kurtz, 2008).

Psychotherapy and counselling research. This research subsection will cover three parts: psychology and counselling research, mindfulness and therapy research, and body-centered psychotherapy research.

Psychotherapy and counselling research. The terms *psychology, counselling and systemic review* yielded 308 results on a variety of topics including: counselling methods and styles, uses (including but not limited to: suicide, transgender, dementia and coping with stress), supervision, efficacy and dissemination methods in research. When the term *qualitative* was added to the above search, 17 systematic reviews were found but none of the reviews focused on the client experience of therapy. An additional search using the terms *psychotherapy, counselling* and *phenomenology* returned 240 articles of these seven studies discussed the client experience of therapy. The studies covered topics such the use of metaphor at the end of therapy, the client experience of self-disclosure of the therapist, meaning-making in counselling, suffering, the experience of experiencing, experiencing vulnerability and integration.

Mindfulness and therapy research. A search of the literature revealed 74 systematic reviews or meta-analyses of the efficacy of mindfulness and therapy. The majority of these reviews, looking at efficacy for many different illnesses, recommend that better study design and larger sample sizes are required before conclusions can be made decisively about efficacy. Interestingly, Khoury et al. (2013) conclude that there is already sufficient evidence to prove that mindfulness-based therapies (MBT) are effective. (MBT) "is an effective treatment for a variety of psychological problems, and is especially effective for reducing anxiety, depression and stress" (p. 763). However, all

the studies, including Khoury et al. (2013), are looking at efficacy rather than describing experience.

Therefore, an additional search with the terms mindfulness, therapy and phenomenology produced a list of seventeen studies, most were either phenomenological studies from the perspective of the therapist or were about phenomenological informed psychotherapy. There were three studies whose findings looked at the experience of mindfulness and therapy from the patient/client perspective. Mehling et al. (2011), mentioned earlier in the yoga research section, and two interpretive phenomenological inquiries: William, McManus, Muse and Williams (2011) who looked at mindfulness therapy related to hypochondriasis, and Higginson and Mansell (2008) who explored the role of mindfulness and therapy in personal change and recovery. The latter two studies found that mindfulness and therapy assisted the participants to identify the problem, see how their lives were affected, identify barriers to change and come to a new way of seeing the problem.

*Research on Body-centered Psychotherapy***.** A search of the literature using the terms mind, body, therapy and *phenomenology* returned 54 articles from academic journals, of these, nine studies dealt with body research or client experience of therapy. Topics addressed included: embodiment, perspective, knowing, self-awareness, therapeutic relationship, mindfulness and the placebo effect. Four of these articles were of particular interest to me: Frenkel (2008) about the placebo effect and discussing Merleau-Ponty's perspective on body understanding, Mason (2012) looking at energy psychology and psychotherapy, Mehling et al. (2011) as mentioned in the last section, and Nanda (2009) on mindfulness and existential analysis. I briefly considered using the

topics outlined in these studies as search terms for an additional literature search. However, I opted to wait until the interviews from this Psoma Yoga study were complete. I wanted to ensure additional literature searches were related directly to the findings from this study.

A literature search using the term *body-centered psychotherapy* returned an interesting doctoral dissertation by Kaplan (2006). This dissertation is about body-centered psychotherapy and uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. The case-study analysis component, which revealed different rates of therapy progress and different themes for the research participants, used language to describe the feelings and sensations of the participants. This assisted me to expand my understanding of the meaning of "vivid" in relation to van Manen's (2002) descriptions of phenomenological writing as the descriptions were easy to imagine and sense.

Theological considerations. McCarthy (2000) describes our modern society as a place where many people are "searching for depth, meaning, and direction" (p. 194). Killen and de Beer (1994) describe theological reflection as a way of "exploring individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage.... [to] confirm, challenge, clarify and expand how we understand our own experience and how we understand our religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for living" (p. viii). Psoma Yoga, with its foundation of yoga and Hakomi, is influenced by theological wisdom literature from several traditions.

Two influential wisdom texts from yoga that influence Psoma Yoga are Patanjali's Yoga Sutra and the Bhagavad Gita. There are many translations of these works for the western world. Desikachar (1999) says, "Patanjalis Yoga Sutra is the heart

of yoga... As yoga study and practice develop, the message of the Sutra takes on a deeper resonance and becomes more relevant and more revealing" (p. 145). It is assumed that Patanjali did not originate these teachings but inherited it from the Vedas (the oldest Sanskrit texts and the ancient scriptures of Hinduism). Desikachar (1999) describes that the Sutras are used by yoga teachers to link yoga knowledge with the student and activate the "transformative power of the heart" (p. 145). The second text, the Bhagavad Gita (Mitchell, 2000), tells the tale of Arjuna, a warrior prince who needs to make difficult decisions. He seeks guidance and his charioteer, Krishna, tells him that he must do his duty but "be indifferent to gain or loss, victory or defeat" (p. 52). In this translation of ancient yogic wisdom, Mitchell (2000) illustrates the importance of the focused mind. The story dares us to cultivate moments where the mind is unmoving so we can access our true essence and reach our full potential. Further influence from the Eastern wisdom traditions, which "emphasize living from our deepest nature, turning the mind around so that it can see into its very essence" (Welwood, 2000, p. 3), has already been mentioned. The development of Hakomi was influenced by Buddhism and Taoism and by the spiritual context of mindfulness.

However, Psoma Yoga and Hakomi were created in the West and the Western wisdom traditions "teach that we are here not just to realize our divine nature but to embody that nature into human form... individuals are here... to discover their unique gift and fully embody it in their lives" (Welwood, 2000, p. 4). The question "Who am I?" is central to human experience. Throughout life we are constantly redefining and reinventing ourselves. Welwood (2000) describes that the human fear of non-existence leads to an ongoing struggle to create an identity that is "solid, real, and substantial"

(page 26). VanKatwyk (2003) cites, "Tillich's description of the self is one of perpetual motion and change" (page 26). VanKatwyk (2003) also reports that as humans we are altered by our interactions with the world and as we integrate these changes we form revised identities.

Welwood (2000) discusses the links between psychology and spirituality and advocates for a spiritually-informed psychology that incorporates the different aspects offered by the East, letting go of fixation on form - breathing out, and the West, emphasizing form and individuation - breathing in. VanKatwyk (2003) says, "Spiritual care is, therefore, primarily a practice of listening and learning to relate to another's personal sense of his or her special place in the world and the larger universe" (p. 29). This type of listening is described by Harris (1996, as cited by Clark, 2012), "thick listening [as] multilayered contemplative awareness that understands and relishes the deep touch points that take place between suffering (or a variety of other experiences from our everyday lives) and imagination" (n.p.). Groome (n.d. as cited by Clark, 2012) describes that "'thin moments' occur when and where 'separation between worlds is thin' " (n.p.). Thus, "theological reflection is 'thick listening' at 'thin moments' " (Clark, 2012, n.p.). The key to this type of listening, in both the Eastern and Western traditions, is awareness.

McCarthy (2000) shares,

> Awareness as a discipline opens us to levels of reality not immediately apparent. It enables us to see ourselves, our circumstances, our world without illusion, to see without prematurely judging both the "terrors of our present situation and the greatness of our inner evolution," to grasp the reality of both our divinity and our

> animality. It requires stillness, receptivity and availability. The discipline of awareness involves deep listening which is marked by waiting, attending and presence... We quiet the many voices around us and within us as we wait to hear a word of revelation (p. 199).

Psoma Yoga encourages awareness and cultivates both Eastern and Western wisdom but the question remains, "What is the experience of Psoma Yoga?"

In this chapter I have created a foundation for researching the experience of Psoma Yoga. Psoma Yoga integrates ideas from yoga, Hakomi, mindfulness, and psychotherapy and counselling. Using an interpretive approach to research means that I, as a Registered Nurse, yoga teacher, Hakomi therapist, beginning counsellor and beginning researcher, with my unique personal history, individual and social circumstances, pre-understandings, perceptions and prejudices, am intricately a part of this work. In choosing a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, I seek to articulate the essential meanings individuals make about their Psoma Yoga experiences to broaden my own understanding of the phenomena and in doing so, hopefully, engage others in an ongoing conversation that will broaden our horizons and understanding of the experience.

Chapter 3

Understanding Psoma Yoga

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
(Eliot, 1963, p. 222)

After years of witnessing what appeared to be profound changes in people who experienced body-centered psychotherapies, such as Hakomi and Psoma Yoga Therapy, I began to wonder what, if anything, was happening. In this inquiry, I sought to understand the lived experience of Psoma Yoga. I was drawn to the human science traditions because, rather than predicting, hypothesizing and testing hypotheses, I wanted to attempt to thoughtfully explore and describe the experiential meanings of Psoma Yoga experiences (van Manen, 1990). I wanted to deeply embody this understanding to assist me in my therapeutic interactions with people in both in my nursing and counselling practices. After careful consideration of the nature of my research question, it became clear that a phenomenological approach would be appropriate to fully explore the phenomenon of Psoma Yoga. It is here that my journey into the world of hermeneutic-phenomenological research began.

Researching the Psoma Yoga Experience

Interpretive study needs to be oriented to the question at hand and the researcher must select techniques and procedures that will reveal the significance and meaning of the experience, while keeping in mind that, "the method of phenomenology is that it has no method" (Gadamer, as cited in van Manen, 1990, p. 30). However, van Manen (1990) provides six research activities to provide a "methodical structure" to the dynamic

process of hermeneutic phenomenological research. These activities include: (1) commitment and interest in the phenomena; (2) investigating experience as we live it; (3) reflecting on the essential themes; (4) describing through the art of writing and rewriting; (5) maintaining a strong and oriented relation; and (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (p. 30-31). As the researcher, I created a general outline for beginning the research with an awareness that I would need to be flexible and ready to follow the data. In retrospect, I realize having this awareness was not the same as truly understanding both the need for flexibility and openness, and the quality of presence required to be comfortable, or at least able, to sit with uncertainty. I fluctuated between being excited, challenged, sure, and being lost, unsure. In the process of this research, I had to consistently open to an expanding world of interpretive possibility.

Beginning. I clearly articulated my starting place, not to bracket the information, but to clarify my world view and assumptions. Although preconceptions and prejudices were part of my interpretation, I needed to thoroughly reflect and become aware of my values, beliefs, emotions, training and life history. van Manen (1997) explains that the researcher hopes to go beyond preconceptions to point to the thing-itself, therefore making my assumptions explicit and identifying a 'starting point' was essential so that I could remain as open as possible to the experiences and unique voice of the research participants. A "horizon" refers "to the movable circle that limits everything that is visible to be seen from a particular point" (Di Cesare, 2007, p. 96). The researcher seeks a fusion with the horizons or understandings of the participants. For this "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1960/2004) to occur, "It is the task of combining past and future" and in 1986 Gadamer altered his idea of the word 'task' and replaced it with a word that

meant ‘alertness’ (Di Cesare, 2007, p. 96). Therefore, the researcher is alert to his or her own understandings and fuses these with the understandings gained from the research.

Study Participants. Purposive sampling, which selects individuals for research participation based on their knowledge and experience, is necessary for a hermeneutic-phenomenology inquiry (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). I wanted to talk to participants, male or female, who had experience with Psoma Yoga. A recruitment letter (see Appendix A) was sent by email to the creator of Psoma Yoga to distribute to individuals, eighteen years of age or older, who had participated in Psoma Yoga through therapy, workshops, and/or trainings. Interested volunteers were asked to contact the researcher directly by email or by letter to maintain anonymity. A separate email account was created for this purpose. Eight individuals responded to the recruitment request by email and expressed interest in receiving further information about the study. There was no additional interest expressed by letter mail.

Respondents were not local to Edmonton so I sent email responses to each of the eight interested individuals requesting that we schedule a telephone call to discuss the study in more detail. I was able to arrange phone information sessions with seven of the eight interested individuals. Prior to the scheduled phone conversation, a detailed information letter (see Appendix B) and informed consent form (Appendix C), was made available to interested individuals. All individuals had the option to receive the information packages by mail or email, and all chose the email route. Each potential participant received the same information package.

Research Study Information. During the phone information session, I explained the purpose of the research and that the clearance to conduct this research had been

granted by the ethics review board at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, Alberta. Interested individuals were informed that participation was voluntary and should they choose to participate, research interviews would be arranged via Skype at a time that was convenient for them. Each interview would take sixty to ninety minutes and would be audio recorded and video recorded and then transcribed. Each participant would be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity. The transcribed data would then be used in the final thesis and any following articles. A discussion about the risks and benefits to participation also were outlined. While there were no overt benefits from being in the study, it was possible that participants might like the opportunity to speak about and share their experiences. Potential risks to participants could have been self-disclosure and investment in a relationship with the researcher. All participants were informed that should any unexpected issues arise related to our research conversation, such as emotional upset, referral to an appropriate counsellor would be arranged.

During the information call, all seven individuals indicated they were interested in participating in the study. Participants were informed that research interviews would be scheduled once they had completed and submitted the consent form (see appendix C) and biographical data (see appendix D) also was requested. (A summary of the biographical data collected is available in appendix H.) After the information call, an email was sent to each participant with detailed options for submitting the consent and biographical data forms. One individual decided to opt out of participating after the information call. Consent forms and biographical data were received from six participants and Skype research interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for each participant. As I have

attended many Psoma Yoga workshops and trainings, I had met four of the participants prior to the research. However, I had no contact with them outside of the workshop setting and I had never discussed the Psoma Yoga experience with them previously.

Research Conversations. Six research participants, two male and four female, shared their experiences of Psoma Yoga with me. Because these conversations were Skype calls, each session began with a confirmation that the time was still convenient and the space established in both locations was quiet and confidential. I reminded each participant that the conversation would be audio and video recorded and that I anticipated the duration of each conversation would be sixty to ninety minutes. I made it clear that these were merely guidelines and we could finish early or schedule additional interview time if required or they could choose to opt out of the research project at any time.

At the beginning of our discussion about Psoma Yoga, I opened the conversation by saying: "Tell me about your experience of Psoma Yoga. What was it like for you?" The conversations were informal and I encouraged the participants to explore their experiences at length, sometimes prompting the participant by nodding or asking questions such as, "What can you tell me about that?", "Can you say more?", "How was that for you?", to gain greater depth and expression of the experience. Additional guided open ended questions (see Appendix E) were used to ensure the Psoma Yoga experience was explored as fully as possible. In addition, I used information recorded on the biographical data form to assist me to phrase questions that acknowledged the previous experience each participant had with yoga, Hakomi or Psoma Yoga.

During each discussion, participants shared their experiences freely and I was deeply involved in the conversation guided by my passion for understanding the

phenomenon. The interviews ranged in length from 40 to 80 minutes. During the interview, several participants indicated that they had captured the impact of some of their Psoma Yoga experiences through writing or art. Participants were invited to send examples of poetry, writing or art that they felt represented the Psoma Yoga experience. I made sure that participants knew this additional data also would be kept confidential and anonymous.

Data Sources. The data in this hermeneutic inquiry came from several sources. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to create a text. As mentioned, additional written or artistic data from the participants was invited. Two of the participants sent poems. Field notes were created after each interview and helped me to understand the context of the transcribed texts. I created a research journal as a parallel to this thesis document to record my personal experiences with the data. My research journal enabled me to deeply reflect about "the way we tend to make interpretive sense of the lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 73). Audio and video recordings of each participant's interview were played to provide insights about speech tone and inflections and non-verbal communication cues. I accessed academic, phenomenology and spiritual literature as themes emerged from the text. I interacted with the data and the literature using interpretive writing techniques such as exploring existential dimension, anecdotes, etymology and linguistic devices, as outlined by van Manen (2002). The goal was to be steeped in the data (van Manen, 1990).

Steeping in the Data. van Manen (1990) states, "Meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-layered" (p. 78). Van der Zalm and Bergum (2000) consider hermeneutic phenomenology as having descriptive and interpretive elements which lead to inter-

subjective understanding. This type of understanding does not require the researcher to be distant. The interpretive writing in this inquiry adhered to the philosophical tenets of hermeneutics which are not definitive, and reflect an emphasis on "the phenomena" as a whole, as parts, as subjective understanding expanded to the point of unity. "It is the interrogation of the phenomenon in its appearing which allows us to recognise, to verbalise, maybe for the first time, the taken-for-granted which always lay right there, unrecognised... as part of the phenomenon" (Ashworth, 2003, p. 146). The process of moving between explanations and understandings will lead to in-depth understanding of the phenomena.

As recommended by van Manen (1990, cited in Fleming et al. 2003), "the gaining of understanding needs to be systematic" (p. 118). When I first encountered this quote, I interpreted systematic as linear. I tried to understand the data by looking first for "the whole", then "the parts", then compare "the whole and the parts". However, I can now clearly see that systematic is not necessarily linear. What I experienced in the gathering and analysis of this data were systematic layers of understanding. Each time I encountered the data I reflected on the fundamental meanings of the text and incorporated this into my expanding horizon of "the whole", "the parts" and "the relationship between the whole and the parts" (van Manen, 1990).

The initial encounter with the data occurred during the interview and creation of field notes. Next, I transcribed each interview and during the transcription process I noticed that my interview responses were sometimes in sync with the participant's sharing and sometimes they were not. I grew increasingly curious about the periods of synchronicity and the periods when I seemed to miss what was said in the moment in its

entirety. At first, each interview became "a whole" and I identified "parts" or themes within each interview and then compared these different "parts" or themes to "the whole" of an individual interview. As the analysis continued, "the whole" became all of the collected interview data and "the parts" became the individual interviews. In this stage, the comparisons occurred between a single interview and the entire body of data. Finally, there was a progression to specific sentences or sections of the text being compared to all the data. Fleming et al., (2003) describe this final step as a search for shared understandings and unity. This layered expansion was sometimes messy and chaotic because the rate of growth and integration of understandings did not happen in a uniform way.

Imagine that the growth acquired in this inquiry is compared to the growth of the human body. Rather than the proportionate growth experienced as a human develops from infant to adult, the growth in this inquiry is more sporadic. As if, when the inquiry starts, the arms grow exponentially faster than the head, trunk and legs and as the inquiry continues and the literature is consulted the head grows more quickly and the growth of the arms slows. When the interviews begin, the trunk starts to grow and this growth continues into the data analysis until the size of the trunk begins to match the head. Further analysis sees the arms and legs growing again. If you were to view this inquiry body at any given point in the process, it would seem that the body parts were not in proportion. And then finally, everything converges. The head, the trunk, and the arms become proportionally sized and the legs continue to grow to catch up to build a stronger foundation to the understanding. Everything looks proportional and a layer of understanding has been reached. However, the proportional sizing can happen at

toddlerhood, youth, adolescence and then the process can begin again as the adolescent reaches toward adulthood. This metaphor is meant to describe the iterative, rather than linear, nature of this research. The research findings contributed to my deepened understanding in the moment and each time I visited the data I found something new that I hadn't noticed before.

Interpretive hermeneutic research does not have a distinct end point. I stopped the research when: the interpretive account captured the sense of reality of the phenomena so the reader was able to recognise the phenomena from his or her own experience; and, an understanding of the emotional richness had been shared in a clear and poignant way; and, something extraordinary within ordinary experience has been revealed (Finlay & Balinger, 2006; van Manen, 1990). This point is referred to as "the phenomenological nod" (van Manen, 1990).

> The strength and special contribution of the phenomenological method lies in the way it can capture the richness, complexity, ambiguity and ambivalence of lived experience. The quality of any phenomenological study can be judged through its ability to share its discoveries, to draw the reader ever deeper into the worlds of others. (Finlay, 2006, p. 196)

I continued to return to the data until I felt that I had reached a point of deep saturation of understanding. This point, illustrated from the human body/ research body metaphor used earlier, is a point of convergence and proportional growth. This convergence occurred when the data formed into a structure of themes and subthemes.

Rigour. I have ensured that my research question is a good match for this type of inquiry. As described earlier, this study was iterative rather than linear, and I consistently

questioned whether this research design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation were systematic and focused (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). However, I also was aware that this interpretive inquiry was an attempt to explore the meaning of an experience rather than to know a single truth through objective measures of scientific reliability and validity (Emden & Sandelowski, 1998; van Manen, 1990).

> Human science research is rigorous when it is "strong" or "hard" in a moral and spirited sense. A strong and rigorous human science text distinguishes itself by its courage and resolve to stand up for the uniqueness and significance of the notion to which it has dedicated itself....[and] is prepared to be "soft", "soulful", "subtle" and "sensitive" in its effort to bring the range of meanings... to our reflective awareness. (van Manen, 1990, p. 18)

Finlay and Ballinger (2006) highlight trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability and dependability, as essential to rigour. I used field notes, a research journal, thoughtful interpretations and reinterpretations over a prolonged time period to enhance *credibility, transferability*, and *dependability* (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006; Koch, 2006). I recognized my own prejudices and bias and I approached the data with a new sense of wonder and openness each time and let the "soft, soulful" meanings emerge (van Manen, 1990, p. 18). I attempted to create a sense of understanding that is felt and shared in an attempt to gain theoretical connectedness, analytical preciseness, and a vivid, descriptive, socially responsive and meaningful dialogue (Emden & Sandelowski, 1998). And I understand that each reader will view findings "from their own horizons" (Fleming et al., 2003, p. 119). I have made every attempt to conduct this study in a scientifically

rigourous and valid way through maintaining the philosophy (ontology and epistemology) of interpretive phenomenology.

Ethical Considerations. Ethical approval to conduct this research was received from the ethics review board at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, Alberta (see appendix G). The ethical aspects of this research include: informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, risks and benefits, and voluntary participation.

Informed Consent. Individuals who were interested in participating in this research were given information about this study. Recruitment letters (see Appendix A) were sent to potential participants by the creator of Psoma Yoga. Interested individuals were asked to contact me directly. Once the potential volunteer contacted me, I provided information about the study and identified if the volunteer met the selection criteria. Potential participants were provided with an information letter (see Appendix B) and an informed consent form (see Appendix C) for review. The information letter and consent forms were assessed to ensure the reading level was acceptable for the general public to comprehend (see Appendix F). If the volunteer chose to participate, the informed consent process occurred before any research conversations began.

During the process of establishing informed consent, the participant and I spoke by telephone and reviewed the information letter. The participants were encouraged to ask questions at any point in the discussion. I responded to questions using simple terminology. The informed consent form was explained and then completed by the participant. Participants were instructed to submit the consent to me and to keep a copy of the document for themselves. Once the informed consent was received, Skype interviews were scheduled. At the beginning of the interview, I checked with each

participant to confirm the signature on the consent form and to ensure they still wanted to volunteer to take part in the research. I stressed to the participants that participation was voluntary and they could choose to withdraw at any time.

***Confidentiality*.** Confidentiality of information protects participants who have become vulnerable through describing personal experiences. In this study, only my thesis supervisor and I had access to the raw interview data. We agreed that this information would be held in confidence.

Research materials were kept in locked areas to which only I has access. Separate locked areas were assigned to items that identified the participant name (consent forms, audio and video recordings, field notes and records of the participant name and pseudonym) and those that did not identify the participant name (transcribed text and researcher interpretations). The raw data, field notes, and any notes regarding analysis of the texts will be retained by the researcher for seven years. Consent forms identifying the participants will be destroyed when the study is completed.

I have not included any audio or video segments in sharing information or findings from the study. If, in the future, I wish to include audio or video segments for information sharing, the participants will be contacted to obtain consent for this purpose. I will not use audio or video segments without the participant's expressed written consent.

I also informed the participants that if abuse of someone under 18 years of age was disclosed by a participant or was suspected by the researcher, I had a legal obligation to report it to the authorities. Following disclosure of an incident of abuse and discussion

with the authorities, all other information provided by the participant would be held in confidence. There were no reports of abuse during the research process.

Anonymity. The identity of the participants and their involvement in this study was known only to me, the researcher, unless the participant chose to share this information. Written transcripts, with a pseudonym, were used in the transcripts. Pseudonyms will always be used when sharing any information or findings of this study that may be published or presented at conferences.

Risks/Benefits. The risks to participants that arose from this study were those of self-disclosure and investment in a relationship with the researcher. Participants were aware that unexpected issues that could not be addressed by me, as the researcher, would be referred to appropriate counsellors. There were no overt benefits from being in this study. However, some participants may have found it beneficial to have the opportunity to speak about their experiences.

Voluntary Participation. Participation was voluntary and the research participants were free to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. Also, the choice to participate, or not participate, did not impact the yoga classes or therapy sessions from which the participants were identified as potential volunteers.

Chapter 4

Revealing the Experiences of Psoma Yoga

These are only hints and guesses,
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
(Eliot, 1963, p. 213)

In his book, *Writing in the Dark*, van Manen (2002) highlights several ways of deepening understanding through phenomenological writing. Existential dimensions "spatiality, temporality, corporeality, and relationality" are employed in reflections to expose the dimensions of the life world (van Manen, 2002, p. 28). Linguistic devices and anecdotes are used to make uncommon experiences more accessible, to "increase the vividness of the account" and to "bring the phenomenon into experiential nearness" (van Manen, 2002, p. 50, p. 61). Etymology is applied throughout the exploration of topics to provide insight into the experiential "genesis of meaning" and "by tracing the boundary meanings of these terms" to assist with bringing "certain unique experiential qualities into view" (van Manen, 2002, p. 85-86). A variety of these writing techniques were implemented in the creation of this chapter. These writings are interspersed with direct quotes from the participants and writings from other authors to create a multi-layered exploration of the phenomenon. This phenomenological writing reflects on the lived experience of human existence in a thoughtful way, free from statements of theory and prejudice. It is meant to enable the reader to experience life situations, events, and emotions that are normally unavailable to them and in doing so; their horizon is broadened in a personal way (van Manen, 2002).

Participants were invited to contemplate and describe their experiences of Psoma Yoga in response to guiding questions in the interviews. For the purpose of anonymity each research participant was given a pseudonym. These names were chosen to represent the order of the interviews and to be free of any association with gender: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot. As I listened to the interviews, read and re-read the interview transcripts, wrote, questioned and re-wrote, I attempted to gain understanding of the Psoma Yoga experience. Each person's experience, described uniquely, revealed important aspects of the overall experience. Three main themes emerged from the data: the call, embodiment, and transformation. Each main theme contains additional sub-themes that contributed to an expanded understanding of Psoma Yoga and its impact on the participant's lived world. This chapter is a detailed reflection of each theme and of related topics.

The Call

The mailbox opens and within it you find a gleaming, stark white envelope with your name carefully drawn on it in calligraphy. As the envelope reveals its contents, you discover a gentle note, an invitation to an upcoming event and an R.S.V.P. is required. You indicate you will attend. The day of the event draws near and you have long forgotten about it. You are relaxing when your phone breaks the silence. You answer the phone call. A friend, who also is attending the event, is asking where you are. The friend is adamant that you should come immediately.

What does it mean to be called? Is the calling an event, a way of being, a response? Does "the call" come from some external source - Someone speaking to you, calling you on the telephone, emailing you a request? Does the call come from someplace

within a person - an inner feeling, intuition, strong inclination? Is the call the same as an invitation or a suggestion?

The word *call* originally comes from the Old English *ceallian* "to call, shout" and was replaced by the Old Norse *kalla* "to cry loudly". Whereas, the word i*nvitation* is from Latin *invitationem* "an invitation, incitement, challenge" a noun of action from *invitare* "invite, treat, entertain". The word *suggestion* initially meant "a prompting to evil" from the Anglo-French and Old French *suggestioun* "hint, temptation" and from Latin *suggestionem* "an addition, intimation, suggestion" which evolved in Latin to mean "heap up, build" to "bring forward an idea" (Etymology, n.d.). Perhaps a *call* is louder and more intense and an *invitation* or *suggestion* comes in a gentler and quieter form.

> As soon as I saw the advertising in the brochure from Hollyhock it just resonated with me. I don't even think it was the words, I just knew that that's what I wanted. I was looking for a more heart-centred practice, and I certainly found that in the psoma yoga practice. I don't know if I even knew what I was looking for, I was looking for something that was a little more interactive, more relational. (Alpha)

> I felt it was the universe answering my prayers. It is very interconnected with Hakomi except that Hakomi was missing the 'really paying attention to the body piece'. As soon as it existed I knew I had to go. There was no question that I was going. I don't know what that is about but perhaps it was the body wisdom thing again. It wasn't anything I thought about it was just simply going to happen, despite the need to arrange and work around a hectic school schedule. (Charlie)

> I was seeing a Hakomi therapist for a little while and he told me about Donna and he said I might like it [Psoma Yoga] because I am quite movement oriented and I feel things in my body and sometime things don't come out in words and voices but in feeling so he told me about the workshop and I had the time available so without hesitation, I signed up. (Delta)

> As a yoga practitioner, I thought 'here is a chance to see if all the stuff around emotions in your body'... I guess I wasn't a true believer, until I went to Psoma Yoga training, about how yoga changes certain emotional states. (Echo)

Foxtrot described being ill for the last year and a half and then reaching a place of getting well. "The [Psoma Yoga] class was like stepping out into wellness again". The source of some of these messages may seem to be external, yet maybe all calls are generated internally with some of the messages coming from the internal through the external. Brogan (2013) reminds us that,

> Heidegger says: "the call without doubt does not come from some-one else who is with me in the world. The call comes *from* me, and yet *over* me"... It comes over me from beyond, yet it comes from me. (p. 38)

The response to the call is not always immediate, sometime there are delays.

> I have been on a path of wanting to incorporate yoga into counselling and personal growth because I believe you have to incorporate creativity in the physical movement along with any kind of learning and when I was going through the Hollyhock catalogue and saw Psoma Yoga I went 'here is the person who has already done all my work for me'. I'm going to take a workshop and

> incorporate what I can. Then I broke my hip and there was a delay. I had to wait to attend the training. (Bravo)

Invitations, suggestions or calls may be a return to the existential self, a "call of conscience", and in Heidegger's view, there is a way of hearing and listening for the authentic being (Brogan, 2013, p. 35).

> Heidegger says... authentic silence, opens up a space for communication that is transparent in the face of the other. Most of all, Heidegger says, hearing the "call" and the voice of conscience requires the gift of hearing the silence of the authentic word... Authentic speaking has to be made room for and allowed to be made manifest... The call of conscience is the return of phenomenological language, letting *what is* speak of and from out of itself... It can only be heard silently. (Brogan, 2013, p. 36)

Being calm and lowering the internal noise is the intent of practice (Kurtz, 2009; Martin, n.d.). Perhaps yoga practice makes space for listening to the silent call from the authentic voice. "When I went to the first training it was just with an open mind, just to sit there and say 'what is this all about', 'how does this work'... I got curious" (Echo). "Come back to the breath, come back to the body, come back to this moment and we'll go from there" (Charlie). "Listening to your experiences with your body" (Foxtrot). What are we listening for? Is there a rhythm? What does a silent call sound like?

In his book, *Eternal Echoes*, O'Donohue (1999) captures the importance of language, "No one knows the secret colour and the unique sound of the soul of a people as their language does. A language is a magical presence. It is utterly alive" (p. 252). "Sometimes the story would evade me but I was just listening to [Donna's] melody"

(Foxtrot). Have you ever lost track of what someone was saying or have you ever lived somewhere where people speak a different language? You feel the rhythm of language in your body, and in your ears as you listen, a series of sounds and syllables rhythmically dance off the tongue and into the ears. Perhaps it isn't the language but the rhythm and vibration of the language that is important.

Paul (2004) states, "In the Vedic world, words were like yoga postures, used to awaken spiritual illumination; the knowledge of Sanskrit grammar helped one understand the spiritual and energetic relationship among individual words" (p. 27). Words can be used to "reinforce the capacity of soul to express itself fully in our personality" (Paul, 2004, p. 53). The vibrational quality of repeated words can assist individuals to move toward wholeness by pulling together "the disparate portions of our beings" (Paul, 2004, p. 53). What, then, is wholeness?

The word *whole* as an adjective is from the Old English *hal* "entire, unhurt, healthy" from Proto-Germanic *khailaz* "undamaged" and as a noun means "entire body or company; the full amount". *Whole* is related to the word *health*, from the Old English *hælþ* "wholeness, a being whole, sound or well" and from Proto-Germanic *hailitho* or *kailo-* "whole, uninjured, of good omen" but also "prosperity, happiness, welfare; preservation, safety" (Etymology, n.d.). Martin (2009a) cites Tom Brady, Jr. and Carl Jung saying:

> Brady, Jr. says that, "spirituality… is our longing to go home… it is, if you will, the thirst for wholeness." Brady calls the thirst for wholeness "the primary motivating force in our lives". Carl Jung called it "a secret unrest that gnaws at the roots of our being." (p. 11)

> As adults…we've become hypnotically convinced by our limitations. We've forgotten about our creativity and, as a result, we've lost our freedom… the freedom to be fully who we are. This freedom to be who we are is wholeness. (Martin, 2009a, p. 14)

Where do we find this freedom to be who we are, this wholeness? How do we move toward it?

In the midst of the potential disharmonic resonance of everyday life there are pauses, areas to rest and reset. The pause can be in the rhythm of your breath, in the space between the inhalation and the exhalation; it can be in the silence of the morning sunrise or the evening sunset. There are moments of profound peace to be glimpsed, moments when the silence calls you to the depths of yourself, to the vast void that arises and the wisdom of connection with the Self. It is here, I believe, where the ego drops away and we are called to our greater potential, our truest self. A moment of silence is a moment where true communion exists. At some point in life, the deep longing from within calls us to ourselves. It begs us for silence, for a pause in the action of life, where the true nature of *Self* can arise from within. In the silence, the inner world is revealed and can be met with compassion and patience.

Embodiment

How does one meet the inner world? Where does one begin? One day, as you walk along your life path, a door or passageway appears. The door may be made of solid wood, thick and heavy with big metal pulls, or it may be made of balsa wood and screen, light and airy, or perhaps it is a passageway, a narrowing in the path of a river or in a field. It may look heavy and strong or light and easy. However it appears, will be unique

to you - your passage on your path. At first, you may wonder whether to proceed and then you might wonder when the time and the space are right. At some point, you will begin to move. You will push through the door or take a step through the passage into an unknown place, a new space and the world may look new.

In Psoma Yoga (and Hakomi), an invitation to this passageway begins with the question, "what is happening?" This is an invitation to bring awareness to the moment and the way habits and beliefs are embodied. But, what is embodiment? What does it mean to embody something? What does it mean to be embodied?

When we look at the word "embodiment", three separate ideas emerge: *Em*, from the French and Latin, which was a prefix used to form verbs from adjectives and nouns; *Body,* from Old English, originally meaning trunk or chest of a man or animal and was extended to mean person or material components of an organism or main part of anything; and, *Ment*, used as a suffix for forming nouns, was originally from French (and representing Latin -mentum) which was added to verbs to represent a result or product of action. By the 1540s, embody was used in reference to a soul or spirit becoming invested with a physical form, principles or ideas. (Etymology, n.d.) Embodiment may be as Charlie says, "resourcing the body as the giver of wisdom".

> I was more in recognition of my body after, more in tune with it, much more aware of it... before my body typically always came last [and] putting it in the forefront was one thing that I noticed. Being more attentive to how I was treating it and if I was in a position that didn't feel comfortable, noticing that, noting it, shifting… I don't leave out the body as readily as I would have in the past. (Foxtrot)

Perhaps in Psoma Yoga, the intangibles become present through body awareness.

Consider that the word *a-ware-ness*, could be *a-where-ness*, capturing the concept that when we are present we know where we are in relation to the multitude of objects in the tangible world and we may have an understanding of our relationship with the intangible world. Pema Chodron (1997) shares that stopping to listen and reflect on experiences helps the individual pay attention to things made less visible by the busyness and noise of the world. She says that there are many things to experience when we become still enough to notice. She urges that in this stillness, or in the slow, gentle movement made with intention, we are more aware of the present moment.

> There [in the moment] my breathing will change... There is just an acceptance of moving with my body and I'm letting it move how it wants to and it does lead me to wanting to move and stretch and breath and that feels so good when I can let myself be really there. (Delta)

In the present moment, you are viewing the night sky. Where are you? In a city, the buildings and the many lights bleed into the sky obscuring many of the night objects - stars and planets. In a rural township, there is greater darkness and often greater quiet and stillness. The lack of any additional manmade light emphasizes the bright objects in the night sky. Sometimes, it feels like the whole palate of the starry night sky is coming toward earth just to be closer to you. By removing the distractions, things seem clearer.

> When the tension in the jaw relaxes
>
> There is a cascade, a river
>
> Flowing into the heart.
>
> Rusted watergates from the old sites

Creak like cats

Purring in your pool of lap.

The slightest change

Throws an anchor into the bay

And a weight holds you

Steady in the old pain

Which wells into song

And a radiant deep softening.

The breath

Which was terse

Meanders into the folded ribs

And wakens shivering sparrows.

You see,

There isn't anything we do

That doesn't touch everything. (Alpha, poem)

In Psoma Yoga (and yoga), the teacher reminds the students to focus on the breath and then to move with intention. This assists the students to focus on the body and the fluctuations of the body and mind that occur with each breath and each movement. The focus assists the student to notice the breath, an inhalation or an exhalation, and then to notice movement - an arm, a leg, a hand. "I witnessed in my group at Hollyhock, people getting out of their head and just having a body experience" (Bravo). One begins to wonder, are the mind and body connected in some way or are they separate?

The word *connect*, a verb, originally from the Latin *conectere* "join together", evolved into French and became *connecter* which meant "to establish relationship". In the twentieth century, with the advent of telephone connection, it came to mean "get in touch with" and "awaken meaningful emotions, establish rapport". The word *separate*, in verb form, comes from the Latin *separatus* "to pull apart" from *se*-"apart" and *parare* "make ready, prepare. The word *part*, also a verb, from the old French *partir* "to divide, separate" and from Latin *partire* "to share, part, distribute, divide". The idea of "separating (someone from someone else)" came into use in the early fourteenth century (Etymology, n.d.). Whether there is an idea of connection or separation there is an assumption of different parts that make up the greater system.

The yoga teacher continues to assist the student to build capacity to perceive more: the head, the limbs, the breath, and the movement. The brain is an organ situated in the head and the head and the brain are part of the body. The body is connected (or separate) from the surrounding environment. The student notices the distractions but things are clearer as the student learns targeted focus, to understand the separateness and the connection between things. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) comments about the experience of the body:

> The originality of the movements which I perform with my body: they directly anticipate the final situation, for my intention initiates a movement through space merely to attain the objective initially given at the starting point; there is as it were a germ of movement which only secondarily develops into an objective movement. I move external objects with the aid of my body, which takes hold of them in one place and shifts them to another. But my body itself I move directly,

> I do not find it at one point of objective space and transfer it to another, I have no need to look for it, it is already with me - I do not need to lead it towards the movement's completion, it is in contact with it from the start and propels itself towards that end. The relationships between my decision and my body are, in movement, magic ones (p. 108).

Connections between mind and matter have been hinted at in artistic and literary areas for many years. One example, written and published in the early 1900s by James Allen (n.d.) began with these words,

> Mind is the master - power that moulds and makes,
> And Man is Mind, and evermore he takes
> The tool of Thought, and, shaping what he wills,
> Brings forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills: -
> He thinks in secret, and it comes to pass:
> Environment is but his looking-glass. (n.p)

My thoughts shape my environment (Allen, n.d.) and the relationship between my decision (thoughts) and my body are magic ones (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002). Is this experience?

> I want to be very clear... there's a great big difference between having a conceptual idea of something and having a full-bodied experience of something. Having a conceptual idea would be "sure it's important to take risks and go into the unknown" but unless you have a really grounded body experience of it, it's hard to take those steps. Somewhere in there is the sense that there is a foundation, life is supporting you, and that is not a conceptual idea. It is a felt and

> experienced sense, like gravity is always working on my behalf... Knowing that life is working for me and not just knowing it, but feeling it and experiencing it; it's easier to take risks. (Alpha)

What is the difference between a conceptual idea and a full-bodied experience? What does it mean to sense, to feel, to experience, to know?

Thinking, sensing, feeling and intuition. According to Jung, the ego or I-consciousness has four main ways of perceiving and interpreting reality: thinking, sensing, feeling and intuition. He defined that *thinking* referred to the faculty of rational analysis and of responding to things through the intellect (head level). Thinking is connecting ideas in order to arrive at a general understanding. He described *feeling* as the interpretation of things at a value-level (heart-level); feeling evaluates, it accepts or rejects an idea on the basis of whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. *Sensation* means conscious perception through the sense-organs. Sensing relates to physical stimuli (physical level). Finally, *intuition* is like sensation in that it is an experience which is immediately given to consciousness rather than arising through mental activity (e.g. thinking or feeling) but there is no physical cause. Intuition is a hunch (gut-level feeling). Jung described that thinking and feeling are rational in that they require judgement; and, sensation and intuition are irrational because they simply result from stimuli. Jung used these four basic modes of consciousness and combined them with the concepts of introversion and extroversion, judging and perceiving to create his theory of personality types (Hall & Nordby, 1973).

Jung's first three terms, thinking, sensing and feeling, seem to be related etymologically. *Think*, a verb, from the Old English *þencan* which means "imagine,

conceive in the mind; consider, meditate, remember; intend, wish, desire" and originally meant "cause to appear to oneself" from the Proto-Germanic *thankjan.* The word, *thought,* comes from an Old English word *geþoht* “process of thinking, a thought; compassion” from the stem of *þencan* “to conceive of in the mind, consider” (Etymology, n.d.).

The verb form of the word, *sense*, originally meant "be conscious inwardly of (one's state or condition)” and evolved to mean "perceive (a fact or situation) not by direct perception". As a noun, *sense* came from Old French *sens* "one of the five senses; meaning; wit, understanding" and from Latin *sensus* "perception, feeling, undertaking, meaning", and from *sentire* "perceive, feel, know". The literal meaning was "to find one's way" or "to go mentally"(Etymology, n.d).

The word *feel*, as a noun from the early 13th century meant "sensation, understanding" and came from the verb *feel* meaning "action of feeling" and came from the Old English *felan* "to touch, perceive," and from Proto-Germanic *foljan* and from Latin *palpare* "to touch softly, stroke". In Old English, to *sense* was "to perceive through senses which are not referred to any special organ"; to *feel* is to have a sense of "be conscious of a sensation or emotion". The word *feeling* meaning the "act of touching, sense of touch" evolved to mean *emotion* - "what one feels (about something) or *feeling* - "the capacity to feel”. E*motion* “a social moving, stirring or agitation”, comes from French *emouvoir* “stir up” and Latin *emovere* “move out, remove, agitate” (Etymology, n.d.).

Jung’s fourth word, intuition, seems different. *Intuition* as a noun comes from Late Latin *intuitionem* (nominative intuitio) "a looking at, consideration" from *in-* "at,

on" and *tueri* "to look at, watch over" and as a verb from Latin *intuit,* the past participle stem of *intueri,* meaning "to perceive directly without reasoning" (Etymology, n.d).

How are these words used? What is it that they tell us about Psoma Yoga? Thoughts clearly arise from the mind. However, it seems there is some overlap between thoughts and sensations. We often use the terms, feelings, sensations, and emotions interchangeably. The root meanings of the word intuition seem to imply something that bypasses the mind. It seems as if all of Jung's terms involve direct experiencing but intuition is not impacted by thoughts. What, then, is it to have direct experiences?

> Every single day that I was there, something happened to me emotionally and it created pain in my body. I could feel it coming on and there was nothing I could do about it. I just had to be with it. It was overwhelming, I wanted to run away from it and I could not escape it. I would move and I would try to move away from it. Which is something I tend to do when I feel emotional pain, I move away from it instead of move to it. It was so overwhelming that I became afraid of it. (Bravo)

Bravo shared that she believed "facing the pain, moving toward it" would assist her to move through the pain but that she was unable to fully face it at the workshop. In the interview she expressed surprise, "There was a magic that was happening even though I wasn't participating. I was just taking it in and it was still happening…it created a greater brightness in me even though I was dealing with physical pain" (Bravo).

"The whole experience was sort of like remembering who I was" (Foxtrot). What is remembering? Is remembering also a direct experience? What is the role of memory? The verb, *remember,* is from the Old French *remembrer* "remember, recall, bring to

mind" and from Latin *rememorari* "recall to mind, remember" and in the late 14th century, *remember*, meant "consideration, reflection; present consciousness of a past event." The noun, *memory*, meaning "recollection (of someone or something); awareness, consciousness" from Anglo-French *memorie* and directly from Latin *memoria* "memory, remembrance, faculty of remembering", a noun of quality from *memor* "mindful, remembering". (Etymology, n.d.) . Remembering, then, may have similar qualities to direct experience as remembering is the present experience of a past event. It requires an awareness of something that happened before.

In Psoma Yoga, movements may trigger memories or thoughts, sensations, feelings, or emotions. Often it is unclear what the memory trigger is; perhaps there is a relationship between thoughts, sensations, feelings, emotions, memories and movement. Perhaps further exploration about potential relationships is needed. Damasio (1999), a neuroscientist, looks at the link between feelings and emotions.

> We know that we have an emotion when the sense of a feeling self is created in our minds. Until there is the sense of a feeling self… there exist well-orchestrated responses, which constitute an emotion, and ensuing brain representation, which constitute a feeling. But we only know that we feel an emotion when we sense that emotion is sensed as happening in our organism. (p. 279)
>
> It just feels easier to sit with embodied emotion. So other people's emotional states, you can see it in their body, even though they are cognitively talking to you about what is going on, you can see it in their physical body. (Echo)

Could feelings be embodied emotion? Does this mean we influence the experiences of others?

> Having such significant learning about each of us in this sacred place, it's hell, as we unfold - little pieces of ourselves and it unfolds as we go around because somebody else's story will trigger another story… the sense of community is created… And I see Psoma Yoga with Hakomi together, being such a catalyst for that, to not share it and give it and make it available is almost a crime… I was the observer and I found it fascinating to watch people's unfolding. (Bravo)

Are we influencing each other consciously? Perhaps we help each other unfold. What does it mean to unfold? How does unfolding happen? The verb *unfold* comes from Old English *unfealdan*, "to open or unwrap the folds of," also figuratively, "to disclose, reveal, explain,"(Etymology, n.d.) If we are unfolding or revealing, what is being revealed?

"The love and compassion and the stepping up and walking across the room to be of service to another person's soul were profound to me" (Bravo). Is it the soul that is being revealed? What does the word soul mean? The word *soul* is from the Old English *sawol* "spiritual and emotional part of a person, animate existence; life, living being". It is sometimes said to mean originally "coming from or belonging to the sea," because that was supposed to be the stopping place of the soul before birth or after death. At times, *soul* may mean "spirit of a deceased person" or is a synonym for "person, individual, human being" (e.g. every living soul). The word *psyche* is also mentioned as being related to *soul*. *Psyche*, a noun meaning "animating spirit," from Latin psyche, from Greek *psykhe* "the soul, mind, spirit; breath; life, one's life, the invisible animating principle or entity which occupies and directs the physical body; understanding" (Etymology, n.d). The body is tangible and the soul is intangible. Psoma Yoga is

"tapping into a more primordial way of being" (Echo) - both cognitive and beyond cognitive. What may be possible when the tangible and intangible meet?

Awakening.

> I remember going outside in the break afterwards and actually seeing the world differently- profoundly differently. It is like I could see every leaf of the plant was like a friend, like a living being. There was more colour and more detail in what I was seeing in nature. It blew me away. I couldn't believe it. It was like "am I dreaming?", no, I'm awake. (Delta)

What does it mean to be asleep? Are you sleeping? Are you dreaming? If one awakens, as if from sleep, what is it like to awaken? Does one wake slowly or instantly? When one wakes must one first be asleep, or is there some other type of consciousness that one can wake from? What does it mean to dream? Can dreaming occur when one is awake?

The dark stillness of the night gives way to the gentle glimmers of impending dawn. The dreamer nestled in, snuggling amid the cozy bed sheets and comfortable pillows, stirs. On a day off, the slumber continues for an extended time until the emerging light, becoming more insistent, calls the dreamer to slowly transition from one state of mind to another, waking. Yet, on a work day the dreamer is interrupted suddenly by the incessant calling from the alarm clock. Drowsily moving into the routine of the day, assisted by a cup of coffee and a warm inviting shower, consciousness grabs hold and thrusts the dreamer into the day.

Every day we travel to get to where we are going. Walking, riding, moving through the trusted and familiar routes surrounded by the cars, trucks and buses, the

sounds of the city hum in the background, lulling us into inattention. Our thoughts and memories pulling us deep into the past or spring us forward into the future. The brain connections and pathways, well worn, are easy to tread. Moments, seconds, minutes pass until suddenly, we return to the present. Where have we been? Did we travel those last two blocks? How did we get here? What has happened? We collect ourselves, take stock. We are still moving, following the familiar route, city humming in the background.

The term *awake* is defined as "stop from sleeping, awaken, stir, come around" or to "realize, become aware of or more conscious of" and the synonyms of awake are listed as: aware of, conscious of, mindful of, alert to. *Wake* has roots in both Old English as above and Gothic - *wakan* "to watch", Germanic - *waken* "to be awake", Sanskrit - *vajah* "force, swiftness, race, or drives on" and Latin -*vegere* "to be live, be active, quicken". Whereas *sleep*, from the Old English *slæpan* "to be or fall asleep; be dormant or inactive" and *dream* from the Old Norse *draumr*, refers to a "sequence of sensations passing through a sleeping person's mind" (Etymology, n.d.). The terms describe dreaming and waking as distinctly different types of consciousness of either being present or being absent.

Yet, Merleau-Ponty does not agree with this separation between dreaming and waking. "The dream and waking worlds are distinguished from one another as different modes of experience, but both are grounded in a general being that is common to all human experience" (Morley, 1999, p. 91). In embodiment, we find the link between consciousness and nature and "the body is present pre-thematically (prior to conscious knowing) to dreams... the dream is also a 'genuine presence' (Morley, 1999, p. 93). "We

speak when we are awake and we speak in our dreams. We are speaking, even when we do not utter a single word aloud... We are continually speaking in one way or another" (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 185).

> There is an exercise where students are instructed to quickly scan a person through just blinking one's eyes to catch the person's body positioning… and in that split second of visual information, [the blink] told us so much about what the other person was feeling, where they carry tension in their body, where they were relaxed in their body… like all the work that Malcolm Gladwell pulls together in his book "Blink" around our intuitive sense and all the things that our reptilian brain is picking up from the environment around us constantly. It doesn't even slip into our conscious mind, that if we can actually dip into that stuff that we get unconsciously and pull it out – then we get a lot of information. (Echo)

Non-verbal body behaviours, such as smiles, frowns, eye-contact and body movements, and tension may be visible to those who are aware and looking for information. Psoma Yoga may assist us to learn to see the language of the body, to see embodiment.

> We carry our whole story in our bodies... It might just be a blink that is seen in a nanosecond, or out of the peripheral of our eye, but our story is carried in us all the time! I stay really open to how I take [clients] in, I'm listening with my whole physicality to somebody, like letting my whole body be the receptor of them... To intuitively respond to somebody isn't based so much on anything rational or based on something they say... For me it is very heart-centred around the whole presence of the person. I look for the stories everywhere. (Charlie)

Charlie is seeing and listening for a story. But what is a story? Is it a pattern, a narrative, an account of an event or series of events? Imagine a parent reading aloud to a child; describing the beginning, the middle, and the end of some colourful and eventful occurrence. There may be talking animals and exotic locations, something that incites child-like wonder and leaps of imagination. Yet, there may be non-verbal stories being created concurrently to the one being read aloud. The parent, weary from a long day at work, may be distracted while reading and the child may interpret this distraction in many potential ways. For example, the child may wonder what is wrong with him/her and feel unworthy to receive the parent's attention. Yet, this may all be happening beyond the level of consciousness awareness. The unconscious interpretation of this event may begin to create a pattern, or story, in the body. Stories may become layered. They may be fiction or non-fiction, objective or subjective, conscious or unconscious, timed or timeless, visible or invisible, ancient or new, loud, quiet or silent. The meaning and understanding we make of the story may depend upon perspective.

Seeing. Alpha laughed as he shared, "It's like we think how we see things, is how things are." Is this how it is? Does what is seen supply us with the only way that things can be? Is there only one interpretation to how things are? When we see the same things, do we make the same interpretations?

Walking into a crowded room, what do you see? A fleeting glance, people turning and walking away, a couple whispering; what does it mean to see these things? This seeing is done with more than the eyes. It begins with the eyes, and then the mind interprets the images, triggering thoughts and memories which create body sensations and feelings. The perspective we have determines our experience. If we imagine that we are

not welcome in the room, the glances, movement and whispers of those around us may take on a very different meaning than if we imagine that we are welcomed into the room. What we *see* addresses itself to us and the way we feel and what we sense and understand depends on *how we see*. This seeing triggers habitual thoughts and remembering and the meaning we interpret is based on this habitual perspective. Perhaps, as Alpha says, we need to be open to the importance of uncovering our habitual perspective so we can become aware of other possibilities.

> I'm not really used to thinking of perception as a habit but of course it is… I think some of our compelling stories have a pretty powerful pull. To be able to step aside, even a little bit, and to say this is not what's going on now, but this is how my body is reacting. You can spend a moment noticing [the reaction] rather than acting on the feeling… So rather than give into the story of it, I just name the experience and be with [the experience]… I'm feeling like there is a very valuable and simple tool in being able to be present with and explore emotion, and emotional range. (Alpha)

> I realize that maybe the space I am living in might be bigger than what I am actually seeing in the moment... It's like there are different levels and my attention might be in one but it doesn't mean that the other one is not there…there are moments where I am walking and I start *seeing* the trees and I just feel so grateful. I think, 'Oh yeah, I remember now - the world is this beautiful thing. (Delta)

Do the things we focus on change what we see? How do we make meaning of these seeing experiences? What is the difference between seeing and *seeing?*

It was an ordinary morning in the late fall. The family was seated at the breakfast bar and there was much chatter and laughter. In the midst of this, there was a moment when we all seemed to look out the window at the bird feeder positioned in the bare lilac tree. Each branch of the tree was covered in a light layer of ice from the rain that fell overnight and, the ice was beginning to melt. At that moment, the morning sun poked through the cloud. The light hit the melting ice in a grand moment of perfection where the tree appeared to be covered in a layer of gold. The view was breathtaking. And a moment later, the ice melted, the tree stood as it always had with its branches covered by ordinary brown bark, waiting for the visiting birds to land. Everyday life can be a starting point for seeing. In the example of the family noticing nature, there was a moment when it seemed time lengthened. In that moment, the grandeur of the tree was revealed and those witnessing it experienced both a moment of community and a moment of awe. We can notice something ordinary become extraordinary. When it returns to its "ordinary" state we may continue to view it with greater regard and awe. How is it that the family did not really notice the tree waiting for the birds? Only when the ice and light reflected did the family see that which was before them.

Changing perception of space and time. Perhaps what arrives before you when you see differently is a change in perception. Echo remembers his first Psoma Yoga workshop, "I can close my eyes and I am transported to a time and space, to a room with a whole bunch of people that I had never met before… it is very calming". He continues and describes how he uses this type of space in his work with clients, "The biggest thing is creating a sense of safety so they can be whatever they want to be at the time" (Echo). The other research participants describe the creation of space for "healing to happen", a

"place for spirit", "a healing space". What kinds of space are there? What is time? What is a "healing space"?

The opening monologue for the television program and movie franchise, Star Trek (originally created by Gene Roddenberry) starts, "Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before" (Wikipedia, n.d.). This phrase calls the minds of fans to imagine a vast, open, outer space beyond our planet earth; A space of stars, planets, comets, nebulas, galaxies, darkness and unknown adventure, where man can explore and flourish. In contrast, J.K. Rowling's (1997) character, Harry Potter, is first introduced to the reader confined to living in a small space under the stairs. The series of books highlight events from Harry's journey from confinement to personal freedom. Both Star Trek and Harry Potter are inviting us to expand, to move beyond what we know.

These popular culture illustrations begin to hint at what Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) describes as the relationship between "the container and the content" (p. 283). "Space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible" (p. 284). Merleau-Ponty invites us to see space as both concrete and abstract,

> There can be a direction only for a subject who takes it, and a constituting mind is eminently able to trace out all directions in space, but has at any moment no direction, and consequently no space, without an actual starting-point, an absolute 'here' which can gradually confer a significance on all spatial determinations (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002, p. 288).

He explains, “All our experiences, in as much as they are ours, arrange themselves in terms of before and after because temporality, in Kantian language, is the form taken by our inner sense” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002, p. 477).

“Time goes out the window because it is just made up anyway” (Charlie). If time were a river, the way you experience the river would change depending on your perspective. Standing on the edge, you would see the river flowing past a particular point. The water would be coming from somewhere (the past), passing the current point (the present), and continuing off into the distance (the future). However, if you are standing in the river, immersed by the water, there would be no past, present or future; there would be only water. You and the water would be in relationship and depending on your perspective, it may seem like you are moving and the water is still, or the water is moving and you are still, or perhaps, both are still or both are moving. There is no starting point and no end point.

Floating in a dark, quiet, womb-like space, there is no time. There is no up, no down, no centre. This is spaciousness; spacious from the Old French *spacios, espacios* "roomy, spacious, extensive" or from Latin *spatiosus* "roomy, ample" (Etymology, n.d.). There is nothing to do and nowhere to be. You could be falling into the infinite or you could be the infinite. “This beautiful, beautiful realization of being able to relax and be with what was actually going on inside me” (Delta). Then, you become vaguely aware of something. Simple practices begin to tug on you and heighten your curiosity. “What we were doing didn’t seem like much at all but it seemed to be touching some very profound elements” (Alpha).

The "healing space" allows the individual to move fluidly between perspectives, sometimes seeing the water from edge of the river (time) and sometimes from within the river (timeless). This "healing space" is a paradox, a place that both has a starting point and is void of past, present and future. Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2002) perspectives on space outline that whatever is occurring, there is no context until a perspective is established. The Psoma Yoga experience then, creates a place to start, a place to begin to unfold and solidify the meanings and relationships between the abstract objects and ideas that relate with the individual.

> The maximum sharpness of perception and action points clearly to a perceptual ground, a basis of my life, a general setting in which my body can co-exist with the world. With the notion of a spatial level, and of the body as the subject of space, we begin to understand... the associations between the new positions and the old… the new orientation sprang from a process of thought, and consisted of a change of coordinates (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2002, p. 292).

Being. This expanded way of seeing and perceiving may begin to change our way of being,

> Especially if we are working in kind of a medical model system where you have a problem and you apply the solution and you get to the solution. I think that we kind of had to step out of that story, step out of that way of looking. [We shift] into beingness… Approaching health from the point of view of beingness [brings out] the naturalness of our own ability to continue to heal. When we do that, miracles are naturally happening. There is no effort, there is kind of a relaxed

beingness. I think most of us get caught into fixing or right/wrong thinking. I think it takes practice and vigilance to learn how to step out of that. (Alpha)

What does it mean 'to be'? What is being? The verb 'to be' can be described as a very irregular and slippery verb because it constantly changes form, and sometimes without much of a discernible pattern. This verb is compared to Proteus, the Greek sea god, who is capable of changing form in an instant unless you grab hold of him and hold on tight. The present tense of "to be" includes statements like, "I am", "You are", "He/She is" and the present participle, "I am being". The past tense of "to be" features, "I was", "You were", "He/She was" and the past participle, "I have been" ("The Forms of 'To Be'", n.d.). The many forms of "to be" do not readily offer themselves to a single concise meaning.

Heidegger and many other philosophers pondered "being" for their entire lives. Brogan (2013) contemplates being and acting through Heidegger's perspective,

> [There is] this possibility of authentically and existentially encountering oneself in one's everyday self-abandonment... Choosing to make a choice, of course is not an actual choice in the specific sense of choose this or that thing. It is rather a matter of recovering our capacity for choosing. For Heidegger, this amounts to the question of whether and how we can act freely. Heidegger is asking not about acting on one way as opposed to another or about the question of what one is to do, but about the ontology of action. (p. 33-34)

The word *act* is from Old French *acte* "(official) document," and directly from Latin *actus* "a doing, a driving, impulse; a part in a play, act," and *actum* "a thing done". It is related to *doing*, from Middle English *do* and Old English *don* "make, act, perform,

cause; to put, to place." The idea of doing or acting seems to be associated with some type of effort. Effort from Old French *esforz* "force, impetuosity, strength, power" or from *esforcier* "force out, exert oneself" or from Vulgar Latin *exfortiare* "to show strength". The word effortless appeared in the 1800s and means "passive" from *effort* and *less*, meaning "easy" (Etymology, n.d.). What is the relationship between being and doing? Are being and doing part of a duality? Are they at opposite end of a rope in a tug-of-war?

Does the "beingness" Alpha describes have a quality of transcending the duality? In beingness, are 'being' and 'doing' in a great hall dancing - flowing with a rhythm that honors the space between them? Alpha reminds us, "There is no effort, there is kind of a relaxed beingness." Perhaps in beingness there is an acceptance, a relaxation into our essential humanness. Being and doing are happening simultaneously. In the dance of doing and being, perhaps there is a quality of acting without effort. Beingness may be the moment of expanding past self-doubt and acting freely. Wait. Do you remember the earlier discussion about wholeness? Wholeness was described as "the freedom to be who we are" (Martin, 2009a, p. 14). Perhaps beingness is wholeness, and wholeness is being.

How do we find being or wholeness? Is it something that just arises? What qualities might assist with finding wholeness?

> There is something about it [this way of seeing and being] that is poetic, like something that you catch a sense or feeling about. It's not so concrete because I think in some ways its function is supporting change at a very, very subtle level. There is a moving from an egocentric point of view to a non-egocentric point of view. (Alpha)

Alpha is describing "stepping back", opening to a greater view. This view creates some distance from old habits and old experiences and old ways of being. Yet, this "stepping back" is not stepping away; it is still fully engaged with the moment.

At first glance, "stepping back" is like Heidegger's (1927/2010) concept of "widening the horizon". On closer inspection though, it is more closely related to the horizon Gadamer (1960/2004) describes. The essential difference, as described by Di Cesare (2007) is that Heidegger explained understanding of the *self* and understanding the *other* as separate processes. Gadamer did not envision it this way. He envisioned it beyond duality.

> Self-understanding does not mean understanding oneself as a self...understanding involves understanding the self and the other simultaneously... The distinction at stake here is not between self and other, but between what was already understood and what is not yet understood. (Di Cesare, 2007, p. 87-88)

An illustration of this idea is possible when you consider the idea of crop circles. From the perspective of the crop circle what is visible is flattened grain; from the perspective of a nearby hill - there is a round shape visible in the field. You see either the flattened grain or the shape. The horizon of greatest interest is seen from both perspectives since the crop circle exists all at the same time. It is understood from both the centre of the circle - flattened grain and from the hill - shape cut into the field.

This concept considered from the spiritual and psychological perspectives is explained by Welwood (2000),

> [The idea of] fields within fields allows us to understand the conscious/unconscious polarity as two aspects of the organism's

> interconnectedness with reality... The Jungians tend to see mind as a psychic container with various contents... but this way of speaking obscures the nature of contemplative experience, which is a radical passing beyond all "viewpoints"... The unconscious of psychoanalysis is quite different from the no-mind of Zen... In the unconscious... the personal unconscious and the... collective unconscious... are both unknown to the ego. But the no-mind of Zen is... most clearly known... without separation between the knower and the known. (p. 74)

Alpha described "stepping back" from ego-centric to non-egocentric. Is this what Welwood (2000) describes as "fully seeing the ego and stepping beyond it, knowing the "knower and the known" (p. 74)? "It starts with accepting what is happening rather than doing anything to attempt to force yourself out of it. There is an appreciation of whatever is going on" (Alpha). "I was invited to just see what was actually there and there was no pressure to perform or deliver a certain thing or prepare something that would impress people" (Delta).

> My body feels different because I can relax with whatever I'm feeling rather than kind of condemning certain aspects of my body. I can accept and sit and relax and be with myself with present moment awareness, my thoughts - they ease up too. There is an opening, a very noticeable change in my emotions. I feel things more strongly. It just feels good - I feel alive. (Delta)

Charlie shares the story of interacting with a baby and with clients,

> There was a real comfort and softness between us, a comfort and joyful safety. There was more just an energy exchange... There is a relaxation that happens because on that energetic level they know that I'm not going to yell at them. I

appreciate that the message gets through the chaos, it just kind of communicates through.

"It doesn't feel like a forced experience, it feels more like you sort of find it through your own obstacles. It doesn't feel like it is pushed on me. There is a gradualness of the process..." (Foxtrot). What is this relaxation? Perhaps it is in part a relaxation of effort.

When you listen to your favourite piece of music, you are paying attention to every note, every nuance, and every beat. You are paying attention (effort) and you are carried into the music (effortlessness). This is not giving up or collapsing in complete fatigue. This is relaxation that opens the way for balance and understanding. Greenwood and Nunn (2009) capture this idea:

> In order to engage the healing experience, we need to find a way to enter into this experience rather than observe it, to experience it first hand. To reach the place of phase transition, we must be willing to let go of our concept of reality and wait without any particular expectations for a new and different experience. We must trust that this new awareness will emerge, because we will never be able to glimpse a new perspective without first letting go of the old one. (p. 43)

If we let go of our concept of reality, is that like stepping back? Relaxing in and stepping back may be occurring simultaneously. Perhaps the balancing of doing and being, and effort and effortlessness, is being, is wholeness. And what else happens?

> The best thing I should be doing, the most I can be doing for myself, is to go with this urge I have to spread my arms out and make a sound... Taking care of my body and moving... It is a feeling of trusting. (Delta)

Sometimes trust seems to be associated with qualities of predictability, reciprocity, and safety to expose vulnerabilities to another person and sometimes trust is more about faith in oneself. Delta seems to be speaking about the latter. She is more self-reliant, confident and hopeful. Bravo expresses a similar experience, "I trust my intuition more. I know that it is in me. It [Psoma Yoga] taught me to trust that the answers are there [in me]... I trust my intuitiveness."

> I think trust, trust in myself and in life. There were many significant changes: an appreciation of life in a much more experimental dimension, a comfortableness like 'comfortable to go into uncomfortable', being able to say what's going on without having to have a lot of meaning or story attached to it, being able to watch my experience and report rather than live it [be enmeshed in it]. (Alpha)

Chodron (2003) focuses on becoming "comfortable with uncertainty" (p. 5). You have to be willing to change before you can take action. If you are willing to fly out of the nest rather than be thrown out, you will be embracing spaciousness (Chodron, 2003). Flying out of the nest may require a trust in the self and in the greater purpose of things.

Embodiment is central to the Psoma Yoga experience. There is a shifting toward a more present-moment focused experience. This experience fully embraces conscious understanding of the tangible and the intangibles. This may happen through attentive focus to body, breath and movement, thoughts, sensations, feelings, emotions and memories. The multi-dimensional interactions between these elements and between meanings, concepts, ideas, beliefs, and knowledge of the self are honoured. Perhaps this allows and supports an unfolding, a revealing of the soul. Embodiment is a way of listening to the silent call from the authentic voice (Heidegger cited by Brogan, 2013).

"The silence that is stilling announces a changed intentional relation with the world" (van Manen, 1997, p. 356). There is space to move beyond the old ideas and constructs. Embodied experiences, the body-in-relation, may be a place of transformation.

Transformation

Each research participant described the Psoma Yoga experience as using simple practices and experiments which resulted in a profound and transformative impact.

> Something happened to me emotionally. I wasn't really sure what was happening to me in terms of transformation, what I know is when I left there... people wanted to know where I had been and what I had done. They saw a significant difference in me, in who I was and how I interacted. (Bravo)

Delta shared, "the experience of finding a place in which I am not doing anything and having it be such a rich experience and having there being so much information that comes from that place." Echo described, "the exercises have lots of benefits and are quite powerful". Foxtrot says, "It is nothing special, yet it is transformative on so many different levels." The research participants outline a movement or transition to a new understanding - a transformation. Stein (1998) describes transformation,

> The etymology of the word *transformation* is instructive. It is made up of two Latin words, *trans* and *forma*. In Latin, *trans* means "across, over, on the others side." I think here of a river. To carry something across the river, "trans-ports" it. In turn, this Latin word descends from the stem *tra-*, which has cognates in Sanskrit, Celtic and German. It is a basic word, a primal utterance. A term like this is necessary for consciousness and therefore must be included in every language. The English word "through" is rooted in this stem. In general, then

> *trans* communicates the sense of "from one place, person, thing, or state to another," as in the psychoanalytic term "transference" (meaning "to carry over" a psychic image from one interpersonal context to another). But *trans* can be stretched to signify "beyond", as in the word "transcendence" and "transpersonal". This locates something as being on the other side of the river, "over there". When people linked this word to form - a word descended from the Latin *forma*, meaning "form, figure, shape, image, mold, stamp" - it indicated a change from one form or figure to another... This term was found to be extremely useful for thinking about change in many arenas of life... Small wonder that it was taken up by psychology, too. (p. 52-54)

Stein (1998) shared Jung's beliefs about transformation and described several underlying assumptions of Jung's work. Jung took psychic energy as a given and believed that this energy could change manifestation but could not disappear as this energy is "subject to the law of conservation" (p. 54). "If [energy] is lost to consciousness, it is to be found in the unconscious... transformation is driven by a force, a will that has its own goal - namely the creation of the psychological individual" (Stein, 1998, p. 54). Yet, perhaps more the than the psychological individual has transformed.

> When the soul is ready, the awakening to the divine can be triggered by a seemingly innocuous incident or thought. Typically, the awakening experience is accompanied by powerful experiences of radiant spiritual light and fire... Thereafter, one's life course is to be shaped by the spiritual power that has made itself known. It marks the beginning of an entirely different mode of life, even if

one's outer life circumstances initially remain the same (Le Grice, 2013, p. 110 - 111).

Reverent Relating.

I think the most significant aspect [of Psoma Yoga and Hakomi] is "being met" in that place - whether it is me meeting somebody else or somebody meeting me... the communication of mutual reverence... There is just something in there that has nothing to do with words or the right thing to say... this really strong trust in the moment and mutual reverence. (Charlie)

Reverence is deeply respectful and respect comes from the perspective of admiration and high esteem. Reverence is a way of regarding someone or something with a focus on strength and ability, rather than weakness and problem. Reverent relating may be "being-in-relation". Chodron (1997) explains that this type of relating is only possible in an open, non-judgemental space where: we acknowledge what we are feeling; we are not caught up in our own version of reality; and we can see, hear and feel who others really are. Only under these conditions can we communicate properly.

[Psoma Yoga] strengthens my commitment, especially around staying in a loving place with people. I'll drop back into that very simple "loving presence", trying to find something in that person that will take us back to a place of reverence because that energy needs to stay present. It's to come back, to just simply be with them in their lived experience that helps me stay in *their* lens of *their own life*. (Charlie)

What I have been finding just talking to clients and people and other yoga practitioners is our society seems to be lacking in so many different ways… they

> may not be getting some sort of emotional support from anyone… and someone placing a supportive hand on someone's body to support a body position, a body part, the cathartic experiences that are witnessed by myself have been quite powerful…sometimes when I have done this consciously with people, ask them where it feels like thei body needs support, supporting their body in a respectful way. It has been quite powerful to watch. (Echo)

Charlie extends the meaning of reverent relating to the self,

> Showing my body the same reverence, the same kind of unconditional reverence, knowing that it is also carrying my story. Psoma Yoga has helped me with having a different attitude toward my physical body and more respect. You know, 'holy!', this body has been transporting this spirit... it is so amazing. You've got to admit it, [the fact] that we are still breathing at all - it's like a miracle. (Charlie)

It is "holding honestly the responsibility for the relationship. I am able to just be, caring about myself, present, instead of having to be caring for, the relationship goes and the process goes so that I can just be" (Foxtrot).

Imagine that you are sitting on the floor, back to back, with a friend. Sometimes it may feel like the friend is leaning on you and other times it may feel like you are leaning on the friend. The quality that is desired is one where both friends feel supported but neither is carrying additional load. It is not leaning on, it is leaning in, similar to the quality of "relaxing in". This sharing is balanced. It is not giving more than you have.

> I don't think I really understood [my Psoma Yoga experiences] until about two or three months later. I think what has shifted in my body is I just don't feel weighty. And there is a phrase that Donna uses a great deal about 'what wants to

> happen' in a situation or 'what wants to happen' in your body, so often when I'm practicing [yoga] now I think about what movement 'should happen' and what movement 'wants to happen' without me directing it. (Echo)
>
> The practice of Psoma Yoga involves paying attention and experimentation... with new ways of experiencing and seeing... To me there is a magical quality about that kind of work that requires us to fall out of a very usual way of looking at ourselves and of life and into another way of seeing or being. I think that that's somewhat at the core of it. (Alpha)

At every level, life is a series of endings, beginnings and the transitions in between. The breath begins with the inhalation and ends with the exhalation. Bringing conscious awareness to the breath assists with awareness. As you watch, the pauses begin to appear, between the inhalation and the exhalation or between the exhalation and the inhalation. The pauses gain emphasis and suddenly they appear bigger as if they have more room. This concept is captured in the Cherokee parable of the two wolves.

> An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too." The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?" The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed." (Two Wolves, n.d.)

And the inhalation and the exhalation are also encompassed in something larger, beyond dual ideas of thinking.

Out beyond right doing and wrong doing

there is a field, I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,

the world is too full to talk about.

Ideas, language, even the phrase each other

doesn't make any sense. (Rumi, n.d.)

The participants describe being invited or called to Psoma Yoga. This is an invitation to begin noticing embodiment, the intricate patterns of breath, movement and stillness, thoughts, sensations, feelings and emotions, the language and story of the body, and glimpses of the soul. They describe awakening to seeing differently, as if for the first time, where space becomes spacious and time becomes timeless and being becomes effortless. The new experiences acknowledge the "knower and the known" (Welwood, 2000). This type of noticing is transformative and their ways of relating to the self, to others and to the world becomes an experience of reverence. And once again, awareness returns to the breath and the next series of endings, beginnings and transitions.

In the next chapter, I will discuss these findings in light of the existing literature and explore implications for practice.

Chapter 5

Bridges and Implications

It requires a very unusual mind to undertake
the analysis of the obvious. -- Alfred North Whitehead

Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion...
Eliot, 1963, p. 203

This type of research is much like putting together a huge and intricate puzzle; there are many pieces to fit together. The confounding factor is that it is unclear if all the puzzle pieces are in the box or even if there is a box.

> As Heidegger (1971/2001) noted, "There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure"… . In the midst of things, situations and events, there are spaces, openings, and rifts, and it is in these gaps of interpretation and understanding the "truth happens". (Saevi, 2013, p. 8)

In chapter four, excerpts from the interview transcripts and phenomenological writing in response to the transcripts were interlaced with passages of philosophy, theology, neuroscience and psychotherapy to emphasize the themes of the research findings. In this chapter, the "spaces, openings, and rifts" between the interpretations and understandings of Psoma Yoga will be bridged to additional literature in a search for "truth" (Heidegger 1971 in Saevi, 2013). Implications for practice will be integrated into the discussion.

This Psoma Yoga research highlights the importance of honouring transition points and intersections between ideas, disciplines and perspectives. There is constant

movement between the micro level (the parts) and the macro level (the whole) and what appears as macro and what appears as micro is dependent on perspective. For example, the *cellular l*evel of a plant, animal, or human may be the micro level when compared with *the whole* plant, animal or human; but, a whole plant, animal or human may be micro level if the macro is the community of plants, animals or humans. Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2002) perspectives on space outline that whatever is occurring, there is no context until a perspective is established. This world of possibility can sometimes feel overwhelming and disorienting, so, as humans, we attempt to define it, separating the parts that we understand to provide some context from which to begin exploring. We are searching for a place to start.

A Place to Start - Defining the Life World

Stop. Where are you? How are you interacting with the world? Whatever your answer, it will be impacted by a set of defining beliefs, a "lifeworld" (Ashworth, 2003; Jones, 1989; Heidegger, 1927/2010; van Manen, 1990). This lifeworld (be it defined from the psychological, theological, philosophical, or phenomenological perspective) can be both a help and a hindrance. The beliefs and habits that make up our lifeworld may assist with managing aspects of life and sometimes they may become so pervasive that the lifeworld becomes limiting. Defining our own lifeworld and assisting clients to uncover their lifeworld can bring to conscious awareness what was once unconscious influence, ideas and beliefs taken as truth.

Kahneman (2010) draws attention to possible reasons why these ideas are taken as truth. He speaks of the "riddle of experience vs. memory" (n.p.) and says the experiencing-self is based in present-time and the remembering-self is the story teller for

which time has very little impact. The remembering-self records changes, significant events and endings. Kahneman explains that the experiencing-self is under the tyranny of the remembering-self because experiences in the moment are overshadowed by memories of what happened. Kurtz (2008) explains this idea in relation to the Hakomi method,

> The person's stories may not be all that accurate, but spontaneous behavior—reactions, habits and impulses—are true expressions of a person's experiential self. Aristotle said, "You are what you habitually do." Your habits are how you learned to interact with your environment. They operate automatically, without conscious thought. They express your beliefs about what kind of world you believe you're in and who you are in that world. They limit and control what you can and cannot experience. (n.p.)

Psoma Yoga and Hakomi challenge these long held beliefs through a series of explorations of the relationships between the mind, the body, and the meanings we make of experiences. The participants each described how their underlying assumptions were impacting their experience and how revisiting these assumptions freed them to expand. Sometimes unnecessary linkages between thoughts, sensations, feelings, emotions, memories and movements occur and these linkages contribute to the holding of habitual patterns that limit the lifeworld; as these links are teased apart, greater unity between the body and other dimensions of the self become possible, expanding the lifeworld. The findings from this research indicate that the series of explorations for noticing embodiment, which may occur either linearly or iteratively, seem to occur in four parts: developing safe space, using small experiments done in mindfulness to increase awareness, delving deep into the layers of information, and finding what is needed to

allow for an unfolding, a tranformation. Regardless of the order, these parts can begin to challenge the preconceptions about the existing lifeworld.

The first part develops or creates a safe space for healing to happen. In Psoma Yoga, this means that the therapist and client practice ways of interacting that are respectful, curious, compassionate and unconditionally loving. Foxtrot captured this quality in the description of Psoma Yoga as a gradual process, "It doesn't feel like a forced experience, it feels more like you sort of find it through your own obstacles. It doesn't feel like it is pushed on me." If, at first, this does not come naturally, creation of this state of mind is facilitated by exercises, which were developed in Hakomi and adopted for use in Psoma Yoga, that create what is called "loving presence" (Kurtz, 2008; Martin, 2014). These exercises assist the participants to see and receive inspiration from the other. In both individual and group settings, this is accomplished by using every day interactions (like sitting with someone, or walking, or meeting someone) and sharing what we notice as inspirational about each other's unique way of practicing these tasks. Participants learn to observe themselves, observe others, observe the interactions and share these different aspects of the interaction with the therapist or other group members.

The next part of Psoma Yoga consists of little experiments done in mindfulness. As noted by several participants, we could call this part 'small things are big things' because these experiments may be tiny movements which assist participants to make big discoveries. Awareness is brought to the moment, and small tasks, as simple as moving a hand or an arm, can trigger thoughts, feelings, sensations, emotions and memories. These triggers may bring out the unconscious meanings we have made about these movements

over time. When we slow down and notice what is happening, we begin to uncover many layers of understanding related to the movement (Kurtz, 2008; Martin 2009b)

Tracking these emerging layers of information, delving deep, with curiosity and compassion encourages a multi-layered, deep exploration. We are following thoughts, feelings, emotions, sensations, memories or physical tension patterns and their linkages, conscious and unconscious. These discoveries uncover information about what is needed (Kurtz, 2008; Kurtz, 2009; Martin 2009b).

When we find 'what is needed' we create an experience that meets this need. These experiences are unique to each situation but may be pre-verbal felt experiences, such as a gentle hand on the back or a hug, or simple statements that feel nourishing, such as 'you are safe' or 'you are fine just the way you are'. When just the right nourishment is experienced, transformation (unfolding) occurs (Kurtz, 2008; Martin, 2009b). This journey to greater embodiment occurs again and again. Each time one engages in the process, there is more understanding about the relationships between the body and the mind and the environment. The *Self* unfolds.

Bridges to the Literature

In the literature reviewed in chapter two, we were shown that Psoma Yoga integrates ideas from yoga, Hakomi, mindfulness, and psychotherapy and counselling. In this section, I will integrate the findings from this Psoma Yoga research with both mainstream and academic literature.

Mainstream literature. The curiosity about how humans think and behave has reached popular culture. There has been a proliferation of books and articles related to understanding how our mind works and how therapies, such as yoga and mindfulness-

based stress reduction (MBSR), impact our mind and behaviour. Magazines such as Scientific American, Scientific American Mind, and Time regularly have articles related to the brain, mindfulness, or yoga (Bargh, 2014; Jabr, 2012; Pickert, 2014; Pike, 2014; Sutherland, 2014) and authors write about concepts and experiences of consciousness, awareness, embodied cognition, brain changes with yoga practice, yoga uses and mindfulness.

One author, Jabr (2012) makes an important distinction about the difference between consciousness and self-awareness:

> Scientists differ on how they distinguish between consciousness and self-awareness, but here is one common distinction: consciousness is awareness of your body and your environment; self-awareness is recognition of that consciousness—not only understanding that you exist but further comprehending that you are aware of your existence. Another way of considering it: to be conscious is to think; to be self-aware is to realize that you are a thinking being and to think about your thoughts. (Jabr, 2012, n.p.)

Bargh (2014) speaks of embodied cognition and describes research findings reporting that physical actions and sensations can induce psychological states. Sutherland (2014) shares research findings indicating, "The ancient practice [of yoga] promotes growth in brain regions for self-awareness" (n.p.) and describes MRI research which found,

> Yogis had larger brain volume in the somatosensory cortex, which contains a mental map of our body, the superior parietal cortex, involved in directing attention, and the visual cortex, which Villemure postulates might have been bolstered by visualization techniques. The hippocampus, a region critical to

> dampening stress, was also enlarged in practitioners, as were the precuneus and the posterior cingulate cortex, areas key to our concept of self. All these brain areas could be engaged by elements of yoga practice. (n.p.)

Pike (2014) describes how using yoga in a prison setting has contributed to decreased anxiety and a decrease in aggressive impulses. Pickert (2014) highlights the increasing popularity of mindfulness practices both in practice, as in stress management techniques such as Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and in science, "477 scientific-journal articles about mindfulness were published in 2012" (n.p.).

Books about the brain and consciousness also are numerous. Two of these books are particularly meaningful in relation to Psoma Yoga. First, Schwartz and Begley (2002) describe how the dualist debate about mind and matter go back to the time of the French philosopher Rene Descartes. Descartes was

> …the first scientific thinker to grapple seriously with the strangeness of mind, with the fact that the mental realm seems to be of an entirely different character from the material world. His solution was simplicity itself. He posited the existence of two parallel yet separate domains of reality*: res cogitans*, the thinking substance of the subjective mind whose essence is thought, and *res extensa*, or the extended substance of the material world. (Schwartz & Begley, 2002, p. 32)

However, the separation of the material and mental realms has fostered a science based in dualism ever since. Western scientific thought has the underpinning that "there exists an unbridgeable divide between the world of the mind and the world of matter" (Schwartz & Begley, 2002, p. 33). The material realm is seen as being real and the immaterial realm is

seen as being illusory. However, Descartes also recognized "the immaterial human mind could cause the material human machine to move" and this puts the idea of the mind being "immaterial" into question (Schwartz & Begley, 2002, p. 33 and 34).

> The neural connections that form brain circuits are necessary for the existence of the mind as we know it... Neural correlates to every aspect of mind you can think of are not merely correlates; they are the essence of that aspect of mind... these "qualia" have an existence and a reality that transcend the crackling and dripping of neurons. (Schwartz & Begley, 2002, p. 36)

The neuroscientists continue to wrestle with the question of how the material and immaterial components of the mind and brain are in relation. Yet, regardless of the mechanism, it is clear that the tangible and the intangible are in relationship; a bridge between them is available. Remember Alpha's description, "What we were doing didn't seem like much at all but it seemed to be touching some very profound elements". Therapies, like Psoma Yoga, assist individuals to bring greater awareness to experiences that strengthen the neural pathways for these linkages.

The second book, by Hanson and Mendius (2009), is of interest because in Psoma Yoga we are also interested in the way we relate to each other. Hanson and Mendius (2009) describe the importance of our evolutionary biology in the development of "relationship abilities and cooperative tendencies" which provide "neural underpinnings of many essential features of human nature" (p. 125). They outline a list of characteristics of human nature: altruism, generosity, concern about reputation, fairness, language, forgiveness, morality and religion; and outline that these characteristics contribute to our ability to feel empathy and foster cooperative relationships (Hanson &

Mendius, 2009, p. 125). The research findings suggest that empathy and cooperative relating greatly contribute to the Psoma Yoga experience. Hanson and Mendius (2009) outline the neural systems involved in the creation of empathy.

> Building on this general sociability, related neural networks support empathy, the capacity to sense the inner state of another person… Humans are by far the most empathic species on the planet. Our remarkable capabilities rely on three neural systems that simulate another person's actions, emotions and thoughts. Actions - Networks in your brain's perceptual-motor systems light up both when you perform an action and when you see someone else perform that action, giving you a felt sense of what he's experiencing in his body (Oberman & Ramachandran, 2007). In effect, these networks mirror the behaviours of others, thus the common term, *mirror neurons*. Emotions - The insula and linked circuits activate when you experience strong emotions such as fear or anger; they also light up when you see others having those same feelings, particularly people you care about. The more aware you are of your own emotional and bodily states, the more your insula and anterior cingulate cortex activate - and the better you are at reading others (Singer et al. 2004). In effect, the limbic networks that produce your feelings also make sense of the feelings of others. As a result, impairments in the expression of emotions - such as stroke - frequently also worsen the recognition in other people (Niedenthal 2007). Thoughts - Psychologists use the term *theory of mind* (ToM) to refer to your ability to think about the inner workings of another person. ToM relies on prefrontal and temporal lobe structures that are evolutionarily quite recent (Gallagher & Frith 2003)… These three systems - tracking the actions,

> emotions and thoughts of other people - help each other. For example, sensorimotor and limbic resonance with the actions and emotions of others gives you lots of data for ToM-type processing. Then once you form an educated guess - often within just a few seconds - you can test it out on your body and your feelings. Working together, these systems help you understand, from the inside out, what it is like to be another person. (Hanson & Mendius, 2009, p. 125 -127)

Lewis, Amini and Lannon (2000), in *A General Theory of Love*, artfully describe the impact of limbic resonance,

> It is limbic resonance that makes looking into the face of another emotionally responsive creature a multi-layered experience. Instead of seeing a pair of eyes as two be-speckled buttons, when we look into the ocular portals to a limbic brain our vision goes deep: the sensations multiply, just as two mirrors placed in opposition create a shimmering ricochet of reflections whose depths recede into infinity. Eye contact, although it occurs over a gap of yards, is not a metaphor. When we meet the gaze of another, two nervous systems achieve a palpable and intimate apposition. (Lewis, Amini & Lannon, 2000, p. 63)

We are able to see and feel happiness, joy or sadness, and suffering. This is evident in Charlie's story about interacting with a baby and clients after the Psoma Yoga experience, "there was a real comfort and softness between us, a comfort and joyful safety…the message gets through the chaos…". We have access to the emotions of others just by being in their presence.

In Psoma Yoga, we are bringing this unconscious limbic relating to consciousness, relating with an attitude of openness and compassion, in order to assist the

other to explore their own way of being, self-discovery about how they interact with the world. Remember Bravo's words, "I wasn't really sure what was happening…, what I know is when I left there… people wanted to know where I had been and what I had done". This way of relating develops "the neurobiology of *we*" (Siegel, 2010, p. 210), because we learn to become advocates for each other. Siegel (2010) describes that healthy relationships happen when there is a shared experience of "feeling felt" by one another. Charlie used the words "being met in that place". "The sensation of being with someone who knows you, who wants to connect, who has your best interest in mind" is nourishing and disruptions in this state of being can create suffering (Siegel, 2010, p. 211).

In Psoma Yoga, suffering can be present in many manifestations. Psoma Yoga, and Hanson and Mendius (2009), see the concept of suffering (*dukkha)* from the perspective outlined in Buddha's "Four Noble Truths" (p. 24). Suffering is the result of regular life: birth, ageing, illness, dying; the anxiety and stress of constant change; and, the thoughts, feelings, emotions and pain that are created when we hold on tightly to what we want life to be instead of what life is. Life is always happening and when feelings are uncomfortable we like to push them away, avoid them. This avoidance is particularly prevalent with the fast paced lifestyle in Western society.

Hanson and Mendius (2009) outline a theory on the link between thoughts and emotions, saying that "it is sometimes said that desire leads to suffering" but they go on to describe that desire alone does not seem to lead to suffering. Instead, there are two additional factors that may result in suffering: craving and intention. If you desire

something and crave it, suffering occurs. In addition, they outline a potential link between intention [a thought] and pain and suffering,

> Intentions are a double-edged sword that can either hurt or help. For example, the Three Poisons - greed, hatred, and delusion - are a kind of intention: to grab pleasure and hold on tight, resist pain and anything else you don't like, and ignore or distort things you would rather not know about. (Hanson & Mendius, 2009, p. 103)

In Buddhist literature, authors such as Chodron (2003; 1997) discuss the concepts of necessary suffering and unnecessary suffering. Necessary suffering is experienced in response to a tragic event like an illness, death or uncontrollable change. This suffering occurs because we are attached to a way of being in the world and this way of being has been disrupted. There also is unnecessary suffering. This occurs when we react to a situation with more drama, pain, or angst than is necessary (Chodron, 1997). In Psoma Yoga practice, like Hakomi, the intent is to assist with identification of how the mind, the body and the spirit experience this unnecessary suffering. Remember Alpha's discovery, "It's like we think the way we see things is the way they are". When habitual ways of being are looked at objectively and when we understand how and why we feel things, we have more conscious choice, and the feelings have less power over us.

I believe that health and caring professionals, including nurses and counsellors, need to be able to assist clients to explore the manifestations of suffering with a quality of open-heartedness and curiosity. When working with suffering, it is important to remember: each individual's experience of suffering is unique; we, as humans, often seek to avoid confronting intense feelings, thoughts or physical symptoms; it is normal to have

some pain and discomfort in life. In Psoma Yoga, we believe it is possible that this discomfort can assist us in our journey. When Bravo was experiencing pain she reported that the Psoma Yoga techniques "created a greater brightness in me even though I was dealing with physical pain". Reframing suffering from something to be endured to something that may provide useful information may assist the client to come to terms with a new situation.

Welwood (2000) describes an approach he has found that works well with those who are suffering. These steps sound very congruent with the process of Psoma Yoga. Welwood (2000) reminds the reader to listen and respect the client's real problems as a means of true connection (creating space); follow the client's experience rather than mental interpretations about the experience (experiments - small things are big things, and tracking - delving deep), thereby allowing the counsellor to be open to the client's suffering without taking on the heaviness; and, provide a safe space for the client to experience their own feelings (unfolding). "In the end, cultivating openness to this larger space surrounding all our structures is what allows the fresh breezes of change and renewal to keep circulating through our lives" (Welwood, 2000, p. 21). Reading this in Welwood, I realized that dealing with suffering cannot be approached using a mechanistic 'find the problem and offer the solution' style. An expanded perspective is necessary and for this reason, caring professionals who work with clients need to have the courage and resilience to explore their own suffering so that they may be fully present and open to the suffering of others.

Hanson and Mendius (2009) describe that:

> Harmful intentions operate at all levels of the brain… But the same is also true of wholesome inclinations toward generosity, kindness and insight: they ripple up and down the neuroaxis, from visceral brain stem energy for good causes to abstract ideals sustained by the PFC [prefrontal cortex]. As you weave positive inclinations more deeply into the different levels of your brain, you increasingly… cultivate strength…Strength is often quiet, receptive determination. (p. 103-104)

Recall Delta's statement, "the experience of finding a place in which I am not doing anything and having it be such a rich experience." I believe this quality of quiet, receptive determination is an essential part of compassionate being. Armstrong (2011) states that "The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves" (p. 6). As we are open to our own experience, we are better able to see possibilities and to bring a greater depth of understanding to how the concepts of suffering and compassion may be linked to other concepts. Fundamentally, it appears that understanding the self leads to greater understanding of others, and greater understanding of both leads to greater compassion and empathy for individuals and humanity.

Academic literature. In the findings from the Psoma Yoga research, there appears to be a link between embodiment and an increase in self-understanding. Alpha stated, "There is an appreciation of whatever is going on" and Delta shared, "my body feels different because I can relax with whatever I'm feeling rather than condemning certain aspects…" The importance of embodiment or body knowledge and relationship are captured in the education literature (Frieler, 2008; Lawrence, 2012; Shapiro &

Shapiro, 2002), nursing and health research literature (Sandelowski, 2002; Sharma, Reimer-Kirkham & Cochrane, 2009; Swartz, 2012; van Manen, 1998; Wright & Brajtman, 2011), and psychotherapy literature (Mehling et al., 2011).

> Developing a deeper understanding of exactly what is meant by embodiment and how some of our learning in the world is accessed through embodied experiences can be daunting and perplexing. After all, approaching the body is steeped in complexity. (Frieler, 2008, 38)

Frieler (2008) examined the literature about embodiment and noted that there were differing perspectives on the subject. She found that "*embodiment, embodied learning,* and *somatic learning* are all closely aligned and used interchangeably in the discourses" (p. 39) but notes that *somatic learning* generally refers to "learning directly experienced through bodily awareness and sensation during purposive body-centred movements (Alexander Technique, tai chi, yoga)" (p. 39). She goes on to explain that, "*embodiment* and *embodied learning* generally refer to a broader, more holistic view of constructing knowledge that engages the body as a site of learning, usually in connection with other domains of knowing (for example, spiritual, affective, symbolic, cultural, rational)" (p. 39). However, there are variations in the way authors situate embodiment: some see it as an existential condition, others as a process of making meaning in the body, and others prefer the term bodiliness - "the experience of being a body and the phenomenon of bodiliness" (p. 39-40). Cognitive science, used to ground the ideas of phenomenological and neural embodiment, sees reason as connected to our bodies, brain structures, and environmental interactions. Freiler (2008) sees embodiment as,

> ...a way to construct knowledge through direct engagement in bodily experiences

> and inhabiting one's body through a felt sense of being-in-the-world...
> and embodied learning involves being attentive to the body and its experiences as a way of knowing. (p. 40)

Swartz (2012), with a perspective which draws on neuroscience via embodied cognition, assumes that all living organisms are dynamic learning systems embedded in nature. She highlights several important definitions:

> *Embodied learning* as a heavily brain-influenced process of emergence and stabilization of connection... over time and space.... that arise from the embodied mind... *Embodied mind* is a neurobiologic construction of interconnections among body systems, especially nervous and endocrine systems... [which] arises throughout a lifetime of recursive neurobiologic processes that require interpersonal interactions and emotion to proceed... to integrate past, present and future... *Intelligence* is the ability to adapt by fitting behavior and cognition (which is embodied) to the changing context, using slight shifts or radical jumps, all being sourced in the embodied mind. [Finally,] *embodied cognition* is primarily preconscious (therefore, not conscious), unlanguaged embodied knowing for which mindfulness is the natural state of awareness. (p. 17)

I believe it is important to identify that there are different understandings of what embodied learning is and I agree with Freiler (2008) who reminds the reader that application of embodied learning depends on context and social processes. This reminds me of descriptions shared by Echo and Charlie. "Sometimes when I have done this… ask them where it feels like their body needs support and supporting their body in a respectful way. It has been quite powerful to watch" (Echo). "It's to come back, to just simply be

with them in their lived experience that helps me stay in their lens of their own life" (Charlie). In Psoma Yoga, we are interested in assisting each other to identify our unique context and habits of social interaction.

Even though we are interested in the unique contexts, there are two models of interest to bring forward in this discussion. The first is from the education literature and the second from nursing and education. First, Lawrence (2012) developed a model which shows that "holistic knowing or knowledge [is] at the intersections of body, mind, heart, and spirit and their relationship to intuition" (p. 6) (see appendix I). In this triangular model, the body is the foundation (which is physical sensation and somatic knowledge), the left point is the heart (which is affective knowledge and emotion), and the right point is the mind (which is cognitive knowledge - rational and logical). In the centre of this triangle is the place of spirit where body, mind and heart connect. Intuition knowledge, which exists before it comes into conscious awareness, is represented by a circle beneath the triangle (p. 6-8). Lawrence emphasizes that although these domains are separate, they are interconnected and urges the importance of bringing the whole self "the sum of their embodied and affective lived experiences to the learning environment" (p. 12).

This holistic learning model describes the multi-dimensional complexities that are evident in learning and emphasizes the connections and transitions between these aspects. If a model is needed to define the Psoma Yoga learning experience, this model could be adapted for use. However, the model as it is currently drawn, in two dimensions, may benefit from the addition of a third dimension which would better capture the chaos and non-linear nature of this learning experience. My new understanding of Psoma Yoga would see this model adapted as a sphere containing a tetrahedron to reflect the multi-

dimensional complexity that is reported by research participants. It is unclear to me if a model of the learning that occurs in Psoma Yoga is required. This may require further discussion and study in future research.

Second, Swartz (2012) describes her interest in embodied learning arising from her clinical nursing experiences with patients who were unable to describe their symptoms. She explains, "sometimes, experiencing disconnection from the body, they don't notice its messages or think to share them" (Swartz, 2012, p. 15). As a nurse, who practices Psoma Yoga, this is of particular interest to me. I believe that including Psoma Yoga in nursing and counselling practices might assist clients to reconnect with their bodies and learn to listen to their own body wisdom. Yet, I wonder how to introduce this spiritually-informed, body-mind practice into mainstream health and mental health care?

Swartz (2012) recommends moving to a model aimed at bridging the gap between the science-driven health care world and an individual's neurobiologic understanding. Bridging the gap would,

> ...enhance each person's adaptability to changing contexts... [with] the desired general movement toward greater integration of past experience and current capability... [and] promote the mind's return to its natural state of mindful reflective awareness. (Siegel, 2010 cited in Swartz, 2012, p. 18)

I need to consider Martin's (2009b) words prior to considering the introduction of Psoma Yoga into the medical settings.

> The medical model is based on the idea that something is "wrong" and needs to be fixed. Diagnosis is the evaluation of what is "wrong" and treatment is the attempt to fix it... There is no need to abandon the medical model in stepping into

> a "spiritual" context for healing... only to expand beyond it to include another perspective, one that says that, on one level, there really is no problem. (p. 86)

The medical system, based in Western thought, often is entrenched in duality. If I am going to introduce these practices into health care, I will need to emphasize the concept of 'expanding to include' rather than abandoning the current model.

Swartz (2012) writes about the adaptation of work from Miller and Crabtree (2005) to create a clinical action pedagogy (see appendix I), where pedagogy refers to the science and art of education. She explains that Miller and Crabtree's "wheel of clinical action pedagogy" provides structure in program planning. This model may be worth considering for the introduction of mind-body practices, which include Psoma Yoga, into current health and mental health environments.

The model considers knowledge of the embodied self (mastery of information), connection with the environment (both natural and constructed), relationships with others, and caring for the self. It also incorporates a subjective (meaning-making) view and an objective (scientific) view in an effort to integrate (embodied learning). Swartz (2012) reports that "the formation of new patterns of connection through learning with this embodied clinical action pedagogy revealed that we all possess unique personal styles of being in the world through our bodies" (p. 22) and exploration of these styles through embodied learning practice assisted both nurses and patients. Further research, to evaluate this model and consider others, may be needed to assist with the introduction of mind-body practice into health and mental health care.

The introduction of mind-body practices into spiritual care seems more straightforward. It is striking how Killen and de Beer's (1994) descriptions of theological

reflection are similar to the way exploration occurs in Psoma Yoga. They emphasize that humans need to make meaning of their lives and this process of making meaning can occur when "we reflect on, muse over, ponder or analyse events" (p. 20). From this place of exploration, most people move through the process of making meaning without understanding the structure of this process. Killen and de Beer (1994) "call this pattern in the process of reflection the *movement toward insight*" (p. 20) and identify that this "movement flows through five parts: experience, feelings, images, insights and action" (p. 20) but the movement is not linear, it is a "circular spiral: action, by leading to new experiences in our lives, propels us back to experience" (p. 20).

The movement is this:

> When we enter our *experience,* we encounter *feelings.*
>
> When we pay attention to those *feelings, images* arise.
>
> Considering and questioning those *images* may spark *insight*.
>
> *Insight* leads, if we are willing and ready, to *action.*
>
> Becoming aware of this movement in our lives can strengthen and refine our habit of reflection. It puts us in touch with how, at times, in our lives, we have come to significant understandings that allowed us to choose more freely among options or that strengthened or shifted our sense of who we are in relation to God, self, other and the world. (Killen & de Beer, 1994, p. 21)

These instructions are similar to 'tracking-digging deep' and to the way Psoma Yoga encourages self-reflection. It is reasonable to imagine that theological reflection practiced in this way also would lead to 'unfolding'. Perhaps introducing Psoma Yoga, as

part of spiritual care, in health and mental health facilities would be a good place to begin. This will need to be considered more carefully.

Mehling et al. (2011) sought to create a better understanding of the role of body awareness in therapeutic mind-body approaches. They used focus groups to ask practitioners and patients of body-mind approaches about their experiences. They discovered that the theoretical stance of practitioners in their study demonstrated a strong parallel to positions presented by phenomenological philosophers like Merleau-Ponty who "attempt to transcend viewing persons in dualistic terms and focus not on 'the body' as such but on what it means to be embodied" (Mehling et al., 2011, p. 10). They also were able to outline four levels of client experience on the path to embodiment: i. "the lived body" - the body is described as absent and the client may be unself-consciously aware of the body or completely unaware of it; ii. "the objective body state" - the body opposes the self, the body is painful or there is loss of function; iii. "cultivated immediacy" - there is a new experience of the body characterized by acceptance; and finally, iv. "the subjective body"- the body as a source of learning and meaning (Mehling et al., 2011, p. 10). They showed that participants experienced an expansion of perspective to include: body, self, and environment. The "dialectic of body and self formulated by phenomenological philosophers has been expanded to a... 'trialectic' " because the person becomes "embedded and active in a cultural environment and society" (Mehling et al., 2011, p. 10). Based on these findings, I believe that some participants may have experienced this 'trialectic'. I suspect expanded ways of being may contribute to the sense of transformation the participants describe. Once again, further study about Psoma Yoga will be required to draw any conclusions.

> The truth may be puzzling. It may take some work to grapple with. It may be counterintuitive. It may contradict deeply held prejudices. It may not be consonant with what we desperately want to be true. But our preferences do not determine what's true. We have a method, and that method helps us to reach not absolute truth, only asymptomatic approaches to the truth — never there, just closer and closer, always finding vast new oceans of undiscovered possibilities. (Sagan, 1995, n.p.)

Sagan is speaking about scientific method, which will be required for further research about Psoma Yoga, but he could also be speaking about the journey of change in the complex human experience of multi-dimensions. Any alteration on one level (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) will interact with all levels. Any search for truth may lead to transformation. In this section, I will delve into ideas about transformation from philosophical and mythological perspectives.

Brogan (2013) discusses Heidegger and eloquently captures some of the requirements of transformation.

> Anticipation discloses to existence that its extreme inmost possibility lies in giving itself up, and thus it shatters all one's clinging to whatever existence one has reached. Being-towards-death teaches us not to hold on to ourselves. But in doing so, Heidegger says, it also frees us from the grasp of others and frees others from our grasp. Not holding on to others does not mean being out of touch with them. (Brogan, 2013, p. 32).

Brogan (2013) discusses how Heidegger originally understood *thereness* and *presence* as a dual relationship but in his later writings his descriptions became more clearly situated

in the space of transition. The importance of the transition point is evident - the point where there is both holding and letting go, and where there is freedom from others and connection with them. As the findings of this research show, Psoma Yoga practice enhances the abilities of participants to "step back" and "relax in" to a broader view of what is happening which greatly impacts experience. These abilities create a change in perspective that does not negate the previous perspective but expands on it. Based on these findings, I suggest that healing and transformation are the result.

Greenwood and Nunn (2009), Canadian physicians, express their perspectives on healing and transformation.

> The power of a transformational experience cannot be underestimated. Change comes from within, not from without, and the experience places the locus of control back within us, where we can recognize it as our own healing system being activated. (p. 61).

The research participants in this study indicate that the gentle, non-forcing style of Psoma Yoga encourages and supports the locus of control remaining with the participant. This is important because when buried feelings surface, there often is a link between emotion and illness. "When feeling is so buried that memory is impaired, then the only message the body can relay to the mind is pain" (Greenwood & Nunn, 2009, p. 65); so, "To know feeling we must relive our pain. It is a most difficult lesson. Healing involves us being in continuous interaction with feeling... when the connection is made between intellect and feeling, the process of healing begins" (p. 24). In the Psoma Yoga process, individuals are supported as they follow the feelings, wherever they lead.

> You must learn to discriminate between different drives and impulses that move you, so you can attune yourself to the promptings of the Self. In this way, the multiplicity of complexes and impulses that move you can be brought into a dynamic harmony, such that each is given proper expression in service of the Self - the principle of higher integrative unity in the psyche. (Le Grice, 2013, p. 84)

The participants described the Psoma Yoga process as often slow and gentle, assisting with supporting the investigation and subsequent discernment of determining when patterns serve us and when they do not.

In his book, *Rebirth of the Hero*, Le Grice (2013) describes the process of psychological individuation and relates it to Joseph Campbell's mythology. He says,

> The hero's journey, Campbell notes, pertains to the process of overcoming resistances and the recovery of long lost powers from the unconscious. It is the means by which we can experience a continual birth, activating a continual flow of power from the unconscious into the daylight world of consciousness... Interpreted psychologically, the journey is to do with discovering and learning to serve this deeper center within the psyche. (Le Grice, 2013, p. 103)

This idea of continual birth certainly comes through in the descriptions provided by the research participants, particularly in the sections on the experiences of awakening, seeing, listening, being and reverently relating. It is as if each moment is a birth. There is a letting go, a wondering place, and a new space. Life may be a series of births and hopefully practices, like Psoma Yoga, assist individuals to navigate these transitions with greater purpose. Le Grice (2013) reiterates this idea,

> You will likely experience many "calls to adventure'; each time you experience a synchronicity, for instance, this amounts to some kind of call to follow a particular path. So too one must repeatedly overcome resistance to life, continually bring forth new life energy from the unconscious, just as the labor of communicating one's truth to the world is also ongoing. There is a fluidity, then about the major phases - separation, initiation, and return... (p. 107)

The research participants all indicated that the Psoma Yoga "call to adventure" is one that they would like to see made more readily available to them and to a wider community.

Implications for Practice

Psoma Yoga has many implications, some have already been discussed in relation to the literature, and these will be summarized here before moving into discussion of other potential implications. First, defining our own lifeworld and assisting clients to uncover their lifeworld can be helpful in bringing conscious awareness to unconscious influences. Next, I believe that health and caring professionals, including nurses and counsellors, need to be able to assist clients to explore the manifestations of suffering with a quality of open-heartedness and curiosity. The reason this is important is that reframing suffering from something to be endured to something that may provide useful information may assist the client to come to terms with a new situation. In order to assist with reframing this suffering, caring professionals need to have the courage and resilience to explore their own suffering because understanding the self leads to greater understanding of others, and greater understanding of both leads to greater compassion and empathy for individuals and humanity.

It is important to be aware that there are different understandings of what embodied learning is and to remember that embodied learning depends on context and social process. If models are needed to describe the learning that occurs in Psoma Yoga or, to assist with the introduction of Psoma Yoga into health and mental health settings, further research into potential models and applications is required.

As there are many similarities between Psoma Yoga and theological reflection practices, perhaps further consideration could be given to introducing Psoma Yoga as part of spiritual care into health and mental health facilities.

Further study is required to determine if the expansion described by these research participants contributes to the existing knowledge about the sense of transformation. The research participants would like to see Psoma Yoga made more readily available to them and to a wider community. Further study into potential uses and applications of Psoma Yoga is recommended and additional study about who may benefit from Psoma Yoga would contribute to evidence-based or evidence informed practice.

Evidence-based or evidence-informed practices assist practitioners to determine if therapies and treatments they are considering are safe and to whom they are most beneficial. Sharma, Reimer-Kirkham and Cochrane (2009) remind the reader that research about *lived experiences* is influenced by the perspectives and context of the researcher and the participants. They caution that awareness that leads to embodied knowledge is only partial knowledge "because we are partial researchers" (p. 1649). "Embodiment does not express the truth, but expresses conditions of possibility among multiple possibilities" (Sharma et al., 2009, p. 1649). The findings of this study, supported by the relevant literature, indicate that Psoma Yoga, as a mind-body practice, is

helpful to bridge the multiple dimensions of human experiencing. Caring professionals, including those in psychotherapy and counselling and nursing, and clients would benefit from a greater awareness of the emotional, mental and spiritual components of health. This awareness builds capacity for discomfort and may greatly contribute to improved well-being and freedom 'to be' (wholeness). Sharma et al. (2009) say that learning to discuss "our embodied experiences and methodological reflections" promotes "critical reflexivity" and that qualitative research pushes us "to go places one might not otherwise have gone" (p. 1649).

Although there is growing research evidence in qualitative traditions, there is still much to learn about mind-body practices. Many of the systematic reviews suggest an increase in quantitative study in the form of case-control studies for mindfulness practices and yoga would be beneficial. I would suggest that in addition to this, there be greater effort placed on developing and studying methods to measure the efficacy of healing experiences. Verhoef and Mulkins (2012) have begun development of an "Integrative Medicine (I-MED) Index" to provide a way of assessing the experiences of individuals receiving complementary and alternative medicines (CAM). Once fully developed, the index, which includes outcome measures, may be useful "in assessing and monitoring the process and outcomes of treatment and care" (Verhoef & Mulkins, 2012, p. 236).

In this chapter, I have put forward three main ideas. First, I have discussed Psoma Yoga as a starting point for defining the lifeworld and for creating space for exploration of thoughts, feelings, sensations, emotions and meanings that may assist with transformation and healing. Second, I have explored the relevant literature from both mainstream and academic sources to reveal information about the relationship between

the mind and the brain, human interaction, suffering and compassion, embodiment, embodied learning models, transformation and healing. Finally, I have suggested implications for practice and identified areas for further research. For now, this puzzle is complete. In the next chapter, I will address the horizon as it stands.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

I want to beg you to be patient toward all that is
unsolved in your heart and to try to love
the questions themselves. -- Ranier Maria Rilke

We had the experience but missed the meaning,
And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form, beyond any meaning...
Eliot, 1963, p. 208

This work began with the question, what is the lived experience of Psoma Yoga? In responding to this question in a hermeneutic-phenomenological way, I have researched how the experience and its meaning are impacted by changes in perspective, in the way we look. This process could go on for a long time, as there is much to look at and reflect upon, but it is time to work with the horizon as it stands now. I will ask three questions: How has this interpretive account fostered our understanding of the topic? If we are attentive to these fostered understandings, how does this impact the practice of caring professionals, including nurses and counsellors? How has my own understanding of Psoma Yoga and myself been transformed by this work? In this final chapter, I will explore my response to these questions.

How has this interpretive account fostered our understanding of the topic?

Bringing conscious awareness to simple practices and mindful experiments can have a profound and transformative impact on an individual. The urge to transform often is proceeded by a suggestion, an invitation, a call to look more deeply at oneself. The creation of a healing space, which allows individuals to move fluidly between

perspectives (body, mind and spirit), is a starting point for deep exploration of habitual patterns. This space has qualities of spaciousness and timelessness.

Embodiment, the invitation to fully experience the form and the soul or spirit, greatly impacts our ongoing transformation by creating a point where the tangible and the intangible meet. In the present moment, greater awareness of thoughts, senses, feelings, emotions, intuition, and memories are explored through body movement and exploration of body tension patterns. Links and connections between the formless mind and formed body reveal previously unavailable possibilities and expanded knowing. We can assist each other in this process by holding healing space, lovingly and compassionately, and supporting self-discovery.

Experiences that arise from this self-discovery feel like awakening to a broader vision, and an expanded way of seeing and being. These experiences of self-discovery are effortless and arise simply by following what is happening. As we step back, relax in, and trust this new way of being, we have access to feelings of greater freedom, wholeness, and are able to relate to others with more respect and reverence.

Transformation happens when we can hold both the duality and the place beyond duality. When our seeing and being is changed from a perspective of 'either this *or* that' to a perspective of 'this *and* that' (and perhaps 'this and that and even more than I am currently unaware of'), we are more spacious, able to embrace not knowing, transcending the ego.

If we are attentive to these fostered understandings, how does this impact the practice of caring professionals, including nurses and counsellors?

Space, which is respectful, curious, compassionate and unconditionally loving, creates the safety and freedom for those in our care to discover who they are.

I believe suffering can manifest on different levels and our western society often seeks to avoid intense feelings, thoughts, and feelings that may arise. We need to be able to assist clients to explore the manifestations of suffering with a quality of open-heartedness and curiosity. Caring professionals need to explore their own suffering so that they can be open, present, and compassionate with the suffering of others.

Psoma Yoga, as a mind-body practice, is helpful to bridge the multiple dimensions of human experiencing. Caring professionals, including those in psychotherapy and counselling and nursing, and their clients would benefit from a greater awareness of the emotional, mental and spiritual components of health which can be realized through a spiritually-informed practice such as Psoma Yoga.

Psoma Yoga, often practiced slowly and gently, assists with supporting the investigation and subsequent discernment of determining when habitual patterns, ways of being, serve us and when they do not. Clients and professionals alike can explore these different dimensions of the self to discover their own inner wisdom.

Life is a series of transitions, births, deaths, and the spaces between. Practices, like Psoma Yoga, may assist individuals to navigate these transitions with greater purpose and ease.

How has my understanding of Psoma Yoga and myself been transformed by this work?

Before I began this research, I did not fully appreciate that my own lifeworld perspectives were greatly impacted by the philosophical works of Heidegger, Gadamer and especially Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) and his work about the phenomenology of perception. I now have a clearer sense of the philosophical works and a new set of questions have appeared as a result of this.

I have explored the phenomenon in relation to literature from neuroscience, nursing, education, theology, and psychotherapy and counselling. I am struck by the overlap of the information and the many explanations and understandings of similar themes and ideas. This gives me trust in the idea that there are many paths to the same end.

Perhaps the most profound impact occurred from the phenomenological writing itself. The sense of wonder and questioning in this research assisted with the discovery of the Psoma Yoga experience and the similarities between the writing and my understandings of the phenomenon emerged. van Manen (1997) explains that phenomenological writing, grounded in the lifeworld and using poetic, non-cognitive language, may evoke just the right images for felt understandings that lie beyond language to come within reach so we can reflect on the meanings. In this last piece of writing, I will attempt to evoke images to reveal the things themselves.

At first, some part of me was hesitant to write about this topic. On one hand, I was excited to write and on the other, I feared that the mere act of writing would create change and disruption in my lifeworld and I felt unprepared to meet those changes. Yet,

writing about the experience in this phenomenologic way seemed to mirror the Psoma Yoga process itself and what occurred for me was a deep understanding and integration of the Psoma Yoga experience.

I came to understand that Psoma Yoga breaks down the paradigms of trying to decide between things. The individual in self-awareness, with a widened perspective, may be more able to fully accept the place of transition, the place of chaos, where all possibilities exist. Psoma Yoga practice builds the capacity and patience for not knowing in a way that expands knowing. And yet, even in writing that statement my rational brain cannot conceptualize what that means. I feel a moment of panic, as if that logical or rational part of me is unable to comprehend the vastness of the statement. I experienced this feeling many times while I was writing.

It was as if I was walking in the bright sunshine, on a beautiful day, amidst the grasses and wild flowers in a great field. I had been here before. I knew the terrain well. I could walk sure footed on the uneven path. I could breathe in the deep, fresh air. I could feel the gentle wind on my face. I was confident, joyous, solid, and in an instant, everything changed. I was suddenly plunged into some dark depth, waiting for my eyes to adjust to the lack of light, fearing to move because I had no idea where I was. As my eyes adjusted, I began to see tunnels and pathways dug into the dirt. There was no way to know where the tunnels would lead. Panic set in, I was momentarily frozen in stillness, and then, meeting this stillness with patient awareness, new understandings emerged. Eventually, I would be returned to the surface to once again confidently walk in the field.

At first these plunges to the depths, "down the rabbit hole" were unwelcome experiences (Carroll, n.d., n.p.). Yet, as I became more open to them, I began to

recognize that these were the moments where expansion was possible. I had dropped out of my normal way of thinking and being into something else, into a world of possibility. There seemed to be a rhythm developing, accented with notes from some faint music from a distant drum.

The feeling that arose was that of being part of something so much bigger, and at the same time being so incredibly small; incredibly there, and yet, not there. And as I sat with that, in my own body, I once again noticed the familiar feelings of 'overwhelm' sitting in my chest; my mind grappling to see how it might contain something so big, and my body giving in to knowing. Relaxing in, resting. Somehow the body may be able to contain this feeling in a much more spacious way, one that isn't fighting to grow and understand or define. It simply is, and is not. Existence and being seem to meet at this place of transition.

In every transformation it seems some deconstruction or destruction needs to happen. Some construct that we've built needs to be challenged and in Psoma Yoga the challenge can come in such a gentle way. It is not forced upon us or pushed. It is simply a space created where you can step into that unknowingness and explore it with support; diving deeply, hearing the whispers, hearing the call to transformation. A transformation that happens in this moment, in the next moment, in every moment, perhaps the body understands while the mind alone may have some trouble comprehending.

One day, after a number of these experiences steeping in the data and spending much time contemplating meanings, Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" rolled out of my mind. The lines, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference" (Frost, n.d, n.p.) took on a new

dimension. These lines came to represent the different ways of knowing--a well trodden cognitive road and a less travelled phenomenological path. As I was writing, I often found myself on the cognitive road. It felt easier to explain and confidently know about Psoma Yoga. The phenomenological path requires more patience, less surety, a questioning attitude, a sense of wonder. Saevi (2013) reminds the researcher,

> Caputo's (1987) echo of Heidegger's hermeneutic concern, "to raise the question of being and let it hang there and to resist the temptation to cut it down when it starts to look a little blue" (p. 1-2), is in fact, also true to the phenomenological project as pursued by hermeneutic phenomenologists. (p. 4)

Often, my writing would slip back to the cognitive road - well-trodden, to the point of being deeply rutted, unconscious and habitual. The urge to list, categorize, and place words somewhere convenient and comfortable was strong. Yet, sometimes I was able to explore new possibility, to venture into the unknown, to meet whatever is on this unknown path. The phenomenological path of new possibility may feel less comfortable, and yet it is rich with promise. On this path, which is readily apparent when you slow down, notice the divergence, and trust the process, previously unavailable understandings blossom before you. Maybe you have found a new sense of freedom, of wholeness, without any effort, being is different. Once followed, as Frost says, this path makes all the difference.

Brogan (2013) reiterates that Heidegger says,

> "the ones to come" will be reticent and silent. They will care for the singularity of being... the future ones give witness to the stillest stillness in which... an imperceptible tug turns the truth back from machination... The ones to come are

> the listeners... who guard and preserve this strangeness and stillness... (Brogan, 2013, p. 44)

Psoma Yoga honors the strangeness, without any rush or any hurry, the method asks us to sit with *what is*. It asks us to explore, to be curious, to be patient, to resist the quick answer, to dive deeply into the experience past where our mind can go, to some subtle place of knowing, of being. And then rising from the depth of this place, we find ourselves changed in some subtle and yet tangible way. From the perspective of those we meet, something is different, yet we may be unable to name that something or what that quality might be.

> "The mystical form of the call to adventure has been termed the "awakening of the self." This awakening is the revelation of a deeper spiritual identity, transcending the ego, when the dividing walls between the normal waking consciousness and the divine are temporarily removed, and one attains a glimpse into the numinous... Obviously, such an experience can radically transform one's sense of what life is about and radically alter one's life direction" (Le Grice, 2013, p. 109).

I know I have been forever changed by Psoma Yoga and by this writing. That which I once feared, I now gratefully embrace, and the ripples of this transformation will likely extend out for a long time to come, until once again there is time and space for effortlessness, for greater awareness, for expanded being, for greater wholeness, for wondering...

Here I stand once again on the edge. The vast abyss of greater understanding reaches out to me - calling me to a new way of being. Sometimes I stay perched on this edge for a long time - fearful or doubtful that expanded

knowing is in my best interest. So many times I have been here on this edge, waiting to plunge into the darkness of not knowing, waiting for precisely the right time or right courage to leap. Each time I leap, I look back toward the ledge wondering why I stood there so long. Each time I explore, little by little, the new spaces, uncovering their secrets and knowings. All the while dying a little more to my ego's view of me and birthing more into the very essence of my being.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Title of Research Project - Psoma Yoga: Exploring the Lived Experience

Investigator: Shelley Winton, BScN, RN, Masters Candidate
Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality program,
St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta campus
Phone: 780 xxx-xxxx (wk)

Supervisor: Dr. Jeanne Vanderzalm, PhD, RN
Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program,
Faculty of Health and Community Studies, Grant MacEwan University
Phone: 780 xxx - xxxx

Are you interested in volunteering to be in a research study about Psoma Yoga™ and Psoma Yoga Therapy™?

I am a Registered Nurse, certified yoga teacher and student counsellor. I am doing a research study to learn more about the experience of individuals who have familiarity with Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy. This study is part of my masters program.

The purpose of this study is to learn what it is like for men and women who have participated in Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga therapy.

Individuals who agree to be in this study will be asked to talk about their experiences of Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga therapy. It will be like an informal conversation.

Each conversation will take about one to one and a half hours. The conversations will take place in a location that is convenient for you, and at a time that is good for you. The possibility of Skype discussions can be explored.

If you would like to hear more about this study, please contact me directly using one of the options on the attached page. Once I receive permission from you, I will call you so we can talk further about the study. After I have explained the study to you, you can decide if you would like to be part of this study.

OPTION 1: E-MAIL

Email the researcher, Shelley Winton, directly at xxxxxx@xxxxxx.com

Please use the subject line: *Psoma Yoga Study - Permission to Contact*

In the body of your email please provide:

A. Your Name

B. Your Telephone Number

C. Your location (or time zone)

D. Your top three choices for date and time to receive a phone call.

1. Date: _____ Time: _____
2. Date: _____ Time: _____
3. Date: _____ Time: _____

I will send a return email to confirm the date and time when I will call you to discuss the study.

OPTION 2: REGULAR MAIL

Please complete the permission to call/contact and then mail the form to:

Shelley Winton

xxxxxxxxxxxxx

Edmonton, Alberta

PERMISSION TO CALL/CONTACT:

I, _____ (please print), give permission to Shelley Winton to contact me to give me information about the research study "Psoma Yoga: Exploring the Lived Experience. Shelley can call at the telephone number listed below and at the time of day indicated below to discuss the study.

Signature: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Time of Day: _____

Appendix B

Information Letter for Participants: Research Conversations

Title of Project – Psoma Yoga: Exploring the Lived Experience

Investigator: Shelley Winton, RN, BScN, Masters Candidate
Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality program,
St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta campus
Edmonton, AB
Phone: 780 xxx-xxxx (wk)

Supervisor: Dr. Jeanne Vanderzalm, PhD, RN
Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program,
Faculty of Health and Community Studies, Grant MacEwan University
Phone: 780 xxx - xxxx

Purpose of this Study: The purpose of this study is to learn about the experience of individuals who take part in Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy.

Background: Psoma Yoga and Psoma Yoga Therapy combine the Refined Hakomi Method and yoga to create a unique therapy style. There is little information available about Psoma Yoga and what it is like for people. I would like to talk with men and women who have taken part in Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy, now or in the past.

Procedure: Individuals who have taken part in Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy will be asked if they want to be a part of this research study. In this research, you will be asked to talk about your experience of Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy. The talks will take place in a place that is convenient for you and at a time that is good for you. Locations could be your home or another place specified by you. Talks may be in person or on-line using Skype. The talks with the researcher will be audio-recorded and video-recorded. In addition, a written copy of the audio tape will be made. We will talk about your experience of Psoma Yoga for 1 – 1.5 hours. If we have not finished our talk then, we may talk again at another time. The total time involved in the study will be not more than 3 hours.

Benefits and Risks: There are no known risks resulting from being in this study. Some individuals find it beneficial to be able to talk about their experiences. Results from this

study may be used to better describe Psoma Yoga or to make improvements to the methods used in Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy.

Voluntary Participation: I want you to know that you do not have to be in this study. If you choose to be in the study and then change your mind, you can drop out at any time by letting me know. All research volunteers were informed about the study by his or her yoga teacher or therapist. Your therapy or yoga class will not change based on your decision to take part in the study or not.

Confidentiality: Your name will not appear in this study. During the process of creating a written record of our talks, a false name (pseudonym) will be given to you instead of your real name. A locked location will be used to hold the record of your name and false name, and the original audio and video recordings. Only the researcher will have access to this locked location. The audio and video recordings will be used by the researcher to help with understanding the written transcript. The audio recording will be listened to by the researcher to look for qualities of speech such as tone and inflection. The video recording will be viewed by the researcher to watch for non-verbal cues. These audio and video recordings may be used for another study in the future only if the researcher gets permission from an ethical review committee. All study recordings, transcripts and consent forms will be kept for seven years and then destroyed.

When sharing any information or findings of this study only your pseudonym will be used. Research findings will be written into a research report (thesis) and may appear in other publications. Findings may also be presented at conferences or in yoga classes.

If the researcher wishes to use any of the audio or video segments to share information about the study, you will be contacted again. The segments will not have any identifying information, other than your physical appearance on the video. You will be able to see or hear the segments the researcher would like to use. There will be a separate consent for use of these segments. The researcher will not use audio or video segments without your expressed written consent.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study at any time, you can contact me or my supervisor at the given telephone numbers.

Appendix C

Consent to Participate: Research Conversations

Title of Project – Psoma Yoga: Exploring the Lived Experience

Investigator: Shelley Winton, RN, BScN, Masters Candidate
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Phone: 780 xxx-xxxx (wk)
Supervisor: Dr. Jeanne Vanderzalm, PhD, RN
Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program,
Faculty of Health and Community Studies, Grant MacEwan University
Phone: 780 xxx - xxxx

Part 1 – Information Letter (to be explained by the researcher)

Part 2 – Consent to Participate (to be completed by the research volunteer):

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	Yes	No
Have you read and received a copy of the information letter?	Yes	No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time? You do not have to give a reason and it will not affect your therapy or yoga class.	Yes	No
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your records?	Yes	No
Do you understand that if any information about abuse or someone under 18 years of age is disclosed by you during the study, the person conducting this study is under legal obligation to report it to the proper authority?	Yes	No

This study was explained to me by: _____

I agree to take part in this study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Research Participant (please print)	Signature of Research Participant	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Witness (please print)	Signature of Witness	Date

I believe that the person signing this form understand what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

_____	_____
Signature of Investigator or Designee	Date

THE INFORMATION SHEET MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS CONSENT FORM AND A COPY GIVEN TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT.

IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE A SUMMARY OF THE STUDY WHEN IT IS FINISHED, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Appendix D

Biographical Data of Participants

To help me understand my findings, I would like to have some additional information about you. If there are any questions that you do not want to answer, just leave them blank. All information is confidential. This information will be included in the final report, but it will be done so that you cannot be identified.

What age group are you in? 18 – 29 years 30 – 49 years 50 - 64 years 65 or more years

Please identify some details about your experience with Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga Therapy.

First exposure (date or year) _____

Types of experience (please circle all that apply)

yoga class therapy session training course

1 – 2 day workshop other: _____

Estimate the total number of all Psoma Yoga experiences:
_____ (days, months, years)

Do you have previous experience with yoga? Yes No

When was your first exposure to yoga (date or year) _____

Please circle the response that best describes how frequently you engage in yoga activities?

Every day Every week Every month

Occasional workshops or courses

The *Refined Hakomi Method* is used as part of Psoma Yoga Therapy.

Have you ever heard of Hakomi? Yes No

If yes, do you have any previous experience with Hakomi? Yes No

If yes, please circle the response that best describes what type of experience.

Therapy session Workshop Training

Appendix E

Example of Interview Questions

1. What is Psoma Yoga like?
2. Tell me about your experience(s) of Psoma Yoga?
3. How did you decide to participate in Psoma Yoga or Psoma Yoga therapy?
4. How do you feel before, during and after Psoma Yoga?
5. Can you describe anything different you noticed about your body, thoughts, or emotions?
6. What was it like to tell people about your experiences?
7. What changes, if any, did you notice in your life?
8. What words would you use to describe your experience?
9. How does Psoma Yoga affect your experience of time (and space)?
10. What was the most significant aspect of your experience?

Appendix F

Document Summary

The following documents contained in this proposal were analyzed using Word Readability statistics to obtain a "Flesch-Kincaid grade level" score.

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter for Yoga Teacher and Psoma Yoga Therapist Offices – Flesch-Kincaid grade level = 8.9

Appendix B: Information Letter for Participants: Research Conversations – Flesch-Kincaid grade level = 9.4

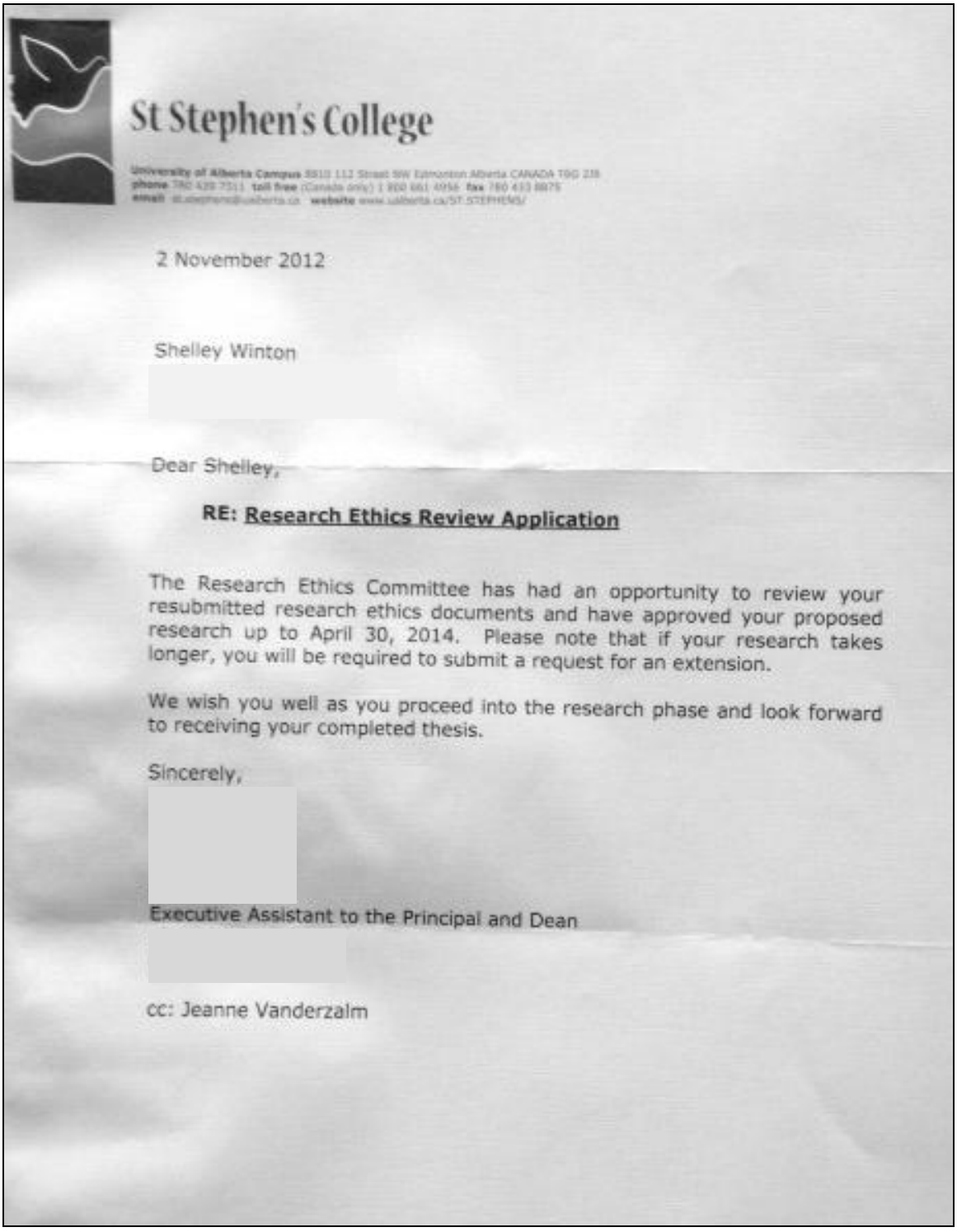
Appendix C: Consent to Participate: Research Conversations - Flesch-Kincaid grade level = 7.9

Appendix D: Biographical Data of Participants - Flesch-Kincaid grade level = 7.6

Appendix E: Example of Interview Questions – Flesch-Kincaid grade level = 6.4

Appendix G

Ethics Approval



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2 November 2012

Shelley Winton

Dear Shelley,

RE: Research Ethics Review Application

The Research Ethics Committee has had an opportunity to review your resubmitted research ethics documents and have approved your proposed research up to April 30, 2014. Please note that if your research takes longer, you will be required to submit a request for an extension.

We wish you well as you proceed into the research phase and look forward to receiving your completed thesis.

Sincerely,

Executive Assistant to the Principal and Dean

cc: Jeanne Vanderzalm

Appendix H

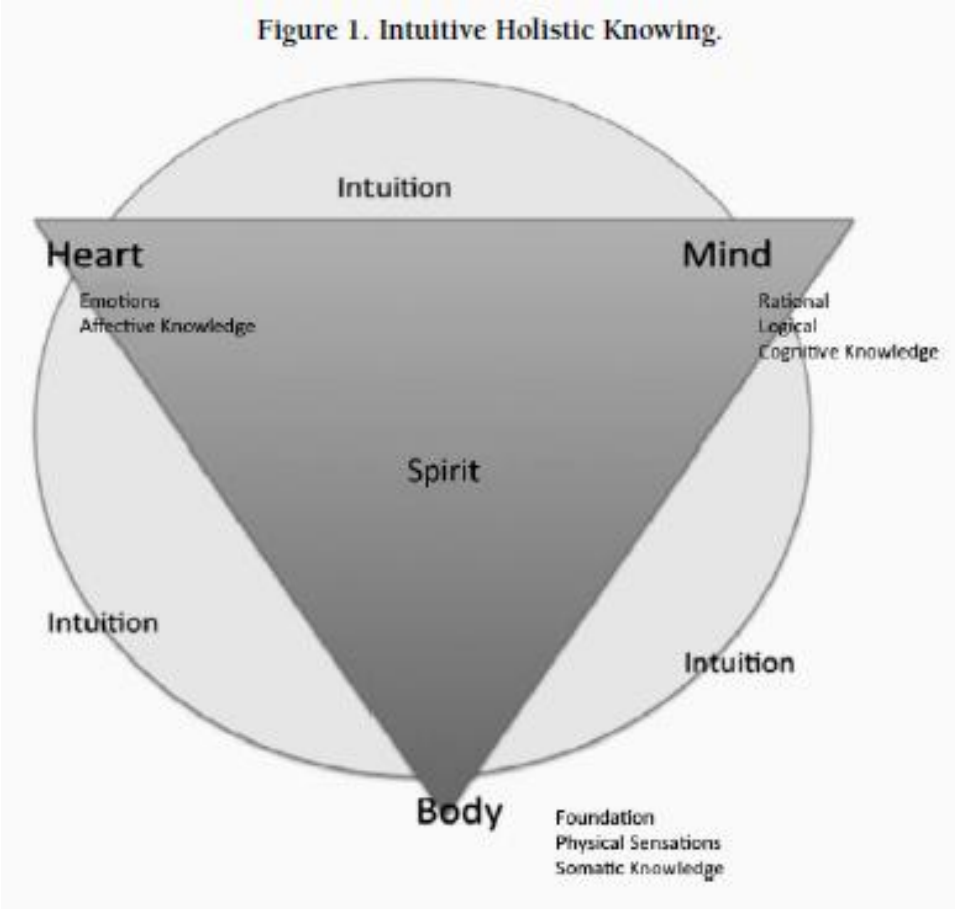
Biographical Data Summary

This information was "self-reported" by each participant.

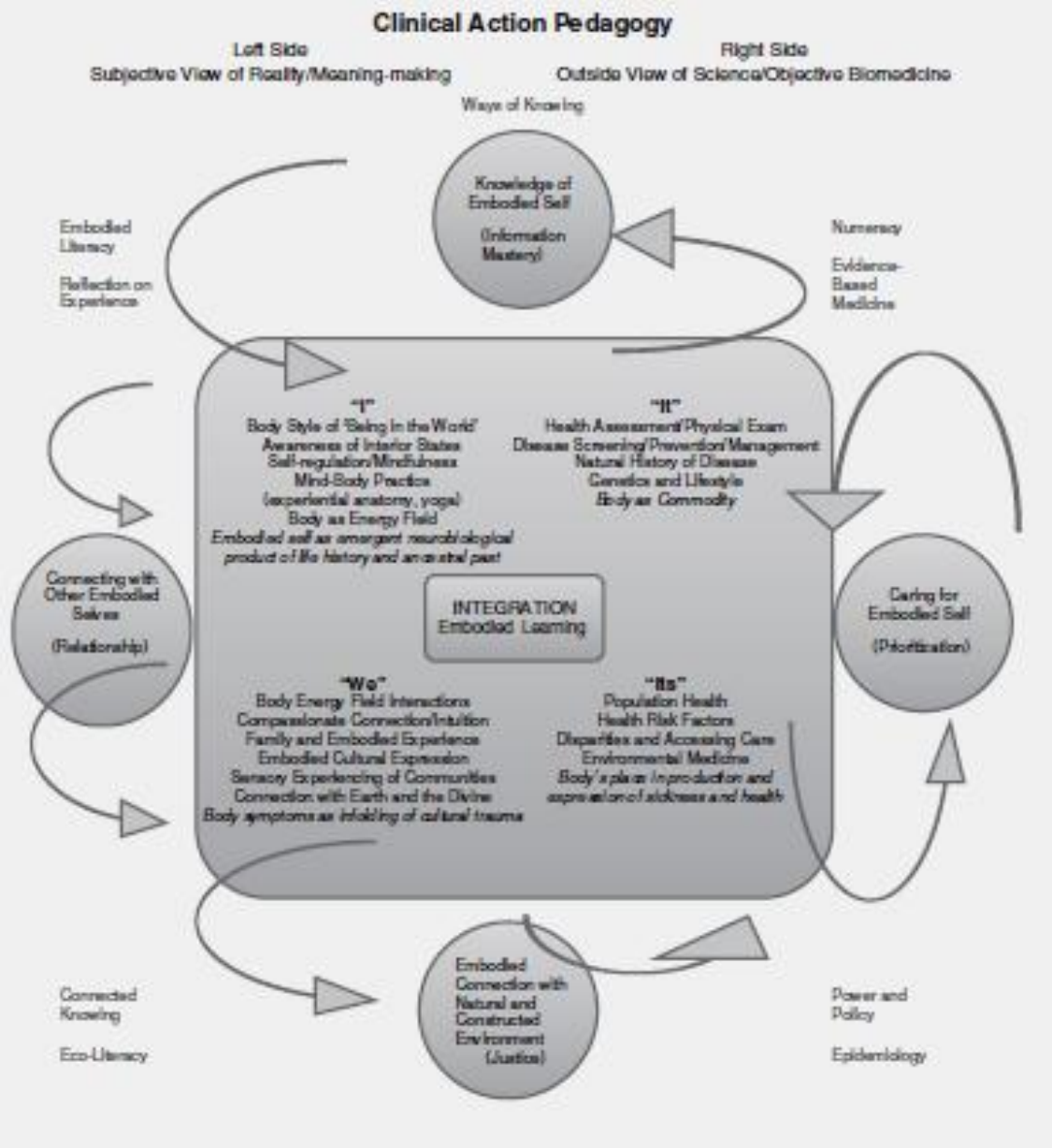
Participant	**Gender**	**Age Range**	**Psoma Yoga First Exposure**	**Total Experience**	**Yoga Experince**	**Hakomi Experience**
Alpha	Male	50-64	2011		Yes	Yes
Bravo	Female	50-64	2012	4 days	Yes	Yes
Charlie	Female	30-49	2011	2 weeks	Yes	Yes
Delta	Female	18-29	2011	3 weeks	Yes	Yes
Echo	Male		2011			
Foxtrot	Female	50-64	2007	15 days	Yes	Yes

Appendix I

Models



Intuitive Holistic Knowing (Lawrence, 2012, p.7)



Clinical Action Pedagogy (Swartz, 2012, p.21)